

by an increase of the Government subsidy to the denominational schools, amounting in most instances to an additional half-crown per child.<sup>1</sup> As a set-off against this reactionary policy, the Act of 1876 took a long step towards creating adequate machinery for obliging parents to provide for the education of their children.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps the most beneficent work of the Conservative Government was the institution by their Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Stafford Northcote, of a Sinking Fund. In the Budget of 1875 a fixed charge of twenty-eight millions was assigned to the service of the National Debt. What remained of this sum after paying the interest was to be spent on the redemption of debt, and, as under the arrangement contemplated less would be paid as interest every year, the amount available for paying off capital would be increased to the same extent. Two conditions, however, were involved in the perfect working of the scheme. The first is that no new debt should be contracted, the second that the Sinking Fund should be kept inviolate; and neither of these has been invariably observed. Still, the actual effect of Northcote's scheme has been to reduce our liabilities considerably below the level at which they would otherwise have stood, placing us, so far, in a more hopeful position than is occupied in this respect by any other great European Power. And for this, as I have already noticed, we have to thank no practical statesman, Liberal or Conservative, but the far-sighted philosopher John Stuart Mill.

<sup>1</sup> Holman, *English National Education*, pp. 202-3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 201-2.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE EMPRESS OF INDIA'S GRAND VIZIER

DISRAELI, on taking office for the last time, announced that his programme would be *sanitas sanitatum, omnia sanitas*. Years afterwards Robert Lowe suggested that the original saying of Ecclesiastes would have better described his performance. In fact, the sanitary measures of the Conservative Administration were limited to the Artisans' Dwellings Act of 1875, the Alkali Act of 1874, and the Pollution of Rivers Act of 1876. Of these the first proposed to pull down what are called rookeries, and to replace them by healthier habitations. But the owners of the rookeries were to be compensated on such a liberal scale as to make the cost of demolishing them prohibitive. The other two Acts, good as far as they went, seem to have been somewhat restricted in their operation.<sup>1</sup> "The Commons Act for preventing illegal inclosures and securing open spaces for the people" may also be mentioned in this connection for what it is worth.<sup>2</sup>

Such squalid interests, however, could at no time have engrossed much of the Hebrew Premier's florid imagination. To exhibit England

<sup>1</sup> *Social England*, vol. vi., p. 616.

<sup>2</sup> Keibel, *History of Toryism*, p. 369.

as an Asiatic Power by sending the Prince of Wales on a tour through India, and by having Queen Victoria proclaimed Empress of India (much to the disgust of her English subjects), were triumphs better suited to his Oriental temperament. But these also were vanities compared with what the statesmanship of Chatham and Palmerston had achieved. It was really Palmerston's brilliant Eastern diplomacy that had inspired the dreams of *Tancred*, as Palmerston's anti-Russian policy was next to inspire the waking schemes of *Tancred's* author. For Disraeli, who had so bitterly taunted Peel with appropriating other people's ideas, was himself as a practical politician much less original than Peel, and much less felicitous also in his choice of models. An opportunity soon presented itself for showing how little his wonderful histrionic powers qualified him for dealing with the realities of European history, how unsafe it was to copy Palmerston when the conditions under which Palmerston acted were no longer there.

Carlyle, writing in 1870, referred to the Turk of Charles V.'s time as "a quasi-infernal roaring lion in the height of his sanguinary fury and fanaticism, not sunk to *caput mortuum* and a torpid nuisance as now."<sup>1</sup> Yet what happened in Syria ten years before showed that the Turk could revert without warning to his former character. In the summer of 1860 the Maronites, a Christian tribe inhabiting Mount Lebanon, were treacherously attacked and

<sup>1</sup> Carlyle, *Miscellaneous Essays*, vol. vii., p. 243 (People's edition).

massacred by their old enemies the Druses, with the connivance and assistance of the Turkish officials and the Turkish garrison. One hundred and fifty villages were burned, six thousand Christians murdered, two thousand women sold into slavery. By orders from Constantinople the perpetrators of these horrors were allowed to get off with almost complete impunity.<sup>1</sup>

In 1863 Professor Goldwin Smith addressed a letter to the *Daily News* clearly setting forth the position of the Turks as a barbarous horde encamped on European soil, incapable of founding any permanent civilisation in the regions over which they held sway. A new Turkish loan was launched on the London market that year, and it would have been well for English investors had they laid to heart the prophetic warning of the philosophic historian.

Thanks to the blind greed of Western capitalism, the barbarian horde held its own for yet a while. In 1866 the Cretan Greeks rose against the Turks, and the insurrection was hailed by Mr. Swinburne in an ode half of triumph at the revival of liberty, half of sorrow at the supineness of Europe. But the Powers refused to interfere, and Lord Stanley, the English Foreign Secretary, gave orders that Greek fugitives were not to receive shelter on board English men-of-war.

At last the breaking-point was reached. The rising of the Bosnian Christians against their Mohammedan oppressors in 1875 so strained the

<sup>1</sup> De la Gorce, *Histoire du Second Empire*, vol. iii., pp. 314-44. My authority for the numbers given is Lavallée, *Histoire des Français*, continuée par Frédéric Lock, vol. vi., p. 174.

resources of the Turkish Government that after twenty years of ruinous extravagance, fed by the loans of credulous investors, it became bankrupt, reducing the interest on its five per cent. debt to one half, and soon failing to pay even that diminished amount.

Meanwhile Turkey's chief vassal, Ismail, the Khedive of Egypt, who had been running a similar career of extravagance, found himself in almost as desperate straits. His unfortunate serfs had been squeezed to the last piastre by a process of extortion unprecedented even in a record going back through at least five thousand years of monotonous oppression. Foreign capital, alarmed by the catastrophe at Constantinople, declined to take any further risk. One resource, however, still remained available. A great French engineer, overcoming the physical obstacles presented by the Isthmus of Suez, and the still more formidable resistance of Lord Palmerston, had at last succeeded in connecting the Mediterranean with the Red Sea by a ship canal. As the price of his assistance a number of shares in the enterprise were allotted to Ismail. It was understood that these must be sold to cover his immediate liabilities, and the French Government was spoken of as a likely purchaser. At this juncture Mr. Frederick Greenwood, editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and at that time beyond dispute the ablest journalist in London, sought an audience of the Prime Minister, and appealed to him not to let the opportunity escape. Perhaps the idea of turning what Palmerston had thought a menace into a bulwark of England's power stirred Disraeli's imagination. At any rate, he agreed to pay four

million sterling for the shares. In the Cabinet this step was opposed by the two Ministers whose departments it most interested—Lord Stanley, the Foreign Secretary, and Sir Stafford Northcote, the Chancellor of the Exchequer; in the House of Commons the Liberal leaders unanimously condemned it. But the *Times* supported Disraeli, and the vocal section of public opinion acquiesced. Abroad people regarded buying the shares as equivalent to buying the Canal, and buying the Canal as equivalent to an English Protectorate over Egypt. As things then stood, the immediate military occupation of the Nile valley by English troops would probably not have called forth any effective protest, and would have prevented much bloodshed in the years to come. But the cohesion of a Cabinet unenterprising by the very law of its existence would not have resisted this further strain.

What made the insurrection in Bosnia and Herzegovina so dangerous to Turkey was that the scene of action lay just outside the door of a great Christian Power. Austria could not view with indifference a contest raging on her frontier and throwing crowds of refugees on her charity for support. Andrassy, the Austrian Chancellor, drew up a Note, to which all the great Powers adhered, pressing certain administrative reforms on the Porte. The Porte accepted them; but the insurgents, knowing what Turkish promises were worth, fought on. Then Carlyle's quasi-infernal roaring lion woke up. "On May 6th, 1876, the Prussian and French Consuls at Salonica were

attacked and murdered by the mob."<sup>1</sup> The Chancellors of the three Empires drew up a Memorandum threatening forcible intervention unless immediate steps were taken to put the promised reforms into execution. Of the other three Powers England alone refused her adhesion to the Memorandum. Immediately after this the Sultan Abdul Aziz was deposed and murdered in prison. His successor Murad, after a three months' reign, was also deposed and replaced by the present Sultan, Abdul Hamid, a ruler in whom the anti-human instincts of his race have embodied themselves with ideal perfection, unrelieved by any trace of the Ottoman's dauntless physical courage.

During that summer events came to light which opened the eyes of at least some Englishmen to the real character of the Power with whose doings their Government declined to interfere. In April the insurrectionary movement had spread from Herzegovina to Bulgaria. Here the Turks had a freer hand, and they applied their traditional methods of repression on a more comprehensive scale. Two correspondents of the *Daily News* first made known to Western Europe the story, since often repeated, of massacre and torture inflicted by Turkish irregular troops on Christian men, women, and children. There may have been some exaggeration about the first accounts. There generally is exaggeration on these occasions. The Sepoy mutineers did not commit all, or nearly all, the horrors ascribed to them by English journalists at the time. But we do not therefore reject as mythical the

<sup>1</sup> Fyffe, *History of Modern Europe*, vol. iii., p. 479.

narratives, written from ocular testimony, of what happened at Delhi and Cawnpore. And in this instance we have the official report of an English Secretary of Legation sent from Constantinople to collect evidence on the spot. It estimates the number of slaughtered Bulgarians at 12,000. At Batak "the villagers were summoned by Achmet Aga to give up their arms, and were solemnly assured by him that, if they did so, their lives would be spared. They obeyed, and gave him their money, too. Achmet promptly set the Bashi-Bazouks upon them, who slaughtered them like sheep. Twelve hundred who took refuge in a church were burnt alive. For this exploit Achmet received the order of the Medjidie."<sup>1</sup>

Disraeli, when first questioned about the massacres, spoke of the newspaper reports as "coffee-house babble." That babble was soon to be used as the instrument of his overthrow. Early in September Gladstone, accepting the correspondence of the *Daily News* as, on the whole, trustworthy, published a pamphlet entitled *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, in which he demanded the expulsion of the Turkish executive officers "from the province they had desolated and profaned." Disraeli, who had been recently raised to the peerage under the title of Earl of Beaconsfield, replied by a protest against the politicians who made use of such incidents for party purposes, "comparing them unfavourably with the perpetrators of the Bulgarian massacres."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> H. Paul, *Modern England*, vol. iv., p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 13.



Apparently, his idea was that our Indian Empire would not be safe unless the Turks continued to keep Russia out of Constantinople, and that a statesman who urged his countrymen to abandon Turkey was for that reason a traitor to England. It was possible to retort, as Freeman the historian actually did, that an empire which could be preserved only at the cost of condoning Turkish atrocities had better be abandoned. Lord Beaconsfield's admirers were evidently not prepared openly to repudiate the idea of applying morality to politics, for, whereas Freeman had said, "Perish our empire in India rather than justice," they studiously quoted him as having said, "Perish India!" and their misrepresentation had such success that Queen Victoria waited some weeks to confirm his appointment to the Professorship of Modern History at Oxford until she was able to satisfy herself about the truth of this report.

In point of fact, the preservation of our empire involved no such disgraceful complicity with the crimes of Achmet Aga. It is very doubtful whether, in any case, our communications with the Far East would be endangered by the presence of a Russian army at Constantinople. With the Suez Canal in our possession, the danger becomes exceedingly small. Nor was there at that time any serious question of a Russian advance to the Bosphorus. Austria, whose interests were more concerned than ours to prevent it, would have blocked the way. Russia herself did not wish for war; nor, if Gladstone's demand of autonomy for Bulgaria had been conceded, would there have been any war. To secure this end no more was needed

than a peremptory representation from England. As it was, the Turks resisted because England made no such demand, and because, when Russia made it, they felt sure that their old ally would not leave them in the lurch.

For a moment it seemed as if the Christians of the Balkan Peninsula could recover their freedom unaided. Aspiring to play the part of a new Piedmont, Servia declared herself independent, and joined with Montenegro, which had always been independent, in making war on the Porte, thousands of Russian volunteers flocking to take part in the new crusade. Unfortunately the Servians were neither themselves a fighting race, nor were they led by a brave Prince; while the Turks, besides wielding far greater resources, showed that their old military capacity still survived in unbroken vigour. Montenegro did wonders; but a series of disasters laid Servia at the feet of her old conquerors before the summer of 1876 was over, to be saved only by Russia's imperative intercession.

Then followed six months of negotiation between the Porte and a reconstituted European Concert. The Powers were agreed in demanding a reformed administration for the Christian provinces of the Balkan Peninsula, with an armed executive Commission to enforce their decrees. All might have been peaceably arranged had not Beaconsfield, with his usual genius for plagiarism, set himself to repeat the part played by Palmerston in 1853-54, totally misconceiving the difference of circumstances, the aim, and the spirit that distinguished his model

from himself. Palmerston had struck at Russia as the enemy of European liberty no less than as the rival of England; Turkey had at least protected Kossuth; with the help of English capital she might be started on a new career of peaceful progress and unsectarian enlightenment; the English people were burning to avenge the wrongs of Hungary; best of all, Louis Napoleon was ready to sell the co-operation of his army and fleet for the cheap price of an introduction to good society. In 1876 not only had all this changed, but, as if to heighten the force of contrast, the political situation of 1859 naturally recurred to the memory of thoughtful people as an exact parallel and precedent for England's guidance in this new crisis of her fate. Then, also, Conservative alarmists had ridiculed the pretensions of a despot to come forward as the champion of a struggling nationality; they had recalled the policy of selfish aggrandisement invariably pursued by French conquerors beyond the Alps; they had recommended us to stand by Austria as the defender of European treaties and the old ally of England. Yet their predictions had all been falsified, and their preferences had contributed to Disraeli's own defeat in the General Election that took place during the Franco-Austrian War. That the cause of the Balkan populations had succeeded to the cause of Italy in the sympathies of English Liberalism had been made abundantly clear by a message of encouragement from the veteran Whig Lord Russell to the Herzegovinian insurgents, and by the enormous success of Gladstone's pamphlet on Bulgarian horrors, which was selling at the rate

of 10,000 copies a day. But, as we have seen, it was a guiding principle with the Tory chief to avoid what seemed to be the ruinous mistakes of his rival, and among those mistakes the most ruinous, in his opinion, was an insufficient assertion of England's power. He forgot that, since Elizabeth, England has only intervened with success and satisfaction to herself on the side of nations struggling to be free.

In a speech delivered at the Guildhall on November 9th, 1876, Beaconsfield declared that England was ready to fight three campaigns in a righteous cause—meaning, presumably, the cause of Abdul Hamid and Achmet Aga. After such a defiance the Czar could not draw back; after such an encouragement the Turk would not yield. A Conference held at Constantinople to press the demands of united Europe on the Porte failed to impress the wily barbarians, who knew, thanks to the English Premier's speech, what to think of its unity. On April 24th, 1877, Russia began what the *Spectator* described, with truth, as "the most just and necessary war of our time."

England had not the glory of making that war unnecessary by sending her fleet to bring the Sultan to reason. She narrowly escaped the infamy of aggravating it by sending her fleet to his support. "There is reason to believe that preparations were actually made, that commanders were chosen, and instructions were almost on their way, which would have committed the country beyond recall. Carlyle heard of this, not, as he said, from idle rumour, but from some authentic source," with the happy result that he wrote a short

letter to the *Times* denouncing, in veiled but significant terms, the scheme of "our miraculous Premier" to the world. What the Premier was actually planning has not yet transpired; but the fleet did not sail, and "this, perhaps," observes his biographer, "was the most useful act in Carlyle's whole life."<sup>1</sup>

Be her cause just or unjust, Russia's generals conduct the operations of war with the same invariable stupidity. On this occasion, as before in the Crimea and afterwards on a far greater scale in Manchuria, her armies suffered a series of discreditable defeats; and the same section of English society that had applauded Louis Napoleon, the Southern slave-holders, and Governor Eyre, now found fresh cause for congratulation in the performances of the victorious Pashas. At last a competent strategist, Todleben, the defender of Sebastopol, was placed in virtual command of the Czar's invading armies, and the Turkish defence collapsed at every point. On advancing to within striking distance of Constantinople the conquerors found themselves confronted by an English fleet. Again war seemed imminent, and again prudent counsels prevailed. Without entering the enemy's capital, Russia was in a position to dictate terms of peace. Her demands were, in the circumstances, not excessive. Originally undertaken for the deliverance of Bulgaria, the war was to have for its chief result the constitution of an autonomous Bulgarian Principality, with a population of four millions and a territory somewhat less

<sup>1</sup> Froude, *Life of Carlyle*, vol. iv., pp. 441-42.

than Roumania and Servia put together. Any increase in the number of people released from Turkish administration represented a pure gain to humanity ; and the larger the country they occupied, the better chance would they have of maintaining their independence against Russia.

Such, however, was not the opinion of the English Ministry, who looked on the proposed principality as Russia's predestined ally in any future advance on Constantinople, just as Roumania had been her ally in the recent campaign. Their protest took the form of a demand that the Treaty of San Stefano, as it was called, should be subjected to the revision of a European Congress. Russia, who had performed single-handed the office Europe had declined, naturally objected to having her work pulled to pieces by those who looked on while she fought. For the third time war came in sight—on this occasion, however, with the likelihood that Austria would be our ally. Two Ministers, Derby and Carnarvon, representing the peace party in the Cabinet, resigned; a credit of six millions was voted, the Reserves were called out, and 7,000 Sepoys were brought from India to Malta—a trumpery reinforcement, of whose ability to face European troops some authorities expressed their doubts.

On June 3rd, 1878, the new Foreign Secretary, Lord Salisbury, announced that Russia—alarmed, as was left to be supposed, by our more or less imposing display of power—had consented to lay the Treaty of San Stefano before a European Congress. Unfortunately, the day after the Congress met at Berlin it transpired that the

labours of that august assembly had been forestalled by a private arrangement made between Lord Salisbury himself and Count Schouvaloff, the Russian Ambassador in London. An outsider employed by the Foreign Office to copy the secret treaty had made a private copy for himself, and had sold it to the *Globe* newspaper, which published the text *in extenso* on the evening of June 14th.

England alone had made the subjection of the Treaty of San Stefano to a European Congress a question of peace or war. It now appeared that she was ready to back up every demand of Russia except one. Instead of a big Bulgaria, there was to be a little one, with a territory two-fifths of the size originally determined, and a population reduced from four to one and a-half millions. Another fifth, with a population of nearly a million, was to be formed into a province called Eastern Roumelia, to be placed more directly under Turkish sovereignty, but with guarantees against its worst abuses. The remaining two-fifths reverted to the chances of alternate oppression and anarchy. As a fee for her good offices England was to occupy Cyprus, paying tribute for it to the Porte.

Beaconsfield and Salisbury represented England in the rather farcical gathering of diplomatists who met at Berlin to register the articles of the secret treaty. Such was the dread and hatred of Russia entertained at that time by the German people, and such the influence of Hebrew journalists on public opinion, that the not very great concessions extorted from Prince Gortchakoff by Beaconsfield made our Prime Minister the idol of all classes in Germany, even

the historian Mommsen ranking him with Pitt.<sup>1</sup> Received on his return to London by a cheering multitude, the great master of hollow phraseology favoured them with his most felicitous creation: "We bring you back peace with honour." Peace had not been endangered by anyone but himself; and the honour was rather for his personality than for his adopted country.

Palmerston's first challenge to Russia in Europe had been met by a counter-mine at Cabul, exploding in disastrous war. His imitator was now to experience the consequences of the same policy in much the same way.

In January, 1876, Disraeli sent out Lord Lytton, son of Bulwer-Lytton, the novelist and statesman, as Viceroy to India. With the temperament but without the genius of a poet, the new ruler had hitherto been known, or rather notorious, for the extent and audacity of his literary plagiarisms. As a practical statesman he habitually set himself above precedent and advice, sometimes with good, sometimes with evil consequences. Because the liberty of the Press has been defended on grounds of abstract right, he failed to see that it may be defended with better reason on grounds of practical expediency, summarily disposing of it as "a fetish"—a nickname which his party are now using as an excellent substitute for argument in their campaign against Free Trade. His own fetish was State interference. But the methods of benevolent despotism are better fitted to cope with famine

<sup>1</sup> Mommsen, *Römische Geschichte*, Bd. v., p. 264.



than with discontent ; and if Lord Lytton gagged the Hindoo Press, he fed the Hindoo people. Beyond the Indian frontier his policy of not letting things alone proved fruitful of mischief. His tactless efforts to bring Shere Ali, the Ameer of Afghanistan, permanently within the sphere of British influence, merely drove that half-insane potentate to seek protection from the ever-advancing power of Russia. An opportunity soon occurred for making himself agreeable to his Northern neighbour, with the advantage, at the same time, of reading a lesson to the meddlesome Viceroy. Beaconsfield's threat to draw on India for reinforcements naturally suggested to the Czar's advisers a scheme for giving the Indian Army employment nearer home. While the issues of peace and war were still pending in the West, a Russian envoy left for Cabul—probably to negotiate an alliance with Afghanistan. He arrived after the Congress had done its work, and withdrew after a short visit, his continued stay not being thought desirable by the suspicious Afghans. Lytton had previously broken off all relations with Shere Ali ; but it seemed intolerable that a Russian envoy should be received where admission had been denied to the representatives of the Empress of India. Accordingly, without the Ameer's consent and against his known wishes, a British Mission, accompanied by an escort of 200 armed men, was dispatched to Cabul, but was stopped immediately after crossing the frontier by an Afghan official, and forbidden to advance any further until instructions had been received from the Ameer. The Afghans, as an independent people, were clearly within their rights

in acting as they did ; but the Indian Government, like the French Government in 1870, wanted to pick a quarrel for the purpose of securing what was called a scientific frontier by annexing a piece of Afghan territory. The pretended insult to our Embassy furnished a welcome pretext for an iniquitous war of conquest.

Shere Ali fled before the invaders, and died soon afterwards in exile. His son, Yacoub, accepted a treaty ceding the scientific frontier, and agreeing to the establishment of a British Resident at Cabul. Sir Louis Cavagnari, the officer chosen to occupy that perilous position, entered on his duties on July 24th, 1878. Six weeks afterwards he and the whole Mission were massacred by the Afghans, with the connivance, as is believed, of Yacoub. This catastrophe necessitated a second war, leading to the temporary dismemberment of the country, the southern division, Candahar, being retained in our possession. Still the tribesmen fought on, and even inflicted on us at Maiwand (July 27th, 1880) the most signal defeat ever suffered by a British army at the hands of Asiatics. Our military position was retrieved by the brilliant strategy of General Roberts, whose decisive victory at Candahar brought the war to an end. By this time a Liberal Ministry had succeeded to office ; the just demands of the Afghans were conceded ; Candahar was reunited to Afghanistan ; and the new Ameer, Abdurrahman, entered into friendly relations with the Indian Government, which abandoned the unlucky attempt to force a British Resident on the Afghan ruler when a native envoy answered the same purpose much better. Meanwhile, India had

to pay £17,000,000 for an unjust and unnecessary war.

Among the few territorial gains assigned to England by the Congress of Vienna, the Cape of Good Hope was one. It had been taken from the Dutch at a time when their country was a vassal of the French Empire; and, being a station on the ocean route to India, it seemed too valuable a possession to part with when Holland regained her independence on the restoration of peace. But the old colonists, known as Boers, who were mostly Dutch or French, did not take kindly to British rule. After a time great numbers of them migrated across the Orange and Vaal Rivers, founding new settlements whose independence the Cape Government recognised in 1853 and 1854 under the names of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal Republic. Meanwhile the native Africans, a robust and high-spirited race, by the multiplication of their numbers effectually prevented the white colonisation of the country on such a scale as obtained in America and Australia. Their frequent revolts involved us in expensive wars, and at the same time kept alive the military spirit of the Boers.

In 1877 the Transvaal Republic had become nearly bankrupt, and was reported to be in danger of invasion by the Zulus, who, under the administration of their king, Cetywayo, had developed a formidable military power. At the suggestion of some settlers, who probably expected to make their fortunes under a more efficient government, the Transvaal was annexed by proclamation to the

British Crown without the consent, and against the wish, of the Boer population. Had our agent, Sir Theophilus Shepstone, who was personally responsible for the annexation, been content to wait a little longer, the same result might have been amicably obtained.

At that time it was a favourite scheme with English statesmen to unite the whole of South Africa into a single Confederation, somewhat after the style of the Dominion of Canada. In furtherance of this scheme Lord Carnarvon, the Conservative Colonial Secretary, sent out Sir Bartle Frere, an Anglo-Indian official of high character and ability, as Governor of Cape Colony and High Commissioner for the settlement of native affairs. Cetywayo, who had been deeply offended at seeing the Transvaal rescued from his grasp, proved a formidable obstacle in Frere's path. An ultimatum practically demanding the break-up of his army and the surrender of his independence was sent to the Zulu King. On the expiration of the time allowed for an answer, the High Commissioner declared war, without the authorisation of the Home Government and contrary to their instructions. The force at his disposal seems to have been insufficient for its destination, besides being led by one of our incompetent titled generals, Lord Chelmsford. Owing to his bad management, a force of 1,774 British soldiers and 650 natives was surprised and defeated by 20,000 Zulus, with the loss of half its numbers.

Had the policy of Sir Bartle Frere proved immediately successful, his disobedience would probably have been condoned and rewarded. When the

news of the disaster, for which he was not responsible, reached England the Beaconsfield Government censured, but did not recall him. At this distance of time we can see that their violations of justice and expediency were far more flagrant in the case of Bulgaria and Afghanistan than in the case of South Africa. Yet in both instances they received the support of many Liberal members, whereas the whole Liberal Opposition united in a vote of censure on their lenient treatment of the man who, on his own responsibility, had involved us in an unprovoked and unlucky war. Their party majority saved them from defeat; but it was understood that the Liberals had public opinion at their back.

After a six months' campaign, Lord Chelmsford succeeded in decisively defeating his barbarian opponents. Before their final overthrow they had unconsciously rendered a service to France as well as to English Liberalism. The Prince Imperial, as the fallen French Emperor's heir was entitled, had gone out to the Cape as a volunteer in order to acquire some of that military reputation which is the obligatory stock-in-trade of a Bonapartist pretender. He fell into a Zulu ambush, and, by his death, relieved France from the fear of an Imperialist restoration. His sword had not made women childless; but the sentence of the Hebrew prophet seemed to be carried out with terrible appropriateness on her who had forced on the Franco-German War that her son's succession to a tottering throne might be secured.

A period of commercial and agricultural distress

at home came to reinforce the effect of disaster and discredit abroad. In Ireland the bad harvest of 1879 led to the association of an agrarian agitation for reduced rents—or, in some instances, for no rent—with the chronic political agitation for Home Rule. In Great Britain the influence of political journalism, once so powerful, on public opinion now gave place utterly to the influence of platform oratory, not merely on the audience who heard it delivered, but on the far greater multitude who read reports of it in the daily Press. Two speakers, in particular, made an unprecedented impression—Sir William Harcourt on the educated classes, by coruscations of wit and epigram recalling Disraeli in his best days, Gladstone on the many, by an impassioned eloquence beside which Bright's more carefully studied and classic periods seemed cold and tame.

So insecure did the Conservative leaders feel their position to be that they seemed to contemplate the advisability of letting Parliament sit out the legal term of its existence. Then something that looked very like a gigantic job in connection with a Bill for buying out the London Water Companies raised an outcry before which they found it expedient to retreat by means of an appeal to the country (March, 1880).

"We always knew," said Gladstone, with unwonted pleasantry, "that water would dissolve salt, but not that it would dissolve a Parliament." In this instance it dissolved a Government and a whole political system as well. At the General Election of 1880 the Conservatives lost 112 seats. As against Liberals and Home Rulers combined, they were in

a minority of 173 ; as against the Liberals alone, they were in a minority of 107. If the Home Rulers—of whom there were 61—should combine with the Conservatives, the Liberals would still be in a majority of 46.

The dominant party owed its victory, not only to popular enthusiasm, but also to a new system of electoral organisation known, by the misapplication of an American political term, as the Caucus. Candidates for the Parliamentary representation of the constituencies, when they were not the nominees of a local magnate, used, in many instances, to be supplied by the London clubs or similar centralised agencies. The object of those who instituted the Caucus was to hand over this office to a permanent local association chosen by the electors themselves. Each member of the association was elected by a group of electors, constituting what is called a primary, recognised as permanently belonging to the same party, and periodically convoked to choose a representative, just like the larger body of which they formed a subsection. Where this arrangement worked normally, it operated as a healthy development of the representative system, giving the electors a sustained interest in current political questions, and bringing members of Parliament into closer political touch with the opinions and sentiments of those to whom they owed their place in the great Council of the nation.

This excellent system, which has since been adopted by the Conservatives also, was introduced by Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, the member for Birmingham, at that time leader of the advanced Radicals, a strong opponent of State-aided

denominational education, and a strong supporter of Gladstone's Eastern policy. His opinions were supposed to be largely inspired by Sir Charles Dilke and Mr. John Morley, with whom he acted in close alliance. In extent and accuracy of knowledge both were immensely Mr. Chamberlain's superiors; but neither of them could compare with him as an orator or a practical statesman. Many looked on him as Gladstone's destined successor in the leadership of the Liberal party. Meanwhile, his services as the organiser of victory were recognised on the formation of a new Ministry by the bestowal on him of Cabinet rank in the Administration formed by Gladstone when the General Election drove Beaconsfield from power.



## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE LAST PALADINS

It is remarkable that Gladstone's second Ministry included a number of statesmen who had opposed, as not being Liberal enough, his education policy of 1870 and 1873. Mr. Chamberlain, as I have said, obtained a seat in the Cabinet; and if Fawcett, Mundella, Sir Charles Dilke, and Mr. G. O. Trevelyan occupied less prominent positions, it was felt that they represented the future, and that the leanings of the Government, as a whole, would be largely determined by their opinions.

It soon appeared, however, that the religious liberality of the Ministerial majority hardly equalled the promise of the Front Bench. Among the newly-elected Radical members, one of the most remarkable was Charles Bradlaugh. We have already come across him as a leader in the Secularist movement. Being a powerful public speaker and interested in other things besides rationalistic criticism, he had contested Northampton in 1868, but was defeated by a large majority. In 1880 he had better success, polling 675 more than the higher of the two Conservative candidates, the leading local brewer.

When Parliament met, on May 3rd, Bradlaugh presented himself at the table of the House of Commons and claimed leave to be admitted on his affirmation, instead of taking the usual oath, under

an Act passed for the relief of non-theistic witnesses in courts of justice. The point was referred to a Select Committee, which decided, by the casting vote of its chairman, that the claim was invalid. Bradlaugh then expressed his readiness to take the oath, and had already presented himself for the purpose when Sir Henry Drummond Wolff protested against his being permitted to do so. Such an intervention, as afterwards appeared, was illegal, and ought not to have been sanctioned by the Speaker, who, however, was on this occasion weak enough to permit it. The Prime Minister then carried a Resolution for the appointment of a fresh Committee to consider the question of Bradlaugh's competence to be sworn. As a result of questions put to him about his religious opinions, but in express contradiction to his own declarations on the subject, the Committee decided that an oath would not bind his conscience, and for that reason refused him permission to take it. His colleague in the representation of Northampton, Mr. Labouchere, then moved that Bradlaugh should be permitted to affirm. The House refused permission by 275 to 230, thirty-six Liberals and thirty-one Home Rulers voting in the majority. In the course of the debate John Bright declared that, "to a large extent, the working people of this country do not care any more for the dogmas of Christianity than the upper classes care for the practice of that religion."<sup>1</sup>

Again Bradlaugh claimed to be sworn, and this time, on his refusing to withdraw, was forcibly

<sup>1</sup> J. M. Robertson, in the *Life of Charles Bradlaugh*, by his Daughter, vol. ii., p. 235. In my whole account of the Bradlaugh incident I have followed Mr. Robertson.

removed and imprisoned in the Clock Tower, but was set free next day. A fresh vote of the House permitted him to affirm, subject to the decision of the law-courts on the legality of the proceeding. Judgment having been given against him in the following March (1881), Bradlaugh lost his seat, and was re-elected, although by a greatly diminished majority. On presenting himself to be sworn, he encountered the same refusal, and was afterwards forcibly prevented from entering the House. Next Session (1882) the same drama re-enacted itself a third time, with an important variation, for on this occasion Bradlaugh administered the oath to himself, disobeyed the order for his exclusion, and was expelled from the House. Re-elected once more, after a year's delay caused by complicated legal proceedings and abortive attempts to secure his peaceful admission, Bradlaugh repeated his old tactics, and, on their failure, voluntarily resigned his seat. Northampton returned him by a higher figure than ever, although not by so great a majority as in 1880. The long conflict was nearing its close. Retaining his seat at the General Election of 1885, Bradlaugh was allowed, by the ruling of a new Speaker, to be quietly sworn. In 1888 he carried an Affirmation Bill through both Houses of Parliament, with the support, among others, of the Archbishop of Canterbury. In 1891, while he lay dying, the Resolutions excluding him in former years were expunged from the records of the House.

It is possible that some of the majorities against Bradlaugh in the Parliament of 1880 may have been swelled by the unpopularity attached to his

name in certain circles as the publisher of a neo-Malthusian pamphlet and an assailant of the House of Brunswick. But that the surviving spirit of religious bigotry is responsible for by far the greater part of the hostility he encountered seems probable, especially when viewed in the light of another and much less famous episode, now to be fully related for the first time in an English history.

While the question of Parliamentary oaths was giving rise to acrimonious debates in the House of Commons, the more general question of the limits to free discussion in religious matters came once more before a court of law. In February, 1883, Mr. G. W. Foote, a leading member of the Secularist party, was prosecuted, with two other persons, for the publication of a special Christmas number of the *Freethinker*, in which were certain woodcuts ridiculing the objects of Christian worship. Probably the contents of the publication were of an offensive character—as the attacks on various royal and noble personages in *Punch* used to be—and would have disgusted many who had no more theological belief than Mr. Foote. But nobody was obliged to read the incriminated publication, and a mere glance at the cover was enough to warn off anyone to whom the inside would have been distasteful. What really provoked the prosecutors was the adverse influence they supposed such a work would exercise on the religious belief of the masses, and therefore they were really making war on freedom of religious discussion, purposely choosing for attack a mode of expressing opinion from which serious freethinkers, like Mr. John

Morley, would be careful to dissociate themselves. As the result of a trial conducted with gratuitous harshness by Mr. Justice North, Mr. Foote and his two associates were sentenced to twelve, nine, and three months' imprisonment respectively. "The same judge, it is recorded, let off with three months' imprisonment a ruffian who had killed a coffee-stall keeper with a kick on the face when he was refused a second cup of coffee until the first had been paid for."<sup>1</sup>

While undergoing his sentence Mr. Foote was prosecuted on another charge of blasphemy before a judge of a very different character from North, Lord Chief Justice Coleridge. In charging the jury, Coleridge demolished the old fallacy that Christianity is part of the common law, in any sense that would make the denial or the derision of its doctrines a crime independently of special legislation; besides expressing a general disapprobation of all religious persecution in a way that seemed to cover the particular charge brought before him. On this occasion the jury disagreed, and the prosecution was dropped.<sup>2</sup>

The attacks on Mr. Foote seem to have grown out of the conflict with Bradlaugh, whom it was hoped to implicate in the same charge of blasphemy, and thus to disable from continuing the fight for his seat. Ultimately, the affair resulted in a great extension of religious liberty, and this was brought about in a characteristically English fashion, by making a scene, or, rather, a succession of scenes.

<sup>1</sup> J. M. Robertson, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., p. 326.

<sup>2</sup> Robertson, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., p. 333; H. Paul, *Modern England*, vol. iv., p. 307.

Plimsoll had compelled Parliament to give its serious attention to the grievances of sailors in merchantmen by a more extreme application of the same method ; and we shall now see how a group of Irishmen brought Home Rule into the first line of political interests by making themselves a nuisance to the House of Commons.

Isaac Butt, who had both created the Home Rule party and led it till his death in 1879, never advanced the cause one single step by the methods of eloquence, reason, and moderation. In 1875 he was joined by a young Irish Protestant squire of little education or rhetorical skill, but of supreme practical ability—Charles Stewart Parnell. The new member belonged to a type most unlike the conventional Irishman of English imagination, but represented more largely among the higher classes of Ireland than among the higher classes of England. Taciturn, imperious, unscrupulous, quick to form resolutions and patient in carrying them out—above all, looking to things, not to words—Parnell had read very few books in his life ; but one of those he did read, Froude's *English in Ireland*, had impressed him with a conviction, hardly anticipated by its brilliant author, that the English were incapable of governing his countrymen. A profound study of Parliamentary tactics suggested a way of obtaining their consent to the separation of the two islands—which was to make it impossible for the English to govern themselves. Obstruction under various forms had long been a familiar Parliamentary device for preventing the passage of measures that were sure to be carried

if they were put to a direct vote. But Parnell was the first to elaborate it into an instrument for making all legislation next to impossible. His effective employment of obstruction under the Conservative Government served to advertise his more solid qualities, and thus lifted him into a position of unquestioned supremacy among the Irish Nationalists, not only in Parliament, but all over the world. In Ireland he became President of the Land League, an association formed for the purpose of putting the tenants in possession of their holdings. An American tour enabled him to win over the Fenian organisation, and to secure a war treasure for the support of impecunious Home Rulers at Westminster. Soon after the meeting of the new Parliament he was elected Chairman of the Home Rule party, whose votes he henceforth directed with consummate judgment and inflexible determination.

As if to complete the distraction of Parliament, a Fourth party next presented itself on the scene. It never included above four members—Lord Randolph Churchill, Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, the present Sir John Gorst, and Mr. Arthur Balfour; but all four were of distinguished, and two of first-rate, ability. It may be said that the group owed its existence as such to the energy of Sir H. Drummond Wolff in protesting against Bradlaugh's admission to be sworn, and to the weakness of the Speaker in tolerating his intervention. But the lead was soon taken and kept by Lord Randolph Churchill, who made himself conspicuous by the violence of his attacks on

Bradlaugh, and indeed on all who supported the Affirmation Bill, describing them as "the scum of the population." Mr. Balfour, destined afterwards to supersede Lord Randolph in the competition for the future leadership of the Conservative party, professes that sort of religious intolerance which consists in denying the consistency of morality with theological unbelief. If Atheists behave morally, it is, according to him, because they have been brought up in a Christian society and remain permeated by its influence all their lives. Holding such views, he naturally wishes that a dogmatic education should be provided at the public expense for the greatest possible number of children.

For the rest, the Fourth party were distinguished from the main body of Conservatives by their methods rather than by their principles. To miss no opportunity of attacking the Government, and more particularly its illustrious chief, to urge on the official leaders of the Opposition, or to set them an example of factious procedure with a view to taking their places at the next division of the spoils, and, generally speaking, to get themselves talked about—such was the policy, partly copied from Parnell, which alone gave them the standing of a separate Parliamentary group. Their leader, Randolph Churchill, called himself a Tory Democrat. He certainly succeeded, by the employment of demagogic arts, in making himself popular with, or rather interesting to, the masses; and even before the electoral discomfiture of Beaconsfield's foreign policy he had the merit of privately siding with Gladstone on the Eastern Question. He also favoured a wide extension of



the suffrage, and was prepared, in a rather indefinite way, to govern Ireland according to Irish ideas. Like many others, he looked to a revival of Protectionism under the specious title of Fair Trade as a remedy for England's declining commercial prosperity during the eighties, but advantageously distinguished himself from other Tory Democrats by a timely return to rational economics. Holding so much in common with the Liberals, it may be asked why he never joined their ranks. We can only answer that, as he first blazed into notoriety on the religious question, so a community of religious tradition kept him in touch with the electric main of Toryism when every other strand in the cord connecting him with his party had broken. And perhaps this may be taken for a sign that in the near future differences about the unseen world will more and more determine the lines of party division for Englishmen, as they already determine them for Frenchmen and Italians.

Irish discontent was not in 1880, as it had been twelve years before, the question on which the new Ministry had come into Office; but now, as under Earl Grey, it rapidly overspread the whole political horizon, throwing every other interest into the shade and tending to break the Liberal majority to pieces.

Reactionists taunted Gladstone with having failed to conciliate Ireland by his sacrifice of Protestant ascendancy. But Disestablishment, apart from its other advantages, had the merit of bringing the Land question full into view. As has been observed in a former chapter, religious differences

only masked the real evil, which was that the mass of Irish cultivators, less privileged than Egyptian Fellahin, could be removed from their holdings at the pleasure of landlords mostly belonging to a foreign race. We saw how Bright, following Mill, wished to convert them into peasant proprietors, and how, at Bright's suggestion, a slight attempt in that direction was made by the legislation of 1870. As it happened, however, subsequent developments took their start, not from the Purchase Clauses in the Land Act of that year, but from the provision of Compensation for Disturbance. Tenants who were evicted for not paying their rent received no benefit from this arrangement; and the prevailing agricultural distress, by multiplying the number of such insolvent debtors, gave harsh landlords a welcome opportunity for clearing them off their estates without expense. In the opinion of many besides the evicted tenants themselves, their inability to pay arose from excessive rents, difficult to find in the best times and impossible in the worst. To carry out the evictions military force was needed, involving conflicts between the soldiery and the mob, and leading, in some instances, after the eviction had been accomplished, to the murder of the landlord, of his agent, or of the incoming tenant. Then, when persons accused on vehement presumption of committing such murders were put on their trial, witnesses could hardly be induced to come forward against them or juries to convict.

These things had been the invariable accompaniment of Irish distress at other periods; the present agitation brought into existence a new terror before

unknown, or practised, if at all, on a much smaller scale. It consisted in refusing to do any service, paid or unpaid, for those who had offended the tenant interest, and were marked out by it for social excommunication. From its first victim, a certain Captain Boycott, an Englishman who acted as agent for Lord Earne's estate in County Mayo, this method has received the name, which has since passed from English into other languages, of "boycotting." Auguste Comte, in his social philosophy—which is, to a great extent, a romantic resuscitation of mediæval practices under modern forms—recommends the Catholic system of excommunication as a means of bringing moral pressure to bear on malefactors who manage to keep outside the grasp of the criminal law;<sup>1</sup> and George Eliot has illustrated the working of the principle in *Middlemarch* by Caleb Garth's refusal to remain in the employment of a rich man whom he suspects of doing something equivalent to murder. But Comte proposed that the boycott—to use its modern name—should be exercised only at the suggestion of a responsible priesthood, and should never be pushed to physical violence. Irish boycotting observed no such restriction, and rapidly degenerated into violence of the worst description. Parnell, who introduced it into the methods of the Land League, recommended that tenants taking farms whence their predecessors had been evicted should be treated as moral lepers, and left severely alone. But the victims of boycotting, as actually practised, were not left alone. They were threat-

<sup>1</sup> Comte, *Politique Positive*, vol. ii., p. 418; vol. iv., p. 335.

ened, hooted, mobbed, marked out for outrage and murder. Nor was this the worst. By a peculiarly atrocious aggravation the whole family of the offending or obnoxious person was involved in the persecution, and those who disobeyed the interdict by rendering any service to its victims were themselves boycotted also. If they entered a place of worship, it was deserted; if they fell ill, medical aid was forcibly withheld.

Professor Thorold Rogers, the Radical political economist, justly denounced boycotting as un-Christian; but that it should be practised, without rebuke from their priesthood, by the most Christian people in Europe seems to have excited no surprise.

Pending the preparation of their Land Bill, the Liberal Government proposed to meet the situation by a provisional Bill extending the payment of compensation for disturbance to tenants who should be evicted for non-payment of rent, where the inability to pay was the consequence of bad harvests alone.<sup>1</sup> In the Commons twenty Liberals voted against the Bill and fifty more abstained. It failed to pass the House of Lords, and would have failed had none but Liberal Peers voted on the second reading.

Next year (1881) the Government introduced and carried a measure which still forms the basis of Irish agrarian legislation. It embodied the principle of what are called the three F's—Fair Rent, Fixed Tenure, and Free Sale. What constituted a fair rent was to be decided by a Commission appointed for the purpose, and was to remain fixed

<sup>1</sup> H. Paul, *Modern England*, vol. iv., p. 164.

for fifteen years. So long as the tenant paid his judicial rent he could not be disturbed ; and, on a change of tenancy, he could sell his interest to his successor.

This amount of State interference with private contract was attacked by some persons as against the principles of Political Economy. They might as well have said that it was against the principles of astronomy to light fires in winter, or to ice one's drinks in summer. Their mistake was to overlook the difference between a science and an art. It is not the business of an economist as such to prescribe systems of land tenure, although he may supply information without which they cannot be usefully constructed. By combined observation and reasoning he may tell what system in given circumstances enables the largest produce to be extracted, for a continuance, from the soil. In this particular instance it does not seem to have been contended that the produce of Irish estates would be diminished by applying the three F's. Supposing it to be diminished, the loss might be more than compensated by the creation of a thriving peasantry. It was said that capital would not be laid out on improvements in a country where the rights of landlords were so little regarded. But capital was unlikely to seek a country where the collection of rents had become so dangerous. And to say that rents should be collected by military force was not a sufficient answer. Such a system of executing the law will not work, for the simple reason that it is too expensive. A saying much quoted at this time, that "force is no remedy," called forth a good deal of ridicule. On what, it

was asked, does all government rest if not on force? What other guarantee have we against the enemies of society? But government is neither an abstraction nor a celestial visitant armed with supernatural terrors. It rests on public opinion, and disposes of no more power than what opinion allows it to be supplied with. What were called the rights of property in Ireland merely expressed a state of opinion that was rapidly ceasing to exist.

Legislation in restraint of free contract was not limited to Ireland. In England also old ideas about leaving people to bargain for themselves underwent a certain modification. The elections of 1880 showed that Liberalism was making progress in the counties, long the stronghold of Toryism. As a recompense for this partial adhesion the Malt Tax was repealed, to the great joy of the landed interest in general; but the tenant farmers were still more gratified by a Bill enabling them to shoot hares and rabbits on the land they occupied. Hitherto the landlords had reserved for their own exclusive privilege the rather childish occupation of shooting these mischievous animals for amusement, with the result that a large stock of valuable food was annually sacrificed to their maintenance. It seems strange that at a time when the demand for good tenants exceeded the supply farmers should still find themselves unable to arrange by private contract for liberty to shoot or trap the depredators of their property; and that not only should this right have to be secured to them by statute, but that they should be precluded by statute from contracting themselves out of it. In

reality, however, freedom of contract rather gained than lost by the intervention of the Legislature. For Parliament became an agency by which the tenant farmers were able to bargain on more equal terms with the landlords; while the mass of the people reasserted their equitable claim to limit the rights of landed property in such a way that they should not be so abused as to diminish the food supply of the country.

A still more important advance was made in protecting those who could not protect themselves by the Employers' Liability Act of 1880. Hitherto employers of labour had been only liable to pay damages for injuries inflicted on outsiders through the negligence of their workmen; workmen injured by each other's negligence had no remedy against their common employer. For several years the Trade Unions had sought to remove this grievance by legislation, but in vain. Apparently, it did not interest those devoted friends of the people, Disraeli and Lord John Manners. At last, "through the pertinacity of Mr. Broadhurst [a Labour member] a partial reform was obtained from Mr. Gladstone's Government in 1880, in spite of the furious opposition of the great employers of labour sitting on both sides of the House." Employers were made liable for accidents caused by those to whom they had delegated their authority, such as foremen and superintendents. Workpeople might contract themselves out of the Act. "In the vast majority of cases," however, they were not induced to do so. As a consequence, we may suppose, of this increased responsibility the relative number of accidents has diminished. "Whereas in 1877 1 railway employee

in 95 was more or less injured, in 1889 the proportion was only 1 in 195. Whereas between 1873 and 1880 1 coalminer in 446 met his death annually, between 1881 and 1890 the proportion was only 1 in 519."<sup>1</sup>

"In 1893-94 [under a Liberal Government] a further amending Bill passed the House of Commons which swept away the doctrine of common employment and placed the workman with regard to compensation on the same footing as any other person. A clause making void any agreement whereby a workman forewent his right of action was rejected by the House of Lords, and the Bill was thereupon abandoned."<sup>2</sup> So far, Tory democracy does not seem to have been very active on behalf of its clients. But in 1897 it woke up. "The Workmen's Compensation Act of that year introduced into the law the new principle that an employer must, subject to certain limitations, insure his workmen against the risks of their employment. At the same time, the right of a workman to bargain away his claim to compensation was in reality, though not in form, nullified, since any contract whereby he foregoes the right to compensation secured him by the Workmen's Compensation Act is effective only where a general scheme for compensation agreed upon between the employer and the employed secures to the workmen benefits at least as great as those which they would derive from the Compensation Acts; and this arrangement must be sanctioned by a State official."<sup>3</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, pp. 351-52.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> A. V. Dicey, *Law and Opinion in England*, p. 282.



principle of liability for compensation has still more recently been extended to domestic servants by a Liberal House of Commons.

Thus, after a long delay, a principle first enunciated by Bentham's most trusted disciple, Edwin Chadwick,<sup>1</sup> and fully consistent with Bentham's philosophy, has been carried out.

Finally, in 1880, Mundella's Education Act completed the provision for securing the school attendance of working men's children by making it a duty imperative on the various local bodies commissioned for the purpose to exercise the powers of compulsion they already possessed. In 1891 elementary education was also made completely free, and this seems a logical consequence of making it compulsory, not because the State imposes a duty on the parents which they may or may not recognise, but because it deprives them of the addition to their income formerly provided by the compulsory labour of their children; so that, were the children fed and even clothed at the expense of the community, their parents would not be in a better position than before. In this connection, let me again recall the fact that three Benthamites—Roebuck, George Grote, and Sir William Molesworth—were strong supporters of State education; a proof, among others, that philosophical Radicalism was more consistent with itself through the whole nineteenth century than any other political school of the same duration.

Compulsion has secured the objects its promoters had in view. "It was calculated that in 1870 a

<sup>1</sup> *Dictionary of National Biography*, Supplement, vol. i., p. 407.

million and a half of children were receiving a fairly efficient education."<sup>1</sup> In 1882 the average attendance had risen to three millions, of whom two millions were accounted for by the Voluntary schools.<sup>2</sup> In 1895 these showed an increase of half a million, and the Board-schools of nearly a million.<sup>3</sup> In 1905 the total attendance for England and Wales was five millions and a quarter.<sup>4</sup>

Before reviewing the foreign policy and the Irish administrative policy of Gladstone's Government it will be convenient to say something about his last great legislative achievement, the provisional completion of Parliamentary Reform by the extension of Household Suffrage to the counties in 1884. For ten years previously this had been part of the Liberal programme, and resolutions for carrying it into effect were annually moved by the present Sir George Trevelyan in the Conservative House of Commons. In principle the Tories were not ostensibly opposed to the enfranchisement of the rural householder. "I have not the slightest doubt," said Disraeli, "that he possesses all those virtues which generally characterise the British people," and is as well qualified to vote as the town householder.<sup>5</sup> Being, however, a Conservative as well as a Tory, he thought it more important to keep our electoral system unchanged than to give the cottagers an opportunity for bringing their virtues to bear on the choice of Parliamentary

<sup>1</sup> Craik, *The State in its Relation to Education*, p. 119.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Whitaker's Almanack* for 1907, p. 268.

<sup>5</sup> Keibel, *History of Toryism*, p. 371.

representatives. In fact, whatever Tory Democrats might say, the unenfranchised labourers were more likely to look on the Liberals, and especially on the party led by Gladstone, as their real friends; so that another Reform Bill could hardly fail to benefit that party.

A Bill for the extension of Household Suffrage to the counties involved such a vast increase in the number of rural voters as logically to necessitate a sweeping redistribution of seats. As in 1866, Gladstone considered it advisable to separate the two measures, putting franchise first. On that occasion his tactics had resulted in the division of his party and the wreck of his Government. This time—thanks, perhaps, to the Caucus—more perfect discipline prevailed, and his County Suffrage Bill passed the Commons by a large majority. But it was thrown out by the Lords, whose opposition gave rise to a great agitation for such a reform in the constitution of the upper House as would incapacitate it from permanently thwarting the popular will.

It cannot, however, be denied that on the question immediately at issue the Peers had a strong case. What they, or rather the Conservative leaders who represented them, maintained was that, as the strength of the Conservative party lay in the counties, and as they would probably lose a number of county seats under Household Suffrage, they could not be expected to give the Liberals this advantage except at the price of a considerable addition to the county representation as a whole, with a corresponding diminution of the seats assigned to the boroughs. And not only had the

Peers a good case, but they had also a strong position. For, practically, no change could be made in the constitution of the Upper House without an appeal to the people; and, under the existing electoral law, such an appeal might well have resulted in the return of a Conservative majority.

Thanks partly to the Queen's intervention, a way was found out of the deadlock. The leaders on both sides met and arranged a scheme of redistribution by which the counties gained so many seats as actually to return more than half the members for England and Wales, instead of something under two-fifths as before. The result of their private deliberations was obediently accepted by their followers on both sides, and the two Bills, for Franchise and Redistribution, passed into law before the end of 1884.

As it happened, the great increase in the number of county seats redounded entirely to the benefit of the Liberals, and saved them from a crushing defeat at the next General Election, which revealed the fact that Conservatism had been making extraordinary progress in the great cities, especially London, Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, and Sheffield, where the Liberals had confidently reckoned on carrying from two-thirds to three-fourths of the seats.<sup>1</sup> In Ireland also the loss to Liberalism under the new franchise was great, the vast majority of members returned being Parnellites and the remainder Conservatives.

<sup>1</sup> *The Radical Programme*, pp. 5-6. Instead of fifteen Tories, as the writer expected, London sent up thirty-seven (*The Political History of England*, 1837-1901, p. 371).

In order to explain the great loss of popularity suffered by the Liberals during their five years' tenure of office, we have now to pass briefly in review the foreign, colonial, and Irish policy of Gladstone's Government.

With regard to the Eastern Question, Gladstone, as might be expected, assumed an attitude markedly contrasting with that of his predecessor. As a reward for their heroic exertions in the recent war, it had been agreed that the Montenegrins should receive an accession of territory at Turkey's expense. But the Porte was in no hurry to make the required cessions until a naval demonstration of the Powers, organised by England, compelled it to yield. Europe had also recommended the cession of Thessaly and Epirus to Greece, but rather as a pious wish than as a command. In 1881 Gladstone again brought pressure to bear at Constantinople, with so much effect that about seven-tenths of the territory in question was added to the Hellenic kingdom.

It has already been mentioned how, by a righteous reversal of Lytton's policy, Candahar was re-united to Cabul. To undo the mischief wrought by the late Government in South Africa proved a harder task. Gladstone, in his electoral campaign, had very properly denounced the annexation of the Transvaal as an attack on freedom; but after taking office he showed no inclination to give back the Boers their independence, although the Radical section of his Cabinet desired it. Sir Owen Lanyon, a British officer charged with the administration of the Transvaal, described the Boers, in language recalling that which had been used of

the Yankees a little over a century earlier, as "mortal cowards."<sup>1</sup> Five days after he wrote those words the Boers were besieging him in Pretoria, and the whole country was up in arms. Upon this our authorities began to treat. While negotiations were still pending 200 Boers attacked and destroyed a small British force at Majuba Hill, the British general, Sir George Colley, falling in the fight. Many people at home, animated with a spirit like Cetywayo's, thought that we should have avenged this defeat before letting the Transvaal go; but fortunately the Prime Minister was not among the number. The peace negotiations were concluded, and a Convention, made in 1884, recognised the South African Republic as an independent State, subject to the veto of the British Crown on any treaty it might make with a foreign Power except the Orange Free State. It was also stipulated that "white men were not to be excluded from living or trading in any part of the Republic, nor to be taxed more heavily than native burghers."<sup>2</sup> At that time the gold mines had not been opened, nor was any value attached to the possession of the country, except in so far as its independence might endanger our hold on the Cape, so cherished as a link in the long chain of our communications with India.

The safety of India supplies the key to our whole foreign policy during the nineteenth century, except that which was inspired by sympathy with the struggles of other nations for freedom. Indian

<sup>1</sup> H. Paul, *Modern England*, vol. iv., p. 195.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 193-202, 323.

interests were responsible for Beaconsfield's attitude towards Turkey and Afghanistan, as well as for his purchase of the Suez Canal shares. Nominally in the interest of the bondholders, but really from mutual jealousy, in order that neither might acquire a position of exclusive predominance, England and France established a joint control over the finances of Egypt, reducing the authority of the Khedive to a shadow. Impatient at this tutelage, Ismail dismissed the Controllers in 1879. Thereupon the two Powers, with the Sultan's consent, promptly deposed the old tyrant, replacing him by his son Tewfik.

On his way into exile Ismail exclaimed: "I leave my country as a Schleswig-Holstein to England and France!" His prophecy has not been fulfilled. Two years afterwards a military mutiny, headed by the misguided patriot Arâbi Pasha, led to the temporary deposition of Tewfik and the release of Egypt from foreign domination. A massacre of the European residents in Alexandria (June, 1881) left no alternative but armed intervention. France, made prudent by the terrible experiences of 1870, refused to take part in the restoration of order by military force. After a vain appeal for co-operation to Italy, England undertook the task alone. Remodelled by a democratic Government and led by a democratic general, Sir Garnet Wolseley, our army did its work with admirable efficiency and promptness, defeating Arâbi and entering Cairo before the end of the summer. France retained her financial rights, and has ever since continued to exercise them hurtfully for Egypt in the interest of a capitalist ring; but, politically, the dual control

came to an end. Against the intentions of the Ministers who sent out the expedition, a virtual English Protectorate has since been established in Egypt, thereby securing the alternative route to India.

Before long, however, new and almost insuperable difficulties arose out of what seemed such an easy conquest. With the help of English officers Ismail had built up a huge Sudanese empire, containing ten millions of inhabitants and extending from the Nubian frontier to the great lakes of Central Africa. As recent converts to Islam, the Sudanese were animated by a spirit of passionate religious fanaticism. Content to obey a Mohammedan ruler at Cairo, they revolted against his infidel successors. Under the guidance of a prophet known as the Mahdi, whose career recalls the legendary exploits of a Moses or a Samuel, they attacked and surrounded the Egyptian garrison, scattered in helpless isolation over a vast extent of inland territory. An Egyptian army sent to relieve the garrisons under Hicks Pasha, an English officer in the service of the Khedive, fell into an ambushade and was annihilated, the commander himself being among the slain.

Hitherto the English Government had disclaimed all responsibility for what Tewfik chose to do or not to do beyond the southern frontier of Egypt. It was his business to maintain or to withdraw the garrisons as he pleased. Finally, under pressure of public opinion, orders were sent from London for the evacuation of the Sudan. At the suggestion of an impulsive newspaper editor, the perilous mission of bringing off the besieged garrisons was



entrusted to an impulsive mystic, General Gordon. As a young man Gordon had crushed a formidable rebellion against the Emperor of China. In middle life he had done more than any other man to establish Egyptian dominion in Central Africa, using his authority to suppress the slave trade. What he might now have done had his advice been accepted or adequate support sent out in response to his urgent messages from Khartoum, we do not know. As it was, he held out for ten months against overwhelming odds. An expedition sent to relieve him arrived too late. Hearing of its approach, the Mahdi delivered his final assault on January 26th, 1885. Khartoum fell, and Gordon, who had been believed, perhaps believed himself, to bear a charmed life, was among the slain.

Before England had recovered from her indignation, and Gladstone's Government from the discredit of what Randolph Churchill called the abandonment of the Christian hero, war with Russia seemed close at hand. It had been arranged that the frontier between Afghanistan and Russian Turkestan should be drawn by a joint Commission acting on behalf of the two interested Powers. While the delimitation was still in progress the Afghans occupied a place called Penjdeh, of which Russia claimed to be the legitimate owner. Without waiting for the Commission's award, the Russians attacked and drove them out of it with much loss of life. Such, at least, was the account received and credited in England, with the result that serious preparations for war were begun. On the other hand, it was maintained by the Russian

authorities, not without some support in the English Press, that the Afghans had been the aggressors and had brought their fate on themselves. At first the two Governments agreed to submit the question to arbitration, but afterwards preferred arranging it by direct negotiation. Penjdeh remained Russian, and no more was heard of the alleged outrage on our Afghan allies. Its historic effect was to lower England in the eyes of Europe and the Liberal Cabinet in the eyes of England, although their rivals would have been even less inclined to make war for such a quarrel.

Gladstone and his Government were still more unfortunate in their relations with disorder in Ireland than with disorder in Africa and Asia. Their provisional settlement of the agrarian question only brought the Nationalist question more fully into view. They prosecuted Parnell on a charge of seditious conspiracy, but failed to satisfy a Dublin jury of his guilt. Then, taking advantage of the exceptional powers conferred on them by the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, they imprisoned him without a trial. The only apparent result was a fresh epidemic of agrarian outrages. Parnell, on his side, soon got tired of being in prison, and promised, if he were let out, to co-operate with the Government in passing Liberal measures. He was, in fact, set free after a short detention, but not, as would appear, on the strength of his promise, which proved rather embarrassing than otherwise to those who were to benefit by it, and whom public opinion now accused of leaning for support on a rebel and a traitor.

Anyhow, a more gracious treatment of Ireland was in contemplation. W. E. Forster, Gladstone's Irish Secretary, had given much offence to Irish susceptibilities by his unconciliatory manners and roughly repressive administration. His position gradually became untenable, and on May 2nd, 1882, he resigned. Four days afterwards his successor, Lord Frederick Cavendish, Lord Hartington's brother, was murdered in the Phoenix Park, Dublin, with his Under Secretary, T. H. Burke. There had been no intention of killing Lord Frederick; he lost his life in a vain attempt to interfere between the assassins and Burke, their destined victim. But if the new Chief Secretary fell by accident, his predecessor Forster and the Viceroy, Lord Cowper, only escaped by accident, for the original plot had been directed against them as well as against Burke.<sup>1</sup> In England many people looked on the crime as the natural result of making any concessions to Irish demands. A new Coercion Bill was rushed through Parliament, followed, it is true, by a Bill relieving tenants from the arrears of rent, with partial compensation to the landlords from the unspent Irish Church Fund. Meanwhile, agrarian outrage and murder continued to rage with greater virulence than before; and Nationalist emissaries from America exploded parcels of dynamite in the public buildings of London. A number of criminals, including the Phoenix Park murderers, were discovered and punished; but this did not promote a better feeling between England and Ireland.

<sup>1</sup> H. Paul, *Modern England*, vol. iv., p. 293.

In the face of such difficulties and disasters it is a marvel that Gladstone's Government should last so long and achieve so much both at home and abroad. What finally brought about their fall was a proposed increase of taxation necessitated by the Sudanese and Afghan muddles. Their new imposts threatened the public-house interest, which, as usual, found staunch support on the Tory benches. An understanding with the Conservative chiefs that, if they came into office, the Coercion Act of 1882 should not be renewed secured Parnell's support. The great Ministry fell by a majority of 12 (June, 1885). So many Liberals were absent unpaired as to give the idea that the leaders rode for a fall.

Lord Salisbury came into office with a Ministry of caretakers, including Lord Randolph Churchill as its most conspicuous member. In the autumn a General Election took place with an electorate five million strong, of whom three million belonged to the working classes. Voting began, as usual, in the boroughs, and there the Conservatives won a series of unexpected successes, with the help of the Irish vote, which the Nationalist leaders had directed to be thrown on their side, or rather against the Liberals, whom they had now come to regard with deadly hatred. But the newly-enfranchised agricultural labourer broke away from the squire and the parson, turning the scale against Conservatism to such an extent that only 249 supporters of Lord Salisbury were returned. The final result was a deadlock; for the Parnellites numbered 86, and were these to combine with the 249 Conservatives—as they certainly would at the first opportunity, in order to make all government

impossible — their united forces would exactly balance the Liberal strength, which only amounted to 335 in a House of 670 members.

In such circumstances the Liberal leader had to choose between Home Rule, against which he had lately declared, as the price of the Irish vote, and exclusion from office until the next General Election, if not for the rest of his life. He chose Home Rule, with what ruinous consequences to his party the next chapter will show.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### TANGLED ISSUES

WHEN the new Parliament met, in January, 1886, Gladstone had already declared for Home Rule. He soon found himself in a position to ascertain how far his old political associates were prepared to join in his change of front. Defeated on an Amendment to the Address by a coalition of Liberals and Parnellites, Lord Salisbury resigned, and was succeeded by the aged statesman whose place he had taken little more than seven months previously. The new Cabinet were agreed on the principle that a certain measure of self-government should be granted to Ireland. This, however, was going further than some of Gladstone's late colleagues were prepared to follow. Sir Henry James, the greatest Parliamentary lawyer in the Liberal party, refused the Lord Chancellorship rather than support Home Rule in any form. For the same reason Lord Hartington would not return to office, as neither would Lord Derby, who had left the Conservatives—he never was a Tory—to join Gladstone a few years before. Lord Selborne, Mr. Goschen, and John Bright, who had all formerly held high office under the same chief, also offered an uncompromising opposition to the new departure. Bright's name carried the highest authority of all, from his long championship of the

Irish cause and the absolute sincerity of his political convictions.

More calamitous still was the loss of two Ministers, Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Trevelyan, who resigned when Gladstone's Home Rule Bill was laid before the Cabinet. Mr. Chamberlain had hitherto been known as the most advanced of the official Liberals, even standing sponsor to a recently-published "Radical Programme"; and many looked up to him as the future leader of the party. Mr. Trevelyan's talent was literary rather than oratorical; but he also had been named among possible future Premiers; he had two years' experience of Ireland as Chief Secretary; and, above all, his reputation for honesty was of the highest. It augured ill for any measure that these men could not accept it.

The Home Rule Bill proposed to give Ireland a Parliament of her own, with an Executive responsible to it alone. It was known that an Irish House of Commons, if left to itself, would imitate the British Colonies in establishing Protection; accordingly, provision was made that it should not meddle with trade. It was known that the priests, if they were permitted, would use their influence to procure a large endowment for the Roman Catholic Church from the Dublin Parliament; accordingly, endowments to any religious community were forbidden. It was known that the gift of Home Rule without the power of confiscating land-rents to any extent would be derisory; therefore, it was arranged that provision should be made in a separate Bill for buying out such landlords as would not trust the new Legislature to protect their

rights, the purchase money to be raised on the credit of the imperial exchequer.

The Home Rule Bill was defeated on the second reading by a majority of thirty, ninety-three Liberals voting against it (June 7th). Gladstone dissolved, as he had a perfect right to do, for with such a division of parties no Government was possible. The constituencies returned a decisive answer. Gladstone's Liberal opponents—or, as they were now called, the Liberal Unionists—lost fifteen seats, but the Conservatives gained sixty-seven, thus nearly quadrupling the majority against Home Rule. For the third time in little over a year there was a change of Ministers, Lord Salisbury resuming the Premiership, with Lord Randolph Churchill for his second in command. But the victory had really been won by the Liberal Unionists, and, above all others, by Mr. Goschen, who became Chancellor of the Exchequer on Lord Randolph's resignation and political eclipse in the following December. In after years, as First Lord of the Admiralty, this distinguished statesman took a leading part in that great work of naval reconstruction which has made our fleet superior to any hostile combination ever likely to be put in line against it. Lord Goschen—to give him his present title—is the son of German parents, and is clearly filled with that intense patriotism, comparable to the enthusiasm of converts, which so often animates the children of foreign settlers towards their adopted country, and which is everywhere noticeable among European Jews.

Gladstone had sincerely desired that Home Rule



should not be treated as a party question ; and he had offered to co-operate with Lord Salisbury in bringing about a settlement of it by the Conservative Ministry. But that such an idea should have occurred to him as feasible shows with how much ignorance of the world the world may be governed. What misled him on this occasion was probably the success of his negotiations the year before with the Conservative leaders on the details of the Redistribution Bill. But the two cases offered no parallel, for it was precisely on the details, not on the principle, of popular representation that disagreements existed. With Home Rule the principle was everything ; and Conservatism might as well have ceased to exist as accept it. Irish autonomy meant a fundamental change in the Constitution ; a personal offence to the Queen, who hated it ; a measure, more or less, of confiscation ; a danger to Protestantism ; an apparent triumph to the enemies of England. Justice, freedom, nationality, were the leading ideas invoked on behalf of the new departure ; but these had long been watchwords of Liberalism. They might appeal to individual Conservatives like Lord Carnarvon, whom a brief residence in Dublin as Viceroy had converted to Home Rule ; to the mass of the party they stood for that particular kind of canting sentiment which is used as a cloak for selfish ambition.

Nor was this all. Apart from principle, and considered merely from the Parliamentary point of view, Liberalism had everything to gain, Toryism everything to lose, by a scheme of Home Rule which would exclude the Irish members from the House of Commons. It meant the speedy return

of Gladstone to power with a solid majority of 112 at his back, relieved from the Bradlaugh question, relieved from Parnellite obstruction, relieved from the Fourth Party, installed for the rest of his active life as omnipotent dictator of Great Britain. On the other hand, before Parliament met it was already evident to Lord Salisbury, as to the whole world, that a considerable section of the Liberal party would abandon their leader on the Irish question and coalesce with the Conservatives, thus giving them a majority in the whole House.

Many thought at the time, and many perhaps still think, that Home Rule was imposed on the Liberal party by the will of its chief. If we understand this to mean that it was accepted without enthusiasm, the notion is not true. It would rather seem that the great majority of Liberals were already leaning that way, and were only waiting for a signal from the leader to declare their conversion. It is no proof to the contrary that eight Liberal Unionists out of nine retained their seats, and that they formed a larger proportion of the party in the Parliament of 1886 than in the Parliament of 1885. For, by an agreement between the Unionist leaders, Liberal candidates who had voted against Home Rule were supported by the Conservatives in nearly every contested election; and many were old favourites whose personal popularity made it hopeless for a Home Ruler to be run against them. By the nature of the case these men, being advanced in life, were the first to drop off, and their seats, as they fell vacant, were generally filled up by Gladstonian Liberals, thus giving rise to an

exaggerated impression that the country was coming round to Home Rule. On Gladstone himself the support of his party, which he confounded with the English working classes, acted as a powerful stimulant, converting what seems at first to have been a resolution adopted solely on grounds of expediency into an ethical conviction held and expressed with all the energy of his rich and passionate nature; while his fervid utterances, in their turn, communicated fresh enthusiasm to the followers, whose opinions he fed with an inexhaustible stream of argument and illustration.

Assuming that the masses were on his side, the new leader of the Home Rule party declared that in all the great political issues of the previous sixty years they had been right and the classes wrong. It was candid on his part to say so, for the clearest instance of such a correct judgment had been given in the case of the American War, when he himself had sided with the slave-holders against the majority of the English people; but he might have remembered how, in his youth, the masses were against Catholic Emancipation, which the classes, as represented by an unreformed House of Commons, had repeatedly approved. A still better evidence of fallibility is that the oracle does not always agree with itself. In three General Elections, coming sufficiently near together, a plebiscite has been practically taken on Home Rule. It was rejected in 1886, accepted in 1892, and rejected again in 1895.

Besides the masses, which have proved such an untrustworthy tribunal, Gladstone appealed to another and more select authority, the historians,

whom he claimed as supporters of Home Rule. But neither could this special jury agree on a verdict. Discounting politicians who write history, Froude, Lecky, Seeley, and Professor Goldwin Smith stood for the Union; Freeman, Gardiner, York Powell, and Mr. Oscar Browning for Home Rule.

On the other hand, a contemporary writer, himself holding advanced Liberal opinions, exaggerates when he says that the intellect of the country was against Home Rule.<sup>1</sup> There certainly was a preponderance of distinguished names on the Unionist side. Herbert Spencer, Tyndall, Huxley, Henry Sidgwick, James Martineau, Jowett, Fitzjames and Leslie Stephen, Tennyson, Browning, Swinburne, Matthew Arnold, make up, with the historians already named, an imposing list; and in some ways every one of them was a Liberal. But against these we have to set, besides the Home Rule historians, Ruskin, Mr. George Meredith, Mr. Bryce, Mr. John Morley, Mr. Frederic Harrison, Professor Beesly, and, as a later accession, the present Sir George Trevelyan, who rejoined the Gladstonian Liberals on the removal of certain particulars to which he objected in the Home Rule Bill of 1886.

Turning from authority to reason, let us now consider the arguments by which the adhesions on either side were ultimately determined. Those in favour of Home Rule—besides the motives of political expediency already specified, which probably suggested Gladstone's scheme in the

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Herbert Paul, in *Modern England*, vol. v., p. 58.

first instance and won for it the adhesion of his party as a whole, in the hope of securing their Parliamentary position for another term of years—were the great Liberal ideas of nationality, justice, and freedom. Indeed, it is a principle admitted by the best English Conservatives, as well as by most Liberals, that nations are, on the whole, best governed by themselves—that is to say, by rulers of their own race and their own choice; and it was on this principle that the efforts of Greece, Belgium, Italy, Hungary, Poland, and the Balkan Peninsula had met with such ardent sympathy among Englishmen. Now, a century of agitation proved that the Irish people constituted a true nationality, visibly marked off as such by the natural frontier of the sea. Was it not, then, unjust and unreasonable to withhold from them what the Continental despots had been so severely censured for taking from the inhabitants of alien countries subjected, by conquest or inheritance, to their sway?

There is, however, another principle that sometimes meets and overbears the claim of a people to be free, and that is no other than the supreme law of self-preservation. It was invoked on this occasion by England just as it had been invoked, with the full approval of many advanced Liberals, by the majority of the American people against the pretension of the Slave States to set up an independent Confederacy, by the Swiss Protestant Cantons against the Sonderbund, and by the French Jacobins of 1793 against the real or supposed Girondist intention of substituting a loose federal tie for the one and indivisible Republic. It was,

and still is, alleged by Unionists that Irish independence would mean a breach of the bond which constitutes the integrity of the British Archipelago, and holds it together as a single State of the first order. Granting the existence of a steady movement towards the emancipation of nationalities in modern Europe, there is, they say, another movement towards the formation of great agglomerations, and this movement, whenever the two have collided, has proved the stronger, as in the examples already cited of Switzerland and America, to which may be added the attempted Federal Republic of Spain in 1873.

Again, Irish independence would mean more than the deduction of so much territory and population from the resources of Britain ; it would mean their addition to the resources of any Power with which we might at any time be at war. More especially, it would mean the conversion of an island only four hours' steam from England's shores into a permanent outpost of the United States, with its millions of American-Irish citizens in a state of permanent conspiracy for the destruction of England and her empire.

To these alarmist prophecies the English Home Rulers replied that there was no wish to break up the unity of the archipelago or of the empire : what Ireland wanted was not national independence, but autonomy, liberty to manage her own affairs in her own way. So much had been conceded, with the happiest results, to England's great trans-oceanic colonies ; and the same results might reasonably be expected to follow from Home Rule. Experience also showed that somewhat similar

arrangements had succeeded perfectly in the cases of Norway and Hungary, neither of which kingdoms wanted complete independence.

Unfortunately for the Liberal optimists, Parnell himself, addressing an American audience, had announced, in his own name and in the name of his friends, their intention of not resting until they had "destroyed the last link that keeps Ireland bound to England"; while Mr. Sexton, the most eloquent of the Nationalist orators, had proclaimed that between England and Ireland there never could be any feeling but the passion of hate. The history of their relations also seemed to show that every concession to Ireland had been used as leverage for gaining further concessions, Catholic Emancipation leading to the demand for Repeal, Disestablishment and agrarian legislation to obstruction and Home Rule. Colonial self-government could not be quoted as a precedent; for, in the first place, Canada and Australia were bound by the strongest motives of self-interest to keep up their connection with the mother country; and, in the next place, if they chose to separate, whatever the loss to her prestige, England's power would remain what it was before, or would even be increased by no longer having distant dependencies to defend. As for the European parallels, Norway, by severing the last link with Sweden, has turned the tables on Separatist logic; while Hungary has shown herself a permanent danger to the stability of the Austrian monarchy.

Besides the general presumption arising from the whole tenour of Irish agitation, there were particular reasons for believing that Home Rule

would be merely a stepping-stone to complete separation. Gladstone's scheme left Ireland with four formidable grievances, on any one of which a claim to complete independence might be based. It imposed on Ireland an amount of imperial taxation which Parnell declared to be much in excess of what was just. It withheld freedom to abolish Free Trade, a disability which Irish agitators might be trusted to represent as a tyrannous restriction imposed in the interests of English manufacturers. It forbade religious endowments; and, in view of the fact that the Protestant Church had retained a handsome share of its former wealth, the Roman Church might be expected to claim, on principles of elementary justice, a subsidy from the State of at least four times that amount—say thirty millions. Finally, the new Land Bill, tending to make the State the universal landlord, while it lowered rents considerably, transferred their collection from agencies that might be appeased or frightened to an inexorable and irresistible authority. All these grievances might, of course, be remedied with the consent of the English Parliament. But the very necessity of having to appeal at every step to an alien Legislature for leave to exercise a natural right would be resented as an intolerable humiliation by a people that had learned to look on itself as a nation among the nations of the world.

Such, stated on the broadest grounds of political expediency, was the Unionist case against Home Rule. Yet at that period there prevailed through all grades of English society, from the Heir



Apparent to the humblest peasant, and from the most reactionary Ritualist priest to the narrowest Nonconformist minister, such a passion for justice, and such hopeless weariness of the Irish incubus, that all these problematic perils might have been cheerfully faced in the confidence that England need only stretch out her invincible arm at any moment, if necessary, to take back her gift if it were abused—had justice and liberty only spoken with an undivided voice. What gave the situation such tragic poignancy, what shattered the higher Liberalism from crown to base, was the perplexity, the ambiguity, of those ideal guides. Liberal sympathies had gone out whole-heartedly to Italy, Hungary, and Poland, for there they were given to nations at unity with themselves. United Ireland only existed as the title of a violent party newspaper. It was claimed that a third of the Irish people, and *that* a third including far the larger share of Irish property, industry, intelligence, and enlightenment, looked with dismay on the prospect of being handed over to the control of an ignorant and ravenous populace, led partly by unscrupulous demagogues and partly by the most fanatical priesthood in Catholic Europe. Now, what priestly dictation meant had recently been shown in the English Parliament by the object-lesson of the Bradlaugh case. A Secularist member, himself Ireland's friend, had been forbidden either to affirm or to swear, because in division after division the scale had been turned against religious liberty by Home Rule—that is, Rome Rule—votes. A very intelligible anti-clericalism had perhaps something to do with the fact that, among English Rationalists,

Huxley, Froude, Professor Goldwin Smith, and Mr. Swinburne were Unionists, as were also the Irish Rationalists, Tyndall and Lecky, to whom may be added Professor Thomas Maguire, a Roman Catholic, but also a Hegelian, and therefore, presumably, a Modernist. Even assuming Irish Protestants to be as a rule no more liberal than Irish Catholics, it was no longer in their power to be intolerant, while under Home Rule they would be less able to defend themselves than the Catholics if, as many believed likely, they were to be attacked by such modern methods of persecution as boycotting. At any rate, the passionate hostility of Protestant Ulster to Home Rule, amounting to threats of civil war if it were granted, showed that revolt against an alien domination was a game that two could play at. And the prospect of having English troops called in to shoot down men whose only crime was their fidelity to England did not appeal to the imaginative sympathy of the English electorate.

Ulster could at least fight for independence from Celtic and Catholic control. The half million or so of Anglican Protestants scattered over the three other provinces would be left as sheep to the slaughter—a likely fate if it was thought that they stood between the ultra-Nationalists and the attainment of their final object, the severance of the last link that bound Ireland to England. Before risking such horrors, it might be as well to try what could be done by less heroic remedies than separation, to give the new agrarian legislation time to do its healing work; above all, to substitute steady execution of the law—what Lord Salisbury called

twenty years of resolute government—for a policy of alternate coercion and concession. O'Connell's Repeal agitation had collapsed; the Young Ireland agitation had collapsed; why should not Home Rule, when confronted by the same steady resistance, disappear into the same limbo of unrealised dreams?

So evenly balanced were the arguments for and against Irish autonomy that the English democracy for a time let its decision hang on rather petty personal considerations. Charges of encouraging political assassination were brought against Parnell, and found, on inquiry, to rest on forged documents; so people thought that, as a compensation, he ought to be allowed to lead a Parliament on College Green. Then he was so unfortunate as to be detected in an unlawful amour, and, being only an uncrowned king, had not authority enough to save himself from exposure in the Divorce Court. The English Home Rule Nonconformists, more squeamish than their adored leader, Gladstone, decided to boycott Home Rule unless it parted company with the only Irish politician capable of managing the Irish Nationalist representatives. These men had re-elected him to be their Chairman after the Divorce Court scandal, but they reversed their vote by a large majority in deference to the English Liberal sentence, and the mass of the Irish people, led by the Catholic hierarchy, followed suit. Parnell fought desperately for his position; but the struggle broke down his health, and in less than a year he was dead.

Nine months afterwards a General Election

placed the Home Rule Liberals, with Gladstone at their head, in power (July, 1892). But their majority only amounted to forty-two; and without the Nationalist vote they would have been in a minority of somewhat more than that figure. In fact, the tide that ran so high after Parnell's vindication had been receding ever since his exposure in the Divorce Court, and had not been arrested by his death. When the General Election of 1892 took place the tide was, so to speak, half-way out; and this unsettled state of public opinion accounts for the small majority given to Home Rule by the whole kingdom, and to the Union by Great Britain.

A second Home Rule Bill was introduced in 1893. It differed from the Bill of 1886 in two important particulars. Ireland was still to be represented in the British Parliament; but her delegation was to be reduced from 103 to 80—that is to say, nearly as many as she would be entitled to in an imperial Parliament elected on the principle of strictly proportionate representation. And no provision was made for compensating the landlords who would certainly be dispossessed of their estates by a tenants' Parliament sitting in Dublin. A Land Purchase Act had, it is true, been passed by the Unionist Parliament; but it did not compel the present owners to sell their estates for whatever the occupiers might think fit to offer, nor was the capital provided large enough to go round if every landlord stood out for a fair price.

Such as it was, this Bill passed the Commons by a majority of thirty-four. Some Liberals are reported to have voted for it only because they

were sure that it would be kicked out by the Lords. And kicked out it was in the Upper House by a majority of more than ten to one. A more fatal blow to Home Rule was Gladstone's resignation next year. The Prime Minister was in his eighty-fifth year, and his senses were beginning to fail. But increasing years and infirmities only made him more and more the object of popular idolatry, so much so that his withdrawal from public life had the effect of alienating many from a cause which, but for his authority, they would never have embraced ; or rather it had the effect of making them more sensible to arguments which his authority had hitherto neutralised.

To complete the misfortunes of the Liberal party, Lord Rosebery was chosen to succeed Gladstone as Prime Minister over the head of Sir William Harcourt, by far the ablest and most successful of his colleagues. Harcourt was understood to have no liking for his new chief ; nor, with Lord Rosebery's very tepid Liberalism, could any cordial co-operation between the two be expected. England does not love Cabinets that are divided against themselves ; and such was the weakness of the new Ministry that it fell in June, 1895, before a vote which really only concerned one of its members, the present Sir Henry Campbell - Bannerman. Lord Salisbury resumed office, this time in coalition with the leading Liberal Unionists, the Duke of Devonshire, Mr. Chamberlain, Sir Henry James, and Lord Lansdowne. His nephew, Mr. Arthur Balfour, who, as Irish Secretary, had won the highest reputation for administrative ability and debating skill, became Leader of the House of

Commons, with the prospective inheritance of the Premiership.

On an appeal to the people, the late Liberal Administration—decapitated, discredited, divided, and defeated—had no chance against so powerful and brilliant a band. With the lowest class of voters a less worthy motive than respect for intellectual superiority helped to swell the Unionist ranks. In response to a strong demand for Temperance legislation, Harcourt had introduced a Local Veto Bill, and, although it had to be dropped, the publicans and their clients took the alarm. Those who, like Archbishop Magee, would rather see England free than sober, combining with those who would rather see England drunk than rationally educated, rallied to the cry of Beer and the Bible. The result was a Unionist majority of three to one in England without Wales, and of 152 in the whole kingdom. For the first time since 1874 the Conservatives had a majority over all other parties combined.

The English Empire had been built up by isolated adventurers, with little help or countenance from the nation acting as a whole. Under the guidance of Mr. Chamberlain, the strongest personality in the new Cabinet, England now entered on a career of conscious, grandiose, not always scrupulous, self-assertion and territorial extension. An Egyptian army organised and commanded by English officers overthrew the Dervish host and reconquered the Sudan, constituting it, in a more peculiar sense than even Egypt, as a dependency of England. An attempt made by Frenchmen to

seize a derelict portion of territory formerly subject to the Khedive was abandoned under the menace of our irresistible sea-power. The Transvaal, after a struggle more glorious to the Boers than to ourselves, was re-annexed, the Orange Free State sharing its fate. Russia, our only formidable rival in Asia, saw her armies and fleets destroyed by England's ally, Japan, with whom we have since become more closely linked by a treaty of mutual guarantees.

In order to maintain their majority intact, the Unionist Government, against all precedent, dissolved Parliament in 1900, while the South African War was still in progress. They retained office with a slightly increased majority, but with no more special mandate than to fight until the Boer Republics were subdued. Success proved ruinous to themselves and to their party, which now threw over every pretence of holding Liberal, or even Conservative, principles. In 1902 Mr. Balfour passed a new Education Bill abolishing School Boards and throwing Voluntary schools, which were chiefly Church schools, on the rates—a proposal that even in 1870 had to be withdrawn. It had always seemed a gross injustice to Nonconformists and Secularists that the teaching of what they thought mischievous superstition should be subsidised from the national exchequer. But to resist the payment of imperial taxation because one small portion of it went to help Church schools would have been found impossible in practice. On the other hand, the levying of a local rate in aid of Ritualism or Romanism both made the abuse itself

more palpable and offered its enemies a priceless opportunity for protesting against it. A campaign of passive resistance, as the refusal to pay the new school rates was called, began all over England, and has continued year after year ever since, numbers of men and women allowing their furniture to be seized and sold rather than submit quietly to so hateful an imposition. They were not breaking the law any more than the Parliamentary obstructives break it; they were simply leaving the law to take care of itself. Meanwhile, a vastly greater number of Englishmen, with the English love of fair play in their hearts, although they did not see their way to following the example of the passive resisters, watched them with silent sympathy, accumulating stores of burning indignation against the Government and the party which, without any mandate from the country, had given occasion for such a crying scandal. Others rather welcomed the new Act, in the clear prevision that its authors would ultimately be found to have defeated their own end. For they had facilitated the eventual assimilation of all State-aided schools, voluntary or otherwise, to the old Board schools, which were unsectarian: what was more, they had paved the way to secular education in all elementary schools—a step already taken in the United States—since Church people on their side objected to simple Bible teaching as itself only another form of sectarian religion.

While Mr. Balfour was reviving the old system of privilege and protection in religion, his colleague Mr. Chamberlain was engaged in the congenial task of agitating for its revival in trade. As



Colonial Secretary, he had done much to cultivate a feeling of closer unity between England and her Colonies, which, indeed, had been practically shown on their side by sending numerous volunteers to the help of our armies in the Boer War. It was now proposed to attach them still more closely to the mother country by the concession of certain commercial advantages. So far the reciprocity, as Mrs. Carlyle would say, had been all on one side, seeing that we admitted their staple exports duty-free while they kept out our manufactures by a high protective tariff. At one time a system of Free Trade within the Empire had been suggested, with protective duties against the foreigner alone. But, as this was an arrangement which the Colonial manufacturers could on no account have been induced to accept, a compromise was hit on. Australia had already begun to admit our products into her markets at a slightly lower rate of duties than those levied on the goods of other nations. Why should not she and all the other Colonies be induced to differentiate still further in our favour by our continuing to admit their goods duty free, while taxing all other imports to such an extent as would give Colonial wares, and especially Colonial food-stuffs, an advantage that would enable them to drive all other competitors out of the English market? And this, it was argued, would be only fair in view of the increasing tolls everywhere imposed for protective purposes on English manufactures, to the signal benefit, as was alleged, of the working classes in the countries where that policy had been adopted.

The Tariff Reformers, as Mr. Chamberlain's

followers called themselves, worked this last point with unremitting energy in their addresses to popular audiences, through platform oratory and a cheap daily Press. Increased wages for those already employed, and employment for those out of work, were held out as inducements to abandon the whole commercial system on which this country had lived and thriven for fifty years, and which was looked up to as an ideal by economic thinkers all over the world.

It was a remarkable and suspicious circumstance that Conservatives, of all people, should be found making war on routine and tradition, appealing to reason against prejudice and fetish-worship; remarkable also that capitalists, landowners, and parsons should suddenly develop such an intense interest in the welfare of the artisan and the labourer. Even under the *alias* of Tory Democrat, a Conservative who does not conserve looks like an unintelligible self-contradiction until it has been discovered that he is harking back to the catch-words used by his grandfather sixty years ago.

After all, what the Tariff Reformers urged was not reason, but authority—the authority of Germany, a retrograde military Empire, and the authority of America, whose external policy is controlled by a plutocratic ring. They refused to see that Germany and America owe their increasing prosperity—so far as it is real—not to Protection, but to the sort of scientific education that Conservatism alone prevents England from acquiring.

What the British working man saw clearly through all the bewildering statistics, and still more bewildering calculations, flourished in his face

by the parasites and subsidised organs of the capitalist and landlord interest, was that an attempt was being made to tax his food, for the benefit partly of the rich at home, partly of Colonial millionaires—including the South African Randlords, who were importing gangs of coolies to work under duress in gold mines acquired at an enormous cost of English blood and treasure. A remedy for unemployment was, no doubt, highly desirable; but working men were inclined to look for it in a readjustment of the relations between labour and capital on Socialist lines rather than in new taxes on food.

Mr. Balfour, who succeeded Lord Salisbury as Prime Minister in July, 1902, combines with much less strength of character than Mr. Chamberlain a far finer and more cultivated intelligence; nor does he take his opinions at a five years' lease. But he belongs to a class of thinkers whose distrust of expert opinion leads them to reject the modern and scientific view of any subject in favour of some compromise with the older and more popular view. At a time when most men of intellect and learning not in Holy Orders had abandoned the popular theology, he published a book called *The Foundations of Belief*, for the purpose of rehabilitating it by a sceptical attack on reasoned belief in general. Suitability to our convenience seemed to be the test of credibility for this new logic, which in less articulate utterances is a very old logic indeed. He also advocated bimetallism—a convenient and therefore, presumably, a true doctrine for those who wish to pay off their gold debts in a depreciated silver

currency ; but, by the same token, an inconvenient and untrue doctrine for their unfortunate creditors. On the question of Tariff Reform Mr. Balfour now professed himself a Free Trader, though not a fanatical one. If foreign countries kept out our goods by exorbitant duties, they were to be coerced into a more liberal policy by the imposition of retaliatory duties on their exports to us. It mattered nothing that retaliation had been long since abandoned after trial by English financiers ; that the Protectionist States did not seem to have facilitated commercial relations with each other by their system of mutual prohibition ; that retaliation could only work by giving artificial encouragement to industries which would refuse to be suppressed when the foreigner yielded to our demands. Every consideration suggested by experience or expediency gave way before the comprehensive and ingenuous principle that you cannot make a bargain unless you have something to offer.

Differences on economic policy proved fatal to the union of the Unionist Ministry. Mr. Chamberlain resigned because he was a Protectionist ; the Duke of Devonshire and others resigned because they were Free Traders ; finally, Mr. Balfour resigned, apparently because he was neither a Protectionist nor a Free Trader. His successor, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, had been chosen Liberal leader in 1899 on the strength, one must suppose, of his Parliamentary abilities, seeing that he had no record of distinguished public services, nor any standing as a popular hero outside the House. His Ministry, however, marks an entirely

new departure in English history from the extent to which it has been made up independently of the oligarchic tradition. Half the members of the Cabinet, carrying at least three quarters its weight of metal, are unconnected by birth with the great governing families; and of these the most popular is the former working man, Mr. John Burns. Regard for simple ability has never before been pushed so far in the choice of an Administration, and it is an earnest of what the future may bring forth. As the demands on Government in respect both to legislative and administrative efficiency grow more numerous and exacting, its functionaries in the higher as well as in the lower grades have to be chosen from a wider area; while again the transfer of Sovereignty, in John Austin's sense, from the middle class to the working class involves, by a sort of compensatory movement, the transfer of high office from the aristocracy to the professional and business classes, in whom the people have more confidence, being more accustomed to resort to them for advice and direction, as was long ago pointed out by James Mill.

Knowing that public opinion was on their side, the Liberals had long been pressing for a Dissolution; and Mr. Balfour, by resigning, placed it in their power to dissolve. The result surpassed their most sanguine expectations, and is without a parallel since 1832. The Unionists were left in a minority of 354—more than double their triumphant majority of 1895. In England, the most Conservative part of the Kingdom, where they had stood at 3 to 1 in 1895, and at more than 8 to 3 in 1900, they

now held little more than three seats to eight. True, the so-called Ministerialists did not form a homogeneous mass, for they included 84 Nationalists and 41 Independent Labour members; but the pure Liberals numbered 387—that is to say, a majority of more than 100 against the field.

This enormous shift in the party balance has been explained by a popular metaphor—the swing of the pendulum. On points of principle, however, there was no oscillation. As at the last two elections, the people voted for keeping their fundamental institutions intact. They were conservative in a better sense than the so-called Conservatives themselves, and more united than the Unionist party. They wished to preserve Free Trade; for, without being very profound economists, they knew that it had expert opinion and, so far as food went, common sense on its side. They wished to preserve and develop the Education settlement of 1870 as against the intrusion of subsidised dogma into the elementary schools. They looked with just suspicion on the importation of coolie labour into South Africa as an attempt to revive the slave-trade, abolished a century before. And now, as always, they condemned the inefficiency that accompanies divided counsels. If it had offended their instincts that Gladstone should separate from his old friends in 1886, and that Harcourt should be at loggerheads with Lord Rosebery in 1895, it offended them still more that Mr. Balfour should neither be able to agree with his late colleagues nor altogether, as appeared, with himself. Finally, it would, perhaps, not be too much if we were to credit the people with a wish

to avoid the mistake of 1885, and to secure the stability of the Liberal Government by giving it a majority over all other parties combined.

In carrying down this narrative to a date so recent as the last General Election, I have somewhat exceeded the limit usually assigned to even the most modern histories. My apology is that no other equally distinct line of demarcation between old things and new offers itself among the events of the immediate past. I propose to conclude with a general survey of the tendencies observable during the whole period embraced in this work.