

## CHAPTER XII

1844

MARRIAGE—ROSNEATH—POTATO FAMINE AND ABOLITION OF CORN LAWS—FORMATION OF PEELITE PARTY—RISE OF DISRAELI

I RETURNED to England by Ostend, and on reaching London called at Stafford House. The affectionate kindness of my reception assured me in a moment that I had lost no ground by my winter's absence. I had corresponded regularly with the Duke, who, however, was then absent at Brighton on account of his health. I at once went off to Brighton to see him, and spent a happy day with him in a boating excursion to see a new church at Worthing. Next day he insisted on coming with me to the station to see me off, which, considering my youth and his own age, was, I thought, a very touching but unnecessary attention, though it was, indeed, but a slight indication of the ingrained kindness and courtesy of his most charming character. Feeling now sure of my ground, I soon took occasion to confess my hopes. The Duke came up from Brighton, and all was settled, to my great happiness and satisfaction then, and for thirty-four years. I was married to Lady Elizabeth Leveson-Gower at Trentham on the 30th of July, 1844, by old Dr. Vernon Harcourt, Archbishop of York, the last that I remember of the old school of English prelates, a tall, handsome man of grave and dignified manners, who never appeared except in his episcopal wig, and was a great magnate, rather than a prelate of the more modern school of Anglicanism.

I think it right to record here that I found in my wife more than all that had been told me by her numerous friends. On some subjects, excepting philosophy and the natural sciences, she was more widely read than I was at that time. I found that her religious feelings and opinions were deeply touched by the teaching of Dr. Arnold, and her enthusiasm for every great and good cause was an hereditary characteristic derived from her beautiful mother. The main bent of my own mind had been already largely determined, but many new interests were awakened by my married life. My own family circle had been very small indeed. My wife's family connections were, on the contrary, unusually numerous. In the fullest sense of the word, my wife's mother became like a mother to me, and her sisters like my own. These were Evelyn, who had married Lord Blantyre the year before; Caroline, afterwards Duchess of Leinster; and Constance, afterwards Duchess of Westminster. More than one of her uncles became my dearest friends, as, for example, Lord Morpeth, afterwards Lord Carlisle, and Lord Francis Egerton, afterwards Earl of Ellesmere, of whom I have spoken already. With the Sutherlands we lived for a time literally as one family, at Stafford House, or at Trentham, besides paying long visits to each other in Scotland.

With this happy enlargement of family life I gained a wide circle of interesting friendships. I had had indeed some warm friendships, but they were mostly with men far older than myself. Partly from this cause, no doubt, but also from an inborn circumspect and logical habit of reflection, my mind was unusually mature at an early age. My letters from the Continent to the Duke of Sutherland were circulated rather widely in that very large family circle, and I was amused by hearing afterwards that one near relative, old Lady Granville, an aunt of the Duchess of Sutherland, and a very clever woman, had exclaimed on reading one of them, 'Quite charming; but, oh, it might be from a

grandfather!' The Sutherland family, as regards politics, was predominantly Whig, whilst my own allegiance to Sir Robert Peel remained unshaken. But this was an immense advantage to me, since at that time I had an unreasonable antipathy to the Whigs as a party, and did not fairly appreciate the immortal services they had rendered to the country only a few years before. My antipathies soon melted away under personal intercourse, and the great charm of character and of conversation which distinguished such men as Lord Morpeth, Lord John Russell, and Lord Lansdowne. To Lord John Russell I had, indeed, been introduced before, but on more intimate acquaintance I was surprised to find him playful, humorous, and affectionate, whilst, of course, a long and eventful political life had given him a fund of most interesting anecdote. A more charming companion in private society could not be found, and we soon formed an intimate friendship, which lasted till his death.

There is one other general reflection which it is convenient to make here, before I begin the record of my life after I had entered on its full course and many duties. Men in the position in which I stood have the external conditions of their life pretty well predetermined for them. Country homes and the business of administering large estates render a home-life both a pleasure and a necessity. All the associations of my childhood and all the pursuits and predilections of my early days made this kind of life a second nature to me. The result was that our residence in London was no longer than the exigencies of political duty rendered absolutely necessary, and the moment we could get away we rushed off to our homes in Scotland. There we entertained a great variety of friends, and enjoyed the society of distinguished men and women, whom we could never have elsewhere seen with equal intimacy and comfort.

I ought not to omit to mention the special character of my country home. Rosneath, which

was assigned to us by my father on our marriage, was, it will be remembered, close to the home of my birth and childhood, and had itself been the place in which my memory became awakened to conscious life. Sir Walter Scott, in the concluding scenes of 'The Heart of Midlothian,' calls it an island. This is a mistake, although its long peninsular extension into the Firth of Clyde makes it seem to be an island from several points of view. At the eastern termination there is a bend and a projection on which the old residence is situated, and from which there is one of the loveliest views in the West of Scotland. The foreshortened shores of a long mountain lake, surmounted at the western end by a splendid range of wild and corrugated mountains, cannot fail to be beautiful, especially when the foreground consists of intricate and quiet bays, with fine woods fringing them on every side. Magnificent beeches drooped their branches over the very water at high-tide, whilst fine Scots fir-trees and the two largest silver firs in Europe adorned the elevations which sloped gently into the sea. One great attraction of the place was its privacy. Being a peninsula, there were no public roads following the line of coast, as is very usual in the Highlands. The shores were part of the estate. On the southern side there was a low horizon towards the Valley of the Clyde, and the early winter's sun came streaming across the lawns and gardens full of delicate evergreens, including large arbutus and bay-laurels. The high range at the head of the loch was often splendid in this light, a perpetual reminder of that beautiful expression in the Book of Joel which was a favourite with Lord Shaftesbury, 'Like morning spread upon the mountains.'

This beautiful place had, too, some interesting historical associations. Its castle had been held by Edward I., and had been won from his hands by Sir William Wallace. Popular tradition, erroneously no doubt, pointed out a spot where his horse had

been killed in leaping a precipice of about 50 feet of conglomerate rock. The estate included many features delightful to me; one was a fine wood of Scots fir, which contained a large heronry. Those beautiful birds were always fishing round our quiet shores. There was an excellent grouse moor easily accessible from the house, and the views all round the shores of the estuary of the Clyde, down to the peaks of Arran, were cheerful, various, and beautiful. The Argyll family had held the estate since 1489, and had embellished it by continuous improvement, and by judicious and effective planting. It will not be surprising that, having such a country home, we never wished to leave it except for Inveraray, and that there I found uninterrupted time for the literary and political work which soon became my principal occupation.

The date of my coming of age and of my marriage, so nearly simultaneous, seems the proper time to mention one disadvantage in my career which made itself felt by me at that time—the disadvantage, namely, of never having had any opportunity of entering the House of Commons. I missed it from very peculiar circumstances. The county of Argyll was a secure family seat. My uncle, Duke George, though he took no personal part in politics, was always a Whig, and held office under more than one Whig Government. His nephew, Walter Campbell of Islay, son of his beautiful sister, Lady Charlotte, sat as member for the county in the Whig interest. When my father succeeded, his nephew Islay did not feel comfortable in retaining the seat, and resigned. A former Conservative candidate, Mr. Campbell of Monzie, stood, as he had stood before, and with my father's support met with no opposition. He took part with my father in the Scottish Church question, being one of the few Scottish members who did so. But he made speeches which sounded very radical to the county lairds. The constituency became very

restive under him, and, encountering many indications of this, he felt anxious to escape from his position. But he knew that I must naturally desire to succeed him, and, as this was in 1843, I could not do so for another year. Under these circumstances, he wrote to me to say that, if I wished him to do so, he would hold on in the seat till after the 30th of April, 1844. This put me in rather a difficult position, because no one knew better than I did the dissatisfaction of the constituency with their member. After mature deliberation, I felt that I could not, on grounds affecting myself only, take the responsibility of saddling a great constituency with a distrusted member for a whole year at a very important political time. I therefore declined his offer. The seat was at once filled by no less able and distinguished a man than Duncan McNeill of Colonsay, a representative of one of the oldest families in the county, who was Lord Advocate for Scotland in the Government of Sir Robert Peel, the author of much difficult and important legislation, and who became Lord President of the Court of Session, one of the very best that has guided the decisions of that supreme court of law in Scotland. On all occasions, and they were many, on which I heard praises of his career in the House of Commons, I felt how rightly I had decided in not standing between the constituency and the services of so eminent a man. He was made a peer, under the title of Baron Colonsay of Colonsay and Oronsay, in 1867. But I have never ceased to regret the loss of an experience of the House of Commons. It is true that, as it happened, that experience could only have extended over three sessions, because in April, 1847, I succeeded to my father's peerage. But during three sessions I should undoubtedly have made many personal friends of my own age, and should have acquired a knowledge of men which nothing else can supply. It is not generally observed how very large a number of the peers have been members of the House of Commons for a longer or a

shorter time, and what an effect this has on the silent and automatic causes which smooth the working of our old and hereditary Constitution. There is no truth whatever, of course, in the passionate nonsense which Gladstone once used when he spoke of peers, as such, 'living up in a balloon.' They mingle with all other classes in society, they belong to the same political parties, they stand often on the same platforms, they read the same newspapers, and the line between peer and commoner is invisible and imperceptible in all the business relations of life. I speak of the House of Commons simply as an assembly of men which it is of importance for every politician to belong to, even for a time, however short, that he may know its members as widely as he can. This, and this only, was a loss to me, a loss which I have felt through life.

The attitude of my mind towards political parties at this critical period of my life may be easily explained. Sympathy with a great popular cause in Scotland, which both political parties treated with equal folly, had effectually destroyed any complete trust in either. Mere names could not deceive me. The Conservatives had failed to see what was really best worth conserving. Liberals had failed to see what the most sacred of all popular rights demanded of them. But on all purely secular matters my sympathies were entirely with Sir Robert Peel. I had seen the decrepitude of the Whig Government under Lord Melbourne, their clinging to office when they had lost all power. I saw with something like contempt the opposition made by the Whig party to the great policy of Sir Robert Peel in a complete reform of the tariff in the direction of Free Trade, and under the protection of a renewed income tax. I could see no reason in the Whig objection that, because Mr. Pitt had originally established the income-tax for the purposes of war, it was never right to use it for any other purpose whatever. Sir Robert Peel was not a chief to inspire a young man with any

enthusiasm, and I had none for him. But I used to go to the House of Commons whenever Peel was to make a great speech, and always listened with the greatest interest to his somewhat ponderous but impressive and weighty arguments. One thing in those speeches during the two sessions of 1844 and 1845 which I particularly noticed was the almost faint-hearted, and certainly apologetic, tone of his speeches on the annual motions for the repeal of the Corn Laws. Nothing could be more different from the tone of the really convinced Protectionist party. Protectionism, not only for agricultural produce, but for manufacturing and colonial interests, had been the traditional policy of all parties in the State. The Whig leaders, with Lord John Russell at their head, had begun to waver, and had proposed a low fixed duty on corn in preference to the sliding scale of the existing tax. But this looked so like a mere party manoeuvre that it only increased my distaste towards them. On the other hand, the orators of the League were so unjust and violent in their ascription of purely personal motives to all landlords and tenants who supported the traditional policy, that their speeches constantly filled me with an indignation which was not unjust. Moreover, it was evident to me that, if merely personal and class interests could be ascribed to one party, they were often openly avowed by the other. For the doctrine often paraded was that wages were regulated by the price of bread, and cheap bread was the only hope of securing cheap labour. This would have been the broadened doctrine of the great economist Ricardo. But this argument held out no promise of any universal benefit. It promised a great advantage to the capitalist, possibly, without any benefit to wage-earning classes.

On the whole, therefore, my sympathies were with Peel in his cautious defence of the very modified protective laws which he had himself introduced only two years before, in 1842. He was supported by large



majorities in resisting the annual motion of Mr. Charles Villiers for the total repeal of any duty on corn. And this was the condition of affairs down to the close of the session of 1845, which ended on the 9th of August. Peel's position seemed unassailable. There was a general recognition of the splendid political services his Government had rendered, in restoring the finances, in reforming the tariff, and in conciliating the Catholics of Ireland by a grant to the College of Maynooth.

It was at this time that an incident occurred which seemed at the moment trivial, but which nevertheless has left an indelible impression on my mind. We were then living with the Sutherlands at Stafford House, where on the 6th of August, 1845, our first child was born. A few days after, relations and friends were calling to inquire or to congratulate. Amongst these came one day the Duke of Norfolk, whose Duchess was the Duke of Sutherland's eldest sister. He was not a man of any distinction in public life, but he was an excellent country gentleman, and had a very competent knowledge of rural affairs. He had just come to town from Arundel, his beautiful place in Sussex, and he told us of a mysterious blight which had fallen on the potato crop in Sussex and in other Southern counties. He described the sudden withering of the stalks and leaves, the rapid infection of the tuber, and the destruction of it, even as a food for pigs. Although he was full of the subject, and his description must have strongly arrested my attention, from the vividness of my recollection of it, neither he nor I, nor anyone else at that time, had the remotest conception of the tremendous effects which were about to be produced by a cause apparently so trifling and accidental. We should then have thought him mad, if any man had told us that the mysterious blight described by the Duke of Norfolk would, within a few months, not only settle the long-standing question of the Corn Laws, by rendering their repeal inevitable, but would break up

the strongest and most beneficent Government that had existed for many years in England, would make an entirely new cleavage in political parties, lasting for more than a generation, and finally, would much more than decimate the population of Ireland.

It was not many days after this conversation that the first serious intimation reached Sir Robert Peel. It came not from any land-owner or farmer, speaking only of his own fields, but from a potato-merchant who spoke of the whole of the South-eastern counties. Peel took immediate alarm. So did Sir James Graham, who was his Home Secretary. Steps were at once taken to secure systematic reports on the extent of the disease. In the abeyance of Parliament, a terrible responsibility was thrown on the Executive. Those two Ministers were like men standing on a watch-tower, and seeing all round the horizon the distant gleams of a great but slowly invading host. But this is only a feeble image of the desperately embarrassing position in which those two Ministers stood. Watchmen are not generally disbelieved. Still less is there ever any antecedent prejudice tending to suspicion against their warning cries. But Peel and Graham were the leaders of a great party which had been trained and educated to believe that it was a matter of vital importance to keep up a system of duties on the import of food. The very first conviction which was daily forcing itself on the watchmen, Peel and Graham, was that in the face of a great scarcity and of a probable famine in Ireland, all such import duties must be at least suspended. The next conviction which both Peel and Graham, being statesmen, felt more and more strongly was that, once removed, those duties could never be reimposed. They knew, on the other hand, that this sequence was instinctively foreseen and felt. Peel knew that the great majority of his colleagues were Protectionists by conviction as well as by mere tradition. He must have known that his own cautious and half-hearted language on behalf of their doctrine had been observed

by them, and must expose him to suspicion if he acted on his growing alarm one moment before the danger became imminent and undeniable.

In this most unpleasant and dangerous position he spent the rest of August, the whole of September, and the whole of October, before he ventured to summon his Cabinet. During those two months and a half he was not idle. He was collecting the most authentic information, he was preparing for executive action in relief of the inevitable distress in Ireland, and he was corresponding with leading men both inside and outside the Cabinet. At last he summoned that body to meet him on the last day of October. Laying open to them all his mind, he showed them that the continued maintenance of import duties was impossible. He told them that he could not undertake to propose the restoration of the Corn Laws when the temporary emergency had been met. He foresaw it would be an impossible policy. What he proposed, therefore, was an immediate suspension, and ulterior legislative proposals with a view to the final settlement of the question by a careful and well-considered repeal, under such precautions and compensations for the agricultural interests as might be agreed upon. His weighty statement of facts and his irrefutable logic fell on deaf ears. Out of all his colleagues, only three of the members of the Cabinet supported him. Those three wise men were Sir James Graham, Home Secretary; Lord Aberdeen, Foreign Secretary; and Sidney Herbert.

Peel consented to wait till the end of the month rather than break up the Government at once. But the month only brought a new embarrassment to the Prime Minister. He whom we all at that time irreverently called 'Johnny'—Lord John Russell—thought it an excellent opportunity for striking a strategic blow. He issued a manifesto in favour of a total repeal of the Corn Laws. The leader of a party which had hitherto supported Protection, and had

voted year after year against Mr. Villiers' motion, now suddenly discovered that Protection was 'the bane of agriculture.' Of course the Protectionist majority in Peel's Cabinet were made more intractable than ever. His proposed course looked like a surrender to the Whig leader. In spite, therefore, of the rapidly-growing evidence of approaching distress and famine, the Protectionists would not give way. Peel then resigned. The Queen sent for Lord John to form a Government. He tried and failed. Peel was recalled by the Queen. He accepted unconditionally, determined no longer to depend on the assent of his former colleagues, but to go on if necessary without them. He summoned them and told them so. All except two accepted the inevitable, and one, the grand old Duke of Wellington, was positively delighted with Peel's resolute attitude, and assured him of his own cordial support.

The Bill for the abolition of the Corn Laws was accordingly introduced early in 1846, and was triumphantly carried in both Houses. But, by a discreditable coalition between the angry Protectionists and the Whigs, Peel was defeated almost at the same moment on a Bill to check assassination in Ireland, and in July, 1846, he closed his great political career by his final resignation.

During all these transactions in 1845 and 1846, in so far as they were known to the public, I followed Peel's course with sympathy. I rejoiced in Lord John's failure to form a Government in December, 1845. I resented the assumption that the Whig party as represented by him had any special mission to repeal the Corn Laws, when I had with my own ears, session after session, heard all the leaders of that party resist repeal, and when they had at last lifted the banner of Free Trade only under circumstances which condemned it as a new move in the party game. In the session of 1846 I was present at many of the debates both in the Commons and in the Lords. I

heard Peel open and defend his case with, as I thought, irrefutable logic. I heard the young and fantastic adventurer, Benjamin Disraeli, begin those personal assaults on the great Minister which assisted to bring him into prominence. I confess I hated them and the man who made them. They were purely personal, nothing but a series of clever invectives carefully prepared, glancing even with great skill at individual peculiarities, but never containing any serious convictions. They were essentially the attacks of a condottiere. Nothing but the excited passions of men who thought they had been betrayed, could have made those attacks otherwise than offensive to any assembly of English gentlemen. I recollect well, as if I had seen and heard it yesterday, the only occasion on which I heard Peel condescend to notice the language and conduct of his assailant. Disraeli sat on one of the higher benches on the Conservative side of the House. Peel, speaking, of course, from the Table, turned half round, so as to be able to see the Bar with a sidelong glance to his left, and said, very slowly and deliberately: 'Sir, I will not waste the time of the House in making any reply to the venomous attacks of the honourable member for Shrewsbury.' The word 'venomous' was pronounced with emphasis, and with a peculiar curling of the lips which was very expressive of intense contempt. There was, indeed, one other occasion on which Peel felt called upon to vindicate himself, by a long personal explanation, from an accusation against him in his relations with Canning, and with Catholic emancipation nineteen years before. He did so, not because the accusation was made by Disraeli, but because it was made by Lord George Bentinck, who, as a relative of Canning, might be supposed to have authority for his statements. But at the close of his triumphant refutation of an old political slander he treated Disraeli with a lofty and a due disdain. 'The honourable gentleman,' said Peel, 'frequently and feelingly complains that I won't condescend to bandy

personalities with him. . . . Every man has a right to determine for himself with whom he will descend into the arena of personal contest.' And so he left the great adventurer to lead and guide the Protectionist faction, on whose vindictive passions of the moment he knew so well how to play.

There is one other personal recollection of that stirring time which I must dwell on for a moment, and that is the speech of Lord Stanley in the House of Lords against the second reading of the Bill for the abolition of the Corn Laws. It seemed to me then, and it seems to me still, by far the finest speech I have ever heard in Parliament. His silver voice, his easy and graceful delivery, the rhythm of his sentences, his skill in arranging the main points of his case—all were combined in that speech with a fervency of conviction which was rendered all the more apparent from the painful contest he had gone through with his own colleagues in Peel's Cabinet. It was a real pleasure to me to hear those arguments so well put, which up to a few months ago had satisfied all the leading parties in the State. This was a plea on which he rested a good deal in a splendid and touching peroration. He declared he could not accept the new teaching. If he was wrong, he could at least remember that he was wrong in good company, including the wisest men in both parties in the State. He was content to abide in the convictions of Liverpool and of Huskisson, of Canning and of Grey.

When the smoke of this great battle, fast and furious, had passed away, it was clear that a new face had been put on the world of English politics. The old traditional parties had been completely shattered. A new party had arisen, which for the moment was called Peelite, but which soon came to be recognised as the Liberal-Conservative party, inheriting all that was best in the traditions of Toryism, and yet under a new impulse to yield to evidence or to argument in favour of all real reforms. It was a party which seemed

to be founded on the remarkable words of Peel in his great speech on the Address on the 22nd January, 1846: 'Whether holding a public station or placed in a private one, I will assert the privilege of yielding to the force of argument and conviction, and acting on the results of enlarged experience.' This party, though ejected from office and not numerous, was in a position of effective power, holding the balance between other parties for the moment, and sure to grow in numbers and in weight. It included all the members of Peel's Cabinet who were of any great ability, with the single exception of Lord Stanley. Outside the circle of those who had been Cabinet Ministers, it included a good many men of high position, great abilities, and a wide sphere of influence.

It is well to record the names of some of these, for they contributed not a little both to the settlement of a great question and to the establishment of a great party. One was Lord Francis Egerton. He moved the Address for Peel on the opening of the session of 1846. Another was Lord Ashley, afterwards Earl of Shaftesbury, a man of strong Conservative leanings, but also one of the most earnest and most successful reformers of his time in social legislation. Another, again, was Lord Mahon, afterwards Earl Stanhope, the historian, also of strong Conservative opinions, but upon whom reading and reflection had told decisively under the combination of circumstances which had determined the course of Peel himself.

To a new party so constituted it seemed as if I belonged by nature. The tendency to eclecticism in my opinions, which arose out of early education and circumstances, was exactly reflected in this fresh political group, and I gave to it all my sympathy. Their power in the State did not at once become apparent. It was the joke against them that they were like a corps of officers with no battalions to command. But they acted together as one man in

supporting the Whig Government against any reactionary attempts by the Protectionist party. Peel continued to fear this danger long, as I think, after it had passed away. But for a time the Peelites seemed merged in a great united army, whose one object was to defend free trade in corn against any possible risk of overthrow.

As all the world knows, it was in the broken waters of that stormy time that Benjamin Disraeli was floated to the surface. But it is less known how completely this image represents the nature of his rise. A statesman of great eminence, who served with and under Disraeli to the last, once said to me in conversation, 'Disraeli is the greatest myth that I know,' referring, as I understood at the time, to the wide difference between the current beliefs about him and the realities of his character and position. This mythical atmosphere enveloped him from the first. The popular idea, propagated alike by friends and foes, has been that, by the sheer strong swimming of extraordinary genius, he breasted innumerable opposing currents; that the accidents of opportunity did little for him, and that he was even handicapped in the race for power by every kind of external difficulty and disadvantage. All this is not only incorrect, but it is the reverse of the truth. Never, perhaps, has any politician been so favoured by the most extraordinary accidents of external circumstance. The secession from the ranks of the Conservative party of the whole of Peel's Official staff cleared out of his way in the House of Commons, at one fell swoop, every single man of recognised Parliamentary experience and ability who could possibly be thought of as a leader. Lord George Bentinck was, for a short time only, a nominal exception. His whole life had been devoted to the turf, and though he had considerable natural abilities, they were not of a kind to qualify him for such a position. His high birth, his perfect honesty, and the evident sincerity of his opinions, did nevertheless raise him



to it for a moment. But even this obstacle was speedily removed out of the way of Dizzy. In the prime of life, with a person the handsomest in the House of Commons, and an appearance of manly strength which was in itself attractive, Lord George Bentinck fell dead on a lonely footpath across one of his ancestral fields. By this strange event Disraeli was soon left absolutely alone, the only piece upon the board on that side of politics that was above the level of a pawn. What is true of Disraeli is, not that he conquered his own position and opportunities, but that he had some special gifts which enabled him to take advantage of several purely accidental openings, altogether unprecedented in their width and facility of passage. He was like a subaltern in a great battle where every single superior officer was killed or wounded.

Nor is the popular impression less wide of the mark respecting some supposed personal disabilities over which he is said to have triumphed only by supreme genius. It is true, indeed, that in the ordinary social sense of the words he was a man of no birth. He was a foreigner, and a Jew. But these circumstances were no impediments whatever in his way. The British aristocracy was called a 'proud' one by Lord John Russell in 1846. But whatever faults it may have, it has never had any vulgar prejudice against 'new men.' Out of such men it has been itself built up, by the continuous welcome and incorporation of them for 700 years. Nor does there now exist in England any of that disgraceful antipathy to Jews which still prevails on the Continent of Europe. But besides all this, Disraeli was the son of a man highly distinguished in literature, who had been long naturalized in England, and was an acceptable guest in the best society. Young Dizzy himself, although in dress and manners a fantastic fop, had long before made his mark in the literature of fiction. His novels, full of absurdities and paradox as they were,

had so arrested attention that Dean Milman spoke of one of them as being as clever as Byron's poem of 'Don Juan.' In one of his early, but abortive, attempts to win a seat in Parliament, he had actually enjoyed the support of such splendid patrons as Wellington and Lyndhurst. In London society he was received everywhere with a distinction which was largely mixed with curiosity and amusement. It is really nonsense to talk of a man in such a position as a mere 'Jew boy,' who, by the force of nothing but extraordinary genius, attained to the leadership of a great party. The only impediments in his way were, not any want of external advantages, but his own often grotesque and unintelligible opinions. These, however, all the more served to rouse curiosity and arrest attention. But neither these nor any other power which he possessed would ever have secured for him the place he came to occupy if the normal division of parties had continued, and if the Conservatives had not been suddenly deprived of all their leaders. If such men as constituted Peel's staff, if Sir James Graham, and Sidney Herbert, and Gladstone, and Dalhousie, had continued to be chiefs in that party, they never could have been pushed aside or superseded by such qualities as Disraeli possessed. In 1846 he had been for twenty years a conspicuous writer, and he had been already for nine years in the House of Commons. He was not a youth with unknown qualities undeveloped. He was forty-two years old, and in the House he had been a frequent speaker without giving any indication of political genius. But when a clean sweep was made of all the official leaders and of others from the Conservative ranks, an absolute vacuum was created, into which Dizzy was just the man to step. He had no opinions of his own. He had no traditions with which to break. He was free to play with prejudices in which he did not share, and to express passions which were not his own, except in so far as they were tinged with personal resentment.

He was an adept in the art of inventing skilful phrases, and these, carefully prepared, and backed with the venom of the enraged Protectionists, were the very weapons needed to concentrate on the great Minister the resentful animosities of an angry and defeated party. I write now as I saw and felt then, but later reflection has not altered my opinion.

The feeling of loyalty to Sir Robert Peel told, no doubt, on all the able men who formed the backbone of the Peelite party, and who had been his colleagues, and, together with the dread of a reaction in favour of Protection, was the predominant influence which determined the course of politics during the six years from the end of 1846 to the date of the so-called Coalition Government of Lord Aberdeen in the end of 1852.