

CHAPTER XXI

1854

THE CRIMEAN WAR

As I am not writing a history, but a biography, I may here confess that there were moments in those ten months of difficult and precarious negotiations in which I felt the heavy strain of responsibility so great as to occasion not only anxiety, but distress. A great part of the time was taken up with endeavours to find some phrase or form of words in which Turkey could give a promise to Russia which would be safe, and incapable of being turned to any dangerous use. For example, the insertion of the word 'spiritual,' as applying to the Christian privileges which Turkey was to guarantee, was much insisted on. This was an invention of Lord Stratford, in the interests of peace. But my inborn tendency to verbal analysis led me greatly to question its value. Was it not evident that a secular privilege—property, for example—guaranteed to a spiritual body, becomes in a very practical sense a spiritual privilege? And would it be possible to fend off the pressures of Russian ambition by such frail verbal barriers as these? If not, was it worth while to make the tremendous issues of peace and war depend on trifling changes in phraseology of this kind? Such doubts came over me with painful force at times, and I almost wished sometimes to be out of the affair. But I was always brought back to a proper sense of the spirit in which such burdens must be borne—the spirit, namely, of doing the best that

seems possible in each contingency as it actually arises. Where these contingencies depend on such complicated elements as the wills and passions of proud European autocrats and of cunning Asiatic Sultans, it is not easy to forecast with any confidence the effect of any particular step. Some of those steps, on which there was much difference of opinion among my colleagues, I considered immaterial. Such, for example, was the question at what moment it would be well to send our fleets to the Dardanelles. If this were done as a threat, I knew it would be useless. I had not scanned in vain the haughty and determined countenance which I had seen in 1844 under the cedars of Chiswick. I was certain that Nicholas would never be moved to anything except obstinacy and anger by a policy of threats.

It was in Palmerston's nature to rely too much on bullying. But the flabby old trickster on the throne of France, whom he had cowed successfully in 1840, was a very different man from the proud Emperor with whom we had now to deal. If, on the other hand, our movement of the fleet were to be directed to the practical and needful purpose of securing Turkey against any sudden naval attack from the Black Sea, it would be time enough when we knew that such a danger was even possible. And so likewise with the question which at one moment threatened to arise, whether we should abandon the cause of Turkey unless she accepted as her promise to Russia an ingenious compound of words which was concocted at Vienna. I felt that such a course would be so absurd and inconsistent as to be practically impossible. The very essence of our whole contention was, that the defeat of Turkey in her resistance to the Russian demand would be the defeat of Europe and of ourselves. To abandon her to her fate would be to abandon our own position; and although such an idea might arise out of irritation, because Turkey would not accept some jargon on which we had bestowed much

trouble, it was not an idea which could possibly be seriously entertained.

So little did all those disputed points affect my mind that, although they occupied in some form or another almost the whole of the ten months of which I am now speaking, they have left no impression on my memory. I can only recall them when I read the various biographies of my older colleagues—Palmerston, Lord John Russell, and Lord Aberdeen—which have since been published. The public impression which has arisen of a deeply divided Cabinet does not consist with my memory at all. Many of the disputes spent themselves in personal letters, which were never brought before the Cabinet at all, and the comparatively few which required to be settled by the Cabinet were decided by the most calm and amicable discussion, it being evident in every case what the general sense was. Not only was there never an actual division taken—for this is very rare in Cabinets—but there was not even one single heated discussion. I used to notice in Lord John's face how impressionable he was, and how open to the full consideration of any weighty objections. Extremely irritable in his letters, he was always calm and dignified in the Cabinet, sometimes, however, with an evident air of self-suppression.

As to Palmerston, he was singularly silent, and when he did discuss, it was always frankly, always with perfect temper, and always acquiescing without any show of irritation in the general sense of the Cabinet. There were two causes accounting for this conduct on the part of Palmerston—first, that on the whole, and in the general principles of our policy, founded as it was on his own Treaty of 1840, he agreed. The other cause was his own personal position amongst us. He had joined us not without hesitation, and in doing so he made a great sacrifice of personal feeling, seeing that the Foreign Office, in which he had won all his laurels, was deliberately withheld from him, as one

who could not be trusted with it. Having accepted this position, it would be inconsistent with his generous surrender of personal claims if he even seemed to push himself forward in a way to embarrass Clarendon, to whom that great office had been confided. When Palmerston felt strongly on any step which he thought ought to be taken, he generally explained it fully to Aberdeen in a letter, and gave notice that he would raise the question in the next Cabinet. This was a straightforward method, and an excellent one for securing an adequate discussion. Aberdeen had time to consider it himself, and to consult the colleagues on whom he most relied. In one case I have found all the details in his private correspondence, and it well illustrates how our conduct was decided. When Turkey declared war against our advice in the autumn, Palmerston thought we ought to take auxiliary measures in her support—measures which would be acts of war against Russia, although war was not to be actually declared. He wrote to the Prime Minister that he would so move in a Cabinet which was to be held on October 7th. Aberdeen, in his description of what occurred, says: ‘Palmerston urged his proposal perseveringly, but not disagreeably.’ This exactly agrees with my recollection of all our discussions. So does Aberdeen’s description of the parts we all severally took.

Aberdeen was always against any step which would render war inevitable. So was I. He wished to keep our freedom as long as possible. So did I. Clarendon made a modified proposal, which would have suspended all hostile actions until Russia actually took the offensive in the Black Sea. This modified proposal became the resolution of the Cabinet; and Aberdeen mentions, as having strongly supported what he considered the cause of peace, the names of Gladstone, Charles Wood, Argyll, Sidney Herbert, Granville, and, though less strongly, Newcastle. Lansdowne and John Russell, though warlike, were subdued in tone. It so

happens, by mere accident, that I have preserved a few words which I wrote on a slip of paper in the Cabinet and handed to Aberdeen, next whom I was (as usual) sitting. They were words pointing to a compromise on Palmerston's proposal. 'I suppose we should all agree, after what has happened, that our fleets could not see a descent of the Russian fleet on Varna, or any point of that coast, if it were actually to make such an attempt. The instructions sent long ago to Stratford seem to me to cover such a case as this. If so, there could be no objection to point more specifically to such a case in new instructions to the fleet. This involves possible defensive operations in the Black Sea. But this seems to be all that is implied in Palmerston's proposed instruction. At least, such an instruction would go far to meet his view, and would yet be clearly part of what we are already in for!' Whether this argument had any effect on Aberdeen or not, I do not know. But he knew my wish to support him as far as possible, and the conclusion to which he yielded was in the sense of the argument so urged.

This case is rather a typical one as showing—what was the fact—that in the Aberdeen Cabinet, when divisions of opinion arose, those divisions never ran along the lines of our old party differences. Both sides on every question were miscellaneous in composition, as regards these old antagonisms. In this case the more peaceable section had a majority of Peelites. But Charles Wood and Granville were typical old Whigs, and had been high officials in the Whig Government, whilst, even among the Whigs, there was a perceptible difference of spirit between Palmerston and his two old colleagues, Lord John and Lord Lansdowne. Clarendon was a Whig, and his was the proposal which met the general sense of the Cabinet most completely, and was adopted. It effectually provided for the defence of the Turks against any sudden *coup de main* by Russia, whilst it left us still free to

try by negotiation to settle the question without war, before ourselves joining in the fray.

I think it only right to say that in all these discussions at this time I conceived a very great respect for Palmerston. I thought him eminently straightforward, quite honest, outspoken, and with an excellent temper. His well-known character in dealing with foreign affairs made it quite certain that he would always be for the most defiant measures, and that he would trust largely to the influence of fear on foreign Sovereigns and Cabinets. But if personal character determines very often the advice of such men as Palmerston, personal character determines not less absolutely the effects of that advice on such men as Nicholas. The French had already been trying the game of threats with Russia. They had moved up the fleet from Marseilles and Toulon to the Bay of Salamis, with no other effect than to stiffen the back of Nicholas, and to endanger the then impending settlement of the dispute about the Holy Places. I was, therefore, adverse to Palmerston's proposal to commit ourselves to actual war with Russia, at a date which would fall to be determined, not by ourselves, but by the Turks, acting against our advice. On the other hand, Clarendon's proposal would put our fleet to that use for which it was competent, that use, too, which expressed quite as well the policy on which we were all agreed. That policy was to defend Turkey against any assault likely to end in bringing Russia to Constantinople. Aberdeen told Palmerston, in the course of this discussion, that he entirely agreed in that policy, and would be ready to go to war to enforce it.

It will be seen from this account that much has been said and believed about the Aberdeen Cabinet and the causes of the Crimean War which is absolutely untrue. Spencer Walpole's story about it is almost pure fiction. He represents us as a divided Cabinet, not in the sense of a Cabinet which merely contained men of various tendencies of mind, but as a Cabinet

divided between two set parties, who were in favour of two antagonistic policies—one of these policies being that of the Whigs, headed by Lord John Russell and Lord Palmerston, who were for war, and the other by Aberdeen and his friends, who were for peace. There is no shadow of truth in this representation of the facts. Palmerston and John Russell were very far from being close allies. Sometimes their views coincided, but as often they disagreed, and it was evident from Palmerston's manner that old scores had been by no means forgotten.

I do not dwell at all upon the fact that behind our wills was at last the will of almost the whole British people, insisting on our not fluctuating in our determination to resist the aggression of Russia on the Turkish Empire. I do not dwell upon it because our line had been taken in the month of February, when Stratford was told to look to the Treaty of 1840 as the guide of our policy, and when as yet the British public knew little or nothing of the danger that was appearing in the East. Not till the current of events which was carrying us all with it had commenced to run in rapid streams and boiling eddies—that is to say, not until our determination had met the counter-determination of the Emperor, and he had resorted to acts of violence—did the contest begin to attract, and rapidly to engross, the attention of the British people. Then indeed it did engross them, to a degree and with a passionate violence of feeling for which it is not easy to account. There could not have been more agitation in Rome when Cæsar passed the Rubicon, than in England when the armies of Nicholas crossed the Pruth. It amounted to a frenzy, and seemed to seize all classes, all ranks, and all parties. Mad suspicions of everybody who was supposed to be in favour of peace were among the dangerous symptoms of the time. Among the uneducated and ignorant, these suspicions were directed against the Prince Consort, who, besides being the husband, was the wisest coun-

seller of the Queen. Among the educated classes, Lord Aberdeen came in for the greatest share of obloquy. The part taken by the old Tory press against him was particularly disgraceful. He had been the Foreign Secretary under both Wellington and Peel, and if the question of Protection had not broken up the party and the Government, Aberdeen would undoubtedly have continued to be Foreign Secretary of the Conservative party. Yet he was now attacked by that party with violence, as if he were notoriously inclined to sacrifice the honour of the country. This was nothing but a vindictive assault upon him because he had supported Free Trade, and because, under him alone, it had been found possible to constitute a united Cabinet such as ours.

But Aberdeen was not the only object of suspicion. There was a magnificent cartoon in *Punch*, representing the British lion listening at the door of the Cabinet, with his ear applied closely to the available apertures for sound, that he might hear what we were about in the way of negotiation. Our Cabinet at that time was rather leaky. Things got out, we did not quite know how, and reports, not very correct, were circulated as to the part taken by individual members. I believe the explanation to have been this: Molesworth had a habit of taking down in a pocket-book notes of what passed in Cabinet discussions. On one occasion I saw Granville stop short in what he was saying, and intimate that he could not go on till Molesworth laid down his note-book. If the note-books were accessible to anyone, their contents may have reached the ears of Charles Villiers, of Kinglake, and of Hayward, through whom they would have a wide circulation in the press and in the clubs of London. This I believe to have been the source of a great deal of the small-talk, full of misrepresentation, which was embalmed in the history of the Crimean War, which we owe to the clever but not very scrupulous pen of the author of 'Eothen.'

At the end of the session of 1853, my wife and I took advantage of a kind invitation from the Duke of Leinster to visit him in Ireland. My wife's younger sister, Caroline, had married Lord Kildare, the Duke's eldest son. The Duke was a dear old man, full of energy and life, speaking with a strong brogue, and dispensing a warm-hearted hospitality to all his friends and neighbours. We spent a pleasant time with him at Carton, and with the Kildares, for whom the Duke was restoring an old castle called Kilkea. At Carton I was interested by seeing the College of Maynooth, which was on the Duke's estate, and was the seminary in which the members of the Roman Catholic priesthood of Ireland were almost all educated. The Duke was on the most friendly footing with all the staff of the college, and especially with Dr. Russell, a most cultivated and gentlemanlike man. I was much amused by an answer which he gave me to a question which I happened to put to him one evening after dinner. Something had raised the question of prayers for the dead, and I asked Dr. Russell how long in his Church prayers were continued for the dead. He replied: 'Oh, only a very short time!' But I rejoined that I had heard and read of such prayers being prolonged for years. 'Oh yes,' he said, 'but that is only in the case of very exalted and wealthy people.' I thought that I had never before heard such a frank admission that such a view is taken by the Roman Catholic Church of the advantages of wealth in another life.

As the second visit of the Queen to Ireland was to take place shortly, and as 'Ireland's only Duke' would naturally have a good deal to do on that occasion, we thought it right to leave him free of guests. We therefore took our departure from Dublin, by the railway to Belfast, on the very morning of the Queen's arrival at Kingstown. It was a fine clear day, and as we steamed out of Dublin we saw the Queen's flotilla arriving, and heard the salutes which were fired in

honour of the occasion. It was an extremely pretty sight, and it remains photographed on my organs of visual memory with unusual distinctness. Our destination near Belfast was Clandeboye, the home of Lord Dufferin, the most intimate friend I ever had of my own age. His friendship has added more than I can well say to the happiness and the charm of life.

For this autumn we had made an arrangement which I am afraid was in some ways far from successful. I have repeatedly mentioned in this memoir how intimate I had become with Lord John Russell. I really do not think that our intimacy was at all sensibly increased by our being, now for the first time, colleagues in the same Government. I knew that he was sore and fretful on account of not being at its head. But he never said a word to me that betrayed this state of mind. This was natural. He knew that I came into office as a friend of Aberdeen, and that I should be unable to take the same view as he did of the necessities which had arisen out of his own failure to form a purely Whig Cabinet. But he was at least as friendly as before to me, and I was personally very fond of him. Before the close of the session I heard that he was looking out for some place in Scotland where he might go for a few weeks with his family. I therefore determined to offer him the loan of my place, Rosneath, on the Firth of Clyde. This he willingly accepted. It had special advantages for him in the existing anxious condition of foreign affairs. It was close to Greenock, whence there was rapid railway communication with London. And yet it was very private and retired in its situation, with walks of singular beauty along quiet shores, and with an exquisite mountain-range in the middle distance.

I had a longer distance to travel from Inveraray, but Aberdeen kindly gave me timely notice of any important Cabinets that he could foresee. In the

changes which went on from day to day, and almost from hour to hour, there was one moment when Aberdeen and Clarendon were obliged to answer quickly, and, catching Palmerston, who was passing through London, they called for his help and advice, and drew up an amendment which had to be sent off at once. When it was sent to Lord John it elicited from him a letter, addressed to Clarendon on September 17th. This letter would have no interest now, were it not for the fact that the terms of it reveal the real cause of proceedings on Lord John's part soon after which, led to the most serious results. He declared that he felt himself to be in a degraded position, which it required all his patience to bear. This no doubt was the truth. He had summoned up enough of magnanimity to join a Government in which he was not to hold the first place, but he had not magnanimity enough to face the difficulties which this position involved. He was surrounded by a clique of old Whigs who were always inciting him to discontent, and on the least provocation it was always bursting out in letters threatening resignation. If he had so little confidence in the three ablest of his colleagues that he could not trust them to make some verbal amendments in documents like the one in question, he ought to have stayed in London, as Aberdeen and Clarendon did, during the whole autumn, so that he could have seen everything that went on at the Foreign Office.

Aberdeen, in forming the Cabinet, had unfortunately held out a possible prospect of retiring altogether at some favourable opportunity, when Lord John might take his place. It is now evident that Lord John looked for this change taking place about this time, and when he saw no signs of it coming, his annoyance increased. Aberdeen took the opportunity of telling Lord John that the amendment which so roused his indignation was mainly drafted, not by Clarendon or by himself, but by Palmerston. I did not hear of this letter at the time, but I knew enough even then,

and know far more now, to make me admire beyond measure the calmness, dignity, and imperturbable good temper with which Aberdeen met the complaints of his colleague. He had the comfort during this wretched autumn of the tactful ability and straightness of Clarendon, whose perceptions of personal character were as quick and true as his resourcefulness was great, in shaping a course beset with many difficulties, which were inseparable from the conditions of the problem to be solved, and from the very opposite suggestions to which these conditions gave rise, according as they were viewed from one aspect or another.

We were all agreed to oppose the possession of Constantinople by the Russians. We could not, therefore, coerce Turkey by threatening to leave her to her fate. Consequently the issues of peace or war were in a great degree taken out of our hands, and placed in the hands of a barbarian Government, which might and did wish for war, when it found itself backed by the two great Western Powers of Europe. But again, if we allowed ourselves to be dragged into the war under those influences, we could not tell how widely it might extend. There might be a rising among the Christian subjects of the Porte, supported by Russia, and what would be our position then? Could we fight for the Turk against them? Then, again, we had our game to play with Austria. To persuade her to support us was our great aim from the first. Any act of needless precipitation in the direction of war would alienate her sympathy, and might even drive her into the arms of Russia. There never, surely, was a more tangled skein. Hence the hope and desire to find a peaceful solution were not founded on any mere abstract horror of a great war, but on the doubtful and precarious issues which were before us. It was most annoying to feel or even to suspect that the mind of so important a member of the Government as Lord John Russell was being swayed by feelings and considerations which

were quite irrelevant to the merits of the questions before us. Yet I saw in several letters from Lord John, in the latter end of September, that he was taking a more decidedly pro-Turkish line, which I had not before observed in him, and therefore, as I was on intimate terms with him, and as I believed he put some trust in my judgment, I thought it right to address to him on the 24th September a letter on our position considered as a whole. It was as follows :

‘ INVERARAY,

‘ September 24, 1853.

‘ MY DEAR LORD JOHN,

‘ Really we seem in a great mess about the East. I do not see our way out of it. But though the Porte is all in *the right*, and the Czar utterly in *the wrong*, I trust we shall not commit the honour of England too closely to act for the Turks, as they have an undoubted right to act for themselves. The degree and extent to which they are entitled to uphold an equality of “independence” with other European Powers is one thing ; the extent to which we are bound to act *with* and *for* them in this struggle is quite another thing. We must know that, as a fact, this equality of position is not true ; we must be conscious that we do not ourselves act upon this view of her position. The language in which we are perpetually addressing her from our own Embassy and our Foreign Office on subjects connected with her internal administration is such as we should never dream of addressing to a Power practically possessed of the position to which, ostensibly, she is nevertheless entitled.

‘ It is all very well, in the language of diplomacy and the forms of official intercourse, to shut our eyes to this fatal discrepancy between fact and theory, but we shall get into a dreadful scrape if we carry this too far. For example, in the event of a war between Turkey and Russia about the Principalities, I cannot believe that the Christian population would actually side heartily in support of Turkey. They may not wish to fall under the Empire of Russia ; but this will not seem to them the only alternative. With a view simply to independence, they would probably feel and act rather with Russia than with the Mussulman hordes now assembled on the Danube.

‘ Now, if such a feeling were expressed or manifested, however indirectly, it would be utterly impossible for us to take part against it. Yet the independence of those provinces would be as much a violation of the “integrity” of Turkey as their cession to the Czar.

‘ It would not be the same thing—a very different thing—as regards the “balance of power” and other considerations of European policy, but it would be quite the same thing as regards Turkish “integrity”; and if we commit ourselves too closely to *this*, I see nothing but the most fatal entanglement before us.

‘ It is quite a different thing to stand by in an attitude of armed watchfulness, and to see that events which interest all Europe do not issue in the mere aggrandizement of one Power, and that one egregiously in the wrong. I only trust that the English Cabinet will not act as if they had the same duties as the Divan in respect to the “honour and independence” of a Mahomedan Empire.

‘ I do not mean, of course, that the fact of their religion makes it excusable to treat them with any injustice. But I mean simply that the fact of the relation in which the Government stands to the religion of a great portion of its subjects renders that policy *impossible*, which, under any circumstances, could never have been a duty.

‘ Yours, etc.,

‘ ARGYLL.’

Some of these reasons for delaying as long as possible acts of war against Russia are indicated in a letter I received from Aberdeen dated November 3, 1853.

It is impossible to mistake the attitude of mind which this letter reveals. It was an attitude of intense annoyance with some of the most insuperable facts of the position in which we and all our allies were placed. We were driving straight into a war for, and with, a barbarous Government which had declined to follow our advice, which, nevertheless, could not stand alone—a Government whose interests were only very partially, and perhaps only very temporarily, coincident with our own. A change of circumstances, which was not at all unlikely to occur,

might destroy even this partial coincidence in a moment. One of the most important of our allies, Austria, whose direct interests were very much more nearly concerned than ours, was at that very moment holding aloof and even threatening separation from us until she saw what our next move would be. I quite agreed with Aberdeen that the situation was intolerably provoking. The whole Cabinet felt it, and the French Government felt it equally.

It was under these circumstances that we all agreed to make one more united effort to secure a diplomatic settlement, and we came nearer to it than we had ever come before. England, France, Austria, and Prussia all united in a form of Turkish concession to Russia, which the Sultan agreed to. It was just when the preliminary achievement had been accomplished that an event happened which introduced additional passion into the already explosive elements with which we had to deal. The silly and wayward Turks, after declaring war against Russia, had the inconceivable folly to send their little wretched fleet into the Black Sea, and to anchor it in the open and undefended harbour of Sinope. This bay is only about 180 miles from Sebastopol, and of course the Turkish fleet was marked down by a reconnoitring squadron from the great Russian arsenal, as a woodcock is marked down by sportsmen. Then the Russian fleet appeared, and, as the Turks resisted, they were simply destroyed, as completely as we had destroyed the Turkish fleet at Navarino twenty-three years before.

The British people had been pretty nearly at white heat against Russia long before this event. But what was called the 'massacre' of Sinope drove them wild. The French Government was mortified and affronted in a high degree, and we agreed with France that our combined fleets should enter the Black Sea, and intimate to Russia that the Turkish flag, as well as Turkish territory, was for the future placed under the combined protection of the two Western Powers.

This step, though not taken for the purpose, had at that moment one great advantage: it brought to an immediate test the theory that strong measures such as this, amounting almost to belligerent acts, on the part of England and France in close concert and alliance, were the only measures that were calculated to affect the conduct of the Czar. In the present case it was just in time. We had not yet communicated to Russia the new plan of settlement, to which we had procured the assent not only of our special ally, France, and of Turkey, but of Austria and Prussia also. It was a concert, therefore, of the whole of Europe. It was at a moment, too, when Nicholas might well have been content with the tremendous blow he had inflicted on Turkey, in the utter destruction of her fleet, and in the exhibition of his maritime supremacy over her. If, therefore, Nicholas could ever have afforded to accept without loss of dignity a threat from the Western Powers, made in the interests of peace, this was the moment when it would have seemed possible for him to do so. But nothing of the kind happened. On the contrary, that happened which was sure to happen with a man of the overbearing pride of that haughty Sovereign. Not only did he spurn the proffered terms of peace, but, as if on purpose to set at ease the most peaceful among us, he asserted roundly the very doctrine of his own exclusive right to deal with Turkey as he pleased, which we were all united in resisting, and which, in principle, he had himself repudiated in signing the Treaty of 1840. This was the only issue which justified, in my opinion, a war, nominally in defence of the Turk, but really a war in defence of the right of Europe to keep the fate of Turkey as a matter of common interest and concern. All assertions, therefore, and all assumptions that the Aberdeen Government plunged the country into war in support of the barbarous Government of Turkey, are a gross misrepresentation of the facts. I had the best means of knowing what the policy

was in support of which we went to war. My own view of it was strong and definite. I stated it as emphatically and as frequently as I could in letters to my colleagues. The replies they gave me proved their complete concurrence in that plea of European right in support of which alone we were prepared to fight.

Having thus concluded my personal recollections of the causes which led to the war with Russia, I must advert for a moment to a speech of John Bright, made long after, in which he told his audience that Lord Aberdeen had confessed to him in private conversation that he deeply regretted having allowed himself to become responsible for that war. In such a case memory is apt to be deceptive, and especially so when strong convictions and strong feelings lead us to put a sense upon the words of other men which is a good deal different from that which they may have been intended to convey. In later years Lord Aberdeen did indeed often wish that he had never been placed in a position which compelled him to be a War Minister. But this is a very different thing from saying, either that he could have retreated from that position, or that, being in it, he could have discharged its duties otherwise than he did. I can speak from personal knowledge on this point, because I doubt whether he ever spoke to anyone more freely than to me, and on one occasion he did express himself so nearly in the sense attributed to him by John Bright that I felt compelled to put to him a testing question. I said: 'Now, Lord Aberdeen, will you allow me to put one question to you? In all our long negotiations, lasting through ten months, can you put your finger on any one step to which you ought never to have assented, or any one step which you ought to have taken and failed to take?' 'No, I cannot,' was Lord Aberdeen's immediate reply. 'Then,' I said, 'my dear Lord Aberdeen, you have nothing to reproach yourself with. Your feeling of regret is nothing but the feeling common

to us all—a feeling of ceaseless regret that we were placed in a position in which duty to our country and to Europe compelled us to take a course which resulted in war.’

It was an immense relief to me that our long and hopeless negotiations to keep the peace were brought to an end by the action of Russia, thus clearing up the issue which might otherwise have been obscured.