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ORATORY

SELECTED SPEECHES OF THE RIGHT HON. JOHN BRIGHT, M.P., ON PUBLIC QUESTIONS WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY JOSEPH STURGE

LONDON: J. M. DENT & CO.
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WHEN HE SENT HIS GREAT VOICE FORTH: OUT OF HIS BREAST, & HIS WORDS FELL LIKE THE WINTER SNOWS, NOR THEN WOULD ANY MORTAL CONTEND WITH ULYSSES
HOMER ILIAD

SELECTED SPEECHES

(of the Rt Hon^ble)

JOHN BRIGHT M.P.

on Public Questions)

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INTRODUCTION

JOHN BRIGHT was born at Rochdale in 1811, and he died there in 1889. He came of an old Quaker family, was educated at Quaker schools, and remained to the end of his days a loyal member of the Society of Friends. His father was a cotton manufacturer, and John Bright was himself trained to business at the mills, in which he was all his life a partner. When he was a Privy Councillor, the older hands, who had known him from a boy, still regarded him as one of themselves. When Bright was a young man the whole country was convulsed by the great Reform agitation, and from that time forward he took a keen interest in public affairs. His earliest speeches were in support of temperance, and he soon won repute in the contest against the local church-rate. It is recorded that in 1840 his eloquence carried an amendment at a public meeting called for the purpose of levying such a rate. About the same time his sympathy was aroused by the sufferings of the masses of his fellow-countrymen from the stagnation of trade and the high price of food, caused by the incidence of Protection. He spent a large part of his time between 1840 and 1846 in agitating, in co-operation with Richard Cobden, for the abolition of the Corn Laws. In 1843 he was elected M.P. for Durham, and in 1847 for Manchester.

He was a convinced individualist in all things, and held throughout his life that it is unwise, and in many cases oppressive, to restrict the working hours of adults *by Act of Parliament*, though he was in favour of the legislative protection of children.

"He was not a philanthropist in the common and rather hackneyed sense of the word. His sympathies

did not run in that channel. He had not much faith in remedies prescribed for the occasion, nor in short-cuts for reforming social evils. On such matters he was a difficult man to move. Hence he was not found hurrying to and fro in quest of every fresh symptom that might be clamorous for a cure. But he had a steadfast faith in the operation of general causes, such as temperance, education, the improvement of the material condition of the people, and the removal of political inequalities. He aimed chiefly at being just and doing justly. He believed in the remedial power of justice, and he loved it with an ardour which set his whole being on fire. But having given the people what they were entitled to, he was not disposed to go further. Anything like petting or coddling seemed to him to be at variance with manliness, and sure to fail of its object. Give them, he would say, equal political rights with the rest of the community, remove every hindrance to their industry, and then, with the aid of the schoolmaster and a cheap press, they may be left to work out their own salvation" (Dunkley).

His strong conviction that the Crimean War was a blunder and a crime brought him into collision with the great body of his fellow-countrymen, and ultimately cost him his seat for Manchester. He was, not long afterwards, elected Member for Birmingham, and continued to represent that constituency to the day of his death. When three-fourths of the Members of the House of Commons were anxious for the break-up of the American Union, in the dispute over the question of slavery, Bright adhered heroically to the cause of the North, appealing, not without success, to the tribunal of working-class opinion on behalf of his faith in freedom.

After the General Election of 1868, he became a member of Mr. Gladstone's Government; he finally left it in 1882 as a protest against the bombardment of Alexandria. It is important to notice, however, that in this case, as in the case of the Crimean War, he based his opposition on the merits of the quarrel, and that he refused to commit himself to any condemnation of all war in the abstract. During his tenure of office the

Bright Land Clauses of the Irish Church Act, which were the basis of all subsequent Irish land legislation, proved his success as a practical legislator. His suggestion of a commercial treaty between England and France, taken up by Chevalier, led to the famous treaty which Cobden carried out between the two countries in 1861, with such beneficent and far-reaching results. With all his sympathy for Ireland, Mr. Bright never accepted the idea of a separate legislature, and Gladstone's Home Rule Bill, therefore, did not obtain his approval. To his infinite regret, he consequently passed his last years in political separation from Mr. Gladstone and from many of his other old friends.

One of Mr. Bright's great sayings was, that "statesmanship consists as much in foreseeing as in doing." His historian, in the "Dictionary of National Biography," thus points out the singular success of his own important forecasts. In his first speech in the House of Commons (August 7, 1843) he remarked that Peel was at issue with his party upon principles. On June 25, 1844, he predicted that Peel would repeal the Corn Laws at the first bad harvest. From the outset of his career he denounced the Irish Church establishment. He foresaw the danger of restriction to one source for the supply of cotton; the probability of a cotton famine ensuing on the break-up of slavery, and the consequent disorganization of the Southern States. He insisted that India should be brought under the authority of the Crown. While Palmerston was asserting the revival of Turkey, Bright as consistently insisted that Turkey was a decaying power. Sir James Graham afterwards made him the admission, "You were entirely right about the Crimean War; we were entirely wrong." He predicted that the successful defence of Turkey would lead to fresh demands on her as soon as Russia had recovered from her exhaustion. He foretold that the cession of Savoy would bring about Italy's independence from French control. He said, as far back as 1878, that an Irish party hostile to the Liberal party in Great Britain involves the perpetual reign of the Tories."

A man who attacked all the cherished idols of the ruling classes, and who characterized the aggressive foreign policy of Palmerston as "a gigantic system of out-door relief for the aristocracy of Great Britain," was not likely to be much loved by the great ones of the earth. And "there was nothing deprecatory about John Bright. He could be quite as insolent in his way as any aristocrat in his. What was really irritating about him was that his disdain was genuine. He did think very little of the Tory party, and he did not care one straw for the opinion of society. He positively would not have cared to have been made a Baronet."

Years have elapsed since these speeches were delivered, but they are not therefore out of date. Of the 1,500 pages that Rogers selected for publication there are very few that do not still afford good reading, and the same applies to many other addresses which might be disinterred from old newspaper files. The great problem of Indian government is always with us. Protection, which its champion, Disraeli, said was "not only dead, but damned," is again trying to rear its head. The military and naval expenditure, which Bright held to be absurd and wasteful, was small compared with that which a Liberal Government now considers necessary. Those causes which, largely through Bright's influence, were carried to a successful issue, and have become part of the national inheritance, depended on the underlying principle of faith in freedom, which is of undying value and importance. His great saying, "Force is no remedy," deserves specially to be revived at a time when its spirit has been eclipsed by clouds of materialism and passion.

As models of the clear and convincing expression of thought, Mr. Bright's speeches will be read and re-read by every student of the English language and by every one who wishes to learn so to express himself as to influence the minds of his fellow-countrymen. It was said that Bright and Gladstone were the only men of their time in the House of Commons whose eloquence actually changed votes. Thorold Rogers remarked how well these speeches fulfil the three demands of Aristotle,

that an orator must convince his audience at the outset, first, that he has their interests at heart; next, that he is competent to interpret them; and thirdly, that he is free from any taint of self-seeking. It was remarkable to notice how, if the apt word he wanted did not come to John Bright at first, he would keep the mighty audience hanging on his lips for quite a long pause until he had found the very phrase that

> "Helved his thought as slick
> As straight-grained hickory does the hatchet."

In studying the speeches, it will be noticed how thoroughly Mr. Bright's mind was impregnated by the study of the Bible and of great English classics, especially Milton. The point of almost every address seems to be brought out by a line from the Old Testament, or it may be from Dante, from Homer, or from Lowell.

A generation has grown up which never felt how John Bright not only convinced men's minds, but "swayed their hearts like barley bending," and which is not thrilled by the mention of his name. The esteem in which Birmingham held him was well voiced by Dr. R. W. Dale in August, 1882: "I venture to say that the affection and veneration which Mr. Bright has inspired are not fully explained either by his eloquence or by the magnificent service which he has rendered to the country. The man is greater than the eloquence. The man is nobler than his service. In circumstances of great peril Mr. Bright has always been loyal to his conscience. Slanders never turned him aside from what he believed to be the path of righteousness, nor mockery, nor insult, nor hatred. He never quailed before the power of the great; and when, for a time, fidelity to conscience brought upon him storms of unpopularity, and he lost the confidence of the people he loved and served, Mr. Bright remained faithful still. I believe he has elevated the national ideal of political morality." This passage may help to illustrate the faith and enthusiasm that Bright inspired in great masses of his fellow-countrymen and the influence which he wielded over the minds of his generation—an influ-

ence doubtless based on his own profound faith in righteousness, in the Divine government of the world, and in the duty of every citizen to take his share in carrying that government forward.

The following selections from the speeches will be sufficient to illustrate Mr. Bright's determined opposition to the Crimean War, his passionate protest against the rebellion of the American Slave States, his desire to bring the possession of land within the reach of the people of England and Ireland, and his suggestions for the better government of India. They will serve their purpose if they induce some of their readers to study the volumes from which they are taken, and to consider the problems of the present day in the light of the principles for the furtherance of which John Bright's life was spent.

1907.

The following is a list of Bright's published speeches, letters, etc.:

"Speeches on Questions of Public Policy," edited by Professor J. E. Thorold Rogers, 2 vols., 1868; popular edition, 1 vol., 1878, 1892; "Public Addresses," edited by Professor J. E. Thorold Rogers, 1879; "Public Letters," collected by H. J. Leech, 1885; "Life and Speeches of John Bright," by G. B. Smith, 1881.

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I

INDIA—I

(FROM HANSARD)

House of Commons, June 24, 1858.

[After the suppression of the Indian mutiny, Lord Palmerston's Government determined to introduce a Bill the object of which was to place the possessions of the East India Company under the direct authority of the Crown. This Bill was introduced by Lord Palmerston on February 12. But the Government fell a few days afterwards, on the Conspiracy Bill, and Lord Palmerston's Bill was withdrawn. On March 26 the new Government introduced their own Bill, which was known as the India Bill No. 2. The chief peculiarity of this Bill was that five members in the proposed council of eighteen should be chosen by the constituencies of the following cities: London, Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow, and Belfast. The scheme was unpopular, and Lord Russell proposed that it should be withdrawn, and that resolutions should be passed in a Committee of the whole House, the acceptance of which might prove a guide to the proceedings of the Government. The suggestion was accepted by Mr. Disraeli, and in consequence India Bill No. 3 was brought in, and read a second time on June 24.

The non-recognition, by the East India Company's government of adopted heirs was doubtless, one of the contributory causes of the mutiny of 1857. After peace was restored, the right of adoption was expressly recognized by the Government, and Sanads, or documents guaranteeing this right, were issued by Lord Canning to all the chiefs on March 11, 1862.]

WHAT is it we have to complain of in India? What is it that the people of India, if they spoke by my mouth, have to complain of? They would tell the House that, as a rule, throughout almost all the Presidencies, and throughout those Presidencies most which have been longest under British rule, the cultivators of the soil, the great body of the population of India, are in a condition of great impoverishment, of

great dejection, and of great suffering. I have, on former occasions, quoted to the House the report of a Committee which I obtained ten years ago, upon which sat several members of the Court of Directors; and they all agreed to report as much as I have now stated to the House—the Report being confined chiefly to the Presidencies of Bombay and Madras. If I were now submitting the case of the population of India I would say that the taxes of India are more onerous and oppressive than the taxes of any other country in the world. I think I could demonstrate that proposition to the House. I would show that industry is neglected by the Government to a greater extent probably than is the case in any other country in the world which has been for any length of time under what is termed a civilized and Christian government. I should be able to show from the notes and memoranda of eminent men in India, of the Governor of Bengal, Mr. Halliday, for example, that there is not, and never has been in any country pretending to be civilized, a condition of things to be compared with that which exists under the police administration of the province of Bengal. With regard to the courts of justice I may say the same thing. I could quote passages from books written in favour of the Company with all the bias which the strongest friends of the Company can have, in which the writers declare that, precisely in proportion as English courts of justice have extended, have perjury and all the evils which perjury introduces into the administration of justice prevailed throughout the Presidencies of India. With regard to public works, if I were speaking for the Natives of India, I would state this fact, that in a single English county there are more roads—more travelable roads—than are to be found in the whole of India; and I would say also that the single city of Manchester, in the supply of its inhabitants with the single article of water, has spent a larger sum of money than the East India Company has spent in the fourteen years from 1834 to 1848 in public works of every kind throughout the whole of its vast dominions. I would say that the real activity of the Indian Govern-

ment has been an activity of conquest and annexation —of conquest and annexation which after a time has led to a fearful catastrophe, which has enforced on the House an attention to the question of India, which but for that catastrophe I fear the House would not have given it.

If there were another charge to be made against the past Government of India, it would be with regard to the state of its finances. Where was there a bad Government whose finances were in good order? Where was there a really good Government whose finances were in bad order? Is there a better test in the long run of the condition of a people and the merits of a Government than the state of the finances? And yet not in our own time, but going back through all the pages of Mill, or of any other history of India, we find the normal condition of the finances of India has been that of deficit and bankruptcy. I maintain that if that be so, the Government is a bad Government. It has cost more to govern India than the Government has been able to extract from the population of India. The Government has not been scrupulous as to the amount of taxes or the mode in which they have been levied; but still, to carry on the government of India according to the system which has heretofore prevailed, more has been required than the Government has been able to extract by any system of taxation known to them from the population over which they have ruled. It has cost more than 30,000,000*l.* a year to govern India, and the gross revenue being somewhere about 30,000,000*l.*, and there being a deficit, the deficit has had to be made up by loans. The Government has obtained all they could from the population; it is not enough, and they have had to borrow from the population and from Europeans at a high rate of interest to make up the sum which has been found to be necessary. They have a debt of 60,000,000*l.*, and it is continually increasing; they always have a loan open; and while their debt is increasing their credit has been falling, because they have not treated their creditors very honourably on one or two occasions, and chiefly, of course, on account of the calamities which

have recently happened in India. There is one point with regard to taxation which I wish to explain to the House, and I hope that, in the reforms to which the noble Lord is looking forward, it will not be overlooked. I have said that the gross revenue is 30,000,000*l.* Exclusive of the opium revenue, which is not, strictly speaking, and hardly at all, a tax upon the people, I set down the taxation of the country at something like 25,000,000*l.* Hon. Gentlemen must not compare 25,000,000*l.* of taxation in India with 60,000,000*l.* of taxation in England. They must bear in mind that in India they could have twelve days' labour of a man for the same sum in silver or gold which they have to pay for one day's labour of a man in England; that if, for example, this 25,000,000*l.* were expended in purchasing labour, that sum would purchase twelve times as much in India as in England—that is to say, that the 25,000,000*l.* would purchase as many days' labour in India as 300,000,000*l.* would purchase in England. [An Hon Member: "How much is the labour worth?"] That is precisely what I am coming to. If the labour of a man is only worth 2*d.* a day, they could not expect as much revenue from him as if it were 2*s.* a day. That is just the point to which I wish the hon. Gentleman would turn his attention. We have in England a population which, for the sake of argument, I will call 30,000,000. We have in India a population of 150,000,000. Therefore, the population of India is five times as great as the population of England. We raise in India, reckoning by the value of labour, taxation equivalent to 300,000,000*l.*, which is five times the English revenue. Some one may probably say, therefore, that the taxation in India and in England appears to be about the same, and no great injury is done. But it must be borne in mind that in England we have an incalculable power of steam, of machinery, of modes of transit, roads, canals, railways, and everything which capital and human invention can bring to help the industry of the people; while in India there is nothing of the kind. In India there is scarcely a decent road, the rivers are not bridged,

there are comparatively no steam engines, and none of those aids to industry that meet us at every step in Great Britain and Ireland. Suppose steam engines, machinery, and modes of transit abolished in England, how much revenue would the Chancellor of the Exchequer obtain from the people of England? Instead of 60,000,000*l.* a year, would he get 10,000,000*l.*? I doubt it very much. If the House will follow out the argument, they will come to the conclusion that the taxes of the people of India are oppressive to the last degree, and that the Government which has thus taxed them can be tolerated no longer, and must be put an end to at once and for ever. I wish to say something about the manner in which these great expenses are incurred. The extravagance of the East India Government is notorious to all. I believe there never was any other service under the sun paid at so high a rate as the exclusive Civil Service of the East India Company. Clergymen and missionaries can be got to go out to India for a moderate sum—private soldiers and officers of the army go out for a moderate remuneration —merchants are content to live in the cities of India for a percentage or profit not greatly exceeding the ordinary profits of commerce. But the Civil Service, because it is bound up with those who were raised by it and who dispense the patronage of India, receive a rate of payment which would be incredible if we did not know it to be true, and which, knowing it to be true, we must admit to be monstrous. The East India Government scatters salaries about at Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Agra, Lahore, and half a dozen other cities, which are up to the mark of those of the Prime Minister and Secretaries of State in this country. These salaries are framed upon the theory that India is a mine of inexhaustible wealth, although no one has found it to be so but the members of the Civil Service of the East India Company. The policy of the Government is at the bottom of the constant deficit. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has twice recently declared that expenditure depends upon policy. That is as true in India as in England, and it is the policy that

has been pursued there which renders the revenue liable to this constantly recurring deficit.

I have come to the conclusion, which many hon. Members probably share with me, that the edifice we have reared in India is too vast. There are few men now, and least of all those connected with the East India Company, who, looking back to the policy that has been pursued, will not be willing to admit that it has not been judicious but hazardous—that territories have been annexed that had better have been left independent, and that wars have been undertaken which were as needless as they were altogether unjustifiable. The immense empire that has been conquered is too vast for management, its base is in decay, and during the last twelve months it has appeared to be tottering to its fall. Who or what is the instrument—the Cabinet, the Government, or the person—by whom this evil policy is carried on?

The greatest officer in India is the Governor-General. He is the ruler of about one-fifth—certainly more than one-sixth—of the human race. The Emperors of France and Russia are but the governors of provinces compared with the power, the dignity, and the high estate of the Governor-General of India. Now, over this officer, almost no real control is exercised. If I were to appeal to the two hon. Gentlemen who have frequently addressed the House during these debates (Colonel Sykes and Mr. Willoughby), they would probably admit that the Governor-General of India is an officer of such high position that scarcely any control can be exercised over him either in India or in England. Take the case of the Marquess of Dalhousie for example. I am not about to make an attack upon him, for the occasion is too solemn for personal controversies. But the annexation of Sattara, of the Punjab, of Nagpore, and of Oude occurred under his rule. I will not go into the case of Sattara; but one of its Princes, and one of the most magnanimous Princes that India ever produced, suffered and died most unjustly in exile, either through the mistakes or the crimes of the Government of India. This, how-

ever, was not done under the Government of Lord Dalhousie. As to the annexation of Nagpore, the House has never heard anything about it to this hour. There has been no message from the Crown or statement of the Government relative to that annexation. Hon. Members have indeed heard from India that the dresses and wardrobes of the ladies of its Court have been exposed to sale, like a bankrupt's stock, in the haberdashers' shops of Calcutta—a thing likely to incense and horrify the people of India who witnessed it.

Take, again, the case of the Burmese war. The Governor-General entered into it, and annexed the province of Pegu, and to this day there has been no treaty with the King of Burmah. If that case had been brought before the House, it is impossible that the war with Burmah could have been entered upon. I do not believe that there is one man in England who, knowing the facts, would say that this war was just or necessary in any sense. The Governor-General has an army of 300,000 men under his command; he is a long way from home; he is highly connected with the governing classes at home; there are certain reasons that make war palatable to large classes in India; and he is so powerful that he enters into these great military operations almost uncontrolled by the opinion of the Parliament and people of England. He may commit any amount of blunders or crimes against the moral law, and he will still come home loaded with dignities and in the enjoyment of pensions. Does it not become the power and character of this House to examine narrowly the origin of the misfortunes and disgraces of the grave catastrophe which has just occurred? The place of the Governor-General is too high—his power is too great—and I believe that this particular office and officer are very much responsible —of course, under the Government at home—for the disasters that have taken place.

Only think of a Governor-General of India writing to an Indian Prince, the ruler over many millions of men in the heart of India, "Remember you are but as the dust under my feet." Passages like these are left

out of despatches, when laid on the table of the House of Commons:—it would not do for the Parliament, or the Crown, or the people of England to know that their officer addressed language like this to a Native Prince. The fact is that a Governor-General of India, unless he be such a man as is not found more than once in a century, is very liable to have his head turned, and to form ambitious views, which are mainly to be gratified by successful wars and the annexation of province after province during the period of his rule. The "Services" are always ready to help him in these plans. I am not sure that the President of the Board of Control could not give evidence on this subject, for I have heard something of what happened when the noble Lord was in India. When the Burmese war broke out, the noble Lord could, no doubt, tell the House that, without inquiring into the quarrel or its causes, the press of India, which was devoted to the "Services," and the "Services" themselves, united in universal approbation of the course taken by the Governor-General. Justice to Pegu and Burmah and the taxes to be raised for the support of the war were forgotten, and nothing but visions of more territory and more patronage floated before the eyes of the official English in India. I contend that the power of the Governor-General is too great and the office too high to be held by the subject of any Power whatsoever, and especially by any subject of the Queen of England.

I should propose, if I were in a position to offer a scheme in the shape of a Bill to the House, as an indispensable preliminary to the wise government of India in future, such as would be creditable to Parliament and advantageous to the people of India, that the office of Governor-General should be abolished. Perhaps some hon. Gentlemen may think this a very unreasonable proposition. Many people thought it unreasonable in 1853, when it was proposed to abolish the East India Company; but now Parliament and the country believe it to be highly reasonable and proper; and I am not sure that I could not bring before the House reasons to convince them that the abolition of

the office of Governor-General is one of the most sensible and one of the most Conservative proposals ever brought forward in connection with the Government of India. I believe the duties of the Governor-General are far greater than any human being can adequately fulfil. He has a power omnipotent to crush anything that is good. If he so wishes, he can overbear and overrule whatever is proposed for the welfare of India, while, as to doing anything that is good, I could show that with regard to the vast countries over which he rules, he is really almost powerless to effect anything that those countries require. The hon. Gentleman behind me (Colonel Sykes) has told us there are twenty nations in India, and that there are twenty languages. Has it ever happened before that any one man governed twenty nations, speaking twenty different languages, and bound them together in one great and compact empire? [An hon. Member here made an observation.] My hon. Friend mentions a great Parthian monarch. No doubt there have been men strong in arm and in head, and of stern resolution, who have kept great empires together during their lives; but as soon as they went the way of all flesh, and descended, like the meanest of their subjects, to the tomb, the provinces they had ruled were divided into several States, and their great empires vanished. I might ask the noble Lord below me (Lord John Russell) and the noble Lord the Member for Tiverton . . . whether, when they came to appoint a Governor-General of India, they did not find it one of the most serious and difficult duties they could be called on to perform? I do not know at this moment, and I never have known, a man competent to govern India; and if any man says he is competent, he sets himself up at a much higher value than those who are acquainted with him are likely to set him. Let the House look at the making of the laws for twenty nations speaking twenty languages. Look at the regulations of the police for twenty nations speaking twenty languages. Look at the question of public works as it affects twenty nations speaking twenty languages; where there is no municipal power

and no combinations of any kind, such as facilitate the construction of public works in this country. Inevitably all those duties that devolve on every good Government must be neglected by the Governor-General of India, however wise, capable, and honest he may be in the performance of his duties, because the duties laid upon him are such as no man now living or who ever lived can or could properly sustain.

It may be asked what I would substitute for the Governor-Generalship of India. Now, I do not propose to abolish the office of Governor-General of India this Session. I am not proposing any clause in the Bill, and if I were to propose one to carry out the idea I have expressed, I might be answered by the argument, that a great part of the population of India is in a state of anarchy, and that it would be most inconvenient, if not dangerous, to abolish the office of Governor-General at such a time. I do not mean to propose such a thing now; but I take this opportunity of stating my views, in the hope that when we come to 1863 we may perhaps be able to consider the question more in the light in which I am endeavouring to present it to the House. I would propose that, instead of having a Governor-General and an Indian Empire, we should have neither the one nor the other. I would propose that we should have Presidencies, and not an Empire. If I were a Minister—which the House will admit is a bold figure of speech—and if the House were to agree with me—which is also an essential point—I would propose to have at least five Presidencies in India, and I would have the governments of those Presidencies perfectly equal in rank and in salary. The capitals of those Presidencies would probably be Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, Agra, and Lahore. I will take the Presidency of Madras as an illustration. Madras has a population of some 20,000,000. We all know its position on the map, and that it has the advantage of being more compact, geographically speaking, than the other Presidencies. It has a Governor and a Council. I would give to it a Governor and a Council still, but would confine all their duties to the Presidency of

Madras, and I would treat it just as if Madras was the only portion of India connected with this country. I would have its finance, its taxation, its justice, and its police departments, as well as its public works and military departments, precisely the same as if it were a State having no connection with any other part of India, and recognized only as a dependency of this country. I would propose that the Government of every Presidency should correspond with the Secretary for India in England, and that there should be telegraphic communications between all the Presidencies in India, as I hope before long to see a telegraphic communication between the office of the noble Lord (Lord Stanley) and every Presidency over which he presides. I shall no doubt be told that there are insuperable difficulties in the way of such an arrangement, and I shall be sure to hear of the military difficulty. Now, I do not profess to be an authority on military affairs, but I know that military men often make great mistakes. I would have the army divided, each Presidency having its own army, just as now, care being taken to have them kept distinct; and I see no danger of any confusion or misunderstanding, when an emergency arose, in having them all brought together to carry out the views of the Government. There is one question which it is important to bear in mind, and that is with regard to the Councils in India. I think every Governor of a Presidency should have an assistant Council, but differently constituted from what they now are. . . . What we want is to make the Governments of the Presidencies Governments for the people of the Presidencies; not Governments for the civil servants of the Crown, but for the non-official mercantile classes from England who settle there, and for the 20,000,000 or 30,000,000 of Natives in each Presidency.

I should propose to do that which has been done with great advantage in Ceylon. I have received a letter from an officer who has been in the service of the East India Company, and who told me a fact which has gratified me very much. He says:

"At a public dinner at Colombo, in 1835, to the

Governor, Sir Wilmot Horton, at which I was present, the best speech of the evening was made by a native nobleman of Candy, and a member of Council. It was remarkable for its appropriate expression, its sound sense, and the deliberation and ease that marked the utterance of his feelings. There was no repetition of useless phraseology or flattery, and it was admitted by all who heard him to be the soundest and neatest speech of the night."

This was in Ceylon. It is not, of course, always the best man who can make the best speech; but if what I have read could be said of a native of Ceylon, it could be said of thousands in India. We need not go beyond the walls of this House to find a head bronzed by an Indian sun equal to the ablest heads of those who adorn its benches. And in every part of India we all know that it would be an insult to the people of India to say that it is not the same. There are thousands of persons in India who are competent to take any position to which the Government may choose to advance them. If the Governor of each Presidency were to have in his Council some of the officials of his Government, some of the non-official Europeans resident in the Presidency, and two or three at least of the intelligent Natives of the Presidency in whom the people would have some confidence, you would have begun that which will be of inestimable value hereafter—you would have begun to unite the government with the governed; and unless you do that, no government will be safe, and any hurricane may overturn it or throw it into confusion.

Now, suppose the Governor-General gone, the Presidencies established, the Governors equal in rank and dignity, and their Councils constituted in the manner I have indicated, is it not reasonable to suppose that the delay which has hitherto been one of the greatest curses of your Indian Government would be almost altogether avoided? Instead of a Governor-General living in Calcutta, or at Simla, never travelling over the whole of the country, and knowing very little about it, and that little only through other official eyes, is it not reasonable to suppose that the action of

the Government would be more direct in all its duties and in every department of its service than has been the case under the system which has existed until now? Your administration of the law, marked by so much disgrace, could never have lasted so long as it has done if the Governors of your Presidencies had been independent Governors. So with regard to matters of police, education, public works, and everything that can stimulate industry, and so with regard to your system of taxation. You would have in every Presidency a constant rivalry for good. The Governor of Madras, when his term of office expired, would be delighted to show that the people of that Presidency were contented, that the whole Presidency was advancing in civilization, that roads and all manner of useful public works were extending, that industry was becoming more and more a habit of the people, and that the exports and imports were constantly increasing. The Governors of Bombay and the rest of the Presidencies would be animated by the same spirit, and so you would have all over India, as I have said, a rivalry for good; you would have placed a check on that malignant spirit of ambition which has worked so much evil—you would have no Governor so great that you could not control him, none who might make war when he pleased; war and annexation would be greatly checked, if not entirely prevented; and I do in my conscience believe you would have laid the foundation for a better and more permanent form of government for India than has ever obtained since it came under the rule of England.

But how long does England propose to govern India? Nobody answers that question, and nobody can answer it. Be it 50, or 100, or 500 years, does any man with the smallest glimmering of common sense believe that so great a country, with its twenty different nations and its twenty languages, can ever be bound up and consolidated into one compact and enduring empire? I believe such a thing to be utterly impossible. We must fail in the attempt if ever we make it, and we are bound to look into the future with reference to that point. The Presidency of Madras,

for instance, having its own Government, would in fifty years become one compact State, and every part of the Presidency would look to the city of Madras as its capital, and to the Government of Madras as its ruling power. If that were to go on for a century or more, there would be five or six Presidencies of India built up into so many compact States; and if at any future period the sovereignty of England should be withdrawn, we should leave so many Presidencies built up and firmly compacted together, each able to support its own independence and its own Government; and we should be able to say we had not left the country a prey to that anarchy and discord which I believe to be inevitable if we insist on holding those vast territories with the idea of building them up into one great empire. But I am obliged to admit that mere machinery is not sufficient in this case, either with respect to my own scheme or to that of the noble Lord (Lord Stanley). We want something else than mere clerks, stationery, despatches, and so forth. We want what I shall designate as a new feeling in England, and an entirely new policy in India. We must in future have India governed, not for a handful of Englishmen, not for that Civil Service whose praises are so constantly sounded in this House. You may govern India, if you like, for the good of England, but the good of England must come through the channels of the good of India. There are but two modes of gaining anything by our connection with India. The one is by plundering the people of India, and the other by trading with them. I prefer to do it by trading with them. But in order that England may become rich by trading with India, India itself must become rich, and India can only become rich through the honest administration of justice and through entire security of life and property.

Now, as to this new policy, I will tell the House what I think the Prime Minister should do. He ought, I think, always to choose for his President of the Board of Control or his Secretary of State for India, a man who cannot be excelled by any other man in

his Cabinet, or in his party, for capacity, for honesty, for attention to his duties, and for knowledge adapted to the particular office to which he is appointed. If any Prime Minister appoint an inefficient man to such an office, he will be a traitor to the Throne of England. That officer, appointed for the qualities I have just indicated, should, with equal scrupulousness and consciousness, make the appointments, whether of the Governor-General, or (should that office be abolished) of the Governors of the Presidencies of India. Those appointments should not be rewards for old men simply because such men have done good service when in their prime, nor should they be rewards for mere party service, but they should be appointments given under a feeling that interests of the very highest moment, connected with this country, depend on those great offices in India being properly filled. The same principles should run throughout the whole system of government; for, unless there be a very high degree of virtue in all these appointments, and unless our great object be to govern India well and to exalt the name of England in the eyes of the whole Native population, all that we have recourse to in the way of machinery will be of very little use indeed.

I admit that this is a great work; I admit, also, that the further I go into the consideration of this question, the more I feel that it is too large for me to grapple with, and that every step we take in it should be taken as if we were men walking in the dark. We have, however, certain great principles to guide us, and by their light we may make steps in advance, if not fast, at any rate sure. But we start from an unfortunate position. We start from a platform of conquest by force of arms extending over a hundred years. There is nothing in the world worse than the sort of foundation from which we start. The greatest genius who has shed lustre on the literature of this country has said, "There is no sure foundation set on blood"; and it may be our unhappy fate, in regard to India, to demonstrate the truth of that saying. We are always subjugators, and we must be viewed with hatred and

suspicion. I say we must look at the thing as it is, if we are to see our exact position, what our duty is, and what chance there is of our retaining India and of governing it for the advantage of its people. Our difficulties have been enormously increased by the revolt. The people of India have only seen England in its worst form in that country. They have seen it in its military power, its exclusive Civil Service, and in the supremacy of a handful of foreigners. When Natives of India come to this country, they are delighted with England and with Englishmen. They find themselves treated with a kindness, a consideration, a respect, to which they were wholly strangers in their own country; and they cannot understand how it is that men who are so just, so attentive to them here, sometimes, indeed too often, appear to them in a different character in India. I remember that the Hon. Frederic Shore, who wrote some thirty years since, stated, in his able and instructive book, that even in his time the conduct of the English in India towards the Natives was less agreeable, less kindly, less just than it had been in former years; and in 1853, before the Committee presided over by the hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. T. Baring), evidence was given that the feeling between the rulers and the ruled in India was becoming every year less like what could be desired. It was only the other day there appeared in a letter of the *Times*' correspondent an anecdote which illustrates what I am saying, and which I feel it necessary to read to the House. Mr. Russell, of the *Times*, says:

"I went off to breakfast in a small mosque, which has been turned into a *salle à manger* by some officers stationed here, and I confess I should have eaten with more satisfaction had I not seen, as I entered the enclosure of the mosque, a native badly wounded on a charpoy, by which was sitting a woman in deep affliction. The explanation given of this scene was, that '——[the name of the Englishman was left blank] had been licking two of his bearers (or servants), and had nearly murdered them.' This was one of the

servants, and, without knowing or caring to know the causes of such chastisement, I cannot but express my disgust at the severity—to call it by no harsher name—of some of our fellow-countrymen towards their domestics."

The reading of that paragraph gave me extreme pain. People may fancy that this does not matter much; but I say it matters very much. Under any system of government you will have Englishmen scattered all over India, and conduct like that I have just described, in any district, must create ill feeling towards England, to your rule, to your supremacy; and when that feeling has become sufficiently extensive, any little accident may give fire to the train, and you may have calamities more or less serious, such as we have had during the last twelve months. You must change all this if you mean to keep India. I do not now make any comment upon the mode in which this country has been put into possession of India. I accept that possession as a fact. There we are; we do not know how to leave it, and therefore let us see if we know how to govern it. It is a problem such as, perhaps, no other nation has had to solve. Let us see whether there is enough of intelligence and virtue in England to solve the difficulty. In the first place, then, I say, let us abandon all that system of calumny against the Natives of India which has lately prevailed. Had that people not been docile, the most governable race in the world, how could you have maintained your power for 100 years? Are they not industrious, are they not intelligent, are they not—upon the evidence of the most distinguished men the Indian Service ever produced—endowed with many qualities which make them respected by all Englishmen who mix with them? I have heard that from many men of the widest experience, and have read the same in the works of some of the best writers upon India. Then let us not have these constant calumnies against such a people. Even now there are men who go about the country speaking as if such things had never been contradicted, and talking of mutilations and atrocities committed in

India. The less we say about atrocities the better. Great political tumults are, I fear, never brought about or subdued without grievous acts on both sides deeply to be regretted. At least, we are in the position of invaders and conquerors—they are in the position of the invaded and the conquered. Whether I were a native of India, or of England, or of any other country, I would not the less assert the great distinction between their position and ours in that country, and I would not permit any man in my presence, without rebuke, to indulge in the calumnies and expressions of contempt which I have recently heard poured forth without measure upon the whole population of India.

There is one other point to which I wish to address myself before I sit down, and in touching upon it I address myself especially to the noble Lord (Lord Stanley) and his colleagues in the Government. If I had the responsibility of administering the affairs of India, there are certain things I would do. I would, immediately after this Bill passes, issue a Proclamation in India which should reach every subject of the British Crown in that country, and be heard of in the territories of every Indian Prince or Rajah. I would offer a general amnesty. It is all very well to talk of issuing an amnesty to all who have done nothing; but who is there that has done nothing in such a state of affairs as has prevailed during the past twelve months? If you pursue your vengeance until you have rooted out and destroyed every one of those soldiers who have revolted, when will your labour cease? If you are to punish every non-military Native of India who has given a piece of bread or a cup of water to a revolted trooper, how many Natives will escape your punishment and your vengeance? I would have a general amnesty, which should be put forth as the first great act done directly by the Queen of England in the exercise of Sovereign power over the territories of India. In this Proclamation I would promise to the Natives of India a security for their property as complete as we have here at home; and I would put an end to all those mischievous and irritating inquiries

which have been going on for years in many parts of India as to the title to landed estates, by which you tell the people of that country that unless each man can show an unimpeachable title to his property for ninety years you will dispossess him. What would be the state of things here if such a regulation were adopted?

I would also proclaim to the people of India that we would hold sacred that right of adoption which has prevailed for centuries in that country. It was only the other day that I had laid before me the case of a Native Prince who has been most faithful to England during these latter trials. When he came to the throne at ten years of age he was made to sign a document, by which he agreed that if he had no children his territories should be at the disposal of the British Government, or what was called the paramount power. He has been married; he has had one son and two or three daughters; but within the last few weeks his only son has died. There is grief in the palace, and there is consternation among the people, for the fact of this agreement entered into by the boy of ten years old is well known to all the inhabitants of the country. Representations have already been made to this country in the hope that the Government will cancel that agreement, and allow the people of that State to know that the right of adoption would not be taken from their Prince in case he should have no other son. Let the Government do that, and there is not a corner of India into which that intelligence would not penetrate with the rapidity of lightning. And would not that calm the anxieties of many of those independent Princes and Rajahs who are only afraid that when these troubles are over, the English Government will recommence that system of annexation out of which, I believe, all these troubles have arisen?

I would tell them also in that Proclamation, that while the people of England hold that their own, the Christian religion, is true and the best for mankind, yet that it is consistent with that religion that they who profess it should hold inviolable the rights of conscience and the rights of religion in others. I would show,

that whatever violent, over-zealous, and fanatical men may have said in this country, the Parliament of England, the Ministers of the Queen, and the Queen herself, are resolved that upon this point no kind of wrong should be done to the millions who profess the religions held to be true in India. I would do another thing. I would establish a Court of Appeal, the Judges of which should be Judges of the highest character in India, for the settlement of those many disputes which have arisen between the Government of India and its subjects, some Native and some European. I would not suffer these questions to come upon the floor of this House. I would not forbid them by statute, but I would establish a Court which should render it unnecessary for any man in India to cross the ocean to seek for that justice which he would then be able to get in his own country without corruption or secret bargain. Then I would carry out the proposition which the noble Lord has made to-night, and which the right hon. Gentleman the Chancellor of the Exchequer made when he introduced his Bill, that a Commission should be issued to inquire into the question of finance. I would have other commissions, one for each Presidency, and I would tell the people of India that there should be a searching inquiry into their grievances, and that it was the interest and the will of the Queen of England that those grievances should be redressed.

Now, perhaps I may be told that I am proposing strange things, quite out of the ordinary routine of government. I admit it. We are in a position that necessitates something out of the ordinary routine. There are positions and times in the history of every country, as in the lives of individuals, when courage and action are absolute salvation; and now the Crown of England, acting by the advice of the responsible Ministers, must, in my opinion, have recourse to a great and unusual measure in order to allay the anxieties which prevail throughout the whole of India. The people of India do not like us, but they scarcely know where to turn if we left them. They are sheep literally without a shepherd. They are people whom

you have subdued, and who have the highest and strongest claims upon you—claims which you cannot forget—claims which, if you do not act upon, you may rely upon it that, if there be a judgment for nations—as I believe there is—as for individuals, our children in no distant generation must pay the penalty which we have purchased by neglecting our duty to the populations of India.

I have now stated my views and opinions on this question, not at all in a manner, I feel, equal to the question itself. I have felt the difficulty in thinking of it; I feel the difficulty in speaking of it—for there is far more in it and about it than any man, however much he may be accustomed to think upon political questions, and to discuss them, can comprise at all within the compass of a speech of ordinary length. I have described the measures which I would at once adopt for the purpose of soothing the agitation which now disturbs and menaces every part of India, and of inviting the submission of those who are now in arms against you. Now I believe—I speak in the most perfect honesty—I believe that the announcement of these measures would avail more in restoring tranquillity than the presence of an additional army, and I believe that their full and honest adoption would enable you to retain your power in India. I have sketched the form of government which I would establish in India and at home, with the view of securing perfect responsibility and an enlightened administration. I admit that these things can only be obtained in degree, but I am convinced that a Government such as that which I have sketched would be free from most of the errors and the vices that have marked and marred your past career in India. I have given much study to this great and solemn question. I entreat the House to study it not only now, during the passing of this Bill, but after the Session is over, and till we meet again next year, when in all probability there must be further legislation upon this great subject; for I believe that upon this question depends very much, for good or for evil, the future of this country of which we are citizens, and which we all

regard and love so much. You have had enough of military reputation on Eastern fields; you have gathered large harvests of that commodity, be it valuable or be it worthless. I invite you to something better, and higher, and holier than that; I invite you to a glory not "fanned by conquest's crimson wing," but based upon the solid and lasting benefits which I believe the Parliament of England can, if it will, confer upon the countless populations of India.

II

INDIA—II

(FROM HANSARD)

House of Commons, August 1, 1859.

[On August 1 Sir Charles Wood made his financial statement on India to the House of Commons. One of his proposals was that the Government should be empowered to raise 5,000,000*l.* in the United Kingdom in order to meet the demands of the present year. The Loan Bill passed through both Houses.]

BUT there is another course that may fairly be recommended. It is to take India as it is, the empire with all your annexations as it stands, and to see if it is not possible to do something better with it than you have done before, and to give it a chance in future years of redeeming not only the character of the Government but its financial and legislative position. The noble Lord (Lord Stanley) says there cannot be any great diminution in the expenditure for the Civil Service of India; but I do not in the least agree with the Secretary for India when he says that the gentlemen of the Civil Service in that country are not overpaid. Every one knows that they are overpaid; except some very high-salaried Bishops of whom we have heard, no men are so grossly overpaid as the officials of the Civil Service in India. The proof of this may be found everywhere. Look at the Island of Ceylon; there the duties are as arduous and the climate as unfavourable as in India; yet the Government does not pay its officials there

more than one-half or two-thirds of the salaries they are paid in India. There are in India itself many hundreds of Europeans, the officers of the Indian army, all the Indian clergy, and missionaries; there are also English merchants, carrying on their business at rates of profit not much exceeding the profits made in this country. But the Civil Service of the Indian Government, like everything privileged and exclusive, is a pampered body; and, notwithstanding it has produced some few able men who have worthily done their duty, I do not think the Civil Service of India deserves the loud praise we have so frequently heard awarded to it by speakers in this House. Now if you could reduce the expense of the Civil Service by any considerable amount, the best thing you could do with the money would be to increase the establishment by sending a greater number of competent persons as magistrates, collectors, and officials into the distant provinces, and thereby double the facilities for good government in those districts. If you could reduce the income of the Civil Service one-half, you could for the same money have a more efficient Service throughout India than at present. You might not save money, but you would get a more complete Service for it.

But the military question the House of Commons will certainly have to take in hand; though Secretaries for India are afraid to grapple with it. I am not astonished that they feel some hesitation in doing so, for from every one connected with the Military Service they would hear the strongest objections to reducing the number of the troops. But let me ask the Committee to consider what it has just heard. Before the Revolt the European troops in India numbered 45,000 and the Native troops 250,000; now the 45,000 European troops are 110,000, and the 250,000 Native soldiers are raised to 300,000. What was it that we heard during the Indian Mutiny; what was the cause of all the letters that appeared in the newspapers? Every man said that the great evil was having a Native army far larger than was required. That has been the source of peril, and that was the real cause of the mutiny. Now we

have even a larger portion of this most perilous element than we had before. The authorities of India do not appear to have learnt anything from the mutiny, or they have learnt that all that was said in this House and in this country was untrue, because they have 50,000 more Native troops than they had before the mutiny. Therefore, the mode of argument appears to be this: A Native army was the cause of the mutiny, the cause of all our perils, and now it is necessary to have more of it; and, as that is the perilous element, of course 45,000 troops are not sufficient to keep them in check; therefore, you have at present 110,000; and certain officers who were examined, and the Commissioners who reported, recommended that you should always have at least 80,000 Europeans there. If we are only to have one body of troops to watch another, it seems to me there can be no hope of any diminution of our military force, nor any real reduction in our expenditure. Why is it that you require all this army? Let me ask the Committee to look at the matter as sensible men of business. The Revolt, which has been such a terrible affair, has been suppressed. It was suppressed mainly by the 45,000 men in India, and not by the 110,000 you have succeeded in placing there at a later period. More than that, there is not at the present moment any alarming amount of dissatisfaction in India, or at least the dissatisfied are dispirited, and have lost all hope of resisting the power of England, and must for a long period, I think, remain wholly dispirited. At the same time, you have disarmed the people over a vast province. There are millions of people in India, a great number of whom were previously in possession of arms, who do not now possess a single weapon. I have seen in the last accounts, only a day or two since, a statement that not less than 1,400 forts in the kingdom of Oude alone have been destroyed, and we know that many more have been destroyed in other parts. There is at this moment no power for combined organized armed resistance against you, except that which is in the Native army, which the Indian Government has been building up of late to a greater extent than ever.

The noble Lord (Lord Stanley) spoke of one point—the great importance of which I admit—the want of confidence and sympathy that must have arisen between the two races in consequence of the transactions of the last two years. The shock of revolt must have created great suspicion and hatred and fear, and there is nothing out of which panic grows so easily as out of those conditions. I believe that is the case in India, and perhaps there are indications of something of the kind at home. There is a panic, therefore, and neither the Governor-General nor the Civil Service nor military officers can make up their minds that they are safe, recollecting the transactions of the past two years, in having a less military force than we now have in India. But if you ask those gentlemen they will never say they have enough. There are Admirals here, as we know, who are perfectly wild about ships, with whom arithmetic on such a question goes for nothing. They would show you in the clearest possible manner that you have not ships enough. So also, although I am glad to find not to the same extent, as to troops. Some one said the other night, in answer to an hon. Gentleman, about an increased force of a particular kind, "There is nothing like leather," and it is so. I say naval officers and military officers are not the men to whom the Chancellor of the Exchequer should depute the great and solemn duty of determining what amount shall be expended for military purposes. There is not a country in the world that would not have been bankrupt long since, and plunged into irretrievable ruin, if the military authorities had been allowed to determine the amount of military force to be kept up, and the amount of revenue to be devoted to that purpose.

I have another objection to this great army, and I now come to the question of policy, which, I am sorry to say for India, has not been touched upon. I do not think this is a question to be merely settled by a very clever manner of giving the figures of the case. Those figures depend upon the course you intend to pursue, upon the policy which the Government intends to adopt, in that country. With this great army two

things are certain—we can have no reform of any kind in the Government of India, nor an improved conduct on the part of the English in India towards the Natives of India. With a power like this—110,000 English troops, with an English regiment within an hour's reach of each civil servant, you will find that the supremacy of the conquering race will be displayed in the most offensive manner.

Everybody connected with India—the hon. Member for Devonport (Sir Erskine Perry), the hon. Member for Aberdeen (Colonel Sykes)—all who are connected with India, know well that when the English were feeble in India, when they had not a great army in the field or a great revenue to support it, every Englishman treated the Natives by whom he was surrounded rather with the feeling that he was an intruder in the country, and that it was not only proper but absolutely necessary to deal in a conciliatory and just manner with the great body of the Natives in India; but precisely as our power increased the conduct of our countrymen changed, and I find in the excellent book of Mr. Shore that thirty years ago he describes this as the very source of the growing ill-feeling between the races in India. It has grown from that time to this, until we have an irritation and animosity which in our time, it may be, we shall see very little removed, and which may perhaps never be wholly allayed. A Government, then, with this vast army, must always be in a difficulty. Lord Canning—Lord anybody else—cannot turn his attention to anything but this wearing, exasperating question of how money is to be got for the next quarter to pay this army. He cannot turn his attention in any way to reforms, and I am convinced that this House must insist upon the Government reducing its army, whatever be the risk. A large army will render it impossible for you to hold the country, for you will have a constantly increasing debt, and anarchy must inevitably overwhelm you in the end. A small army, a moderate, conciliatory, and just Government, with the finances in a prosperous condition;—and I know not but that this country may possess for generations and centuries a

share, and a large share, in the government of those vast territories which it has conquered.

As to measures of reduction, I admit that it is of little use attempting them unless they are accompanied by other changes. Here I have a charge to bring against the Indian Government. I did hope when the noble Lord spoke to-night that he would have told us something which I am sure he must have known; that there is no such thing as a real Government in India at all; that there is no responsibility either to a public opinion there, or to a public opinion at home; and that therefore we cannot expect a better policy or happier results. Let hon. Gentlemen imagine a Government like that in India, over which the payers of the taxes have not the slightest control; for the great body of the people in India have, as we all know, no control in any way over the Government. Neither is there any independent English opinion that has any control over the Government, the only opinions being those of the Government itself, or those of the Military and Civil Services, and chiefly of the latter. They are not the payers of taxes; they are the spenders and the enjoyers of the taxes, and therefore the Government in India is in the most unfortunate position possible for the fulfilment of the great duties that must devolve upon every wise and just Government. The Civil Service, being privileged, is arrogant, and I had almost said tyrannous, as any one may see who reads the Indian papers, which mainly represent the opinion of that Service and the Military Service, which, as everywhere else where it is not checked by the resolution of the taxpayers and civilians, is clamorous and insatiable for greater expenditure. The Governor-General himself—and I do not make any attack upon Lord Canning, although I could conceive a Governor-General more suited to his great and difficult position—he is a creature of these very Services.

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The noble Lord opposite (Lord Stanley) did an excellent thing. He did honour to himself by appointing a man of a new sort as Governor of Madras. I

have not much acquaintance with Sir C. Trevelyan, but I believe him to be a very intelligent man and very earnest for the good of India. But he finds that at Madras he is like a man who is manacled, as all the Governors are. He is able to do almost nothing. But he has a spirit above being the passive instrument for doing nothing in the hands of the Governor-General, and he has been disposed to make several changes which have looked exceedingly heterodox to those who are connected with the old Government of India, and which have shocked the nerves of the fifteen old gentlemen who meet in Leadenhall Street, and their brethren in India. I find that among the changes endeavoured to be effected by Sir C. Trevelyan, the following are enumerated: He has endeavoured to conciliate the Natives by abolishing certain ceremonial distinctions which were supposed to degrade them when visiting the Government House; he has shown that personal courtesy to them which appears to be too much neglected in India; he has conspicuously rewarded those who have rendered services to the State; he has made one of the Natives his aide-de-camp; he has endeavoured to improve the land tenure, to effect a settlement of the Enam, and to abolish the impress of cattle and carts. He has also abolished three-fourths, or perhaps more, of the paper work of the public servants. He also began the great task of judicial reform, than which none is more urgently pressing. But what is said of Sir C. Trevelyan for instituting these reforms? He has raised a hornets' nest about him. Those who surround the Governor-General at Calcutta say, "We might as well have the Governors of the Presidencies independent, if they are to do as they like without consulting the Governor-General as has been done in past times." The *Friend of India* is a journal not particularly scrupulous in supporting the Calcutta Government, but it has a horror of any Government of India except that of the Governor-General and the few individuals who surround him. A writer in the *Friend of India* says:

"Sir C. Trevelyan relies doubtless on Lord Stanley,

and we do not dream of denying that the Secretary of State has provocation enough to excuse the unusual course he seems obliged to pursue. To send a reform to Calcutta is, at present, simply to lay it aside. It will probably not even be answered for two years, certainly not carried in five. Even when sanctioned, it will have to pass through a crucible through which no plan can escape entire. That weary waiting for Calcutta, of which all men, from Lord Stanley to the people of Singapore, now bitterly complain, may well tempt the Secretary to carry on his plans by the first mode offered to his hand."

Here are only a dozen lines from a long article, and there are other articles in the same paper to the same purport. I think, then, that I am justified in condemning any Secretary for India who contents himself with giving us the figures necessary to show the state of the finances, which any clerk in the office could have done, and abstains from going into the questions of the government of India and that policy upon which alone you can base any solid hope of an improvement in the condition of that country.

There is another point I would mention. The Governor-General of India goes out knowing little or nothing of India. I know exactly what he does when he is appointed. He shuts himself up to study the first volumes of Mr. Mill's "History of India," and he reads through this laborious work without nearly so much effect in making him a good Governor-General as a man might ignorantly suppose. He goes to India, a country of twenty nations, speaking twenty languages. He knows none of those nations, and he has not a glimmer of the grammar and pronunciation or meaning of those languages. He is surrounded by half-a-dozen or a dozen gentlemen who have been from fifteen to forty years in that country, and who have scrambled from the moderate but sure allowance with which they began in the Service to the positions they now occupy. He knows nothing of the country or the people, and they are really unknown to the Government of India. To this hour the present Governor-General has not travelled

through any considerable portion of the territory of India. If he did, he would have to pay an increased insurance upon his life for travelling through a country in which there are very few roads and no bridges at all. Observe the position, then, in which the Governor-General is placed. He is surrounded by an official circle, he breathes an official air, and everything is dim or dark beyond it. You lay duties upon him which are utterly beyond the mental or bodily strength of any man who ever existed, and which he cannot therefore adequately perform.

Turning from the Governor-General to the Civil Service, see how short the period is in which your servants in that country remain in any particular office. You are constantly criticizing the bad customs of the United States, where every postmaster and many other officers lose their situations, and where others are appointed whenever a new President is elected. You never make blunders like the United States, and you will therefore be surprised at a statement given in evidence by Mr. Underhill, the Secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society. He says that in certain districts in Bengal there are three or four Englishmen to 1,000,000 inhabitants, and that the magistrates are perpetually moving about. I have here the names of several gentlemen cited. Mr. Henry Lushington went to India in 1821, and remained till 1842. During these twenty-one years he filled twenty-one different offices; he went to Europe twice, being absent from India not less than four and a quarter years. Upon an average, therefore, he held his twenty-one offices not more than nine months each. Mr. J. P. Grant was Governor of Bengal. That was so good a place that he remained stationary in it. But he went to India in 1828 and remained there until 1841. In those thirteen years he held twenty-four different situations, being an average of less than six months for each. Mr. Charles Grant—and I may say that Grant is a name which for three or four generations has been found everywhere in India—he was in India from 1829 to 1842, and in those thirteen years he filled seventeen offices, being an average of only

eight months for each office. Mr. Halliday, Governor of Bengal, went to India in 1825, and remained until 1843. In those eighteen years he held twenty-one offices, and he did not become stationary until he was accredited to the lucrative and great office of Governor of Bengal.

I think these facts show that there is something in the arrangements of the Indian Government which makes it no Government at all, except for the purpose of raising money and spending taxes. It is no Government for watching over the people and conferring upon them those blessings which we try to silence our consciences by believing the British Government is established in India to promote. What can a Governor-General do with such a Council, and with servants who are ever changing in all the departments? I am not stating my own opinion, but what is proved by the blue-books. Mr. Halliday stated that the police of Bengal were more feared than the thieves and dacoits. But how is this Government, so occupied and so embarrassed, to be expected to put the police on a satisfactory footing? With regard to justice, I might appeal to any gentleman who has been in India whether, for the most part, the Judges in the Company's Courts are not without training, and if they are without training, whether they will not probably be without law. The delay is something of which we can have no conception, even with our experience of the Court of Chancery in this country. Perjury and wrong are universal wherever the Courts of the Company's Service have been established in India. Of their taxation we hear enough to-night. It is clumsy and unscientific. In their finance there is such confusion that the Government proposes to send out somebody, not to raise revenue, not to spend it, but somebody who will be able to tell you how it is raised and spent, for that is what you want to know. They have no system of book-keeping whatever. The Secretary of State gives us a statement of revenue and expenditure up to the 30th of April, 1858, sixteen months back, and even for the year preceding he can only furnish what he calls an "esti-

mate." Would any other Legislative Assembly in the whole world, except this, tolerate such a state of things? I did try myself several years ago to get a statement of the accounts up to a later period; but I found it was of no use. They ought to be brought up to a later period; the thing is quite within the range of possibility; it is simply not done because there is no proper system of book-keeping, and no one responsible for doing it.

You have no Government in India; you have no financial statement; you have no system of book-keeping; no responsibility; and everything goes to confusion and ruin because there is such a Government, or no Government, and the English House of Commons has not taken the pains to reform these things. The Secretary of State to-night points to the increase in the English trade. In that trade I am myself interested, and I am delighted to see that increase; but it should be borne in mind that just now it is not a natural increase, and therefore not certain to be permanent. If you are spending so many millions in railroads and in carrying on war—that is, 22,000,000*l.* for your armaments in India instead of 12,000,000*l.*—is not that likely to make a great difference in your power to import more largely from this country? Do not we know that when the Government of the day was pouring English treasure into the Crimea the trade with the Levant was most materially increased? And, therefore, I say it will be a delusion for the right hon. Gentleman to expect that the extraordinary increase which has taken place within the last three years will go on in future in the same proportion.

Now, the point which I wish to bring before the Committee and the Government is this, because it is on this that I rely mainly—I think I may say almost entirely—for any improvement in the future of India. It would be impertinent to take up the time of the Committee by merely cavilling at what other people have said, and pointing out their errors and blunders, if I had no hope of being able to suggest any improvement in the existing state of things. I believe a great

improvement may be made, and by a gradual progress that will dislocate nothing. I dare say it may disappoint some individuals, but where it will disappoint one man in India it will please a thousand. What you want is to decentralize your Government. I hold it to be manifestly impossible to govern 150,000,000 of persons, composing twenty different nations, speaking as many different languages, by a man who knows nothing of India, assisted by half a dozen councillors belonging to a privileged order, many of whom have had very little experience in India, except within narrow limits, and whose experience never involved the consideration and settlement of great questions of statesmanship. If you could have an independent Government in India for every 20,000,000 of its people, I do not hesitate to say, though we are so many thousand miles away, that there are Englishmen who, settling down among those 20,000,000 of people, would be able to conduct the Government of that particular province on conditions wholly different and immeasureably better than anything in the way of administration which we have ever seen in India.

If I were Secretary of State for India,—but as I am not, I will recommend the right hon. Gentleman to do that which I would do myself, or I would not hold his office for one month; because, to hold office and come before the House Session after Session with a gloomy statement, and with no kind of case to show that you are doing anything for India, or that you are justified in holding possession of it at all, is nothing but to receive a salary and to hold a dignity without any adequate notion of the high responsibility attaching to them. I am not blaming the right hon. Gentleman in particular; he is only doing what all his predecessors before him have done. There has been no real improvement since I have sat in Parliament in the government of India, and I believe the Bill of last year is not one whit better for purposes of administration than any that has gone before. But I would suggest to the right hon. Gentleman, whether it would not be a good thing to bring in a Bill to extend and define the powers of the Governors of

the various Presidencies in India? I do not ask the right hon. Gentleman to turn out the fifteen gentlemen who assist him in Leadenhall Street to vegetate on their pensions, but I ask him to go to India and to take the Presidency of Madras for an instance. Let arrangements be made by which that Presidency shall be in a position to correspond directly with him in this country, and let every one connected with that Government of Madras feel that, with regard to the interests and the people of that Presidency, they will be responsible for their protection. At present there is no sort of tie between the governors and the governed. Why is it that we should not do for Madras what has been done for the Island of Ceylon? I am not about to set up the Council of Ceylon as a model institution—it is far from that; but I will tell you what it is, and you will see that it would not be a difficult thing to make the change I propose. The other day I asked a gentleman holding an office in the Government, and who had lived some years in Ceylon, what was the state of the Council? He said it was composed of sixteen members, of whom six were non-official and independent, and the Governor had always a majority. He added that at the present moment in that Council there was one gentleman, a pure Cingalese by birth and blood, another a Brahmin, another a half-caste, whose father was a Dutchman and whose mother was a Native, and three others who were either English merchants or planters. The Council has not much *prestige*, and therefore it is not easy to induce merchants in the interior to be members and to undertake its moderate duties; but the result is that this Cingalese, this Brahmin, this half-caste, and these three Englishmen, although they cannot out-vote Sir H. Ward, the Governor, are able to discuss questions of public interest in the eye and the ear of the public, and to tell what the independent population want, and so to form a representation of public opinion in the Council, which I will undertake to say, although so inefficient, is yet of high importance in the satisfactory government of that island. Why is it that we can have nothing like this in the Councils of Madras or Bombay? It

would be an easy thing to do, and I believe that an Act of Parliament which would do it would lay the foundation of the greatest reform that has yet taken place in India. At present all the Governors are in fetters; and I see that blame has been imputed to Sir Charles Trevelyan for endeavouring to break through those fetters. No doubt an attempt will be made to have him recalled, but I hope that the right hon. Gentleman, while he moderates the ardour of the Governor so far as to prevent a rebellion among the civilians, will support him honestly and faithfully in all those changes which the right hon. Gentleman knows as well as I do are essential to the improvement of the government of that country.

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In speaking on this subject I have nothing new to offer to the attention of the House. I have propounded the very same theories and remedies years ago. They are not my remedies and theories. I am not the inventor of local government for India; but the more I have considered the subject—the more I have discussed it with the Members of this House and with gentlemen connected with India—the more I am convinced that you will not make a single step towards the improvement of India unless you change your whole system of government—unless you give to each Presidency a government with more independent powers than are now possessed by it. What would be thought if the whole of Europe was under one governor, who knew only the language of the Feejee Islands, and that his subordinates were like himself, only more intelligent than the inhabitants of the Feejee Islands are supposed to be? You set a governor over 150,000,000 of human beings, in a climate where the European cannot do the work he has to do so well as here, where neither the moral nor physical strength of the individual is equal to what it is at home—and you do not even always furnish the most powerful men for the office;—you seem to think that the atmosphere will be always calm and the sea always smooth. And so the government of India goes on; there are promises without number of

beneficial changes, but we never hear that India is much better or worse than before. Now, that is not the way to do justice to a great empire like India. If there had been a better government in India, the late disturbances among your own troops would not have happened; and I own I tremble when I reflect that every post may bring us, in the present temper of the European troops in India, some dire intelligence of acts which they may have committed, because they may think that this is a convenient opportunity for pressing some great claim of their own.

I beg the Committee to consider this matter, notwithstanding that the right hon. Gentleman is not disposed to take a gloomy view of the state of India. Look at your responsibilities. India is ruled by Englishmen, but remember that in that unfortunate country you have destroyed every form of government but your own; that you have cast the thrones of the Natives to the ground. Princely families, once the rulers of India, are now either houseless wanderers in the land they once called their own, or are pensioners on the bounty of those strangers by whom their fortunes have been overthrown. They who were noble and gentle for ages are now merged in the common mass of the people. All over those vast regions there are countless millions, helpless and defenceless, deprived of their natural leaders and their ancient chiefs, looking with only some small ray of hope to that omnipresent and irresistible Power by which they have been subjected. I appeal to you on behalf of that people. I have besought your mercy and your justice for many a year past; and if I speak to you earnestly now, it is because the object for which I plead is dear to my heart. Is it not possible to touch a chord in the hearts of Englishmen, to raise them to a sense of the miseries inflicted on that unhappy country by the crimes and the blunders of our rulers here? If you have steeled your hearts against the Natives, if nothing can stir you to sympathy with their miseries, at least have pity upon your own countrymen. Rely upon it, the state of things which now exists in India must, before long, become most serious. I

hope that you will not show to the world that, although your fathers conquered the country, you have not the ability to govern it. You had better disencumber yourselves of the fatal gift of empire than that the present generation should be punished for the sins of the past. I speak in condemnatory language, because I believe it to be deserved. I hope that no future historian will have to say that the arms of England in India were irresistible, and that an ancient empire fell before their victorious progress,—yet that finally India was avenged, because the power of her conqueror was broken by the intolerable burdens and evils which she cast upon her victim, and that this wrong was accomplished by a waste of human life and a waste of wealth which England, with all her power, was unable to bear.

III

INDIA—III.: IRRIGATION

Manchester, December 11, 1877.

[At this time Sir Arthur Cotton was on a visit to Manchester, and the members of the Indian Association in that city convened a meeting in the large room of the Town Hall, with a view of hearing the opinions which Sir Arthur entertained as to the means of preventing famine in India for the future. Mr. Bright was invited to be present and to speak on the subject. The new buildings of the Manchester Corporation were used for the first time on this occasion.

I THANK you, as I ought, for the kind words which the Mayor has spoken in my behalf, and for the cordial reception which you have given me. It is to my mind a very remarkable meeting. The place is remarkable, and the occasion is in accordance with the place. We are in the centre of this great city, which is the centre of a great industry. We are here on the principal market or business day of the week, and we have before us a very large number of persons who on ordinary occasions are engaged with their business, and are not meeting to discuss great social or political questions. I

ask myself this—What is it that has brought these men together in this remarkable place at this remarkable time? Is it some common question which has excited your enthusiasm or your interest, or is it some question greater than any probably that has ever heretofore been submitted to your attention? We are here to discuss matters interesting—intensely interesting—to the people of England, if they knew their own interests, and intensely interesting also to what we call our Indian Empire, which is a country so vast that nobody has any acquaintance with the whole of it; a country so peopled that no census can give us an accurate account of its populations; a country which has, according to the best authorities, a population of 250,000,000 men, women, and children, who owe directly and indirectly some sort of allegiance to the Queen of this nation. The population of India is five times the population of the whole of the rest of the British Empire, and we may consider for a moment how we came into this position in India. It is not by the ordinary course of a long succession that the Crown of England has power in India. It is not that we have held India by centuries of undisputed possession. Our power there is little more than a century old, and the empire has been built up by means which I am afraid have been instrumental in building up almost all great empires, by ambition, and crime, and conquest. We claim to be now what is called the paramount power over a population equal to one-sixth of the whole population of the globe, and we hold this rule by a mere handful—shall I say, of Englishmen?—well, of men from these islands, backed by an army of 60,000 British troops. With regard to revenues, we receive something like 50,000,000*l.* a year in India, which is principally gathered from its people in the shape of taxes, but which includes also a considerable sum procured from the Chinese from a monopoly in opium. We claim the ownership of all the land, and the Government fixes, for the most part, what rent it chooses to receive; which is generally, I am sorry to say, the utmost it can compel. We impose taxes, import duties, as you know,

stamp duties, and some other duties; but, above all, we levy a salt duty, one which is highly productive, but extremely oppressive, to the poor bitterly cruel, to gather which we send the tax gatherer into the humblest hovel in that vast empire. But you must remember that all this great population has no voice on its own affairs. It is dumb before the power that has subjected it. It is never consulted upon any matter connected with its government. It is subject to the power that rules over it in a manner that cannot be said of the population of any civilized or Christian people in the world. We raise revenue; we create patronage; we pay salaries and pensions, and we trade extensively with the country. You have known, or at any rate you have heard in past times of the riches of India. In fact, within the last hundred years, whenever the word India was mentioned, there was a floating vision of vast wealth passed before the eye and the understanding. I recollect one of our poets—James Montgomery, I think —begins a poem in these words:

> "Blow, ye breezes, gently blowing,
> Waft me to that happy shore
> Where, from fountains ever flowing,
> Indian realms their treasures pour."

And yet there is nothing in the world more clear than this, that India is essentially a country at this moment of great and abject poverty, and that the reputation of its wealth has only been founded upon the fact that it is a country which marauders have always found it easy to plunder.

In this country about which I am speaking there have been famines of a destructive and appalling character, and we are met here to-day for the purpose of discussing how those famines have arisen, and whether it be within the power of human benevolence and statesmanship to put an end to them in future. England for the most part has taken no note of those famines. India is a long way off. It was a very long way when people went round by the Cape. It is far off on the map, although by the wire you speak with it in a few minutes,

and you receive an answer in a few hours. But England took no note of this distant country until there came the calamity of the mutiny, when England suffered greatly, and passed through a great humiliation—for it is a humiliation to any Government that its subjects, and especially that its army, should turn against it. But when the mutiny took place the East India Company fell. If we had discussed India, or the character of the East India Company, in the House of Commons twelve months before the mutiny, the President of the Board of Control, or what is now the Secretary of State for India, would have delivered you a speech an hour long in praise of the wisdom and success of the government of the Company. I took great pains to show that these praises were not deserved, and I urged for years that the Company should be abolished. When the mutiny came in 1857 there was nobody to say anything, or hardly anything, for the Company, and that famous old institution tumbled over at once, and it had scarcely a friend or a single element of power left in it.

We are now in view of another great calamity—the calamity of famine—and I trust that we shall find that not only Parliament but the whole people of England will be willing to give a fair and honest attention to the question that we are here to discuss to-day, and which must before long be discussed in many parts of the country, and also on the floor of Parliament. What are these famines? Some of them you have never heard of, or if you have you do not remember them. There was a famine in 1837-8, which affected 8,000,000 of people, 5,000,000 with great severity, during which no less than 800,000 persons died of famine, more than half as many again as all the men, women, and children of this great city in which we are assembled, and the people of England scarcely heard anything of it, excepting now and then in a paragraph extracted from an Indian paper. In 1860-1 there was another famine. There were 13,000,000 affected, 5,000,000 suffered intensely. The mortality, as far as I have searched for it, is not on record, but I do not think there is any

reason to believe it was any smaller than in the previous famine. In 1863 there came the famine in Bengal and Orissa, and one quarter of the population died in some of the districts. The total amount of the deaths was enormous. Nearly the whole of the labouring population was swept away over large districts of country during the pressure of that calamity. In 1868-9 occurred the great famine in Rajpootana and the districts around it. One hundred thousand square miles, or one-sixth of the whole area of the country, was more or less affected by this famine, and 1,250,000 persons are admitted by the Government estimate to have perished of hunger. In 1877, the present year, it is estimated that more than 500,000 people—that is, more than all the population of this great city—have died, and those who die, or the figures of those who died, do not represent the whole calamity. There are multitudes who die afterwards, who suffer and linger, who know never again a day's good health, and whose names are not on the record which tells us of the mortality of the famine. And then there is the loss of cattle. It is enormous. The loss of cattle in a country altogether agricultural of course must be the loss of the principal source of wealth.

The loss of produce, the loss of revenue to the Government, the loss of trade, all this is absolutely beyond calculation, and if one could add all these losses together and show you how much it was, you would find that all the money which Sir Arthur Cotton proposes to have expended in the moments of his greatest hope—or, if you like, his greatest enthusiasm—would be a mere trifle to that which has been sacrificed by these famines, which might probably have altogether been prevented. Sir A. Cotton referred to the number of persons supposed to have died. I was reading the other day a very interesting pamphlet by Mr. R. Elliott, who has been a planter in India, and is well acquainted with many parts of the country. This was published several years ago. Mr. Elliott said that within ten years more than 2,800,000, nearly 3,000,000 persons, had been proved to have died from famine, and

this year we have added to the number another 500,000. Now, the question is, How long is this to go on? What are we to say of a Government which has all this passing under its eye from year to year, and all that I have described within the last ten or fifteen years, and makes no strong and resolute effort to meet it? Look at its effect upon the Government and upon the people. India is poor. Its taxation has almost reached its limits; it is so high that you cannot turn the screw a bit more. There has been very frequently and for many years a deficit when the annual expenses are made up. Bankruptcy is threatening the country. There is the loss of credit to the Government; and yet no Governor-General in India with his Council, no Indian Secretary in London with his cumbrous and burdensome Council, not one of these great personages who are connected with the Government of India, steps forward resolutely with intelligence and force and courage to say that these great calamities, so injurious to India, so perilous and humiliating to England, shall, if possible, for ever be put an end to.

Now we come to the question whether there be any remedy. There are some misfortunes of such a nature, that the moment you find the cause you find the remedy. If a man suffers from hunger you give him something to eat. I think Daniel O'Connell said, when some one complained that his horse was starving, "Have you tried corn?" The calamity which you hear of in India is that famine is there, and that the famine arises from drought; that there is a lack of water, or at least a lack of water in the right place and at the right time. There is always soil, and there is always sun, and there is always rain; but the rain does not always fall when you want it, and it is not at the particular time just as much or as little as you want it. But if you have soil, and sun, and water, and human labour, you may have rich harvests throughout a great portion of India. Now that is a very simple doctrine, which I suppose few people will be disposed to dispute. But with the rainfall there is some difficulty, because the rain comes down there sometimes in profuse quantities. It does not rain,

as we say here, cats and dogs, but I suppose tigers and lions, or anything else you may use as an illustration. But sometimes the heavens are as brass, and there is no rain, not only for weeks but for months.

Now, what is the remedy? Everybody has known the remedy for centuries. If you had before you, as I have seen, an ancient map of the Presidency of Madras, you would think there was no dry land for the people to live upon, the map is so marked with tanks. You will understand that what Sir Arthur Cotton means by tanks is not the sort of thing we call a tank here; but it is a large reservoir, sometimes of miles in extent, and like some of our greatest lakes. Well, this map of Madras is marked out with these tanks or reservoirs from north to south and from east to west, and it shows that the rulers of the people of those ancient days had just the same evil to contend with that we have, and that they manfully did their best to subdue it.

Our Government knows perfectly well what is the remedy, but what do they do? Whenever there is a famine they begin to think about some manner of irrigating that particular district. They generally wait until the horse is stolen before they lock the stable door. I give you an extract here. I quote from an interesting article in the *Fortnightly Review* by Colonel Chesney, who by many persons will be admitted to be a great authority. He says, "The Ganges canal was the outcome of the great famine of 1833; the new project in the Doab of the famine of 1861; the Orissa works of that of 1866." He says, "Oude has escaped famine so far, and in Oude no irrigation works have been constructed." And then he goes on to say that the Indian Government is very like a father who spends a great deal on the doctor or the nurse, if his child is ill and ready to die, but in ordinary times does not take the smallest care of him whatever, or teach him anything with regard to the preservation of his own health. That is the policy which the India Company in past times pursued, and which the Indian Government is yet pursuing for the most part with regard to that very large child it has the care of—the 250,000,000 of people

in our Indian Empire. Now, I have given you the opinion of Colonel Chesney. I might give you one or two others, but I will not trouble you with quotations, for I do not think the question requires it. Sir Charles Trevelyan, who is one of the most intelligent men who have been connected with the Indian Government, and who has been Governor of the province of Madras, on hearing a paper read by Sir Arthur Cotton, said he was satisfied that with a thorough system of irrigation famines would be impossible in India. Speaking of what Sir Arthur Cotton had done on the Godavery and Kistna he says, "If all India were treated in the same way, famines would be impossible." Next I give you the opinion of Sir Bartle Frere, a very distinguished Indian servant of the Crown, who has now been sent out, as you know, as the Governor of the South African dominions of the Crown—the Cape of Good Hope. He says:

"It is the fashion to deny the facts regarding the results of the irrigation works on which Sir Arthur Cotton's calculations are based, but I feel certain that the more they are tested the more clearly will it be seen that in no other way can money be so advantageously expended with a view to future production and cheap supply as in great works of irrigation and internal navigation."

Now, I have given you the opinions of three persons. I might keep you here an hour in reading the opinions of men almost equally distinguished, and to the same purport. So I take it for granted that when we have the judgment of past Governments—I mean the ancient Governments of India; the judgment of our own Government of India, when a calamity occurs; the opinion of Colonel Chesney, of Sir Charles Trevelyan, of Sir Bartle Frere, of Sir Arthur Cotton, and I venture to say, also, the unanimous opinion of all the intelligent engineers who are connected with India, we must come to this one conclusion—that as we have found out what is the malady under which these people die, we have also found out the remedy by which they might, if it had been applied, have been kept alive.

They say that Sir Arthur Cotton is an enthusiast. Well, we have all been enthusiasts in our time, and the world would be a dull world if there were no real and honest enthusiasm in it. But Sir Arthur Cotton is not surpassed by any man in the Indian service for long experience and for great success in the works in which he has been connected and which he has undertaken. He has broader and grander views than some of his competitors, or some of his fellow-officers, or of those connected with the Government. But he knows that this is a great question, that India is a great country, that 250,000,000 of people are a great people; and therefore he thinks that a broader and a grander policy is necessary. Why is it that the Governor-General of India and his Council in Calcutta, and Lord Salisbury, and those who have preceded him as Secretaries of State for India in England, and his Council—why is it that they regard this question with so little favour? They are always on the brink of bankruptcy; the Government wrings whatever it can from the people—it takes every farthing it can get from them. It is admitted that taxation cannot be carried to a higher limit, and yet all that they get from taxation is not enough to spend, for they spend more than 6,000,000*l.* or 7,000,000*l.* which comes to them from the sale of monopoly opium in China. They have spent all this for years past; and besides spending that, they have incurred a debt, say of 100,000,000*l.* sterling. Therefore they are always in terror of a bankrupt exchequer, and they turn their backs upon anybody who proposes that they should deal largely with any question, however important, if it requires that there should be a considerable or a large expenditure.

Now the question, in my opinion, is very much too great for the officials at Calcutta. You know that a new Governor-General of India is sent out from this country about every five years. As a rule, as far as my experience goes, these gentlemen do not know any more than the majority of their own class in society know upon this question. They begin, the moment they are appointed, to read "Mill's British India." I

met—I do not know whether I have stated this before in public, but I recollect meeting a Governor-General with whom I was acquainted, just after he was appointed. I met him at Euston Station in London, and I observed that he had got a book under his arm, and was hurrying away. I spoke to him and said, "If I were in the habit of laying wagers I would lay a wager that I could tell the name of the book under your arm." Well, he looked surprised and amused, and said, "What is it?" I said, "I think it is 'Mill's British India.'" He said it was quite true. He was beginning to read Mill, for he thought that as he was going out to India it was necessary that he should, if possible, rub up the information which perhaps in the lapse of years had passed from his mind. But when you come to discuss with the officials in Calcutta the question of railways there, they can open their minds to the large, and as they consider it the necessary expenditure; but the question of railways, in their opinion, is a totally different one from the question of canals, either for navigation or irrigation.

I think the question of railways is far more a question for the English, as a power in India, than for the native people in India. It is a great military question. It was supposed that with one regiment they could do the work in maintaining order or suppressing insurrection with railways, that would require three regiments when there were no railways, though since they have made railways the authorities have half as many more men in India as they had when there were no railways at all. So that with regard to railways, whether they pay or not (and I am taking the statement of Sir Arthur Cotton with regard to the State railways that are being made, I have not examined the figures minutely myself), whether they pay or not, such is the fear of the authorities in Calcutta as to the peril connected with their power in India, that railways must be made for the sake of the permanence of that power, although they may not be worth one-twentieth part of what canals for navigation or irrigation would be worth in relation to the true interests, comfort, and prosperity of the

millions of Natives of the country. Why is it, if they have spent 100,000,000*l.*, or 120,000,000*l.*, and it is much more if you add the debt—if they have spent all that upon railways—and yet the vast bulk of India is not touched by railways at this moment—why should they hesitate as to a policy which, by spending one quarter of it, or 25,000,000*l.*, within the next few years, might redeem India from the disgrace which attends it from this neglect, and might redeem that vast population from the suffering which periodically assails it?

There are engineers in India—and where great works are to be done great engineers are found—though we cannot hope that Sir Arthur Cotton himself will ever again give his time and labour to works of this kind in India, yet I have no doubt there are other men, and not a few of them, who would have the ambition to tread in his steps, and who after their forty or fifty years in India might point to works as grand as his, which entitle him not only to the gratitude of the people of India, but to the high esteem and the grateful consideration of the people of England too. Thirty millions spent in this way, at the rate of interest at which the English Government could borrow it, would be only about 1,000,000*l.* per annum; and at the rate at which the Indian Government could borrow, it would not certainly be more than 2,000,000*l.* per annum.

Well, if these canals could be made, if this cheap navigation could be provided—and recollect that the people of India do not want to travel by express trains, their time is not worth the expense of such travelling—they would be very glad to go even at half the speed of an ordinary train in India. Their produce, which is mostly what you call raw produce from the soil, dees not require to travel at twenty miles an hour. They cannot afford to pay the cost of travelling at such a rate. If canals for navigation or irrigation were made upon some grand scheme determined by eminent and competent engineers, you would find the produce of nearly all the districts of India, all those

not hitherto irrigated, would probably be doubled. Produce would be carried cheaply to the coast, and it would be distributed in the interior of the country, where there was partial scarcity, from where there was great abundance, and the surplus would come to this country and help to feed the growing population we have amongst us. The fact is that England and India would be both blessed by a policy of this kind. The population of India would be redeemed from poverty, and the population of England would have steadier and more constant employment, and a steady and, I hope, satisfactory rate of wages. But it is easy to say what shall be done. Some gentlemen—for whom our friends below are now busy with their fingers and their pens — some gentlemen who direct leading articles in the newspapers will say, "How easy it is to say this and that shall be done;" and they will begin to point out difficulties, and show that these things are doubtful in themselves, and if they are not, the obstacles are such as at the present time, in the present condition of the finances of India, the Government cannot overcome.

I said just now, referring to the Government in Calcutta, that these gentlemen have a terror of expenditure before their eyes. I do not think half a dozen gentlemen in Calcutta—and who, by the way, spend I believe half the year at Simla—are capable of administering the government for 200,000,000 or 250,000,000 of people. I think it is an impossibility, which man in our present state of knowledge and morals will never be able to overcome, to govern one-sixth of all the population of the globe by half a dozen officers from this country—governing a people who have been conquered, and therefore must be less easy to govern; a people who are foreign, and therefore whose wants must be less understood. There never was anything in the world so monstrous as to believe that half a dozen officials in Calcutta can govern one-sixth of the population of the globe, comprising twenty or more different nations and speaking twenty different languages; and yet this is what we expect to have done, and what

many people have believed has been well done by a Governor-General and half a dozen eminent civilians in the city of Calcutta. I believe there is only one person in India, so far as I have ever heard, who is in favour of economy, and he is the Governor-General. All the people with white faces—English, Scotch, Irish, and so forth—are nearly all in the service of the Government. I am not speaking now of the handful of merchants, but all the civilians, engineers, military men, everybody —they are all in favour of, and have an interest in, patronage, promotion, salaries, and ultimately pensions.

And then there is no public opinion which fights in favour of economy. There are two sets of newspapers —those, first, which are published by Englishmen, and these, being the papers of the Services, cannot, of course, be in favour of economy. They assail me every time I mention India in a speech, if it is even only in a single paragraph, and no doubt they will do the same for what I am saying now. Then there are the Native papers; and although there are a great many published in the Native languages, still they have not much of what we call political influence. The Government officials look into them to see if they are saying anything unpleasant to the Government—anything that indicates sedition or discontent, but never for the purpose of being influenced by the judgment of the writers and editors. The actual press of the country which touches the Government is the press of the English; and that press, as a rule, is in favour—and, of course, generally has been in favour—of annexation of more territory, more places, more salaries, and ultimately more pensions. Now I may say of these salaries and pensions that I believe there is no other service in the world, and never has been, in which salaries have been so high and pensions so large as those that have been given by the Indian Government, whether under the East India Company or under the present Government of the Crown. I may say further that their military expenditure, that consisted only of the maintenance of an army of 40,000 men before the mutiny, consists now of an army of 60,000 Europeans, although the mutiny

was subdued, I believe, before a single fresh soldier had landed in that country from this.

It may be said that I am no authority on this subject. I admit it. I admit that the persons who are out there —the Governor-General and his principal ministers, and officers of the army—possibly they may all have opinions that are more worth your considering than mine; but I state these facts, and I say that the Government put over 250,000,000 of people, which has levied taxes till it can levy no more, which spends all that it can levy, and which has borrowed 100,000,000*l.* more than all that it can levy—I say a Government like that has some fatal defect which at some not distant time must bring disaster and humiliation to the Government and to the people on whose behalf it rules.

I have nearly finished what I have to say, but I want to make one reference to what took place nineteen or twenty years ago when the Government of India was changed. At the time when the second reading of the Bill was before the House—a Bill I supported in every stage—I ventured to address a speech to the House of Commons on the general and broad question of our Government in India. I said then that I did not believe, as I have said now, that a Government in Calcutta could ever efficiently direct the affairs of that country or legislate for it; that it could not do its duty to nations speaking twenty languages, comprising, as it is said, now more than 200,000,000 of people—one-sixth the population of the globe. I argued that it was necessary, and would some time become imperative, that the Government of India should be so changed that it should be divided into five or six separate and entirely independent Presidencies; that by that means the government of every district should be brought nearer to the people; that you would not have the Government of Madras contending constantly with the Government of Calcutta, and the Government of Bombay being unable to do many things it would like to have done because the Government at Calcutta would not consent; that if you would divide the country into

different Presidencies, and make each a separate and independent State in itself, with the management of its own government, with its own Council, you would bring the government home to the people. And while the Government would necessarily or probably be much better, you would teach the people of these Presidencies to consider themselves, as generations passed on, as the subjects and the people of that State.

And thus if the time should come—and it will come—I agree with Lord Lawrence that no man who examines the question can doubt that some time it must come—when the power of England, from some cause or other, is withdrawn from India, then each one of these States would be able to sustain itself as a compact, as a self-governing community. You would have five or six great States there, as you have five or six great States in Europe; but that would be a thousand times better than our being withdrawn from it now when there is no coherence amongst those twenty nations, and when we should find the whole country, in all probability, lapse into chaos and anarchy, and into sanguinary and interminable warfare. I believe that it is our duty not only to govern India well now for our own sakes and to satisfy our own conscience, but so to arrange its government and so to administer it that we should look forward to the time—which may be distant, but may not be so remote—when India will have to take up her own government, and administer it in her own fashion. I say he is no statesman—he is no man actuated with a high moral sense with regard to our great and terrible moral responsibility, who is not willing thus to look ahead, and thus to prepare for circumstances which may come sooner than we think, and sooner than any of us hope for, but which must come at some not very distant date. By doing this, I think we should be endeavouring to make amends for the original crime upon which much of our power in India is founded, and for the many mistakes which have been made by men whose intentions have been good. I think it is our duty, if we can, to approach this great question in this spirit, and

to try rightly to discharge the task committed to us, as the Government and rulers of the countless and helpless millions of that country. If we seek thus to deal with those millions, and men in after ages condemn our fathers for the policy which for the time bound India to England, they may award praise to us and to those who come after us for that we have striven to give them that good government and that freedom which He, who is supreme over all lands and all peoples, will in His own good time make the possession of all His children.

IV

INDIA—IV.: PERVERSION OF AFFGHAN DESPATCHES

(FROM HANSARD)

House of Commons, March 19, 1861.

[Mr. Dunlop brought forward a motion to inquire into the discrepancies between certain sets of documents, relating to the Affghan war of 1837-8. It appeared that some passages in the despatches of Sir Alexander Burnes had been mutilated, in order to make it appear that he advised a policy which he really condemned. Mr. Dunlop moved for a Committee to inquire into this alleged mutilation of despatches presented to the House. The motion was negatived.]

WHEN the noble Lord rose, I observed, from his countenance and from his language, that he seemed to be suffering from the passion of anger. [Viscount Palmerston: "Not much."] "Not much," the noble Lord says. I admit that in the course of his speech he calmed down; but he was so far led from what I think was a fair course as to charge the hon. and learned Gentleman who introduced this Motion with making a violent and vituperative speech, and he spoke of "that vocabulary of abuse of which the hon. Gentleman appeared to be master." Now, I will undertake to say that I am only speaking the opinion of every Gentleman in the House who heard the speech which introduced this question, when I say that there has rarely

been delivered here on any subject a speech more strictly logical, more judicially calm, and more admirable than that which we have heard to-night from the hon. and learned Member for Greenock. But the fact is the noble Lord felt himself hit.

The noble Lord is on his trial in this case, and on that account I expect that at the conclusion of the debate he will not feel himself at liberty to object to the appointment of this Committee. After a few sentences the noble Lord touched upon the case of Sir Alexander Burnes, and he made a very faint denial of the misrepresentations which are charged against the Government of that day in the case of that gentleman. But he went on to say that, after all, these things were of no importance; that what was in, or what was left out, was unimportant. But I should like to ask the noble Lord what was the object of the minute and ingenious, and I will say unmatched care, which was taken in mutilating the despatches of a gentleman whose opinions were of no importance and whose writings could not make the slightest difference either to the question or to the opinions of any person concerned? The noble Lord, too, has stooped to conduct which, if I were not in this House, I might describe in language which I could not possibly use here without being told that I was transgressing the line usually observed in discussions in this assembly. The noble Lord has stooped so low as to heap insult, throughout the whole of his speech, upon the memory of a man who died in the execution of what he believed to be his public duty—a duty which was thrust upon him by the mad and obstinate policy of the noble Lord; and whilst his blood cries to Heaven against that policy, the noble Lord, during a three-quarters of an hour's speech in this House, has scarcely ceased to heap insult on his memory.

What the noble Lord told us throughout his speech was that Sir Alexander Burnes was a man of the greatest simplicity of character. I could not, however complimentary I were disposed to be, retort that upon the noble Lord. He says that Sir Alexander Burnes—of whom he spoke throughout in the most contemptuous

manner—an eminent political agent at the Court of Dost Mahommed, was beguiled by the treachery of that Asiatic ruler; that he took everything for truth which he heard, and that, in point of fact, he was utterly unfit for the position which he held at Cabul. But although the noble Lord had these despatches before him, and knew all the feelings of Sir Alexander Burnes, he still continued Sir Alexander Burnes there. He was there two years after these despatches were written, in that most perilous year when not only himself but the whole army—subjects of the Queen—fell victims to the policy of the noble Lord. Now, I must tell the noble Lord what my hon. and learned Friend, the Member for Greenock, did not discuss, and what the Committee is not to do—because every Member who heard the speech of the hon. and learned Member for Greenock, and those who listened to the speech of the noble Lord, must have seen that from the first the noble Lord evaded the whole question. He endeavoured to lead the House to believe that my hon. and learned Friend was going into some antiquarian researches about the policy of the English or the Indian Government twenty years ago, and that it was proposed to have a Committee to dig up all the particulars of our supposed peril from the designs of Russia at that time. But the fact is that my hon. and learned Friend had no such intention; and there was no man in the House more cognizant of that fact than the noble Lord when he ingeniously endeavoured to convey a contrary impression to the House.

It is not proposed to go into the policy of the war. And there is another question that it is not proposed to go into. It is not proposed to inquire whether Sir Alexander Burnes or Lord Auckland was Governor-General. We know that Lord Auckland was Governor-General; but we know that a Governor-General who may be many hundreds, or in India, perhaps, 2,000 miles away from the place where particular events are transpiring, must rely to a considerable extent on the information he receives from the political agent who is on the spot. If this be so, clearly what Sir Alexander

Burnes thought, and what he said, and what he wrote, is of some importance. At least, if the House of Commons has any evidence placed before it, the noble Lord will agree that in a great question like this—I am not speaking of the present time, but of the time when these events happened—it is of first-rate importance that the House should have evidence not on one side only, but on both sides. There is another thing we do not propose to inquire into, and that is the policy of Russia at that time. I cannot very well understand the course which the noble Lord has taken on this point; for I find that about twelve months after the writing of these very despatches, the mutilation of which is now complained of, the noble Lord made a reply to the Russian Minister who had declared that there was nothing whatever hostile to England in the instructions which were furnished to Vicovich. He says:

"There has not existed the smallest design hostile to the English Government, nor the smallest idea of endangering the tranquillity of the British possessions in India."

The noble Lord, in reply to that, on the 20th December, 1838, just a year after the writing of these despatches by Sir Alexander Burnes, said:

"Her Majesty's Government accept as entirely satisfactory the declaration of the Russian Government that it does not harbour any designs hostile to the interests of Great Britain in India."

I may leave that question there, because I can assure the noble Lord that my hon. and learned Friend has not the smallest intention—I judge so, at least, from his speech—of bringing anybody before the Committee to attack or defend the policy of the Government in the war which then unhappily took place. Nor do I suppose it is intended to arraign anybody for a policy that sacrificed at least 20,000 human lives—20,000 lives of the subjects of the Queen of England. Nor is it intended to inquire how far the loss of more than 15,000,000*l.* sterling by that policy has affected for all future time the finances and the circumstances of the Government of India. These are crimes—the whole

of that policy is a crime—of a nature never to be answered for. No man can accurately measure it. No Committee of this House could adequately punish those who were the perpetrators of it. No, Sir, my hon. and learned Friend has not the slightest idea of going back twenty years for the purpose of bringing the noble Lord, or any one else who may be guilty of that great crime, to the bar of public opinion by this Committee.

But it is worth while that the House should know whether the Government in whom it placed confidence at that time, and in whom the Queen placed confidence—whether that Government was worthy of their confidence, and whether any members of the Government of that day are members of the Government at this day. It is worth while knowing whether there was and is a man in high position in the Government here or in India who had so low a sense of honour and of right that he could offer to this House mutilated, false, forged despatches and opinions of a public servant who lost his life in the public service. Conceive any man at this moment in India engaged, as many have been during the last three years, in perilous services—conceive that any man should know that to-morrow, or next week, or any time this year, he may lay his bones in that distant land, and that six months afterwards there may be laid on the table of this House by the noble Lord at the head of the Government, or by the Secretary of State for India, letters or despatches of his from which passages have been cut out, and into which passages have been inserted, in which words have been so twisted as wholly to divert and distort his meaning, and to give to him a meaning, it may be, utterly the contrary to that which his original despatch intended to convey. I cannot conceive any anticipation more painful or more bitter, more likely to eat into the heart of any man engaged in the service of his country in a distant land.

It is admitted, and the noble Lord has not flatly denied it—he cannot deny it—he knows it as well as the hon. and learned Member for Greenock—he knows

it as well as the very man whose hand did the evil—he knows there have been garbling, mutilation, practically and essentially falsehood and forgery, in these despatches which have been laid before the House. Why was it refused to give the original despatches when they were asked for in 1842 by the hon. Member for Inverness-shire (Mr. H. Baillie), and when they were asked for at a later period by the hon. Member for Sheffield (Mr. Hadfield)? Why was it that the originals were so consistently withheld? That they have been given now, I suppose, is because those who were guilty of the outrage on the faith of Parliament thought, as twenty years had elapsed, that nobody would give himself the trouble to go into the question, and that no man would be so earnest as my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock in bringing the question before the notice of Parliament.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield (Mr. Hadfield) informs me that it was the noble Lord the Member for King's Lynn (Lord Stanley) who consented to the production of the original despatches when he was in office. I was not aware of that fact; but I am free here to tender him my thanks for the course which he took. I am sure he is the last man whom anyone would suspect of being mixed up in any transaction of this kind, except with a view to give the House and the country full information with regard to it. I say, then, avoiding all the long speech of the noble Lord, that the object of the Committee is to find out who did this evil thing—who placed upon the table of the House information which was knowingly false, and despatches that were actually forged—because if you add to or detract from, or so change a coin, or note, or deed, as to make any of them bear a meaning contrary to its original and intended meaning, of course you are guilty of such an act as I have described, and that is precisely what somebody has done in the despatches which we are now discussing. I say an odious offence has been committed against the House and against the truth; and what we want to know is, who did it?

Now, will the noble Lord be candid enough—he does

not think there is anything wrong—he says there is not much—it is very trifling—that Sir Alexander Burnes's opinions are not worth much—supposing it to be so—for the sake of argument, let me grant it; but if it is a matter of no importance, will the noble Lord be so candid as to tell us who did it? When Lord Broughton was examined before the Official Salaries Committee some years ago, he, as the noble Lord is aware, said that he took upon himself, as President of the Board of Control at the time, the entire responsibility of the Affghan war. The noble Lord now at the head of the Government was then a member of the India Board, and so, I believe, was the noble Lord the Member for the City of London. But the noble Lord at the head of the Government was also Secretary for Foreign Affairs. Now, I do not think I am wrong in supposing that this question lies between the noble Lord the Prime Minister and Lord Broughton, once a Member of this House. This thing was not done by some subordinate who cannot be found out.

My hon. and learned Friend says it has been done with marvellous care, and even with so much ability that it must have been done by a man of genius. Of course there are men of genius in very objectionable walks of life; but we know that the noble Lord at the head of the Government is a man of genius; if he had not been he would not have sat on that bench for the last fifty years. And we know that Lord Broughton is a man of many and varied accomplishments. And once more I ask the noble Lord to tell us who did it. He knows who did it. Was it his own right hand, or was it Lord Broughton's right hand, or was it some clever secretary in the Foreign Office or in the India Office who did this work? I say the House has a right to know. We want to know that. We want to drag the delinquent before the public. This we want to know, because we wish to deter other Ministers from committing the like offence; and we want to know it for that which most of all is necessary—to vindicate the character and honour of Parliament. Nothing can sink Parliament to a lower state of degradation and baseness than that it should

permit Ministers of the Crown to lay upon the table, upon questions involving the sacrifice of 20,000,000*l.* of money and 20,000 lives, documents which are not true, which slander our public servants, and which slander them most basely when they are dead and are not here to answer. I do not believe that the gentlemen of England in this House—upon that side of the House or upon this—will ever consent to sit down with a case proved so clearly as this is without directing the omnipotent power and eye of Parliament into the matter. I say, seeing the charge, seeing that the noble Lord was at the head of the Foreign Office at the time, that the policy of the Affghan war was always considered to be his, and that the responsibility of this act must rest between him and Lord Broughton—I should not like to hold the opinion, and I do not hold the opinion, that the noble Lord will object to a Committee to inquire into a matter in which he is himself so directly concerned.

V

AMERICA—I.: THE "TRENT" AFFAIR

Rochdale, December 4, 1861.

[During the excitement caused by the seizure of Messrs. Mason and Slidell, the envoys of the Slaveholders' Confederation, on board the *Trent* steamer, Mr. Bright's townsmen invited him to a public banquet, that they might have the opportunity of hearing his opinions on the American Civil War, and on the duty of England in regard to it. This speech was delivered on the occasion of that banquet.]

THE United States' Constitution left the slave question for every State to manage for itself. It was a question too difficult to settle then, and apparently every man had the hope and belief that in a few years slavery itself would become extinct. Then there happened a great event in the annals of manufactures and commerce. It was discovered that in those States that article which we in this country now so much depend on, could be produced of the best quality necessary for

manufacture, and at a moderate price. From that day to this the growth of cotton has increased there, and its consumption has increased here, and a value which no man dreamed of has been given to the slave and to slave industry. Thus it has grown up to that gigantic institution which now threatens either its own overthrow or the overthrow of that which is a million times more valuable—the United States of America.

The crisis at which we have arrived—I say "we," for, after all, we are nearly as much interested as if I was making this speech in the city of Boston or the city of New York—the crisis, I say, which has now arrived, was inevitable. I say that the conscience of the North, never satisfied with the institution of slavery, was constantly urging some men forward to take a more extreme view of the question; and there grew up naturally a section—it may not have been a very numerous one—in favour of the abolition of slavery. A great and powerful party resolved at least upon a restraint and a control of slavery, so that it should not extend beyond the States and the area which it now occupies. But, if we look at the Government of the United States almost ever since the formation of the Union, we shall find the Southern power has been mostly dominant there. If we take thirty-six years after the formation of the present Constitution—I think about 1787—we shall find that for thirty-two of those years every President was a Southern man; and if we take the period from 1828 until 1860, we shall find that, on every election for President, the South voted in the majority.

We know what an election is in the United States for President of the Republic. There is a most extensive suffrage, and there is the ballot-box. The members of the House of Representatives are elected by the same suffrage, and generally they are elected at the same time. It is thus therefore almost inevitable that the House of Representatives is in accord in public policy with the President for the time being. Every four years there springs from the vote created by the whole people a President over that great nation. I think the

world offers no finer spectacle than this; it offers no higher dignity; and there is no greater object of ambition on the political stage on which men are permitted to move. You may point, if you will, to hereditary rulers, to crowns coming down through successive generations of the same family, to thrones based on prescription or on conquest, to sceptres wielded over veteran legions and subject realms,—but to my mind there is nothing more worthy of reverence and obedience, and nothing more sacred, than the authority of the freely chosen magistrate of a great and free people; and if there be on earth and amongst men any right divine to govern, surely it rests with a ruler so chosen and so appointed.

Last year the ceremony of this great election was gone through, and the South, which had been so long successful, found itself defeated. That defeat was followed instantly by secession, and insurrection, and war. In the multitude of articles which have been before us in the newspapers within the last few months, I have no doubt you have seen it stated, as I have seen it, that this question was very much like that upon which the Colonies originally revolted against the Crown of England. It is amazing how little some newspaper writers know, or how little they think you know. When the War of Independence was begun in America, ninety years ago, there were no representatives there at all. The question then was, whether a Ministry in Downing Street, and a corrupt and borough-mongering Parliament, should continue to impose taxes upon three millions of English subjects, who had left their native shores and established themselves in North America. But now the question is not the want of representation, because, as is perfectly notorious, the South is not only represented, but is represented in excess. . . . Therefore you will see at once that there is no comparison between the state of things when the Colonies revolted, and the state of things now, when this wicked insurrection has broken out.

There is another cause which is sometimes in England assigned for this great misfortune, which is, the

protective theories in operation in the Union, and the maintenance of a high tariff. It happens with regard to that, unfortunately, that no American, certainly no one I ever met with, attributed the disasters of the Union to that cause. It is an argument made use of by ignorant Englishmen, but never by informed Americans. I have already shown you that the South, during almost the whole existence of the Union, has been dominant at Washington; and during that period the tariff has existed, and there has been no general dissatisfaction with it. Occasionally, there can be no doubt, their tariff was higher than was thought just, or reasonable, or necessary by some of the States of the South. But the first Act of the United States which levied duties upon imports, passed immediately after the Union was formed, recited that "It is necessary for the encouragement and protection of manufactures to levy the duties which follow"; and during the war with England from 1812 to 1815, the people of the United States had to pay for all the articles they brought from Europe many times over the natural cost of those articles, on account of the interruption to the traffic by the English nation.

When the war was over, it was felt by everybody desirable that they should encourage manufactures in their own country; and seeing that England at that precise moment was passing a law to prevent any wheat coming from America until wheat in England had risen to the price of 84*s.* per quarter, we may be quite satisfied that the doctrine of protection originally entertained did not find less favour at the close of the war in 1815.

There is one remarkable point with regard to this matter which should not be forgotten. Twelve months ago, at the meeting of the Congress of the United States, on the first Monday in December—when the Congress met, you recollect that there were various propositions of compromise, committee meetings of various kinds to try and devise some mode of settling the question between the North and the South, so that disunion might not go on—though I read carefully everything published in the English papers from the United

States on the subject, I do not recollect that in a single instance the question of the tariff was referred to, or any change proposed or suggested in the matter as likely to have any effect whatever upon the question of Secession.

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The question is a very different and a far more grave question. It is a question of slavery, and for thirty years it has constantly been coming to the surface, disturbing social life, and overthrowing almost all political harmony in the working of the United States. In the North there is no secession; there is no collision. These disturbances and this insurrection are found wholly in the South and in the Slave States; and therefore I think that the man who says otherwise, who contends that it is the tariff, or anything whatsoever else than slavery, is either himself deceived or endeavours to deceive others. The object of the South is this, to escape from the majority who wish to limit the area of slavery. They wish to found a Slave State freed from the influence and opinions of freedom. The Free States in the North now stand before the world as the advocates and defenders of freedom and civilization. The Slave States offer themselves for the recognition of a Christian nation, based upon the foundation, the unchangeable foundation in their eyes, of slavery and barbarism.

I will not discuss the guilt of the men who, Ministers of a great nation only last year, conspired to overthrow it. I will not point out or recapitulate the statements of the fraudulent manner in which they dispose of the funds in the national exchequer. I will not point out by name any of the men, in this conspiracy, whom history will designate by titles they would not like to hear; but I say that slavery has sought to break up the most free government in the world, and to found a new State, in the nineteenth century, whose corner-stone is the perpetual bondage of millions of men.

Having thus described what appears to me briefly the literal truth of this matter, what is the course that England would be expected to pursue? We should be

neutral as far as regards mingling in the strife. We were neutral in the strife in Italy; but we were not neutral in opinion or sympathy; and we know perfectly well that throughout the whole of Italy at this moment there is a feeling that, though no shot was fired from an English ship, and though no English soldier trod their soil, yet still the opinion of England was potent in Europe, and did much for the creation of the Italian kingdom.

With regard to the United States, you know how much we hate slavery,—that is, some years ago we thought we knew; that we have given twenty millions sterling,—a million a year, or nearly so, of taxes for ever,—to free eight hundred thousand slaves in the English colonies. We knew, or thought we knew, how much we were in love with free government everywhere, although it might not take precisely the same form as our own government. We were for free government in Italy; we were for free government in Switzerland; and we were for free government, even under a republican form, in the United States of America; and with all this, every man would have said that England would wish the American Union to be prosperous and eternal.

Now, suppose we turn our eyes to the East, to the empire of Russia, for a moment. In Russia, as you all know, there has been one of the most important and magnificent changes of policy ever seen in any country. Within the last year or two, the present Emperor of Russia, following the wishes of his father, has insisted upon the abolition of serfdom in that empire; and twenty-three millions of human beings, lately serfs, little better than real slaves, have been raised to the ranks of freedom. Now, suppose that the millions of the serfs of Russia had been chiefly in the South of Russia. We hear of the nobles of Russia, to whom those serfs belonged in a great measure, that they have been hostile to this change; and there has been some danger that the peace of that empire might be disturbed during the change. Suppose these nobles, for the purpose of maintaining in perpetuity the serfdom of Russia, and barring out twenty-three millions of your fellow-creatures from the rights of freedom, had established a great and

secret conspiracy, and that they had risen in great and dangerous insurrection against the Russian Government,—I say that you, the people of England, although seven years ago you were in mortal combat with the Russians in the South of Europe,—I believe at this moment you would have prayed Heaven in all sincerity and fervour to give strength to the arm and success to the great wishes of the Emperor, and that the vile and atrocious insurrection might be suppressed.

Well, but let us look a little at what has been said and done in this country since the period when Parliament rose at the beginning of August. There have been two speeches to which I wish to refer, and in terms of approbation. The Duke of Argyll, a member of the present Government,—and, though I have not the smallest personal acquaintance with him, I am free to say that I believe him to be one of the most intelligent and liberal of his order,—the Duke of Argyll made a speech which was fair and friendly to the Government of the United States. Lord Stanley, only a fortnight ago, I think, made a speech which it is impossible to read without remarking the thought, the liberality, and the wisdom by which it is distinguished. He doubted, it is true, whether the Union could be restored. A man need not be hostile, and must not necessarily be unfriendly, to doubt that or the contrary; but he spoke with fairness and friendliness of the Government of the United States; and he said that they were right and justifiable in the course they took; and he gave us some advice,—which is now more important than at the moment when it was given,—that amid the various incidents and accidents of a struggle of this nature, it became a people like this to be very moderate, very calm, and to avoid, as much as possible, any feeling of irritation, which sometimes arises, and sometimes leads to danger.

I mention these two speeches as from Englishmen of great distinction in this country—speeches which I believe will have a beneficial effect on the other side of the Atlantic. Lord John Russell, in the House of Commons, during the last session, made a speech also,

in which he rebuked the impertinence of a young Member of the House who had spoken about the bursting of the "bubble republic." It was a speech worthy of the best days of Lord John Russell. But at a later period he spoke at Newcastle on an occasion something like this, when the inhabitants, or some portion of the inhabitants, of the town invited him to a public dinner. He described the contest in words something like these—I speak from memory only: "The North is contending for empire, the South for independence." Did he mean contending for empire, as England contends for it when making some fresh conquest in India? If he meant that, what he said was not true. But I recollect Lord John Russell, some years ago, in the House of Commons, on an occasion when I made some observation as to the unreasonable expenditure of our colonies, and said that the people of England should not be taxed to defray expenses which the colonies themselves were well able to bear, turned to me with a sharpness which was not necessary, and said, "The honourable Member has no objection to make a great empire into a little one; but I have." Perhaps, if he had lived in the United States, if he was a member of the Senate or the House of Representatives there, he would doubt whether it was his duty to consent at once to the destruction of a great country by separation, it may be into two hostile camps, or whether he would not try all the means which were open to him, and would be open to the Government, to avert so unlooked-for and so dire a calamity.

There are other speeches that have been made. I will not refer to them by any quotation,—I will not, out of pity to some of the men who uttered them. I will not bring their names even before you, to give them an endurance which I hope they will not otherwise obtain. I leave them in the obscurity which they so richly merit. But you know as well as I do, that, of all the speeches made since the end of the last session of Parliament by public men, by politicians, the majority of them have either displayed a strange ignorance of

American affairs, or a stranger absence of that cordiality and friendship which, I maintain, our American kinsmen have a right to look for at our hands.

And if we part from the speakers and turn to the writers, what do we find there? We find that which is reputed abroad, and has hitherto been believed in at home, as the most powerful representative of English opinion—at least of the richer classes—we find in that particular newspaper there has not been since Mr. Lincoln took office, in March last, as President of the United States, one fair and honourable and friendly article on American affairs. Some of you, I dare say, read it; but, fortunately, every district is now so admirably supplied with local newspapers, that I trust in all time to come the people of England will drink of purer streams nearer home, and not of those streams which are muddled by party feeling and political intrigue, and by many motives that tend to anything rather than the enlightenment and advantage of the people. It is said,—that very paper has said over and over again,—"Why this war? Why not separate peaceably? Why this fratricidal strife?" I hope it is equally averse to fratricidal strife in other districts; for if it be true that God made of one blood all the families of man to dwell on the face of all the earth, it must be fratricidal strife whether we are slaughtering Russians in the Crimea or bombarding towns on the sea-coast of the United States.

Now no one will expect that I should stand forward as the advocate of war, or as the defender of that great sum of all crimes which is involved in war. But when we are discussing a question of this nature, it is only fair that we should discuss it upon principles which are acknowledged not only in the country where the strife is being carried on, but are universally acknowledged in this country. When I discussed the Russian war, seven or eight years ago, I always condemned it, on principles which were accepted by the Government and people of England, and I took my facts from the blue-books presented to Parliament. I take the liberty,

then, of doing that in this case; and I say that, looking at the principles avowed in England, and at its policy, there is no man, who is not absolutely a non-resistant in every sense, who can fairly challenge the conduct of the American Government in this war. It would be a curious thing to find that the party in this country which on every public question affecting England is in favour of war at any cost, when they come to speak of the duty of the Government of the United States, is in favour "of peace at any price."

I want to know whether it has ever been admitted by politicians, or statesmen, or people, that a great nation can be broken up at any time by any particular section of any part of that nation. It has been tried occasionally in Ireland, and if it had succeeded history would have said that it was with very good cause. But if anybody tried now to get up a secession or insurrection in Ireland,—and it would be infinitely less disturbing to everything than the secession in the United States, because there is a boundary which nobody can dispute,—I am quite sure the *Times* would have its "Special Correspondent," and would describe with all the glee and exultation in the world the manner in which the Irish insurrectionists were cut down and made an end of.

Let any man try in this country to restore the heptarchy, do you think that any portion of the people would think that the project could be tolerated for a moment? But if you look at a map of the United States, you will see that there is no country in the world, probably, at this moment, where any plan of separation between the North and the South, as far as the question of boundary is concerned, is so surrounded with insurmountable difficulties. For example, Maryland is a Slave State; but Maryland, by a large majority, voted for the Union. Kentucky is a Slave State, one of the finest in the Union, and containing a fine people; Kentucky has voted for the Union, but has been invaded from the South. Missouri is a Slave State; but Missouri has not seceded, and has been invaded by the South, and there is a secession party in

that State. There are parts of Virginia which have formed themselves into a new State, resolved to adhere to the North; and there is no doubt a considerable Northern and Union feeling in the State of Tennessee. I have no doubt there is in every other State. In fact, I am not sure that there is not now within the sound of my voice a citizen of the State of Alabama, who could tell you that in his State the question of secession has never been put to the vote; and that there are great numbers of men, reasonable and thoughtful and just men, in that State, who entirely deplore the condition of things there existing.

Then, what would you do with all those States, and with what we may call the loyal portion of the people of those States? Would you allow them to be dragooned into this insurrection, and into the formation or the becoming parts of a new State, to which they themselves are hostile? And what would you do with the City of Washington? Washington is in a Slave State. Would anybody have advised that President Lincoln and his Cabinet, with all the members of Congress, of the House of Representatives and the Senate, from the North, with their wives and children, and everybody else who was not positively in favour of the South, should have set off on their melancholy pilgrimage northwards, leaving that capital, hallowed to them by such associations,—having its name even from the father of their country,—leaving Washington to the South, because Washington is situated in a Slave State?

Again, what do you say to the Mississippi River, as you see it upon the map, the "father of waters," rolling its gigantic stream to the ocean? Do you think that the fifty millions which one day will occupy the banks of that river northward, will ever consent that its great stream shall roll through a foreign, and it may be a hostile State? And more, there are four millions of negroes in subjection. For them the American Union is directly responsible. They are not secessionists; they are now, as they always were, not citizens nor subjects, but legally under the care and

power of the Government of the United States. Would you consent that these should be delivered up to the tender mercies of their taskmasters, the defenders of slavery as an everlasting institution?

But if all had been surrendered without a struggle, what then? What would the writers in this newspaper and other newspapers have said? If a bare rock in your empire, that would not keep a goat—a single goat—alive, be touched by any foreign power, the whole empire is roused to resistance; and if there be, from accident or passion, the smallest insult to your flag, what do your newspaper writers say upon the subject, and what is said in all your towns and upon all your Exchanges? I will tell you what they would have said if the Government of the Northern States had taken their insidious and dishonest advice. They would have said the great Republic was a failure, that democracy had murdered patriotism, that history afforded no example of such meanness and of such cowardice; and they would have heaped unmeasured obloquy and contempt upon the people and Government who had taken that course.

They tell you, these candid friends of the United States,—they tell you that all freedom is gone; that the Habeas Corpus Act, if they ever had one, is known no longer; and that any man may be arrested at the dictum of the President or of the Secretary of State. Well, but in 1848 you recollect, many of you, that there was a small insurrection in Ireland. It was an absurd thing altogether; but what was done then? I saw, in one night, in the House of Commons, a Bill for the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act passed through all its stages. What more did I see? I saw a Bill brought in by the Whig Government of that day, Lord John Russell being the Premier, which made speaking against the Government and against the Crown—which up to that time had been sedition—which proposed to make it felony; and it was only by the greatest exertions of a few of the Members that the Act, in that particular, was limited to a period of two years. In the same session a Bill was brought in called an Alien Bill,

which enabled the Home Secretary to take any foreigner whatsoever, not being a naturalized Englishman, and in twenty-four hours to send him out of the country. Although a man might have committed no crime, this might be done to him, apparently only on suspicion.

But suppose that an insurgent army had been so near to London that you could see its outposts from every suburb of your Capital, what then do you think would have been the regard of the Government of Great Britain for personal liberty, if it interfered with the necessities, and, as they might think, the salvation of the State? I recollect, in 1848, when the Habeas Corpus Act was suspended in Ireland, that a number of persons in Liverpool, men there of position and of wealth, presented a petition to the House of Commons, praying—what? That the Habeas Corpus Act should not be suspended? No. They were not content with its suspension in Ireland; and they prayed the House of Commons to extend that suspension to Liverpool. I recollect that at that time—and I am sure my friend Mr. Wilson will bear me out in what I say—the Mayor of Liverpool telegraphed to the Mayor of Manchester, and that messages were sent on to London nearly every hour. The Mayor of Manchester heard from the Mayor of Liverpool that certain Irishmen in Liverpool, conspirators, or fellow-conspirators with those in Ireland, were going to burn the cotton warehouses in Liverpool and the cotton mills of Lancashire. I read that petition from Liverpool. I took it from the table of the House of Commons, and read it, and I handed it over to a statesman of great eminence, who has been but just removed from us—I refer to Sir James Graham, a man not second to any in the House of Commons for his knowledge of affairs and for his great capacity—I handed to him that petition. He read it; and after he had read it, he rose from his seat, and laid it upon the table with a gesture of abhorrence and disgust. Now that was a petition from the town of Liverpool, in which some persons have been making themselves very ridiculous of late by reason of their conduct on this American question.

There is one more point. It has been said, "How much better it would be"—not for the United States, but—"for us, that these States should be divided." I recollect meeting a gentleman in Bond Street one day before the session was over. He was a rich man, and one whose voice is much heard in the House of Commons; but his voice is not heard when he is on his legs, but when he is cheering other speakers; and he said to me: "After all, this is a sad business about the United States; but still I think it very much better that they should be split up. In twenty years," or in fifty years, I forget which it was, "they will be so powerful that they will bully all Europe." And a distinguished Member of the House of Commons—distinguished there by his eloquence, distinguished more by his many writings—I mean Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton—he did not exactly express a hope, but he ventured on something like a prediction, that the time would come when there would be, I do not know how many, but about as many independent States on the American Continent as you can count upon your fingers.

There cannot be a meaner motive than this I am speaking of, in forming a judgment on this question,—that it is "better for us"—for whom? the people of England, or the Government of England?—that the United States should be severed, and that the North American continent should be as the continent of Europe is, in many States, and subject to all the contentions and disasters which have accompanied the history of the States of Europe. I should say that, if a man had a great heart within him, he would rather look forward to the day when, from that point of land which is habitable nearest to the Pole, to the shores of the Great Gulf, the whole of that vast continent might become one great confederation of States,—without a great army, and without a great navy,—not mixing itself up with the entanglements of European politics,—without a custom-house inside, through the whole length and breadth of its territory,—and with freedom everywhere, equality everywhere, law everywhere,

peace everywhere,—such a confederation would afford at least some hope that man is not forsaken of Heaven, and that the future of our race may be better than the past.

It is a common observation, that our friends in America are very irritable. And I think it is very likely, of a considerable number of them, to be quite true. Our friends in America are involved in a great struggle. There is nothing like it before in their or in any history. No country in the world was ever more entitled, in my opinion, to the sympathy and the forbearance of all friendly nations, than are the United States at this moment. They have there some newspapers that are no wiser than ours. They have there some papers, which, up to the election of Mr. Lincoln, were his bitterest and most unrelenting foes, who, when the war broke out, and it was not safe to take the line of Southern support, were obliged to turn round and to appear to adopt the prevalent opinion of the country. But they undertook to serve the South in another way, and that was by exaggerating every difficulty and misstating every fact, if so doing could serve their object of creating distrust between the people of the Northern States and the people of this United Kingdom. If the *Times* in this country has done all that it could do to poison the minds of the people of England, and to irritate the minds of the people of America, the *New York Herald*, I am sorry to say, has done, I think, all that it could, or all that it dared to do, to provoke mischief between the Government in Washington and the Government in London.

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Now, then, before I sit down, let me ask you what is this people, about which so many men in England at this moment are writing, and speaking, and thinking, with harshness, I think with injustice, if not with great bitterness? Two centuries ago, multitudes of the people of this country found a refuge on the North American continent, escaping from the tyranny of the Stuarts and from the bigotry of Laud. Many noble spirits from our country made great experiments in

favour of human freedom on that continent. Bancroft, the great historian of his own country, has said, in his own graphic and emphatic language, "The history of the colonization of America is the history of the crimes of Europe." From that time down to our own period, America has admitted the wanderers from every clime. Since 1815, a time which many here remember, and which is within my lifetime, more than three millions of persons have emigrated from the United Kingdom to the United States. During the fifteen years from 1845 or 1846 to 1859 or 1860—a period so recent that we all remember the most trivial circumstances that have happened in that time—during those fifteen years more than two million three hundred and twenty thousand persons left the shores of the United Kingdom as emigrants for the States of North America.

At this very moment, then, there are millions in the United States who personally, or whose immediate parents, have at one time been citizens of this country. They found a home in the Far West; they subdued the wilderness; they met with plenty there, which was not afforded them in their native country; and they have become a great people. There may be persons in England who are jealous of those States. There may be men who dislike democracy, and who hate a republic; there may be even those whose sympathies warm towards the slave oligarchy of the South. But of this I am certain, that only misrepresentation the most gross or calumny the most wicked can sever the tie which unites the great mass of the people of this country with their friends and brethren beyond the Atlantic.

Now, whether the Union will be restored or not, or the South achieve an unhonoured independence or not, I know not, and I predict not. But this I think I know—that in a few years, a very few years, the twenty millions of freemen in the North will be thirty millions, or even fifty millions—a population equal to or exceeding that of this kingdom. When that time comes, I pray that it may not be said amongst them, that, in the darkest hour of their country's trials, England, the

land of their fathers, looked on with icy coldness and saw unmoved the perils and calamities of their children. As for me, I have but this to say: I am but one in this audience, and but one in the citizenship of this country; but if all other tongues are silent, mine shall speak for that policy which gives hope to the bondsmen of the South, and which tends to generous thoughts, and generous words, and generous deeds, between the two great nations who speak the English language, and from their origin are alike entitled to the English name.

VI

AMERICA—II.: THE WAR AND THE SUPPLY OF COTTON

Birmingham, December 18, 1862.

Now I shall not go into a long argument upon this question, for the reason that a year ago I said what I thought it necessary to say upon it, and because I believe the question is in the hand, not of my hon. Friend, nor in that of Lord Palmerston, nor in that even of President Lincoln, but it is in the hand of the Supreme Ruler, who is bringing about one of those great transactions in history which men often will not regard when they are passing before them, but which they look back upon with awe and astonishment some years after they are past. So I shall content myself with asking one or two questions. I shall not discuss the question whether the North is making war for the Constitution, or making war for the abolition of slavery.

If you come to a matter of sympathy with the South, or recognition of the South, or mediation or intervention for the benefit of the South, you should consider what are the ends of the South. Surely the United States' Government is a Government at amity with this country. Its Minister is in London—a man honourable by family, as you know, in America, his father and his grandfather having held the office of President of

the Republic. You have your own Minister just returned to Washington. Is this hypocrisy? Are you, because you can cavil at certain things which the North, the United States' Government, has done or has not done, are you eagerly to throw the influence of your opinion into a movement which is to dismember the great Republic?

Is there a man here that doubts for a moment that the object of the war on the part of the South—they began the war—that the object of the war on the part of the South is to maintain in bondage four millions of human beings? That is only a small part of it. The further object is to perpetuate for ever the bondage of all the posterity of those four millions of slaves. [A few cries of "No! No!"] You will hear that I am not in a condition to contest vigorously anything that may be opposed, for I am suffering, as nearly everybody is, from the state of the weather, and a hoarseness that almost hinders me from speaking. I could quote their own documents till midnight in proof of what I say; and if I found a man who denied it, upon the evidence that had been offered, I would not offend him, or trouble myself by trying further to convince him.

The object is, that a handful of white men on that continent shall lord it over many millions of blacks, made black by the very Hand that made us white. The object is, that they should have the power to breed negroes, to work negroes, to lash negroes, to chain negroes, to buy and sell negroes, to deny them the commonest ties of family, or to break their hearts by rending them at their pleasure, to close their mental eye to but a glimpse even of that knowledge which separates us from the brute—for in their laws it is criminal and penal to teach the negro to read—to seal from their hearts the Book of our religion, and to make chattels and things of men and women and children.

Now I want to ask whether this is to be the foundation, as it is proposed, of a new slave empire, and whether it is intended that on this audacious and infernal basis England's new ally is to be built up.

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Now I should have no kind of objection to recognize a country because it was a country that held slaves—to recognize the United States, or to be in amity with it. The question of slavery there, and in Cuba and in Brazil, is, as far as respects the present generation, an accident, and it would be unreasonable that we should object to trade with and have political relations with a country, merely because it happened to have within its borders the institution of slavery, hateful as that institution is. But in this case it is a new State intending to set itself up on the sole basis of slavery. Slavery is blasphemously declared to be its chief corner-stone.

I have heard that there are, in this country, Ministers of State who are in favour of the South; that there are members of the aristocracy who are terrified at the shadow of the Great Republic; that there are rich men on our commercial exchanges, depraved, it may be, by their riches, and thriving unwholesomely within the atmosphere of a privileged class; that there are conductors of the public press who would barter the rights of millions of their fellow-creatures that they might bask in the smiles of the great.

But I know that there are Ministers of State who do not wish that this insurrection should break up the American nation; that there are members of our aristocracy who are not afraid of the shadow of the Republic; that there are rich men, many, who are not depraved by their riches; and that there are public writers of eminence and honour who will not barter human rights for the patronage of the great. But most of all, and before all, I believe,—I am sure it is true in Lancashire, where the working men have seen themselves coming down from prosperity to ruin, from independence to a subsistence on charity,—I say that I believe that the unenfranchised but not hopeless millions of this country will never sympathize with a revolt which is intended to destroy the liberty of a continent, and to build on its ruins a mighty fabric of human bondage.

When I speak to gentlemen in private upon this matter, and hear their own candid opinion,—I mean

those who differ from me on this question,—they generally end by saying that the Republic is too great and too powerful, and that it is better for us—not by "us" meaning you, but the governing classes and the governing policy of England—that it should be broken up. But we will suppose that we are in New York or in Boston, discussing the policy and power of England. If any one there were to point to England,—not to the thirty-one millions of population in these islands, but to her one hundred and fifty millions in India, and nobody knows how many millions more in every other part of the globe,—might he not, whilst boasting that America has not covered the ocean with fleets of force, or left the bones of her citizens to blanch on a hundred European battle-fields,—might he not fairly say, that England is great and powerful, and that it is perilous for the world that she is so great?

But bear in mind that every declaration of this kind, whether from an Englishman who professes to be strictly English, or from an American strictly American, or from a Frenchman strictly French,—whether it asserts in arrogant strains that Britannia rules the waves, or speaks of "manifest destiny" and the supremacy of the "Stars and Stripes," or boasts that the Eagles of one nation, having once overrun Europe, may possibly repeat the experiment,—I say all this is to be condemned. It is not truly patriotic; it is not rational; it is not moral. Then, I say, if any man wishes the Great Republic to be severed on that ground: in my opinion, he is doing that which tends to keep alive jealousies which, as far as he can prevent it, will never die; though if they do not die, wars must be eternal.

But then I shall be told that the people of the North do not like us at all. . . . It is not reasonable that they should like us. If an American be in this room to-night, will he feel that he likes my honourable Friend? But if the North does not like England, does anybody believe the South does? It does not appear to me to be a question of liking or disliking. Everybody knows that when the South was in power,—and it has

been in power for the last fifty years,—everybody knows that hostility to this country, wherever it existed in America, was cherished and stimulated to the utmost degree by some of those very men who are now leaders of this very insurrection.

My hon. Friend read a passage about the *Alabama*. I undertake to say that he is not acquainted with the facts about the *Alabama*. That he will acknowledge, I think. The Government of this country have admitted that the building of the *Alabama*, and her sailing from the Mersey, was a violation of international law. In America they say, and they say here, that the *Alabama* is a ship of war; that she was built in the Mersey; that she was built, and I have reason to believe it, by a member of the British Parliament; that she is furnished with guns of English manufacture; that she is manned almost entirely by Englishmen; and that these facts were represented, as I know they were represented, to the collector of customs in Liverpool, who pooh-poohed them, and said there was nothing in them. He was requested to send the facts up to London to the Customs' authorities, and their solicitor, not a very wise man, but probably in favour of breaking up the Republic, did not think them of much consequence; but afterwards the opinion of an eminent counsel, Mr. Collier, the Member for Plymouth, was taken, and he stated distinctly that what was being done in Liverpool was a direct infringement of the Foreign Enlistment Act, and that the Customs' authorities of Liverpool would be responsible for anything that happened in consequence.

When this opinion was taken to the Foreign Office, the Foreign Office was a little astonished and a little troubled; and after they had consulted their own law officers, whose opinions agreed with that of Mr. Collier, they did what Government officers generally do, and as promptly,—a telegraphic message went down to Liverpool to order that this vessel should be seized, and she happened to sail an hour or two before the message arrived. She has never been into a Confederate port —they have not got any ports; she hoists the English

flag when she wants to come alongside a ship; she sets a ship on fire in the night, and when, seeing fire, another ship bears down to lend help, she seizes it, and pillages and burns it. I think that, if we were citizens of New York, it would require a little more calmness than is shown in this country to look at all this as if it was a matter with which we had no concern. And therefore I do not so much blame the language that has been used in America in reference to the question of the *Alabama*.

But they do not know in America so much as we know — the whole truth about public opinion here. There are Ministers in our Cabinet as resolved to be no traitors to freedom, on this question, as I am; and there are members of the English aristocracy, and in the very highest rank, as I know for a certainty, who hold the same opinion. They do not know in America —at least, there has been no indication of it until the advices that have come to hand within the last two days —what is the opinion of the great body of the working classes in England. There has been every effort that money and malice could make to stimulate in Lancashire, amongst the suffering population, an expression of opinion in favour of the Slave States. They have not been able to get it. And I honour that population for their fidelity to principles and to freedom, and I say that the course they have taken ought to atone in the minds of the people of the United States for miles of leading articles, written by the London press,—by men who would barter every human right,—that they might serve the party with which they are associated.

But now I shall ask you one other question before I sit down,—How comes it that on the Continent there is not a liberal newspaper, nor a liberal politician, that has said, or has thought of saying, a word in favour of this portentous and monstrous shape which now asks to be received into the family of nations? Take the great Italian Minister, Count Cavour. You read some time ago in the papers part of a despatch which he wrote on the question of America—he had no difficulty in deciding. Ask Garibaldi. Is there in Europe a

more disinterested and generous friend of freedom than Garibaldi? Ask that illustrious Hungarian, to whose marvellous eloquence you once listened in this hall. Will he tell you that slavery has nothing to do with it, and that the slaveholders of the South will liberate the negroes sooner than the North through the instrumentality of the war? Ask Victor Hugo, the poet of freedom,—the exponent, may I not call him, of the yearnings of all mankind for a better time? Ask any man in Europe who opens his lips for freedom,—who dips his pen in ink that he may indite a sentence for freedom,—whoever has a sympathy for freedom warm in his own heart,—ask him,—he will have no difficulty in telling you on which side your sympathies should lie.

Only a few days ago a German merchant in Manchester was speaking to a friend of mine, and said he had recently travelled all through Germany. He said, "I am so surprised,—I don't find one man in favour of the South." That is not true of Germany only, it is true of all the world except this island, famed for freedom, in which we dwell. I will tell you what is the reason. Our London press is mainly in the hands of certain ruling West End classes; it acts and writes in favour of those classes. I will tell you what they mean. One of the most eminent statesmen in this country,—one who has rendered the greatest services to the country, though, I must say, not in an official capacity, in which men very seldom confer such great advantages upon the country,—he told me twice, at an interval of several months, "I had no idea how much influence the example of that Republic was having upon opinion here, until I discovered the universal congratulation that the Republic was likely to broken be up."

But, Sir, the Free States are the home of the working man. Now, I speak to working men particularly at this moment. Do you know that in fifteen years two million five hundred thousand persons, men, women, and children, have left the United Kingdom to find a home in the Free States of America? That is a population equal to eight great cities of the size of Birmingham. What would you think of eight Birminghams

being transplanted from this country and set down in the United States? Speaking generally, every man of these two and a half millions is in a position of much higher comfort and prosperity than he would have been if he had remained in this country. I say it is the home of the working man; as one of her poets has recently said:

> "For her free latch-string never was drawn in
> Against the poorest child of Adam's kin."

And in that land there are no six millions of grown men—I speak of the Free States—excluded from the constitution of their country and its electoral franchise; there, you will find a free Church, a free school, free land, a free vote, and a free career for the child of the humblest born in the land. My countrymen who work for your living, remember this: there will be one wild shriek of freedom to startle all mankind if that American Republic should be overthrown.

Now for one moment let us lift ourselves, if we can, above the narrow circle in which we are all too apt to live and think; let us put ourselves on an historical eminence, and judge this matter fairly. Slavery has been, as we all know, the huge, foul blot upon the fame of the American Republic; it is a hideous outrage against human right and against Divine law; but the pride, the passion of man, will not permit its peaceable extinction. The slave-owners of our colonies, if they had been strong enough, would have revolted too. I believe there was no mode short of a miracle more stupendous than any recorded in Holy Writ that could in our time, or in a century, or in any time, have brought about the abolition of slavery in America, but the suicide which the South has committed and the war which it has begun.

Sir, it is a measureless calamity,—this war. I said the Russian war was a measureless calamity, and yet many of your leaders and friends told you that it was a just war to maintain the integrity of Turkey, some thousands of miles off. Surely the integrity of your own country at your own doors must be worth as much

as the integrity of Turkey. Is not this war the penalty which inexorable justice exacts from America, North and South, for the enormous guilt of cherishing that frightful iniquity of slavery for the last eighty years? I do not blame any man here who thinks the cause of the North hopeless and the restoration of the Union impossible. It may be hopeless; the restoration may be impossible. You have the authority of the Chancellor of the Exchequer on that point. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, as a speaker, is not surpassed by any man in England, and he is a great statesman; he believes the cause of the North to be hopeless; that their enterprise cannot succeed.

Well, he is quite welcome to that opinion, and so is anybody else. I do not hold the opinion; but the facts are before us all, and, as far as we can discard passion and sympathy, we are all equally at liberty to form our own opinion. But what I do blame is this. I blame men who are eager to admit into the family of nations a State which offers itself to us, based upon a principle, I will undertake to say, more odious and more blasphemous than was ever heretofore dreamed of in Christian or Pagan, in civilized or in savage times. The leaders of this revolt propose this monstrous thing —that over a territory forty times as large as England, the blight and curse of slavery shall be for ever perpetuated.

I cannot believe, for my part, that such a fate will befall that fair land, stricken though it now is with the ravages of war. I cannot believe that civilization, in its journey with the sun, will sink into endless night in order to gratify the ambition of the leaders of this revolt, who seek to

> "Wade through slaughter to a throne,
> And shut the gates of mercy on mankind."

I have another and a far brighter vision before my gaze. It may be but a vision, but I will cherish it. I see one vast confederation stretching from the frozen North in unbroken line to the glowing South, and from the wild billows of the Atlantic westward to the calmer waters

of the Pacific main,—and I see one people, and one language, and one law, and one faith, and, over all that wide continent, the home of freedom, and a refuge for the oppressed of every race and of every clime.

VII

AMERICA—III.: THE STRUGGLE IN AMERICA

St. James's Hall, March 26, 1863.

[The meeting at which this speech was delivered was convened by the Trades' Unions of London to enable the working men to express their sentiments on the war in the United States. Mr. Bright was Chairman of the meeting.]

I SHOULD hope that this question is now so plain that most Englishmen must understand it; and least of all do I expect that the six millions of men in the United Kingdom who are not enfranchised can have any doubt upon it. Their instincts are always right in the main, and if they get the facts and information, I can rely on their influence being thrown into the right scale. I wish I could state what would be as satisfactory to myself with regard to some others. There may be men outside, there are men sitting amongst your legislators, who will build and equip corsair ships to prey upon the commerce of a friendly power,—who will disregard the laws and the honour of their country,—who will trample on the Proclamation of their sovereign,—and who, for the sake of the glittering profit which sometimes waits on crime, are content to cover themselves with everlasting infamy. There may be men, too—rich men—in this city of London, who will buy in the slave-owners' loan, and who, for the chance of more gain than honest dealing will afford them, will help a conspiracy whose fundamental institution, whose corner-stone, is declared to be felony, and infamous by the statutes of their country.

I speak not to these men—I leave them to their conscience in that hour which comes to all of us, when

conscience speaks and the soul is no longer deaf to her voice. I speak rather to you, the working men of London, the representatives, as you are here to-night, of the feelings and the interests of the millions who cannot hear my voice. I wish you to be true to yourselves. Dynasties may fall, aristocracies may perish, privilege will vanish into the dim past; but you, your children, and your children's children, will remain, and from you the English people will be continued to succeeding generations.

You wish the freedom of your country. You wish it for yourselves. You strive for it in many ways. Do not then give the hand of fellowship to the worst foes of freedom that the world has ever seen, and do not, I beseech you, bring down a curse upon your cause which no after-penitence can ever lift from it. You will not do this. I have faith in you. Impartial history will tell that, when your statesmen were hostile or coldly neutral, when many of your rich men were corrupt, when your press—which ought to have instructed and defended—was mainly written to betray, the fate of a continent and of its vast population being in peril, you clung to freedom with an unfaltering trust that God in His infinite mercy will yet make it the heritage of all His children.

VIII

IRELAND

(FROM HANSARD)

House of Commons, March 14, 1868.

[This speech was spoken on the occasion of a proposition by Mr. Maguire, M.P. for Cork, for "a Committee of the whole House to consider the state of Ireland."]

IT is said by eminent censors of the press that this debate will yield about thirty hours of talk, and will end in no result. I have observed that all great questions in this country require thirty hours of talk many times

repeated before they are settled. There is much shower and much sunshine between the sowing of the seed and the reaping of the harvest, but the harvest is generally reaped after all.

I was very much struck with what happened on the first night of the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Cork, in the opening portion of his address, described the state of Ireland from his point of view, and the facts he stated are not and cannot be disputed. He said that the Habeas Corpus Act had been suspended for three years in his country—that within the island there was a large military force, amounting, as we have heard to-night—besides 12,000 or more of armed police —to an army of 20,000 men—that in the harbours of Ireland there were ships of war, and in her rivers there were gunboats; and that throughout that country—as throughout this—there has been and is yet considerable alarm with regard to the discontent prevalent in Ireland.

All that is quite true; but when the noble Lord the Chief Secretary opened his speech, the first portion of it was of a very different complexion. I am willing to admit that to a large extent it was equally true. He told us that the condition of the people of Ireland was considerably better now than it was at the time of the Devon Commission. At the time of the Devon Commission the condition of that country had no parallel in any civilized and Christian nation. By the force of famine, pestilence, and emigration, the population was greatly diminished, and it would be a very extraordinary thing indeed if with such a diminution of the population there was no improvement in the condition of those who remained behind. He showed that wages are higher, and he pointed to the fact that in the trade in and out of the Irish ports they had a considerable increase, and though I will not say that some of those comparisons were quite accurate or fair, I am on the whole ready to admit the truth of the statement the noble Lord made. But now it seems to me that, admitting the truth of what my hon. Friend the Member for Cork said, and admitting equally the truth of what the noble Lord

said, there remains before us a question even more grave than any we have had to discuss in past years with regard to the condition of Ireland.

If—and this has been already referred to by more than one speaker—if it be true that with a considerable improvement in the physical condition of the people—if it be true that with a universality of education much beyond that which exists in this island—if it be true that after the measures that have been passed, and have been useful, there still remains in Ireland, first of all, what is called Fenianism, which is a reckless and daring exhibition of feeling—beyond that a very wide discontent and disloyalty—and beyond that, amongst the whole of the Roman Catholic population, universal dissatisfaction—and if that be so, surely my hon. Friend the Member for Cork—one of the most useful and eminent of the representatives of Ireland—is right in bringing this question before the House. And there is no question at this moment that we could possibly discuss connected with the interest or honour of the people that approaches in gravity and magnitude to that now before us. And if this state of things be true—and remember I have said nothing but what the hon. Member for Cork has said, and I have given my approval to nothing he has said that was not confirmed by the speech of the noble Lord—if this be true, surely all this great effect must have some cause.

We are unworthy of our position as Members of this House, and representatives of our countrymen, if we do not endeavour at least to discover the cause, and if we can discover it, speedily to apply a remedy. The cause is perfectly well known to both sides of the House. The noble Lord, it is clear, knows it even from the tenor of his own speech—he spoke of the question of the land, and of the Church. The noble Lord the Member for King's Lynn . . . referred to an absentee aristocracy and an alien Church. I would not say a syllable about the aristocracy in this matter; if I had to choose a phrase, I would rather say an absentee proprietary and an alien Church.

What is the obvious remedy which for this state of

things has been found to be sufficient in every other country? If I could do so by any means that did not violate the rights of property, I should be happy to give to a considerable portion of the farmers of Ireland some proprietary rights, and to remove from that country the sense of injustice, and the sense—the strongest of all—of the injustice caused by the existence of an alien Church. Just for a moment look at the proposition the noble Lord is about to submit to the House. It is very like the Bill of last year. I will not enter into the details, except to say that he proposes, as he proposed then, that the Government should lend the tenant-farmers of Ireland sums of money, by which they would make improvements, which sums of money were to be repaid by some gradual process to the Government authorities. He proposes that the repayment should be spread over a considerable number of years—I do not know the exact number, and it is not of importance for my argument. These tenant-farmers are very numerous—perhaps too numerous, it may be, for the good of the country—but there they are, and we must deal with them as we find them. The number of them holding under 15 acres is 250,000; holding between 15 acres and 30 acres, 136,000; holding over 30 acres, 158,000—altogether there are more than 540,000 holders of land. It is to these 540,000 land-holders or occupiers that the noble Lord proposes to lend money, on the condition that they make certain improvements, and repay after a certain number of years the sums advanced to them. I think I am right in saying that there is no limitation in the Bill as to the smallness of the holding to which the advance of money will be refused; and therefore the whole 540,000 tenants will be in a position to come to the Government, or to some Commission, or to the Board of Works, or to some authority in Ireland, and ask for money to enable them to improve their farms.

The House will see that if this plan is to produce any considerable result, it will be the source of a number of transactions such as the Government have not had to deal with in any other matter; and I expect

that the difficulties will be very great, and that the working out of the plan with any beneficial results will be altogether impossible. What I ask the House is this—if it be right of the noble Lord, to enable him to carry out his plan, to ask the House to pass a measure like this—to lend all these tenants the money for improvements to be repaid after a series of years, would it not be possible for us by a somewhat similar process, and by some step farther in the same direction, to establish to some extent—I am not speaking of extending it all through Ireland—a farmer proprietary throughout the country? If it be right and proper to lend money to improve, it surely may be proper, if it be on other grounds judicious, to lend money to buy.

* * * * *

Now, I am as careful as any man can be, I believe, of doing anything by law that shall infringe what you think and what I think are the rights of property. I do not pretend to believe, if you examine the terms strictly, in what is called the absolute property in land. You may toss a sixpence into the sea if you like, but there are things with respect to land which you cannot, and ought not, and dare not do. But I do not want to argue the question of legislation upon that ground. I am myself of opinion that there is no class in the community more interested in a strict adherence to the principles of political economy, worked out in a benevolent and just manner, than the humblest and poorest class in the country. I think they have as much interest in it as the rich, and the House has never known me, and so long as I stand here will never know me, I believe, to propose or advocate anything which shall interfere with what I believe to be, and what if a landowner I would maintain to be, the just right of property in the land.

But, then, I do not think, as some persons seem to think, that the land is really only intended to be in the hands of the rich. I think that is a great mistake. I am not speaking of the poor—for the poor man, in the ordinary meaning of the term, cannot be the possessor of land; but what I wish is, that farmers and men of

moderate means should become possessors of land and of their farms. About two centuries ago, two very celebrated men endeavoured to form a constitution for Carolina, which was then one of the colonies of this country in America. Lord Shaftesbury, the statesman, and Mr. Locke, the philosopher, framed a constitution with the notion of having great proprietors all over the country, and men under them to cultivate it. I recollect that Mr. Bancroft, the historian of the United States, describing the issue of that attempt and its utter failure, says: "The instinct of aristocracy dreads the moral power of a proprietary yeomanry, and therefore the perpetual degradation of the cultivators of the soil was enacted." There is no country in the world, in which there are only great landowners and tenants, with no large manufacturing interest to absorb the population, in which the degradation of the cultivating tenant is not completely assured.

I hope that hon. Members opposite, and hon. Gentlemen on this side who may be disposed in some degree to sympathize with them, will not for a moment imagine that I am discussing this question in any spirit of hostility to the landowners of Ireland. I have always argued that the landowners of Ireland, in their treatment of this question, have grievously mistaken not only the interests of the population, but their own. I was told the other day by a Member of this House, who comes from Ireland, and is eminently capable of giving a sound opinion upon the point, that he believed the whole of Ireland might be bought at about twenty years' purchase; but you know that the land of England is worth thirty years' purchase, and I believe a great deal of it much more,—and it is owing to circumstances which legislation may in a great degree remove that the land of Ireland is worth at this moment so much less than the land of England. Coming back to the question of buying farms, I put it to the House whether, if it be right to lend to landlords for improvements, and to tenants for improving the farms of their landlords, to those who propose to carry on public works, and to repair the ravages of the cattle plague, I

ask whether it is not also right for them to lend money in cases where it may be advantageous to landlords, and where they may be very willing to consent to it, to establish a portion of the tenant-farmers of Ireland as proprietors of their farms.

Now, bear in mind that I have never spoken about peasant proprietors. I do not care what name you give them; I am in favour of more proprietors, and some, of course, will be small and some will be large; but it would be quite possible for Parliament, if it thought fit to attempt anything of this kind, to fix a limit below which it would not assist the owner to sell or the purchaser to buy. I believe that you can establish a class of moderate proprietors, who will form a body intermediate between the great owners of land and those who are absolutely landless, which will be of immense service in giving steadiness, loyalty, and peace to the whole population of the island. The noble Lord the Chief Secretary, knows perfectly well at what price he could lend that money, and I will just state to the House one fact which will show how the plan would work. If you were to lend money at 3½ per cent., in thirty-five years the tenant, paying 5 per cent., would have paid the whole money back and all the interest due on it, and would become the owner of his farm; and if you were to take the rate at which you have lent to the Harbour Commissioners, and to repair the ravages of the cattle plague, which is 3¼ per cent., of course the whole sum would be paid back in a shorter period. Therefore, in a term which in former times was not unusual in the length of leases in Ireland, namely, thirty-one years, the tenant purchasing his farm, without his present rent being raised, would repay to the Government the principal and interest of the sum borrowed for that purpose, would become the owner of his farm, and during the whole of that time would have absolute fixity of tenure, because every year he would be saving more and more, adding field to field, and at the end of the time he would be the proprietor of the soil.

Let not the House imagine that I am proposing to

buy up the whole of the land. I am proposing only to buy it in cases where men are willing to sell, and to transfer it only in cases where men are able and willing to buy, and you must know as well as I that there will be many thousands of such cases in a few years. Every Irish proprietor opposite . . . must know perfectly well that amongst the tenantry of Ireland there is a considerable sum of saved money not invested in farms. Well, that saved money would all come out to carry into effect transactions of this nature; and you will find the most extraordinary efforts made by thousands of tenants to become possessors of their farms by investing their savings in them, by obtaining it may be the assistance of their friends, and by such an industrious and energetic cultivation of the soil as has scarcely ever been seen in Ireland. I said there were landlords willing to sell, and there are cases in which, probably, Parliament might insist upon a sale—for instance, the lands of the London Companies. I never heard of much good that was done by all the money of the London Companies. I was once invited to a dinner by one of these Companies, and certainly it was of a very sumptuous and substantial character, but I believe that, if the tenants of these Companies were proprietors of the lands they cultivate, it would be a great advantage to the counties in which they are situated. I come then to this: I would negotiate with landowners who were willing to sell and tenants who were willing to buy, and I would make the land the great savings-bank for the future tenantry of Ireland. If you like, I would limit the point to which we might go down in the transference of farms, but I would do nothing in the whole transaction which was not perfectly acquiesced in by both landlord and tenant, and I would pay the landlord every shilling he could fairly demand in the market for the estate he proposed to sell.

Well, I hope every Gentleman present will acquit me of intending confiscation, and that we shall have no further misunderstanding upon that point. I venture to say to the noble Lord that this is a plan which would be within compass and management, as compared with

that laid down in his Bill, if it worked at all, and I believe that it would do a hundred times as much good, in putting the farmer upon the footing of a holder of land in Ireland. What do hon. Gentlemen think would become of an American Fenian if he came over to Ireland and happened to spend an evening with a number of men who had got possession of their farms. I remember my old friend Mr. Stafford, in the county of Wexford, whom I called upon in 1849, who had bought his farm and had built upon it the best farm-house which I saw in the whole South of Ireland, and who told me that if all the tenantry of Ireland had security for their holdings—he was an old man, and could not easily rise from his chair, though he made an effort to do so—"If they had the security that I have," said he, "we'd *bate* the hunger out of Ireland." If the Fenian spent his evening with such men as these, and proposed his reckless schemes to them, not a single farmer would listen to him for a moment. Their first impression would be that he was mad; their second, perhaps, that the whisky had been too strong for him; and it would end, no doubt, if he persisted in his efforts to seduce them from their allegiance to the Imperial Government, by their turning him off the premises, though perhaps, knowing that he could do no harm, they might not hand him over to the police.

The other day I passed through the county of Somerset, and through villages that must be well known to many Gentlemen here—Rodney-Stoke and Drayford, I think they were called—and I noticed a great appearance of life and activity about the neighbourhood. I asked the driver of the carriage which had brought me from Wells what was the cause of it. "Why," he said, "don't you know that is the place where the great sale took place?" "What sale?" I asked. "Oh! the sale of the Duke's property." "What Duke?" "The Duke of Buckingham. Did you never hear of it? About fifteen years ago his property was sold in lots, and the people bought all the farms. You never saw such a stir in the world." He pointed out the houses on the hillside which had been built to

replace old tumble-down tenements, the red soil appearing under the plough, and cultivation going on with such general activity as had not been witnessed till within these last few years. The appearance of these villages was such as must strike every traveller from another part of the country, and it was produced by simple means. The great estate of an embarrassed Duke had been divided and sold off; he had not been robbed; the old miserable hovels of the former tenants had been pulled down, and new life and activity had been given to the whole district. If you could have such a change as this in Ireland, you would see such a progress and prosperity that gentlemen would hardly know the district from which they came.

* * * * *

If the landowners had been a little wiser we might not have had before us to-night the difficulty that now perplexes us. Suppose, for example, they had not been tempted to coerce or to make use of the votes of their tenants; suppose they had not been tempted to withhold leases—undoubtedly the condition of Ireland would have been far superior to what it now is. My hon. Friend the Member for Westminster has some scruples, I believe, on the question of the ballot, but I believe even he would not object to see that admirable machinery of election tried in that country. Do hon. Gentlemen think it not necessary? I was talking, only two days ago, to a Member of this House who sat on one of the Irish election committees—the Waterford committee, I think—and he said: "We could not unseat the Members, though the evidence went to show a frightful state of things; it was one of the most orderly elections they have in that country—only three men killed and twenty-eight seriously wounded." After all, we may smile, and some of you may laugh at this, but it is not a thing to be laughed at. It is a very serious matter, but it exists in no country in the world where the ballot is in operation.

If you were to try that mode of election in Ireland it would have two results: it would make your elections perfectly tranquil, and at the same time it would with-

draw from the landowner—and a most blessed thing for the landowner himself this would be—it would withdraw from him the great temptation to make use of his tenant's vote for the support of his own political party; and if that temptation were withdrawn, you would have much more inducement to grant leases to many of your tenants, and you would take a step highly favourable, not to the prosperity of your tenants only, but to your own prosperity and your own honour. Now, Sir, I shall say no more upon that question except this, that I feel myself at a disadvantage in making a proposition of this nature to a House where landowners are so numerous and so powerful, but I have disarmed them in so far that they will see that I mean them no harm, and that what I propose is not contrary to the principles of political economy; and that if Government is at liberty to lend money for all the purposes to which I have referred, Government must be equally at liberty to lend money for this greater purpose; and, further, I venture to express my opinion, without the smallest hesitation or doubt, that if this were done to the extent of creating some few scores of thousands of farmer proprietors in Ireland, you would find that their influence would be altogether loyal; that it would extend around throughout the whole country; that whilst you were adding to the security of Government you would awaken industry in Ireland from its slumber, and you would have the wealth which you have not had before, and, with wealth, contentment and tranquillity in its train.

Now, Sir, it may appear egotistical in me to make one remark more, but I think if the House will not condemn me I shall make it. Last year you did, under the leadership of the right hon. Gentleman, accept a proposition which I had taken several years of trouble and labour to convince you was wise. On Wednesday last, only two days ago, by an almost unanimous vote you accepted a proposition with regard to another matter, exactly in the form in which six or seven years ago I had urged you to accept it. You in this House recollect when Mr. Speaker had to give the casting

vote, amidst vast excitement in the House, on the miserable question of Church Rates; but now, on Wednesday last, you accepted that Bill almost without opposition; and I presume that, except for the formality of a third reading, we have done with the question for ever. Now if you would kindly, I ask it as a favour—if you would kindly for a moment forget things that you read of me which are not favourable, and generally which are not true, and if you would imagine that though I have not an acre of land in Ireland, I can be as honestly a friend of Ireland as the man who owns half a county, it may be worth your while to consider for your own interest, the interests of your tenants, the security of the country from which you come, for the honour of the United Kingdom, whether there is not something in the proposition that I have made to you.

Now, Sir, perhaps the House will allow me to turn to that other question which, on the authority of the noble Lord the Chief Secretary for Ireland, and the noble Lord the Member for King's Lynn, and indeed on the authority of the Prime Minister himself, is considered the next greatest—perhaps I ought to have said the greatest—question we have to consider in connection with Irish affairs; I mean the Irish Church question. What is it that is offered upon this matter by the Government? The noble Lord himself said very little about it, but he is not easy upon it; he knows perfectly well, and cannot conceal it, that the Irish Church question is at the root of every other question in Ireland. The noble Lord the Member for King's Lynn said also that it was, along with the land, the great and solemn question which we had to discuss, and . . . he turned round almost with a look of despair, and implored somebody to come and tell us what ought to be done on this Irish question. And the Prime Minister himself, in speaking of it, called it an "Alien Church." Bear that phrase in mind. It is a strong phrase, a phrase we can all understand, and we know that the right hon. Gentleman is a great master of phrases—he says a word upon some subject; it sticks; we all remember it, and this is sometimes a great advantage. "Alien Church" is the name

he gives it; and now, what does the noble Lord, acting, no doubt, under the direction of his Colleagues and the Prime Minister, offer upon this question? He rather offered a defence of it; he did not go into any argument, but still, at the same time, he rather defied anybody to make an assault upon it; he believed that it would not succeed, and that it was very wrong; but what does he really propose? Only this: to add another buttress in the shape of another bribe. He says that he will make an offer to the Roman Catholic hierarchy and people of Ireland—some say that the people do not want it, and that the hierarchy do want it, but I say nothing about that, because I hope the Catholic people of Ireland are at least able to defend themselves from the hierarchy, if the hierarchy wish to cripple them too much—he says he will endow a Roman Catholic University in Ireland. As the noble Lord went on with his speech he touched upon the question of the Presbyterian *Regium Donum*, and spoke of it, I think, as a miserable provision for the Presbyterians of the North of Ireland; and evidently, if he had had the courage, the desperate courage to do it, he would have proposed, whilst he was offering to endow a new Roman Catholic University, to increase or double the *Regium Donum*. The noble Lord does not express any dissent from this, and I rather think he wishes that it were safely done. The object of this, and what he would like to have said to the hon. Gentleman about him who came from Ireland to represent the Roman Catholic population, and to the Presbyterians of the North of Ireland, was this: "If you will continue to support the Protestant Church in Ireland and the Protestant supremacy, we will endow you (the Roman Catholics) a University, really, if not professedly, under clerical rule; and as to you (the Presbyterians), we will double your stipend by doubling the amount of the *Regium Donum*."

Now, why do you offer anything? Why is it we are discussing this question? Why did the noble Lord think it necessary to speak for three hours and twenty minutes on the subject? Because the state of Ireland is now very different from the state which we have

sometimes seen, and very different, I hope, from that which many of us may live to see hereafter; because Ireland has a certain portion of its population rebellious, has a larger portion disloyal and discontented, but has a still larger portion dissatisfied with the Imperial rule. Now I must say—I hope the noble Lord will not think I am saying anything uncivil—but I must say that his proposition appears to be at once grotesque and imbecile, and I think at the same time—though I do not like to use unpleasant words—that to a certain extent it must be held to be . . . not only very wrong, but very dishonest. At this moment it seems to find no favour on either side of the House, although I can understand the Catholic Members of the House feeling themselves bound to say nothing against it, and perhaps, if it came to a division, to vote for it; but I believe there is not a Catholic Member on this side of the House who could in his conscience say that it was right in him to accept this proposition as a bribe that he should hereafter support Protestant supremacy.

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Now, does anybody believe that a Catholic University in Ireland could have the smallest effect upon Fenianism, or upon the disloyalty, discontent, and dissatisfaction of which Fenianism is the latest and the most terrible expression? It is quite clear that for the evil which we have to combat, the remedy which the right hon. Gentleman offers through the Chief Secretary for Ireland is no remedy at all.

It reminds me of an anecdote which is related by Addison. He says that in his time there was a man who made a living by cheating the country people. He was not a Cabinet Minister,—he was only a mountebank,—and he set up a stall, and sold pills that were very good against the earthquake. Well, that is about the state of things that we are in now. There is an earthquake in Ireland. Does anybody doubt it? I will not go into the evidence of it, but I will say that there has been a most extraordinary alarm—some of it extravagant, I will admit—throughout the whole of the three kingdoms; and although Fenianism may be but a low,

a reckless, and an ignorant conspiracy, the noble Lord has admitted that there is discontent and disaffection in the country; and when the Member for one of the great cities of Ireland comes forward and asks the Imperial Parliament to discuss this great question—this social and political earthquake under which Ireland is heaving—the noble Lord comes forward and offers that there shall be a clerical-governed endowed University for the sons, I suppose, of the Catholic gentlemen of Ireland. I have never heard a more unstatesmanlike or more unsatisfactory proposition; and I believe the entire disfavour with which it has been received in this House is only a proper representation of the condemnation which it will receive from the great majority of the people of the three kingdoms.

Do not let anyone suppose that I join in the terms which I regretted to hear from the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Stroud, and still less that I join in the, in my opinion, more offensive terms which fell from the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Calne. There can be no good in our attacking either the Catholic population or the Catholic hierarchy of Ireland. We have our duty straight before us, which is to do both the hierarchy and the people justice. We are not called upon to support the plan of the Government, and I believe the people of Great Britain, and a very large portion of the people of Ireland, will rejoice when the House of Commons shall reject a proposition which is adverse to the course we have taken for many years past, and a proposition which would have no better effect in tranquillizing Ireland in the future than the increase of the grant to Maynooth did more than twenty years ago. Sir Robert Peel at that time, with the most honourable and kindly feeling to Ireland, proposed to increase the grant to Maynooth, and it was passed, I think, by a large majority of the House, I being one of a very few persons on this side of the House who opposed the grant. I was as kindly disposed to the Catholics of Ireland as Sir Robert Peel, but I was satisfied that was not the path of tranquillization, and that if he trod that path it would before any long time

have to be retraced; and I think, if you now proceed upon the course recommended by the right hon. Gentleman, you will fail in the pacification of Ireland, and the time will come when you will have to retrace the steps he invites you to tread in now.

Now, Sir, I think we have arrived at this point of the question—that we have absolutely arrived at it, and there is no escape from it—that it does not matter in the least whether the right hon. Gentleman sits on the Treasury Bench, or whether the right hon. Member for South Lancashire takes his place, or whether the two should unite—which is a very bold figure of speech—but I say that if the two should unite, it could not alter this fact, that the Protestant supremacy, as represented by a State Church in Ireland, is doomed, and is, in fact, at an end. Whatever are the details, and I admit that they will be very difficult details in some particulars, which may be introduced into the measure which shall enact the great change that the circumstances of Ireland and the opinion of the United Kingdom have declared to be necessary, this, at least, we have come to, that perfect religious equality henceforth, and not only religious equality, but equality on the voluntary principle, must be granted.

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What is the condition of Ireland at this moment with which you have to deal? There is not only the Church, which it is proposed to disestablish, but you have the *Regium Donum*, which, if the Church be disestablished, must necessarily be withdrawn; and you have, if these two things happen, a grant to Maynooth, the Act conferring which must necessarily be repealed. Now, in doing these things the House will observe that we shall disturb all the three principal sects or Churches in Ireland, and we can only do it, or attempt to do it, on the ground that we are about to accomplish some great public good. Well, my proposal, which some hon. Gentlemen, I dare say, will have some vague idea of, was made with the view of easing Parliament in the great transaction, from which I believe it cannot escape. It is a great thing in statesmanship, when you are about

to make a change which is inevitable, and which shocks some, disturbs more, and makes hesitating people hesitate still more—it is a great thing, I say, if you can make the past slide into the future without any great jar, and without any great shock to the feelings of the people. And in doing these things the Government can always afford to be generous and gracious to those whom they are obliged to disturb.

We have found that this has been the case when needful changes have been proposed; for instance, hon. Gentlemen will recollect, when tithe commutation for Ireland was passed, that there was a certain concession made to the landowners of Ireland, to induce them to acquiesce in the proposition of Parliament. We know that when slavery was abolished a considerable sum of money was voted. Lord Derby proposed in this House that compensation should be given to the slaveowners. If it had not been for that, slavery would before long have been abolished by violence. But Parliament thought it was much better to take the step it did take, and I am not, at this period of time, about for a moment to dispute its wisdom. In all these things we endeavour, if we are forced to make a great change, to make it in such a manner as that we shall obtain the acquiescence and the support, if possible, of those who are most likely to be nearly affected by it. Suppose we were going to disestablish the Church of Scotland—and I understand that there are a great number belonging to the Established Church of Scotland who are coming round to the opinion that it would be much to their benefit, and I think for the benefit of their Church, if it were disestablished—if we were going to disestablish the Church of Scotland or the Church of England, no person for a moment would suppose that, after having taken all the tithes and all the income from these Churches, you would also take all the churches and all the parsonage-houses from the Presbyterian people of Scotland, or from the Episcopal Church people in England. You would not do anything of that kind. You would do to them as we should wish, if we were in their position, that the Government and Parliament should

do to us. Do what you have to do thoroughly for the good of the country, but do it in such a manner as shall do least harm, and as shall gain the largest amount of acquiescence from those whom you are about to affect. I venture to say that such is the course we should take about Ireland.

I am very free in speaking on these matters. I am not a Catholic in the sense of Rome. I am not a Protestant in the sense in which that word is used in Ireland. I am not connected with a powerful sect in England. I think, from my training, and education, and association, and thought on these questions, I stand in a position which enables me to take as fair and unimpassioned a view of the matter as perhaps any man in the House. Now, if I were asked to give my advice, and if I am not asked I shall give it—I should propose that where there are congregations in Ireland—I am speaking now, of course, of the present Established Church—who would undertake to keep in repair the church in which they have been accustomed to worship, and the parsonage-house in which their ministers live, Parliament should leave them in the possession of their churches and of their parsonage-houses. And I believe I speak the sentiment of every Catholic Member on this side of the House, and probably of every intelligent Catholic in Ireland, not only of the laity but of the hierarchy and the priesthood, when I say that they would regard such a course as that on the part of Parliament as just, under the circumstances in which we are placed. Well, then, of course there would be no more Bishops appointed by the Crown, and that institution in Ireland would come to an end, except it were continued upon the principle upon which Bishops are appointed in Scotland. All State connection would be entirely abolished. You would then have all alike. The Protestants would have their churches and parsonage-houses as they have now. But the repairs of them, and the support of their ministers, would be provided by their congregations, or by such an organization as they chose to form. The Catholics would provide, as they have hitherto done so meritoriously and with a remarkable liberality, for themselves.

No greater instance of generosity and fidelity to their Church can be seen in the world than that which has been manifested by the Catholic people of Ireland. They have their churches and their priests' houses in many places. There is no pretence for meddling with them. In the North of Ireland, where the Presbyterians are most numerous, they would also have their places of worship and their ministers' houses as they have now. All the Churches, therefore, in that respect would be on an equality. Well, now, the real point of this question, and which will create in all probability much feeling in Parliament and in the country, is, what should be done on the question of the Maynooth Grant, and on the question of the *Regium Donum?* They must be treated alike, I presume. If you preserve the life interests of the ministers and Bishops of the Established Church, it may be right to preserve the life interests of the ministers of the Presbyterian Church, and it may be right also in some way or other to make some provision that shall not in the least degree bring them under the control of the State. And some provision might have to be made to the Catholic Church in lieu of the Maynooth Grant, which, of course, you would be obliged to withdraw. These are points which I will not discuss in detail. I merely indicate them for the sake of showing to the House, and to a great number of people who are regarding it with even more feeling than we do, what are some of the difficulties of this question—difficulties which must be met—difficulties which it will require all the moderation, all the Christian feeling, and all the patriotism which this House can muster on both sides of it, with the view of settling this question permanently and to the general satisfaction of the three kingdoms. Now, I will go no further, but to say that whatever is done—if a single sixpence is given by Parliament, in lieu of the Maynooth Grant, or in lieu of the *Regium Donum*, it must be given on these terms only—and on that matter I think Lord Russell has committed a great error—that it becomes the absolute property of the Catholics or of the Presbyterians—that it must be as completely their property as the property of the great

Wesleyan body in this country, or of the Independents, or of the Baptists, belongs to these bodies. It must be property which Parliament can never pretend to control, or regulate, or withdraw.

And having consented to that condition, the three Churches of Ireland would be started as voluntary Churches, and instead of fighting, as I am sorry to say they have been fighting far longer than within the memory of man, I hope soon there would be a competition among them which should do most for the education, the morals, and the Christianity of the population who are within their instruction and guidance. Now, Protestants in this country—I think almost all Protestants—object very strongly to Rome. The Nonconformists object to endowments. They sometimes, I think, confound establishments with endowments. I think it absolutely essential that establishments should cease, and that there should be nothing in the way of endowment unless it be some small provision such as that which I have indicated, which it might be necessary to make when you are withdrawing certain things which the Churches in Ireland had supposed were theirs in perpetuity.

Now, one word which I would say to the Nonconformist people of England and Scotland, if the House will allow me to speak, is this—they should bear in mind that the whole of this property which is now in the possession of the Established Church of Ireland is Irish property. It does not belong to Scotland or to England, and it would be a measure intolerable and not to be thought of, that it should be touched or dealt with in any manner that is not in accordance with the feelings and the interests of the people of Ireland. Let any man who to-morrow criticizes this part of my speech ask himself what an Irish Parliament, freely elected, would do with the ecclesiastical funds of Ireland. I think the Presbyterians of Scotland, the Churchmen and Nonconformists of England, have no right to suppose themselves to be judges with regard to religious matters in Ireland. They have a perfect right to say to Parliament, through their representatives,

"We will discontinue the State Church in Ireland, and we will create no other State Churches." But that seems to be about the extent of the interference which they are entitled to in this matter.

I hope I have explained with tolerable clearness the views which I have felt it my duty to lay before the House on the occasion of this great question. The House will see, and I think hon. Gentlemen opposite will admit, that I am at least disposed to treat it as a great question which, if it be dealt with, should be dealt with in the most generous, gracious, and, if you like, tender manner by Parliament, as respects the feelings and interests of all who are most directly concerned. The right hon. Gentleman the Home Secretary, in his speech last night, said that this proposal to disestablish the Established Church of Ireland was, in point of fact, in some sort a revolution. This, at any rate, I am satisfied, would be not only an entirely bloodless revolution, but a revolution full of blessing to the Irish people.

I have not said a word—I never said a word in this House, and, I believe, never out of it, to depreciate the character of the clergymen of the Established Church in Ireland. I think no religious ministers are placed in a more unfortunate position, and I am satisfied that many of them feel it to be so. I have not the least doubt, when this transaction is once accomplished, that they will breathe more freely. I believe they will be more potent in their ministrations, and that their influence, which must, or ought to be, considerable, will be far more extensive than it has been, and far more beneficial in the districts in which they live. But being so great a question, as the Home Secretary described it, it can only be settled by mutual and reasonable concession. The main principle being secured, that State Church supremacy is abolished in Ireland, and that the Irish Churches are henceforth to be free Churches upon the voluntary principle, then I should be willing, and I would recommend every person in the country whom my voice may reach, to make any reasonable concession that can be suggested in the case. So anxious am I that it should be done, that I should be delighted to co-

operate with the right hon. Gentleman, and with hon. Members on the opposite side of the House, in support of any just measure for settling this great question. But I say, if it ever does come to be dealt with by a great and powerful Minister, let it be dealt with in a great and generous spirit. I would counsel to all men moderation and justice. It is as necessary to Protestants as to Catholics and to Nonconformists that they should endeavour to get rid of passion in discussing this question.

We are, after all, of one religion. I imagine that there will come a time in the history of the world when men will be astonished that Catholics and Protestants have had so much animosity against and suspicion of each other. I accept the belief in a grand passage which I once met with in the writings of the illustrious founder of the colony of Pennsylvania. He says that "The humble, meek, merciful, just, pious, and devout souls are everywhere of one religion, and when death has taken off the mask they will know one another, though the diverse liveries they wear here make them strangers." Now, may I ask the House to act in this spirit, and then our work will be easy. The noble Lord, towards the conclusion of his speech, spoke of the cloud which rests at present over Ireland. It is a dark and heavy cloud, and its darkness extends over the feelings of men in all parts of the British Empire. But there is a consolation which we may all take to ourselves. An inspired King and bard and prophet has left us words which are not only the expression of a fact, but which we may take as the utterance of a prophecy. He says, "To the upright there ariseth light in the darkness." Let us try in this matter to be upright. Let us try to be just. That cloud will be dispelled. The dangers which surround us will vanish, and we may yet have the happiness of leaving to our children the heritage of an honourable citizenship in a united and prosperous Empire.

IX

GENERAL POLITICS

Edinburgh, November 5, 1868.

On this day Mr. Bright was elected an Honorary Member of the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce. Mr. George Harrison, Chairman of the Chamber, in congratulating Mr. Bright on being thus elected, stated that the Chamber had elected only three Honorary Members—Sir John Sinclair, the distinguished Scottish economist, in the last, and Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Bright in the present century. In the evening Mr. Bright addressed an audience of working men, and on a vote of thanks being offered him for his pains in acceding to their invitation during a contested election, made a brief speech which concluded his addresses on this occasion. The speech printed here is that which was addressed to the working men.]

I RISE for the purpose, first of all, of expressing how greatly I feel indebted to the gentlemen of the Edinburgh branch of the Reform League and of the trades of Edinburgh for the kindness with which they have prepared and presented to me the addresses which have been read. I do not accept those addresses as in any way binding those who have presented them to an approval of all the course of my political life. I accept them merely as tokens of the belief of those from whom they come that whether we have agreed, or whether on some occasions we have differed, they at least believe that I have acted honourably and conscientiously, as far as I know, for the best interests of the country.

It is about ten years since I last spoke at a public meeting in Edinburgh. Some who are now present were doubtless present on that occasion, and they will feel with me that in the ten years that has passed much has happened, and much has been changed. At that time the Government presided over by Lord Derby was in office, and was engaged in attempting to prepare a Reform Bill for the coming Session of Parliament. That Reform Bill was framed upon the principle that

the Ministry would not consent to what the Government of that day called "any degradation of the franchise." They would have no lowering of the barrier at which people were to be admitted to the vote. The Bill failed, as it deserved to fail, and the Government were expelled from office, as they deserved to be expelled. Coming down to eight years after this—to 1866—the party of whom I have spoken, being the Government of ten years ago, objected to a Reform Bill introduced by Lord John Russell and Mr. Gladstone, and resisted it on the ground that they were not willing to consent to such a degradation of the franchise as should admit householders in towns who were occupiers at the value of 7*l.* at least to the vote. They succeeded in defeating the Bill, and the Government resigned, and the same gentlemen immediately came into office, and though they had been sensible that any degradation of the franchise would be almost the ruin of the country, that its degradation to a 7*l.* rental was so perilous an experiment that they dared not consent to it, in the year 1867 they undertook to "degrade the franchise" to the level of the householder.

The words "degradation of the franchise," as you know, are not mine. I am using the language of those gentlemen in order to express what I believe will be found, instead of a degradation of the franchise, to be a great elevation of the people. We have got, then, and we need not exactly discuss how it has been effected, what may be called a popular and democratic—in fact, a Republican representation, so far as the boroughs of the United Kingdom are concerned. The principle of popular representation in Parliament, as it is adopted in the colonies, and in the States of America, has been conceded. Several boroughs have been disfranchised because they were small; towns have been erected into new boroughs because the towns were large; counties have been divided because they were populous, and the general principle has been admitted that we should make some approximation to the distribution of seats according to the population of the constituencies. Besides this, everybody can see that another question is

coming forward for settlement—one which possibly may not excite so much interest in Scotland as in England, Wales, and Ireland. It is, however, one which is closely related to the representation of the people. This is the great question of the ballot.

The fact is—and I do not say so with any expression of scorn or with any feeling of triumph—the aristocracy of England which so lately governed the country has abdicated, and its most boastful leader, Lord Derby, its chief, in its name, and for it, has capitulated to the people. One hundred and eighty years ago there was a revolution in England. The revolution of 1688 had this effect. It stripped the monarch of absolute power, and, pretending to confer it upon the nation, conferred it mainly upon the nobility. The Bill of 1832, combined with the Bill of last year, gave us another revolution. Power has not been taken from the Crown and given to the nobility, but it has been taken from the nobility and has been given henceforth and for ever to the people. The form of aristocratic power yet remains. In every country the possessors of great wealth are likely to have power. I am not complaining of this; but I am stating a fact, which must be plain to all. But although the influence of wealth is great, the spirit of the country has changed, and the centre of power has been moved. We are, in fact,—do not let us attempt to conceal it from ourselves,—standing on the threshold of a new career. Being there, we need no longer have recourse to the arguments which we have often heard from platforms in times past, such indeed as I sometimes have been ready to use. There is no longer a contest between us and the House of Lords; we need no longer bring charges against a selfish oligarchy; we no longer dread the power of the territorial magnates; we no longer feel ourselves domineered over by a class; we feel that denunciation and invective now would be out of place; the power which hitherto has ruled over us is shifted. We now have to appeal to you, to address our arguments to you, to couple facts—if we are capable of doing so—with wisdom, and, if we may, to counsel you, so that you who are now part of the government of the

country may show in the acts which you do the wisdom which you have learned. The fate of this great nation is in the nation's hands: come weal, come woe, the responsibility of the future must rest with the mass of the people, for they are now admitted, at least within the boroughs, to a large share of representation, and thereby of political power.

But all is not done. There are some matters which have to be adjusted; for to confer the franchise is only to give every man a key by which, if he is wise, he may unlock the treasures which are open to a well-governed people. This very Reform Bill, so extensive and so remarkable as it is, has still many deficiencies. I do not intend to go into details to show what must be done in order to bring the county franchise into greater harmony with the borough franchise. These are details that must come up before long for discussion before the people, and before Parliament; but there is one point to which I will refer, which I have indeed already mentioned, and this is the shelter of the ballot. I see in the papers a speech by a gentleman for whom all who know him must have the highest and deepest feeling of respect. I refer to one of the candidates for the city of Westminster, Mr. John Stuart Mill. No man is more fair in argument than Mr. Mill, no man is more willing to admit the force of anything that an opponent offers for his consideration; but it is not necessary that we should believe that Mr. Mill can know every question better than anybody else—and, in saying that, I say no more than he would be most willing to allow—but in a speech which Mr. Mill made within the last two days to some of his constituents, he says that he opposes the ballot. He thinks—I do not quote his words—that public duties should be performed publicly; that by and by there will be morality and power enough to put an end not only to corruption, but to compulsion; and he compares the free and open exercise of the ballot to the duty of a judge in a court of justice which is open to the public eye. It appears to me that the comparison is not a good one. The judge in open court has no compulsion brought upon him; he is independent; the

Crown, which appointed him to his office, cannot remove him; he is not expected to deliver a judgment in accordance with any feeling that he may have, but one which is wholly in accordance with well-known and recognized rules of law. If instead of stopping at the Bench, Mr. Mill had gone into the jury-room, he would have found that the jury, which is just as important in this country in a trial as the judge, does sit apart from the public eye, and more than that, that it is considered a gross violation of confidence if any juryman should convey to the public a knowledge of what has occurred in the jury-room. I am not able to accept these glowing pictures of the immediately improved morality of the people. If it be wise not to bring in the ballot because men without it will become strong enough not to need it, it might be equally wise to dispense with the judge and jury and the police; for (who knows?) at sometime —it may be remote—men may become strong enough in virtue, honest enough in their hearts, not to violate the written or the moral law, and judges and juries and courts of justice may no longer be required.

I look at the condition of things in this country and in Ireland, where, as you know, a county contest is little less than civil war; in Wales, where all the people, with scarcely any exception, being Nonconformists in their religion and Liberal in their politics, have hardly any opportunity of expressing their own opinions, and hardly any influence in their county representation. I look again at all the great constituencies of the kingdom which have been created under this Bill, and I am forced to conclude, as the new machinery of electing a Parliament comes into working, that it will be proved to every man, who is in favour of public order at our political contests, that the ballot is absolutely and indispensably necessary to secure order as well as liberty.

There is another question which is now before the public which has received much consideration, and, I believe, a wise verdict from the people of Scotland. That is the Irish policy of the Liberal party in the late Parliament. We are about to try a great experiment, one

of the most notable experiments ever attempted by any Government, or by any Parliament—we are about to see whether we can win over the affections and sympathies of a discontented and almost hostile people by one grand, generous, and wise attempt to do them full and complete justice. It is unnecessary in Scotland to point out how much an alien Church is necessarily a root of bitterness; your history teaches you all this in a more marked manner, perhaps, than it has been taught to any other country. I feel that I need only refer to the appeals which have been made to you by the Liberal candidates throughout Scotland to gain your thorough and hearty consent to the great attempt to establish perfect religious equality in Ireland.

But there will be another question by no means without its difficulties when this question of the Church of Ireland is settled, and that is with regard to the ownership and tenure of land in that country. You know nothing of this matter in Scotland from your own experience. Although you have the misfortune to have the land of your country in very few hands, still the men who own it have been not a little alive—as Scotchmen are generally supposed to be—to their own interests. They have conducted their business as landowners upon principles altogether unknown in Ireland. They have granted leases of reasonable duration, and I believe have given good encouragement to their tenants. They have expended their own capital on the erection of buildings, and in the making of certain permanent and necessary improvements. The Scotch farmer entering upon his farm could carry on his business with some hope of success. But you are in a very different position from the Irish. In Ireland the land really is not in the possession of what I may call native proprietors, or natives of the country, to any large extent. It seems to me to be an essential thing for the peace of any country that its soil should at least be in possession of its own people. I believe that in Ireland it will be necessary to adopt some plan—and I believe there is a plan which can be adopted without injustice or wrong to any man—by which gradually the land of Ireland

may be, to a considerable extent, transferred from foreign, or alien, or absentee Protestant proprietors, to the hands of the Catholic resident population of the country. I anticipate that until something of this kind is put into process of operation, we shall not find such tranquillity and content in Ireland as we would wish to see. But in speaking of the Irish land question, I may say one word about the land question in the United Kingdom. Perhaps many of you are not aware that from year to year, from ten years to ten years, the owners of land in the United Kingdom are becoming a smaller and smaller number of persons; that the laws which we have in this country, having been based and supported by the territorial powers, are laws whose express object it is to maintain great estates in the hands of great families, and to make the land not of Ireland only, but of Great Britain, a monopoly in the possession of a few. And the purpose of all this is that these great families by the possession of vast estates may possess and wield great political power, and remain, as they have been until now, the great governing party and power within this realm. But if you look seriously at facts, you will see that certain forces are constantly operating which tend to the accumulation of land; and that certain other forces tend as certainly to its dispersion. Those which tend to its accumulation will easily suggest themselves. Some men think it wise, and certainly agreeable, to put their property into land. Some people feel like Dr. Johnson, who advised a friend of his to take a walk of two miles before breakfast, and said, if possible, it should be upon your own land. Others like investments in land because they like to dabble in agriculture; others because the investment in land in this country gives a certain social influence which repays them for the moderate rate of interest which they receive. On the other hand, you will see that there are also influences which assist the dispersion of landed property. For instance, a man may wish to have an investment in English land, which pays him three per cent., put into American land, which will pay him seven per cent.; or he finds it expedient to get rid of a

portion of his estate in order to procure capital for his son; or he may have been unfortunate in some monetary speculation, and therefore may find it necessary to sell land; or that which happens to all men happens to him—his life comes to an end, and then the property may possibly need to be sold. Thus you will see that Nature has provided certain forces which tend to the accumulation of estates in land, and certain other forces which tend to their dispersion; and I maintain that the true policy of the Government and of the law—the just policy of the law—is to leave all to the forces of Nature, whether they induce the disposition to accumulate or bring about the necessity of dispersion, to their unrestrained operation. Thus when laws are made by which men who wish to buy property will be able to buy it, some in large and some in small quantities, the monopoly which exists in this country will be brought to an end.

I do not propose that there should be any law by which estates should forcibly be cut up and divided among families. I would leave the owner, the man in possession of the estate, perfect freedom to decide whether he will leave the property to one, or divide it among the whole of his children. The law of division maintained in France and in many countries of Europe is believed by most people in those countries to be a good law; but it appears to me to be contrary to the principles of political economy, and I prefer the operation of the law as it exists in the United States of America, which rejects the law of France and rejects also our law. But I conceive that before long it will be the duty of the people of England, of the electors of England, and of Parliament to remove from the Statute-book what is called the law of primogeniture, to allow land where it is left by a person who makes no will to be justly and equally divided by the law as property other than land is now divided, and that the present practice of entails and settlements should be limited to persons who are living when the deeds are made. I believe that it is not a wise thing to sacrifice the public interests to family pride or to the notion that you must build up great

families who are to have great resources, only that they may exercise a paramount authority in a free country.

There is another question which has been discussed a good deal of late, which at least twice a year to some people, and every day to most people, is of some interest. This is the question of Government expenditure. The people of the United Kingdom have carried the burden of heavy chains so long, that they have become used to them, and almost seem to think that the chains are part of their natural limbs. We are paying now, this very year, taxes amounting to 70,000,000*l.* sterling. I wish I could show you what 70,000,000 or even what 1,000,000 means; but I have never found a man who could comprehend the meaning of a million. Out of these 70,000,000*l.*, 26,000,000*l.* go to pay the interest on the debt contracted by wars which have been waged by this country between the time of William III and the time of the Russian War. These wars have seldom been undertaken for any purpose whatever in which the whole people of this country had a real interest. Your fathers having waged the wars, spilled the blood and spent the treasure; it comes on us, their children, and on our children and their children, to pay the interest for an enormous debt. But we are not content with this burden. We have learnt so little by the past, that we are paying this year, I think, rather more than an equal sum, rather more than 26,000,000*l.* from the fear that there may be another war, or that we may be induced again to meddle in some great European contest. We are maintaining an army and a navy at a cost far greater than at any previous period in time past, although we have confessedly—I quote the words of Lord Stanley, the Foreign Minister—a sufficient guarantee that we have altogether abandoned the ancient theory of the balance of power, and that we do not intend henceforth to use the sword in any question in which the honour and interest of England are not distinctly involved.

This year, I think, the army cost about 15,000,000*l.*, and the navy over 11,000,000*l.* Let me tell you how many there are of every kind of soldier and half-soldier in the country. If I am not mistaken, there were voted

140,000 men for the army, for the navy 60,000, making 200,000 regular and permanent troops, which we have been told are absolutely necessary, so necessary that the Government that preceded this present Government were most negligent of the defences of the country in maintaining less. Of the militia there are 128,000 men, of the Volunteers 162,000. In Ireland there is a police force, equal in training and armament to any troops, of, I believe, rather more than 12,000 men. Then there is, as you know, a considerable force of police in all our great towns, and in nearly all the counties. Take them altogether, they make a very formidable sum. These persons are withdrawn from industry to what is supposed to be necessary defence, and you need not wonder that the sum which we pay is as large as that which I have described, to say nothing of the loss to industry. Let me further illustrate what I am saying by calling your attention to Ireland. There have been at times, and certainly not long ago, 30,000 soldiers in Ireland. I do not know how many there are at this moment, but if they are not there they are somewhere else, and I dare say somewhere where they are not wanted. But we have in Ireland, besides the 12,000 armed police which I have mentioned, an army which is paid for out of the taxes of the United Kingdom. The system of the Government of Ireland, of which the Tory party is enamoured, is one which requires this great military force in order to keep Ireland contented, or if it fails in that, to keep it from the constant exhibition of rebellious tendencies. If I were one of the Conservative party—I use the term as it is used in the Tory newspapers—if I were one of that party I really should be ashamed to talk of Ireland: I should feel that if there be a spot on the earth's surface where my principles have had full play, it is in that unhappy country. The territorial magnates have had all the power there, an Established Church has been supported by all the authority of Great Britain; the magistrates in the country, in great majority, have been of the Protestant persuasion; everything has been upheld there which the most resolute Tory could desire to see. But with what result?

That policy has been followed, as it must be everywhere and inexorably, by widespread discontent, and a resolution on the part of the people that they will shake themselves free from such a Government if at any time the power of Great Britain is not strong enough to control them.

And now let us look at the facts in a reasonable manner. What does the 26,000,000*l.* spent on the army and navy mean? It means something equal to the debt of 800,000,000*l.* sterling which our forefathers spent in folly and wrong, and the interest on which your taxes pay. It means that there is virtually another sum of 800,000,000*l.*, the interest of which you are paying in taxes in order to keep up a great army and a great navy. And when? not only in a time of profound peace, but when no country in the world menaces or distrusts us; when there is not a cloud in the sky; when, if ever there was a time at which the United Kingdom may be said to be in tranquillity and peace, the time at which I am speaking is that time. If you look back over the history of England from the time of the Revolution—from the time of William III to the end of the Russian War—you will find that almost every war in which we have been engaged was based on the utter folly and absurdity that this nation is called upon to maintain the balance of power in Europe. I hope that we have abandoned that policy and given up that delusion; that we have got free from that aberration, and are at last in our right mind. May we not, then, calculate that if we keep out of the former hallucination, if we retain that sound mind, if we for the next 50 years, or 100 years, resolve to maintain our present policy of not meddling in the affairs of Europe, that we shall be at least as free from wars in 100 years to come as we might have been in the 100 years that are passed. If that be so, if there be any hope of it,—and I believe there is,—I ask why we should go on paying 26,000,000*l.* sterling a year for the cost of an army and a navy?

I quoted a passage yesterday from perhaps the foremost name in English political history—from John Milton—I

may now quote another. He describes these charges for war as draining the veins of the body to supply ulcers; and so from your veins, from the sweat of your brows, from the skill of your brains, and the industry of your hands, from that which you have worked for to furnish your houses, to clothe your families, to supply their wants—from all these this 26,000,000*l.* is gathered up, not once in 100 years, but every year, to support the army and navy, to maintain and keep up a policy which we have utterly abandoned. If you read the papers, which tell us nearly everything—I find they sometimes tell us things that do not happen—you will find they say something about the West Indian and North American fleet; something about the Pacific squadron; and something about the naval force of Her Majesty in the China seas; something which has happened to ships of war on the coast of India, or at the Cape. Then you hear of Lord Clarence Paget, as here, or there, in some part of the Mediterranean, with a prodigious fleet. You hear, further, that there is always a great Channel fleet which is necessary for our home protection. But there is no necessity whatever for these fleets on our coast, or for traversing every ocean as they do now. There is no other country that finds it needful to have great fleets and squadrons everywhere. I do not know whether it is a dream, or a vision, or the foresight of a future reality that sometimes passes across my mind—I like to dwell upon it—but I frequently think the time may come when the maritime nations of Europe—this renowned country, of which we are citizens, France, Prussia, Russia, resuscitated Spain, Italy, and the United States of America—may see that those vast fleets are of no use; that they are merely menaces offered from one country to another; that they are grand inventions by which the blood is withdrawn from the veins of the people to feed their ulcers; and that they may come to this wise conclusion,—they will combine at their joint expense, and under some joint management, to supply the sea with a sufficient sailing and armed police, which may be necessary to keep the peace on all parts of the watery surface of the globe, and that those

great instruments of war and oppression shall no longer be upheld. This, of course, by many will be thought to be a dream or a vision, not the foresight of what they call a statesman. Still, I have faith that it will not be for ever that we shall read of what Wilberforce called the noxious race of heroes and conquerors; that what Christianity points to will one day be achieved, and that the nations throughout the world will live in peace with each other. How much can we spare of that 26,000,000*l.*? I think one-half of it was considered enough thirty years ago when the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel were in power. Heavy taxation always is unequal, for when the burden is heavy the powerful classes are always endeavouring to shift it from their own shoulders on to those of somebody that is weaker. It is impossible to say how great would be the gain to the commerce and manufactures, to the shopkeeping and distributing interests, to artisans and labourers throughout the country if one-half of these 26,000,000*l.* could be saved. There is not a man or a woman in England that would not reap some advantage from such a change. If this wide extension of the suffrage does not bring the people to consider these questions, and cause them to urge in Parliament greater wisdom and greater economy, I shall be greatly dissatisfied with its results.

In the address which was given to me a reference was made to another question, not less important than any of those I have mentioned. That is, the question of education. I presume that in Scotland, where you have had more education than we have had in England, you are in favour of having more still; for education is one of those things of which the more extensively it is spread among the people, the more a people demand. In England we are superior to other nations in some things: we have great personal freedom; we have a press that can write almost anything it likes; we have a platform on which men may speak freely; we have great success in manufactures; we have immense superiority over almost all countries; but it is singular that in the education of the people, of the working

classes, of those who live by wages, we are much behind very many of the civilized and Christian nations of the world. We have any number of churches and colleges, but we have a great scarcity of schools. I sometimes compare the state of things in New England with the state of things in Old England. New England began to be colonized about 250 years ago: the very first colonists who landed on its shores established at once a system of education. From that day to this that system has not only constantly flourished, but it has been constantly extended and gathered strength, and now the population of New England is descended from no less than eight generations of skilled and intelligent men and women. In this country, as we all know, unhappily, there are at least some millions whose forefathers for eight generations have been entirely deprived of all education whatever. You may imagine—you cannot imagine — the difference between two people, one which has been educated for 250 years, and another which has been almost entirely shut out from education. Only last night, when I came to Edinburgh, I sat by a lady who has not long ago returned from America. She was a lady of your country. She spoke with delight of what she had seen there with regard to education, and with pain and sorrow at the neglect of it which is shown by the population of the United Kingdom. She said that nobody would think of speaking of any class, as we speak, as being partially, or large portions of them as entirely, uneducated. There is a possibility—and we shall find it out, our children will see it, I hope—that the millions of this country who have not been educated—for you can see the fact in the countenances and lives of many—will hereafter have, if not a large, at least a reasonable and necessary culture. I frequently used an argument in favour of a wider suffrage to the following effect:—I said that this great neglect was the fruit of the government of the country by a small section or class; that if we were to transfer the power from the small section and extend it over the nation, the instincts and sympathies of the nation would at once demand that a wide and thorough

system of, at least, elementary education should be speedily extended to every part of the country. I have dwelt on three great topics. I had no notion that the mere passage of a Suffrage Bill would content everybody; for, after all, there is not much difference in holding up your hands at the hustings and going in to have your name put down on the poll-book unless something is to follow. That something, I hope, we shall all consider carefully and wisely, and that in all our future proceedings we shall bear in mind that upon every one of us, as electors, there is a great and solemn responsibility. The three great questions before us are these:—The monopoly of the land, which I believe to be the cause of great and serious evil. It drives vast numbers of the rural population into the towns, where sometimes they are not wanted. It subjects the rural population over wide districts of territory to the rule of one man, as you know; and it keeps the rural popula-lation back in the condition—I speak of the labourers—which they were in for a hundred years ago or more. Rents have risen, the incomes of the landed proprietors doubled, trebled, and quadrupled—aye, in some cases, increased tenfold. What the labourers were at one time they remain, not altogether, but very much the same as they were. Let us protest against the monopoly of the land. I hope that we shall have the united voice of all the free constituencies in the country before long demanding of Parliament that there shall be such a change made as brings the truths of political economy and the law of justice within reach of all.

Next, there is an enormous expenditure, and in some things onerous inequality of taxation. I had this morning the opportunity of meeting the members of the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, and I took occasion to tell them how great a credit it was to them that so far back as the year 1820 they had presented an admirable petition to Parliament in favour of the principle of free trade, and I suggested to them that they might find it to be their duty to endeavour to get what I call a free breakfast-table—to get rid of the heavy duties upon tea, coffee, and sugar. The expendi-

ture of the country might easily be reduced so much as to allow a reduction or repeal of these duties. The equalization of certain other duties—I refer to the legacy and succession duties—might go a considerable way towards the means for extinguishing these duties. You may rely upon it, that if the people say that these taxes are unnecessary and unjust, and if the people protest against them, and resolve to get rid of them, you will not find the slightest difficulty in finding a Chancellor of the Exchequer who will do the work.

The last of the three questions is the existence of ignorance, of almost hopeless ignorance, among the poorest classes of the people. It is not an extraordinary thing that notwithstanding our great industry, our wonderful machinery, our world-wide commerce, and the great wealth of the country, there should be found so large a mass of pauperism in the kingdom. I read the other day a speech made by a member of the House of Commons, and a member of the present Government, or who was until the last Session. The Secretary of the Poor Law Board expressed his apprehension that the pauperism of the country was increasing so fast that it would be nearly as bad as it was some thirty years ago. I think there must be something very rotten if such a result occurs. Since I have taken a part in public affairs, the fact of the vast weight of the poverty and ignorance that exists at the bottom of the social scale has been a burden on my mind, and is so now. I have always hoped that the policy which I have advocated, and has been accepted in principle, will tend gradually but greatly to relieve the pauperism and the suffering which we still see among the working classes of society. I have no notion of a country being called prosperous and happy, or of being in a satisfactory state, when such a state of things exists. You may have an historical monarchy decked out in the dazzling splendour of Royalty; you may have an ancient nobility settled in grand mansions and on great estates; you may have an ecclesiastical hierarchy, hiding with its worldly pomp that religion whose first virtue is humility; but, notwithstanding all this, the whole fabric may be

rotten and doomed ultimately to fall, if the great mass of the people on whom it is supported is poor, and suffering, and degraded.

Is there no remedy for this state of things? If Government were just, if taxes were moderate and equitably imposed, if land were free, if schools were as prominent institutions in our landscapes and in our great towns as prisons and workhouses are, I suspect that we should find the people gradually gaining more self-respect; that they would have much more hope of improvement for themselves and their families, that they would rise above, in thousands of cases, all temptations to intemperance, and that they would become generally—I say almost universally—more virtuous and more like what the subjects of a free State ought to be. The solemn question as to the future condition of a considerable portion of the labouring classes in this country cannot be neglected. It must be known and remedied. It is the work upon which the new electoral body and the new Parliament will have to enter. It is a long way from Belgrave Square to Bethnal Green. It is not pleasant to contrast the palatial mansions of the rich and the dismal hovels of the poor, the profuse and costly luxuries of the wealthy with the squalid and hopeless misery of some millions of those who are below them. But I ask you, as I ask myself a thousand times, is it not possible that this mass of poverty and suffering may be reached and be raised, or taught to raise itself? What is there that man cannot do if he tries? The other day he descended to the mysterious depths of the ocean, and with an iron hand sought, and found, and grasped, and brought up to the surface the lost cable, and with it made two worlds into one. I ask, are his conquests confined to the realms of science? Is it not possible that another hand, not of iron, but of Christian justice and kindness, may be let down to moral depths even deeper than the cable fathoms, to raise up from thence the sons and daughters of misery and the multitude who are ready to perish? This is the great problem which is now before us. It is one which is not for statesmen only, not for preachers of

the Gospel only—it is one which every man in the nation should attempt to solve. The nation is now in power, and if wisdom abide with power, the generation to follow may behold the glorious day of what we, in our time, with our best endeavours, can only hope to see the earliest dawn.

X

RUSSIAN WAR—I.: THE QUEEN'S MESSAGE

(FROM HANSARD)

[Mr. Bright was opposed to the war with Russia. This speech was spoken on the day when the message from the Crown announcing the declaration of war was brought down to the House.]

House of Commons, March 31, 1854.

THERE are two reasons which may induce a Member of this House to address it—he may hope to convince some of those to whom he speaks, or he may wish to clear himself from any participation in a course which he believes to be evil. I presume I am one of that small section of the House to whom the hon. Gentleman who has just spoken (Mr. Layard) has referred, when he alluded to the small party who objected to the policy by which this country has arrived at the "triumphant position which it now occupies." In coming forward to speak on this occasion, I may be told that I am like a physician proposing to prescribe to-day for a man who died yesterday, and that it is of no use to insist upon views which the Government and the House have already determined to reject. I feel, however, that we are entering upon a policy which may affect the fortunes of this country for a long time to come, and I am unwilling to lose this opportunity of explaining wherein I differ from the course which the Government has pursued, and of clearing myself from any portion of the responsibility which attaches to those who support the policy which the Government has adopted.

We are asked to give our confidence to the Administration in voting the Address to the Crown, which has been moved by the noble Lord the Member for London, and to pledge our support to them in the war in which the country is now to engage. The right hon. Gentleman, the Member for Buckinghamshire (Mr. Disraeli), on a recent occasion, made use of a term which differed considerably from what he said in a former debate; he spoke of this war as a "just and unnecessary war." I shall not discuss the justice of the war. It may be difficult to decide a point like this, seeing that every war undertaken since the days of Nimrod has been declared to be just by those in favour of it; but I may at least question whether any war that is unnecessary can be deemed to be just. I shall not discuss this question on the abstract principle of peace at any price, as it is termed, which is held by a small minority of persons in this country, founded on religious opinions which are not generally received, but I shall discuss it entirely on principles which are accepted by all the Members of this House. I shall maintain that when we are deliberating on the question of war, and endeavouring to prove its justice or necessity, it becomes us to show that the interests of the country are clearly involved; that the objects for which the war is undertaken are probable, or, at least, possible of attainment; and, further, that the end proposed to be accomplished is worth the cost and the sacrifices which we are about to incur. I think these are fair principles on which to discuss the question, and I hope that when the noble Lord the Member for Tiverton (Lord Palmerston) rises during this debate, he will not assume that I have dealt with it on any other principles than these.

The House should bear in mind that at this moment we are in intimate alliance with a neighbouring Government, which was, at a recent period, the originator of the troubles which have arisen at Constantinople. I do not wish to blame the French Government, because nothing could have been more proper than the manner in which it has retired from the difficulty it had created; but it is nevertheless quite

true that France, having made certain demands upon Turkey with regard to concessions to the Latin Church, backed by a threat of the appearance of a French fleet in the Dardanelles, which demands Turkey had wholly or partially complied with; Russia, the powerful neighbour of Turkey, being on the watch, made certain other demands, having reference to the Greek Church; and Russia at the same time required (and this I understand to be the real ground of the quarrel) that Turkey should define by treaty, or convention, or by a simple note, or memorandum, what was conceded, and what were the rights of Russia, in order that the Government of Russia might not suffer in future from the varying policy and the vacillation of the Ottoman Government.

Now, it seems to me quite impossible to discuss this question without considering the actual condition of Turkey. The hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Layard) assumes that they who do not agree in the policy he advocates are necessarily hostile to the Turks, and have no sympathy for Turkey. I repudiate such an assumption altogether. I can feel for a country like that, if it be insulted or oppressed by a powerful neighbour; but all that sympathy may exist without my being able to convince myself that it is the duty of this country to enter into the serious obligation of a war in defence of the rights of that country. The noble Lord the Member for Tiverton is one of the very few men in this House, or out of it, who are bold enough to insist upon it that there is a growing strength in the Turkish Empire. There was a Gentleman in this House, sixty years ago, who, in the debates in 1791, expressed the singular opinion which the noble Lord now holds. There was a Mr. Stanley in the House at that period, who insisted on the growing power of Turkey, and asserted that the Turks of that day "were more and more imitating our manners, and emerging from their inactivity and indolence; that improvements of every kind were being introduced among them, and that even printing presses had been lately established in their capital." That was the opinion of a Gentleman anxious to defend Turkey, and speaking in this House

more than sixty years ago; we are now living sixty years later, and no one now, but the noble Lord, seems to insist upon the fact of the great and growing power of the Turkish Empire.

If any one thing is more apparent than another, on the face of all the documents furnished to the House by the Government of which the noble Lord is a Member, it is this, that the Turkish Empire is falling, or has fallen, into a state of decay, and into anarchy so permanent as to have assumed a chronic character. The noble Lord surely has not forgotten that Turkey has lost the Crimea and Bessarabia, and its control over the Danubian Principalities; that the Kingdom of Greece has been carved out of it; that it has lost its authority over Algiers, and has run great risk of being conquered by its own vassal the Pasha of Egypt; and from this he might have drawn the conclusion that the empire was gradually falling into decay, and that to pledge ourselves to effect its recovery and sustentation, is to undertake what no human power will be able to accomplish. I only ask the house to turn to the statements which will be found nearly at the end of the first Blue Books recently placed on the table of the House, and they will find that there is scarcely any calamity which can be described as afflicting any country, which is not there proved to be present, and actively at work, in almost every province of the Turkish Empire. And the House should bear in mind, when reading these despatches from the English Consuls in Turkey to the English Ambassador at Constantinople, that they give a very faint picture of what really exists, because what are submitted to us are but extracts of more extended and important communications. It may fairly be assumed that the parts which are not published are those which describe the state of things to be so bad, that the Government has been unwilling to lay before the House, and the country, and the world, that which would be so offensive and so injurious to its ally the Sultan of Turkey.

But, if other evidence be wanting, is it not a fact that Constantinople is the seat of intrigues and factions

to a degree not known in any other country or capital in the world? France demands one thing, Russia another, England a third, and Austria something else. For many years past our Ambassador at Constantinople has been partly carrying on the government of that country, and influencing its policy, and it is the city in which are fought the diplomatic contests of the Great Powers of Europe. And if I have accurately described the state of Turkey, what is the position of Russia? It is a powerful country, under a strong Executive Government; it is adjacent to a weak and falling nation; it has in its history the evidences of a succession of triumphs over Turkey; it has religious affinities with a majority of the population of European Turkey which make it absolutely impossible that its Government should not, more or less, interfere, or have a strong interest, in the internal policy of the Ottoman Empire. Now, if we were Russian—and I put the case to the Members of this House— is it not likely, according to all the theories I have heard explained when we have been concerned in similar cases, that a large majority of the House and the country would be strongly in favour of such intervention as Russia has attempted? and if I opposed it, as I certainly should oppose it, I should be in a minority on that question more insignificant than that in which I have now the misfortune to find myself with regard to the policy of the Government on the grave question now before us.

The noble Lord the Member for London has made a statement of the case of the Government, and in favour of this Address to the Crown; but I thought it was a statement remarkably feeble in fact and in argument, if intended as a justification of the course he and his Colleagues have taken. For the purposes of the noble Lord's defence, the Russian demand upon Turkey is assumed to be something of far greater importance than I have been able to discover it to be from a careful examination of the terms in which it was couched. The noble Lord himself, in one of his despatches, admits that Russia had reason to complain, and that she has certain rights and duties by treaty, and by

tradition, with regard to the protection of the Christians in Turkey. Russia asserted these rights, and wished to have them defined in a particular form; and it was on the question of the form of the demand, and the manner in which it should be conceded, that the whole of this unfortunate difference has arisen. Now, if Russia made certain demands on Turkey, this country insisted that Turkey should not consent to them; for although the noble Lord has attempted to show that Turkey herself, acting for herself, had resolved to resist, I defy anyone to read the despatches of Lord Stratford de Redcliffe without coming to the conclusion that, from the beginning to the end of the negotiations, the English Ambassador had insisted, in the strongest manner, that Turkey should refuse to make the slightest concession on the real point at issue in the demands of the Russian Government. As a proof of that statement I may refer to the account given by Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, in his despatch of the 5th of May, 1853, of the private interview he had with the Sultan, the Minister of the Sultan having left him at the door, that the interview might be strictly private. In describing that interview, Lord Stratford says, "I then endeavoured to give him a just idea of the degree of danger to which his Empire was exposed." The Sultan was not sufficiently aware of his danger, and the English Ambassador "endeavoured to give him a just idea of it"; and it was by means such as this that he urged upon the Turkish Government the necessity of resistance to any of the demands of Russia, promising the armed assistance of England, whatever consequences might ensue. From the moment that promise was made, or from the moment it was sanctioned by the Cabinet at home, war was all but inevitable; they had entered into a partnership with the Turkish Government (which, indeed, could scarcely be called a Government at all), to assist it by military force; and Turkey having old quarrels to settle with Russia, and old wrongs to avenge, was not slow to plunge into the war, having secured the co-operation of two powerful nations, England and France, in her quarrel.

Now, I have no special sympathy with Russia, and I refuse to discuss or to decide this question on grounds of sympathy with Russia or with Turkey; I consider it simply as it affects the duties and the interests of my own country. I find that after the first proposition for a treaty had been made by Prince Menchikoff, that envoy made some concession, and asked only for a *Sened*, or Convention; and when that was disapproved of he offered to accept a note, or memorandum merely, that should specify what should be agreed upon. But the Turk was advised to resist, first the treaty, then the convention, and then the note or memorandum; and an armed force was promised on behalf of this country. At the same time he knew that he would incur the high displeasure of England and France, and especially of England, if he made the slightest concession to Russia. It was about the middle of May that Prince Menchikoff left Constantinople, not having succeeded in obtaining any concession from the Porte; and it was on the 3rd of July that the Russian forces crossed the Pruth; thinking, I believe, by making a dash at the Principalities, to coerce Turkey, and deter her allies from rendering her the promised support. It has been assumed by some that if England had declared war last year Russia would have been deterred from any further step, and that the whole matter would have been settled at once. I, however, have no belief that Russia on the one hand, or England and France on the other, would have been bullied into any change of policy by means of that kind.

I come now to the celebrated "Vienna note." I am bound here to say that nobody has yet been able clearly to explain the difference between the various notes Turkey has been advised to reject, and this and other notes she has been urged to accept. With respect to this particular note, nobody seems to have understood it. There were four Ambassadors at Vienna, representing England, France, Austria, and Prussia; and these four gentlemen drew up the Vienna note, and recommended it to the Porte as one which she might accept without injury to her independence or her honour.

Louis Napoleon is a man knowing the use of language, and able to comprehend the meaning of a document of this nature, and his Minister of Foreign Affairs is a man of eminent ability; and Louis Napoleon and his Minister agree with the Ambassadors at Vienna as to the character of the Vienna note. We have a Cabinet composed of men of great individual capacity; a Cabinet, too, including no less than five Gentlemen who have filled the office of Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and who may, therefore, be presumed to understand even the sometimes concealed meaning of diplomatic phraseology. These five Foreign Secretaries, backed by the whole Cabinet, concurred with the Ambassadors at Vienna, and with the Emperor of the French and his Foreign Secretary, in recommending the Vienna note to the Sultan as a document which he might accept consistently with his honour, and with that integrity and that independence which our Government is so anxious to secure for him. What was done with this note? Passing by the marvellous stupidity, or something worse, which caused that note not to be submitted to Turkey before it was sent to St. Petersburg, he would merely state that it was sent to St. Petersburg, and was accepted in its integrity by the Emperor of Russia in the most frank and unreserved manner. We were then told—I was told by Members of the Government—that the moment the note was accepted by Russia we might consider the affair to be settled, and that the dispute would never be heard of again. When, however, the note was sent to Constantinople, after its acceptance by Russia, Turkey discovered, or thought, or said she discovered, that it was as bad as the original or modified proposition of Prince Menchikoff, and she refused the note as it was, and proposed certain modifications. And what are we to think of these arbitrators or mediators—the four Ambassadors at Vienna, and the Governments of France and England—who, after discussing the matter in three different cities, and at three distinct and different periods, and after agreeing that the proposition was one which Turkey could assent to without detriment to her

honour and independence, immediately afterwards turned round, and declared that the note was one which Turkey could not be asked to accede to, and repudiated in the most formal and express manner that which they themselves had drawn up, and which, only a few days before, they had approved of as a combination of wisdom and diplomatic dexterity which had never been excelled?

But it was said that the interpretation which Count Nesselrode placed upon this note made it impossible for Turkey to accede to it. I very much doubt whether Count Nesselrode placed any meaning upon it which it did not fairly warrant, and it is impossible to say whether he really differed at all from the actual intentions of the four Ambassadors at Vienna. But I can easily understand the course taken by the Russian Minister. It was this:—seeing the note was rejected by the Turk, and considering that its previous acceptance by Russia was some concession from the original demand, he issued a circular, giving such an explanation or interpretation of the Vienna note as might enable him to get back to his original position, and might save Russia from being committed and damaged by the concession, which, for the sake of peace, she had made. This circular, however, could make no real difference in the note itself; and notwithstanding this circular, whatever the note really meant, it would have been just as binding upon Russia as any other note will be that may be drawn up and agreed to at the end of the war. Although, however, this note was considered inadmissible, negotiations were continued; and at the Conference at Olmutz, at which the Earl of Westmoreland was present, the Emperor of Russia himself expressed his willingness to accept the Vienna note—not in the sense that Count Nesselrode had placed upon it, but in that which the Ambassadors at Vienna declared to be its real meaning, and with such a clause as they should attach to it, defining its real meaning.

It is impossible from this fairly to doubt the sincerity of the desire for peace manifested by the Emperor of Russia. He would accept the note prepared by the

Conference at Vienna, sanctioned by the Cabinets in London and Paris, and according to the interpretation put upon it by those by whom it had been prepared—such interpretation to be defined in a clause, to be by them attached to the original note. But in the precise week in which these negotiations were proceeding apparently to a favourable conclusion, the Turkish Council, consisting of a large number of dignitaries of the Turkish Empire—not one of whom, however, represented the Christian majority of the population of Turkey, but inspired by the fanaticism and desperation of the old Mahomedan party—assembled; and, fearful that peace would be established, and that they would lose the great opportunity of dragging England and France into a war with their ancient enemy the Emperor of Russia, they came to a sudden resolution in favour of war; and in the very week in which Russia agreed to the Vienna note in the sense of the Vienna Conference, the Turks declared war against Russia,—the Turkish forces crossed the Danube, and began the war, involving England in an inglorious and costly struggle, from which this Government and a succeeding Government may fail to extricate us.

I differ very much from those Gentlemen who condemn the Government for the tardy nature of their proceedings. I never said or thought that the Government was not honestly anxious for peace; but I believe, and indeed I know, that at an early period they committed themselves and the country to a policy which left the issue of peace or war in other hands than their own—namely, in the hands of the Turks, the very last hands in which I am willing to trust the interests and the future of this country. In my opinion the original blunder was committed when the Turks were advised to resist and not to concede; and the second blunder was made when the Turks were supported in their rejection of the Vienna note; for the moment the four Powers admitted that their recommendation was not necessarily to be accepted by the Porte, they put themselves entirely into the hands of the Turk, and might be dragged into any depth of confusion and

war in which that respectable individual might wish to involve them.

The course taken by Turkey in beginning the war was against the strong advice of the allies; but, notwithstanding this, the moment the step was taken they turned round again, as in the case of the Vienna note, and justified and defended her in the course she had adopted, in defiance of the remonstrances they had urged against it. In his speech to-night the noble Lord (Lord J. Russell) has occupied some time in showing that Turkey was fully justified in declaring war. I should say nothing against that view if Turkey were fighting on her own resources; but I maintain that, if she is in alliance with England and France, the opinions of those Powers should at least have been heard, and that, in case of her refusal to listen to their counsel, they would have been justified in saying to her, "If you persist in taking your own course, we cannot be involved in the difficulties to which it may give rise, but must leave you to take the consequences of your own acts." But this was not said, and the result is, that we are dragged into a war by the madness of the Turk, which, but for the fatal blunders we have committed, we might have avoided.

There have been three plans for dealing with this Turkish question, advocated by as many parties in this country. The first finds favour with two or three Gentlemen who usually sit on the bench below me—with a considerable number out of doors—and with a portion of the public press. These persons were anxious to have gone to war during last summer. They seem actuated by a frantic and bitter hostility to Russia, and, without considering the calamities in which they might involve this country, they have sought to urge it into a great war, as they imagined, on behalf of European freedom, and in order to cripple the resources of Russia. I need hardly say that I have not a particle of sympathy with that party, or with that policy. I think nothing can be more unwise than that party, and nothing more atrocious than their policy. But there was another course recommended, and which the

Government has followed. War delayed, but still certain—arrangements made which placed the issue of war in other hands than in those of the Government of this country—that is the policy which the Government has pursued, and in my opinion it is fatal to Turkey and disastrous to England. There is a third course, and which I should have, and indeed have all along recommended—that war should have been avoided by the acceptance on the part of Turkey either of the last note of Prince Menchikoff, or of the Vienna note; or, if Turkey would not consent to either, that then she should have been allowed to enter into the war alone, and England and France—supposing they had taken, and continued to take, the same view of the interests of Western Europe which they have hitherto taken—might have stood aloof until the time when there appeared some evident danger of the war being settled on terms destructive of the balance of power; and then they might have come in, and have insisted on a different settlement. I would either have allowed or compelled Turkey to yield, or would have insisted on her carrying on the war alone.

The question is, whether the advantages both to Turkey and England of avoiding war altogether, would have been less than those which are likely to arise from the policy which the Government has pursued? Now, if the noble Lord the Member for Tiverton is right in saying that Turkey is a growing Power, and that she has elements of strength which unlearned persons like myself know nothing about; surely no immediate, or sensible, or permanent mischief could have arisen to her from the acceptance of the Vienna note, which all the distinguished persons who agreed to it have declared to be perfectly consistent with her honour and independence. If she has been growing stronger and stronger of late years, surely she would have grown still stronger in the future, and there might have been a reasonable expectation that, whatever disadvantages she might have suffered for a time from that note, her growing strength would have enabled her to overcome them, while the peace of Europe might have been

preserved. But suppose that Turkey is not a growing Power, but that the Ottoman rule in Europe is tottering to its fall, I come to the conclusion that, whatever advantages were afforded to the Christian population of Turkey would have enabled them to grow more rapidly in numbers, in industry, in wealth, in intelligence, and in political power; and that, as they thus increased in influence, they would have become more able, in case any accident, which might not be far distant, occurred, to supplant the Mahomedan rule, and to establish themselves in Constantinople as a Christian State, which, I think, every man who hears me will admit is infinitely more to be desired than that the Mahomedan power should be permanently sustained by the bayonets of France and the fleets of England. Europe would thus have been at peace; for I do not think even the most bitter enemies of Russia believe that the Emperor of Russia intended last year, if the Vienna note or Prince Menchikoff's last and most moderate proposition had been accepted, to have marched on Constantinople. Indeed, he had pledged himself in the most distinct manner to withdraw his troops at once from the Principalities, if the Vienna note were accepted; and therefore in that case Turkey would have been delivered from the presence of the foe; peace would for a time have been secured to Europe; and the whole matter would have drifted on to its natural solution—which is, that the Mahomedan power in Europe should eventually succumb to the growing power of the Christian population of the Turkish territories.

The noble Lord the Member for London, and his colleague the noble Lord the Member for Tiverton, when they speak of the aggrandizement of Russia relatively to the rest of Europe, always speak of the "balance of power," a term which it is not easy to define. It is a hackneyed term—a phrase to which it is difficult to attach any definite meaning. I wish the noble Lord would explain what is meant by the balance of power. In 1791, the whole Whig party repudiated the proposition that Turkey had anything to do with the balance of power. Mr. Burke, in 1791, when speaking on that subject, used the following language:

"He had never heard it said before, that the Turkish Empire was ever considered as any part of the balance of power in Europe. They had nothing to do with European policy; they considered themselves as wholly Asiatic. What had these worse than savages to do with the Powers of Europe, but to spread war, destruction, and pestilence among them? The Ministry and the policy which would give these people any weight in Europe, would deserve all the bans and curses of posterity. All that was holy in religion, all that was moral and humane, demanded an abhorrence of everything which tended to extend the power of that cruel and wasteful Empire. Any Christian Power was to be preferred to these destructive savages."

Mr. Whitbread, on the same occasion, said:

"Suppose the Empress at Constantinople, and the Turks expelled from the European provinces, would any unprejudiced man contend that by such an event mankind would not be largely benefited? Would any man contend that the expulsion of a race of beings whose abominable tyranny proscribed the arts, and literature, and everything that was good, and great, and amiable, would not conduce to the prosperity and happiness of the world? He was convinced it would. This was an event with which the paltry consideration of the nice adjustment of the balance in Europe was not to be put in competition, although he was a friend to that balance on broad and liberal principles. He abhorred the wretched policy which could entertain a wish that the most luxuriant part of the earth should remain desolate and miserable that a particular system might be maintained."

And Mr. Fox, when speaking of Mr. Pitt's system, said—and be it remembered that nobody is so great an authority with the noble Lord the Member for London as Mr. Fox, whose words I am now about to quote:

"His (Mr. Pitt's) defensive system was wicked and absurd—that every country which appeared, from whatever cause, to be growing great, should be attacked; that all the Powers of Europe should be confined to the same precise situation in which this defensive

system found them. . . . Her (Russia's) extent of territory, scanty revenue, and thin population made her power by no means formidable to us—a Power whom we could neither attack nor be attacked by; and this was the Power against which we were going to war. Overturning the Ottoman Empire he conceived to be an argument of no weight. The event was not probable; and if it should happen, it was more likely to be of advantage than injurious to us."

It will probably be said, that these were opinions held by Gentlemen who sat on that side of the House, and who were ready to advocate any course that might serve to damage the Ministers of the day. I should be sorry to think so, especially of a man whose public character is so much to be admired as that of Mr. Fox; but I will come to a much later period, and produce authority of a very similar kind. Many hon. Members now in the House recollect the late Lord Holland, and they all know his sagacity and what his authority was with the party with which he was connected. What did he say? Why, so late as the year 1828, when this question was mooted in the House of Lords, he said:

"No, my Lords, I hope I shall never see—God forbid I ever should see—for the proposition would be scouted from one end of England to another—any preparations or any attempt to defend this our 'ancient ally' from the attacks of its enemies. There was no arrangement made in that treaty for preserving the crumbling and hateful, or, as Mr. Burke called it, that wasteful and disgusting Empire of the Turks, from dismemberment and destruction; and none of the Powers who were parties to that treaty will ever, I hope, save the falling Empire of Turkey from ruin."

I hope it will not be supposed that I am animated by any hostility to Turkey, in quoting sentiments and language such as this, for I have as much sympathy with what is just towards that country as any other man can have; but the question is, not what is just to Turkey, but what is just to this country, and what this House, as the depositary of the power of this country, has a right to do with regard to this most

dangerous question. I am, therefore, at liberty to quote from the statesmen of 1791 and 1828, the political fathers and authorities of the noble Lord the Member for London, and to say, that if I hold opinions different from those held by the Government, I am, at least, not singular in those opinions, for I can quote great names and high authorities in support of the course I am taking.

This "balance of power" is in reality the hinge on which the whole question turns. But if that is so important as to be worth a sanguinary war, why did you not go to war with France when she seized upon Algiers? That was a portion of Turkey not quite so distinct, it is true, as are the Danubian Principalities; but still Turkey had sovereign rights over Algiers. When, therefore, France seized on a large portion of the northern coast of Africa, might it not have been said that such an act tended to convert the Mediterranean *into a French lake,—that Algiers lay next to Tunis,* and that, having conquered Tunis, there would remain only *Tripoli between France and Alexandria, and that* the "balance of power" was being destroyed by the aggrandizement of France? All this might have been said, and the Government might easily have plunged the country into war on that question. But happily the Government of that day had the good sense not to resist, and the result had not been disadvantageous to Europe; this country had not suffered from the seizure of Algiers, and England and France had continued at peace.

Take another case—the case of the United States. The United States waged war with Mexico—a war with a weaker State—in my opinion, an unjust and unnecessary war. If I had been a citizen of the American Republic, I should have condemned that war; but might it not have been as justly argued that, if we allowed the aggressive attacks of the United States upon Mexico, her insatiable appetite would soon be turned towards the north—towards the dependencies of this Empire—and that the magnificent colonies of the Canadas would soon fall a prey to the assaults of their

rapacious neighbour? But such arguments were not used, and it was not thought necessary to involve this country in a war for the support of Mexico, although the Power that was attacking that country lay adjacent to our own dominions.

If this phrase of the "balance of power" is to be always an argument for war, the pretence for war will never be wanting, and peace can never be secure. Let anyone compare the power of this country with that of Austria now, and forty years ago. Will anyone say that England, compared with Austria, is now three times as powerful as she was thirty or forty years ago? Austria has a divided people, bankrupt finances, and her credit is so low that she cannot borrow a shilling out of her own territories; England has a united people, national wealth rapidly increasing, and a mechanical and productive power to which that of Austria is as nothing. Might not Austria complain that we have disturbed the "balance of power" because we are growing so much stronger from better government, from the greater union of our people, from the wealth that is created by the hard labour and skill of our population, and from the wonderful development of the mechanical resources of the kingdom, which is seen on every side? If this phrase of the "balance of power," the meaning of which nobody can exactly make out, is to be brought in on every occasion to stimulate this country to war, there is an end to all hope of permanent peace.

There is, indeed, a question of a "balance of power" which this country might regard, if our statesmen had a little less of those narrow views which they sometimes arrogantly impute to me and to those who think with me. If they could get beyond those old notions which belong to the traditions of Europe, and cast their eyes as far westward as they are now looking eastward, they might there see a power growing up in its gigantic proportions, which will teach us before very long where the true "balance of power" is to be found. This struggle may indeed begin with Russia, but it may end with half the States of Europe; for Austria and Prussia are just as likely to join with Russia as with England and France,

and probably much more so; and we know not how long alliances which now appear very secure, may remain so; for the circumstances in which the Government has involved us are of the most critical character, and we stand upon a mine which may explode any day. Give us seven years of this infatuated struggle upon which we are now entering, and let the United States remain at peace during that period, and who shall say what will then be the relative positions of the two nations? Have you read the Reports of your own Commissioners to the New York Exhibition? Do you comprehend what is the progress of that country, as exhibited in its tonnage, and exports, and imports, and manufactures, and in the development of all its resources, and the means of transit? There has been nothing like it hitherto under the sun. The United States may profit to a large extent by the calamities which will befall us; whilst we, under the miserable and lunatic idea that we are about to set the worn-out Turkish Empire on its legs, and permanently to sustain it against the aggressions of Russia, are entangled in a war. Our trade will decay and diminish—our people, suffering and discontented, as in all former periods of war, will emigrate in increasing numbers to a country whose wise policy is to keep itself free from the entanglement of European politics—to a country with which rests the great question, whether England shall, for any long time, retain that which she professes to value so highly —her great superiority in industry and at sea.

This whole notion of the "balance of power" is a mischievous delusion which has come down to us from past times; we ought to drive it from our minds, and to consider the solemn question of peace or war on more clear, more definite, and on far higher pinciples than any that are involved in the phrase the "balance of power." What is it the Government propose to do? Let us examine their policy as described in the message from the Crown, and in the Address which has been moved to-night. As I understand it, we are asked to go to war to maintain the "integrity and independence of the Ottoman Empire"—to curb the aggressive

power of Russia—and to defend the interests of this country.

These are the three great objects to which the efforts and resources of this country are to be directed. The noble Lord the Member for London is, I think, the author of the phrase "the integrity and independence" of Turkey. If I am not mistaken, he pledged himself to this more than a year ago, when he was Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, in a letter to somebody at Newcastle-on-Tyne, in answer to an Address from certain enthusiasts in that town, who exhorted the Government to step in for the support of the Ottoman Empire. But what is the condition of that Empire at this moment? I have already described to the House what it would have been if my policy had been adopted —if the thrice-modified note of Prince Menchikoff had been accepted, or if the Vienna note had been assented to by the Porte. But what is it now under the protection of the noble Lord and his Colleagues? At the present moment there are no less than three foreign armies on Turkish soil; there are 100,000 Russian troops in Bulgaria; there are armies from England and France approaching the Dardenelles, to entrench themselves on Turkish territory, and to return nobody knows when. All this can hardly contribute to the "independence" of any country. But more than this: there are insurrections springing up in almost every Turkish province, and insurrections which must, from the nature of the Turkish Government, widely extend; and it is impossible to describe the anarchy which must prevail, inasmuch as the control heretofore exercised by the Government to keep the peace is now gone, by the withdrawal of its troops to the banks of the Danube; and the licence and demoralization engendered by ages of bad government will be altogether unchecked. In addition to these complicated horrors, there are 200,000 men under arms; the state of their finances is already past recovery; and the allies of Turkey are making demands upon her far beyond anything that was required by Russia herself. Can anything be more destructive of the "integrity and

independence" of Turkey than the policy of the noble Lord?

I have seen only this day a letter in the *Times* from its Correspondent at Constantinople, which states that Lord Stratford de Redcliffe and one of the Pashas of the Porte had spent a whole night in the attempt to arrange concessions which her allies had required on behalf of the Christian population of Turkey. The Christians are to be allowed to hold landed property; the capitation tax is to be abolished—for they are actually contending for the abolition of that which the hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Layard) says is a positive benefit to those upon whom it is imposed; and the evidence of Christians is to be admitted into courts of justice. But the *Times'* Correspondent asks, what is the use of a decree at Constantinople, which will have no effect in the provinces?—for the judges are Turks of the old school, and they will have little sympathy with a change under which a Christian in a court of justice is made equal with his master the Turk. This Correspondent describes what Turkey really wants—not three foreign armies on her soil, nor any other thing which our Government is about to give her, but "a pure executive, a better financial administration, and sensible laws"; and it must be admitted that the true wants of the country are not likely soon to be supplied.

Now, so far as regards Turkey herself, and the "integrity and independence" of that Empire, I put it seriously to the House—do you believe, that if the Government and Lord Stratford de Redcliffe had advised Turkey to accept the last note of Prince Menchikoff, a note so little different from the others, offered before and since, that it was impossible to discover in what the distinction consisted; or if the Government had insisted on Turkey accepting, as the condition of their co-operation, the Vienna note, either as at first proposed by the Conference, or with the explanatory definitions with which the Emperor of Russia at Olmutz offered to accept it, that they would have injured the "integrity and independence" of Turkey? Nay, I will not insult you by asking whether, under such cir-

cumstances, that "integrity and independence" would not have been a thousand times more secure than it is at this hour? If that be true, then the "balance of power" theory has been entirely overthrown by the policy of the Government, for no one will argue that Turkey will come out of her present difficulties more able to cope with the power of Russia than she was before. With her finances hopelessly exhausted, will she ever again be able to raise an army of 200,000 men? But there are men, and I suspect there are statesmen, in this country, and men in office, too, who believe that Turkey will not be Turkey at the end of this war—that she cannot come out of it an Ottoman Power—that such a convulsion has been created, that while we are ready to contend with half the world to support the "integrity and independence" of the Ottoman Empire, there will shortly be no Ottoman Empire to take the benefit of the enormous sacrifices we are about to make.

But we are undertaking to repress and to curb Russian aggression. These are catching words; they have been amplified in newspapers, and have passed from mouth to mouth, and have served to blind the eyes of multitudes wholly ignorant of the details of this question. If Turkey has been in danger from the side of Russia heretofore, will she not be in far greater danger when the war is over? Russia is always there. You do not propose to dismember Russia, or to blot out her name from the map, and her history from the records of Europe. Russia will be always there—always powerful, always watchful, and actuated by the same motives of ambition, either of influence or of territory, which are supposed to have moved her in past times. What, then, do you propose to do, and how is Turkey to be secured? Will you make a treaty with Russia, and force conditions upon her? But if so, what security have you that one treaty will be more binding than another? It is easy to find or make a reason for breaking a treaty, when it is the interest of a country to break it.

I recollect reading a statement made by the illustrious Washington, when it was proposed to land a French

army in North America, to assist the colonies in overthrowing the yoke of this country. Washington was afraid of them—he did not know whether these allies once landed might not be as difficult to get rid of as the English troops he was endeavouring to expel; for, said he, "whatever may be the convention entered into, my experience teaches me that nations and Governments rarely abide by conventions or treaties longer than it is their interest to do so." So you may make a treaty with Russia; but if Russia is still powerful and ambitious—as she certainly will be—and if Turkey is exhausted and enfeebled by the war—as she certainly will be—then I want to know what guarantee you have, the moment the resources of Russia have recovered from the utmost degree of humiliation and exhaustion to which you may succeed in reducing her, that she will not again insist on terms with Turkey infinitely more perilous than those who have ruined Turkey by urging her to refuse? It is a delusion to suppose you can dismember Russia—that you can blot her from the map of Europe—that you can take guarantees from her, as some seem to imagine, as easily as you take bail from an offender, who would otherwise go to prison for three months. England and France cannot do this with a stroke of the pen, and the sword will equally fail if the attempt be made.

But I come now to another point. How are the interests of England involved in this question? This is, after all, the great matter which we, the representatives of the people of England, have to consider. It is not a question of sympathy with any other State. I have sympathy with Turkey; I have sympathy with the serfs of Russia; I have sympathy with the people of Hungary, whose envoy the noble Lord the Member for Tiverton refused to see, and the overthrow of whose struggle for freedom by the armies of Russia he needlessly justified in this House; I have sympathy with the Italians, subjects of Austria, Naples, and the Pope; I have sympathy with the three millions of slaves in the United States; but it is not on a question of sympathy that I dare involve this country, or any

country, in a war which must cost an incalculable amount of treasure and of blood. It is not my duty to make this country the knight-errant of the human race, and to take upon herself the protection of the thousand millions of human beings who have been permitted by the Creator of all things to people this planet.

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I have endeavoured to look at the whole of this question, and I declare, after studying the correspondence which has been laid on the table—knowing what I know of Russia and of Turkey—seeing what I see of Austria and of Prussia—feeling the enormous perils to which this country is now exposed, I am amazed at the course which the Government has pursued, and I am horrified at the results to which their policy must inevitably tend. I do not say this in any spirit of hostility to the Government. I have never been hostile to them. I have once or twice felt it my duty to speak, with some degree of sharpness, of particular Members of the Administration, but I suspect that in private they would admit that my censure was merited. But I have never entertained a party hostility to the Government. I know something of the difficulties they have had to encounter, and I have no doubt that, in taking office, they acted in as patriotic a spirit as is generally expected from Members of this House. So long as their course was one which I could support, or even excuse, they have had my support. But this is not an ordinary question; it is not a question of reforming the University of Oxford, or of abolishing "ministers' money" in Ireland; the matter now before us affects the character, the policy, and the vital interests of the Empire; and when I think the Government has committed a grievous—it may be a fatal error—I am bound to tell them so.

I am told, indeed, that the war is popular, and that it is foolish and eccentric to oppose it. I doubt if the war is very popular in this House. But as to what is, or has been popular, I may ask, what was more popular than the American war? There were persons lately living in Manchester who had seen the recruiting

party going through the principal streets of that city, accompanied by the parochial clergy in full canonicals, exhorting the people to enlist to put down the rebels in the American colonies. Where is now the popularity of that disastrous and disgraceful war, and who is the man to defend it? But if hon. Members will turn to the correspondence between George III and Lord North on the subject of that war, they will find that the King's chief argument for continuing the war was that it would be dishonourable in him to make peace so long as the war was popular with the people. Again, what war could be more popular than the French war? Has not the noble Lord (Lord John Russell) said, not long ago, in this House, that peace was rendered difficult, if not impossible, by the conduct of the English press in 1803? For myself, I do not trouble myself whether my conduct in Parliament is popular or not. I care only that it shall be wise and just as regards the permanent interests of my country, and I despise from the bottom of my heart the man who speaks a word in favour of this war, or of any war which he believes might have been avoided, merely because the press, and a portion of the people, urge the Government to enter into it.

I recollect a passage of a distinguished French writer and statesman which bears strongly upon our present position: he says, "The country which can comprehend and act upon the lessons which God has given it in the past events of its history is secure in the most imminent crises of its fate." The past events of our history have taught me that the intervention of this country in European wars is not only unnecessary, but calamitous; that we have rarely come out of such intervention having succeeded in the objects we fought for; that a debt of 800,000,000*l.* sterling has been incurred by the policy which the noble Lord approves, apparently for no other reason than that it dates from the time of William III; and that, not debt alone has been incurred, but that we have left Europe at least as much in chains as before a single effort was made by us to rescue her from tyranny. I

believe, if this country, seventy years ago, had adopted the principle of non-intervention in every case where her interests were not directly and obviously assailed, that she would have been saved from much of the pauperism and brutal crimes by which our Government and people have alike been disgraced. This country might have been a garden, every dwelling might have been of marble, and every person who treads its soil might have been sufficiently educated. We should indeed have had less of military glory. We might have had neither Trafalgar nor Waterloo; but we should have set the high example of a Christian nation, free in its institutions, courteous and just in its conduct towards all foreign States, and resting its policy on the unchangeable foundation of Christian morality.

XI

RUSSIAN WAR—II

(FROM HANSARD)

House of Commons, December 22, 1854.

THE real question was, as every hon. Gentleman knows, What was the condition of the Mahometan? and there is not a Gentleman in this House who is not aware that the Mahometan portion of the population of the Turkish Empire is in a decaying and dying condition, and that the two great Empires which have undertaken to set it on its legs again will find it about the most difficult task in which they ever were engaged. What do your own officers say? Here is an extract from a letter which appeared in the papers the other day:

"They ought to set these rascally Turks to mend them [the roads], which might easily be done, as under the clay there is plenty of capital stone. They are, I am sorry to say, bringing more of these brutes into the Crimea, which makes more mouths to feed, without being of any use."

I have seen a private letter, too, from an able and distinguished officer in the Crimea, who says:

"Half of us do not know what we are fighting for, and the other half only pray that we may not be fighting for the Turks."

The only sign of improvement which has been manifested that I know of is, that on a great emergency, when their Empire, under the advice of Her Majesty's Government, and that of their Ambassador, was placed in a situation of great peril, the Turks managed to make an expiring effort, and to get up an army which the Government, so far as I can hear, has since permitted to be almost destroyed.

Another sign of improvement is, perhaps, that they have begun to wear trowsers; but as to their commerce, their industry, or their revenue, nothing can be in a worse condition. You have now two Empires attempting to set the Turkish Empire up again; and it is said that a third great Empire is also about to engage in the task. The Turk wants to borrow money, but he cannot borrow it to-day in the London market at less than from eight to nine per cent. Russia, on the other hand, is an Empire against which three great Empires, if Turkey can be counted one still, are now combined, and it is said that a fourth great Empire will soon join the ranks of its enemies. But Russian funds at this moment are very little lower than the stock of the London and North-Western Railway. You have engaged to set this Turkish Empire up again—a task in which everybody knows you must fail—and you have persuaded the Turk to enter into a contest, one of the very first proceedings in which has forced him to mortgage to the English capitalist a very large portion—and the securest portion, too, of his revenues—namely, that which he derives from Egypt, amounting, in fact, in a fiscal and financial point of view, to an actual dismemberment of the Turkish Empire by a separation of Egypt from it. Why is it that the noble Lord has to-night come forward as the defender of the Greeks? Is it that he has discovered, when this war is over, that Turkey, which he has undertaken to protect, the Empire which he is to

defend and sustain against the Emperor of Russia, will have been smothered under his affectionate embrace? or, to quote the powerful language of the *Times*, when the Vienna note was refused, that whatever else may be the result of the war in which Turkey has plunged Europe, this one thing is certain, that at its conclusion there may be no Turkish Empire to talk about?

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Now, I am prepared to show that, from the beginning of this dispute, there is not a single thing which Austria wished to do in the course of the negotiations, or even which France wished to do, that the Government of the noble Lord did not systematically refuse its assent to, and that the noble Lord's Government is alone responsible for the failure in every particular point which took place in these negotiations. I will not trouble the House by going into the history of these negotiations now, further than just to state two facts, which will not take more than a few sentences. The noble Lord referred to the note which Russia wanted Turkey to sign, known as the Menchikoff note; but the noble Lord knows as well as I do, that when the French Ambassador, M. De la Cour, went to Constantinople, or whilst he was at Constantinople, he received express instructions from the Emperor of the French not to take upon himself the responsibility of inciting the Sultan to reject that note. ["No."] I know this is the fact, because it is stated in Lord Cowley's despatch to the noble Lord.

I am expressing no opinion on the propriety of what was here done; I simply state the fact: and it was through the interference of Lord Stratford de Redcliffe—acting, I presume, in accordance with instructions from our Cabinet, and promising the intervention of the fleets—that the rejection of that note was secured. The next fact I have to mention is this: When in September, last year, the last propositions were drawn up by Counts Buol and Nesselrode, and offered at Olmütz by the Emperor, as a final settlement of the question, although Austria and Prussia were in favour of those propositions; though Lord Westmoreland

himself said (I do not quote his exact words, but their substance) that they were of such a nature as might be received, thus indicating his favourable opinion of them; and though, likewise, the Emperor of the French himself declared that they guarded all the points in which England and France were concerned (for this was stated by Count Walewski when he said that the Emperor was prepared to order his Ambassador at Constantinople to sign them along with the other Ambassadors, and to offer them to the Porte in exchange for the Vienna note), nevertheless, the Earl of Clarendon wrote, not in a very statesmanlike manner in such an emergency, but in almost a contemptuous tone, that our Government would not, upon any consideration, have anything further to do with the Vienna note. The rejection, first of the amended Menchikoff note, and then of the Olmutz note, was a policy adopted solely by the Government of this country, and only concurred in, but not recommended, by the French Government and the other Governments of Europe. Whether this policy was right or wrong, there can be no doubt of the fact; and I am prepared to stake my reputation for accuracy and for a knowledge of the English language on this interpretation of the documents which have been laid before us. That being so, on what pretence could we expect that Austria should go to war in company with us for objects far beyond what she thought satisfactory at the beginning? or why should we ask the Emperor of the French to go to war for objects which he did not contemplate, and to insist on conditions which, in the month of September of last year, he thought wholly unnecessary?

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I say now what I stated in March last, and what I have since said and written to the country, that you are making war against the Government which accepted your own terms of peace; and I state this now only for the purpose of urging upon the House and upon the Government that you are bound at least, after making war for many months, to exact no further terms from the State with which you are at war, than such as will

give that security which at first you believed to be necessary; and that if you carry on a war for vengeance—if you carry on a war for conquest—if you carry on a war for purposes of Government at home, as many wars have been carried on in past times, I say you will be guilty of a heinous crime, alike in the eyes of God and of man.

One other remark perhaps the House will permit me to make. The noble Lord spoke very confidently to-night; and a very considerable portion of his speech—hoping, as I do, for the restoration of peace at some time or another—was to me not very satisfactory. I think that he would only be acting a more statesmanlike part if, in his speeches, he were at least to abstain from those trifling but still irritating charges which he is constantly making against the Russian Government. I can conceive one nation going to war with another nation; but why should the noble Lord say, "The Sovereign of that State does not allow Bibles to be circulated—he suppressed this thing here, and he put down something else there"? What did one of the noble Lord's present colleagues say of the Government of our ally? Did he not thank God that his despotism could not suppress or gag our newspaper press, and declare that the people of France were subject to the worst tyranny in Europe? These statements from a Minister—from one who has been Prime Minister, and who, for aught I know, may be again Prime Minister—show a littleness that I did not expect from a statesman of this country, whose fate and whose interests hang on every word the noble Lord utters, and when the fate of thousands—aye. and tens of thousands—may depend on whether the noble Lord should make one false step in the position in which he is now placed.

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Now Sir, I have only to speak on one more point. My hon. Friend the Member for the West Riding, in what he said about the condition of the English army in the Crimea, I believe expressed only that which all in this House feel, and which, I trust, every person in this country capable of thinking feels. When I look at

Gentlemen on that Bench, and consider all their policy has brought about within the past twelve months, I scarcely dare trust myself to speak of them, either in or out of their presence. We all know what we have lost in this House. Here, sitting near me, very often sat the Member for Frome (Colonel Boyle). I met him a short time before he went out, at Mr. Westerton's, the bookseller, near Hyde Park Corner. I asked him whether he was going out? He answered, he was afraid he was; not afraid in the sense of personal fear —he knew not that; but he said, with a look and a tone I shall never forget, "It is no light matter for a man who has a wife and five little children." The stormy Euxine is his grave; his wife is a widow, his children fatherless. On the other side of the House sat a Member, with whom I was not acquainted, who has lost his life, and another of whom I knew something (Colonel Blair). Who is there that does not recollect his frank, amiable, and manly countenance? I doubt whether there were any men on either side of the House who were more capable of fixing the goodwill and affection of those with whom they were associated. Well, but the place that knew them shall know them no more for ever.

I have specified only two; but there are a hundred officers who have been killed in battle, or who have died of their wounds; forty have died of disease; and more than two hundred others have been wounded more or less severely. This has been a terribly destructive war to officers. They have been, as one would have expected them to be, the first in valour as the first in place; they have suffered more in proportion to their numbers than the commonest soldiers in the ranks. This has spread sorrow over the whole country. I was in the House of Lords when the vote of thanks was moved. In the gallery were many ladies, three-fourths of whom were dressed in the deepest mourning. Is this nothing? And in every village cottages are to be found into which sorrow has entered, and, as I believe, through the policy of the Ministry, which might have been avoided. No one supposes that the Government wished to spread the

pall of sorrow over the land; but this we had a right to expect—that they would at least show becoming gravity in discussing a subject the appalling consequences of which may come home to individuals and to the nation. I recollect when Sir Robert Peel addressed the House on a dispute which threatened hostilities with the United States,—I recollect the gravity of his countenance, the solemnity of his tone, his whole demeanour showing that he felt in his soul the responsibility that rested on him.

I have seen this, and I have seen the present Ministry. There was the buffoonery at the Reform Club. Was that becoming a matter of this grave nature? Has there been a solemnity of manner in the speeches heard in connection with this war—and have Ministers shown themselves statesmen and Christian men when speaking on a subject of this nature? It is very easy for the noble Lord the Member for Tiverton to rise and say that I am against war under all circumstances; and that if an enemy were to land on our shores, I should make a calculation as to whether it would be cheaper to take him in or keep him out, and that my opinion on this question is not to be considered either by Parliament or the country. I am not afraid of discussing the war with the noble Lord on his own principles. I understand the Blue Books as well as he; and, leaving out all fantastic and visionary notions about what will become of us if something is not done to destroy or to cripple Russia, I say—and I say it with as much confidence as I ever said anything in my life—that the war cannot be justified out of these documents; and that impartial history will teach this to posterity if we do not comprehend it now.

I am not, nor did I ever pretend to be, a statesman; and that character is so tainted and so equivocal in our day, that I am not sure that a pure and honourable ambition would aspire to it. I have not enjoyed for thirty years, like these noble Lords, the honours and emoluments of office. I have not set my sails to every passing breeze. I am a plain and simple citizen, sent here by one of the foremost constituencies of the Empire,

representing feebly, perhaps, but honestly, I dare aver, the opinions of very many, and the true interests of all those who have sent me here. Let it not be said that I am alone in my condemnation of this war, and of this incapable and guilty Administration. And, even if I were alone, if mine were a solitary voice, raised amid the din of arms and the clamours of a venal press, I should have the consolation I have to-night—and which I trust will be mine to the last moment of my existence—the priceless consolation that no word of mine has tended to promote the squandering of my country's treasure or the spilling of one single drop of my country's blood.

XII

RUSSIAN WAR—III.: NEGOTIATIONS AT VIENNA

(FROM HANSARD)

House of Commons, February 23, 1855.

I CANNOT but notice, in speaking to Gentlemen who sit on either side of this House, or in speaking to anyone I meet between this House and any of those localities we frequent when this House is up—I cannot, I say, but notice that an uneasy feeling exists as to the news which may arrive by the very next mail from the East. I do not suppose that your troops are to be beaten in actual conflict with the foe, or that they will be driven into the sea; but I am certain that many homes in England in which there now exists a fond hope that the distant one may return—many such homes may be rendered desolate when the next mail shall arrive. The Angel of Death has been abroad throughout the land; you may almost hear the beating of his wings. There is no one, as when the first-born were slain of old, to sprinkle with blood the lintel and the two side-posts of our doors, that he may spare and pass on; he takes his victims from the castle of the noble, the mansion of the wealthy,

and the cottage of the poor and the lowly, and it is on behalf of all these classes that I make this solemn appeal.

I tell the noble Lord (Lord Palmerston), that if he be ready honestly and frankly to endeavour, by the negotiations about to be opened at Vienna, to put an end to this war, no word of mine, no vote of mine, will be given to shake his power for one single moment, or to change his position in this House. I am sure that the noble Lord is not inaccessible to appeals made to him from honest motives and with no unfriendly feeling. The noble Lord has been for more than forty years a Member of this House. Before I was born, he sat upon the Treasury bench, and he has spent his life in the service of his country. He is no longer young, and his life has extended almost to the term allotted to man. I would ask, I would entreat the noble Lord to take a course which, when he looks back upon his whole political career—whatever he may therein find to be pleased with, whatever to regret—cannot but be a source of gratification to him. By adopting that course he would have the satisfaction of reflecting that, having obtained the object of his laudable ambition—having become the foremost subject of the Crown, the director of, it may be, the destinies of his country, and the presiding genius in her councils —he had achieved a still higher and nobler ambition: that he had returned the sword to the scabbard—that at his word torrents of blood had ceased to flow—that he had restored tranquillity to Europe, and saved this country from the indescribable calamities of war.

XIII

DANGER OF WAR WITH RUSSIA

Birmingham, January 13, 1878.

[The annual meeting of the members of the Borough of Birmingham was held this year at a somewhat earlier date than usual, in consequence of the fact that the session of Parliament began at an unusually early period. Mr. Bright took occasion to dwell on the menacing appearance of affairs in Eastern Europe, and to contrast the popular sentiment which led to the Crimean war with the general determination of the English people to take no part in the existing complications.]

THIS meeting, as you know, has been called some days earlier than was some time ago intended, and you know, also, that Parliament has been summoned about three weeks before the usual time. It is because Parliament has been summoned so early that this meeting has been called so early. In ordinary times the summoning of Parliament creates a considerable interest in the country, but, on the whole, I think it is an interest rather of a pleasurable kind. On this occasion the announcement that Parliament was to meet on the 17th of January had the effect of creating great anxiety; in some cases I have heard it described as consternation, and in all the centres of trade it has caused a certain depression which has been sensibly felt. I am driven to the conclusion, at which I think a large portion of the people have arrived, that the cause of all this is not a fear of Parliament, but a want of confidence in the Administration. We have been passing through something like a crisis, and we have had no decisive voice from the Government. In point of fact, if one body of men has said that the Government has spoken in a particular way, the next body of men that you meet would tell you that the Government intended something entirely different. Of one thing, however, we may be quite sure, that the question which fills the mind of the people at this hour, and which has filled it for a long time back, is the great and solemn question of peace or

war—and I doubt whether it would be possible to submit to any people a greater question than that.

There are many in this hall who remember a period, about twenty-three years ago, when the same question was submitted to the nation which the nation at this moment is considering, and that is, whether peace or war is the true policy and the true interest of this people. At that time the conclusion to which the people came was a conclusion in favour of war. They followed a Government that, unwisely as I thought then, and as most people think now, threw them into war. I think we may take some lesson from that war. I read a short time ago in a very influential newspaper —a newspaper which had supported the war of 1854—that it was a pity to go back at all to that question, that circumstances had entirely changed, and that men who were in favour of that war might very justly and properly be against a repetition of it. Now, for my share, I believe the arguments at the present moment for war are as strong as they were in 1854—and in point of fact, as I believe the war then had no just argument in its support, so I think that now there is no sound argument that can be brought forward to induce this people to countenance any entrance into the existing conflict. As to not going back to the past, what is common with individuals? Nothing is more common and nothing more wise than to look back. One of our poets has said:

> "'Tis greatly wise to talk with our past hours
> And ask them what report they bore to Heaven."

And how does a man become wiser as he grows older but by looking back upon the past, and by learning from the mistakes that he has made in his earlier years? And that which is true of an individual must surely also be true of a nation with regard to its foreign policy.

At that time the public mind was filled with falsehoods, and it was in a state which we might describe by saying that it became almost drunk with passion. With regard to Russia, you recollect, many of you,

what was said of her power, of her designs, of the despotism which ruled in Russia, of the danger which hung over all the freedom of all the countries of Europe. And the error was not confined to a particular class. It spread from the cottage to all classes above, and it did not even spare those who were within the precincts of the throne. It was not adopted by the clergy of the Church of England only, but by the ministers of the Nonconformist bodies also. The poison had spread everywhere. The delusion was all-pervading. The mischief seemed universal, and, as I know to my cost, it was scarcely worth while to utter an argument or to bring forth a fact agaiust it. Well, we had a war for two years, and we know what was its result; at least we know something of it. We know that the naval arsenal at Sebastopol was to a large extent destroyed—that the Russian fleet was sunk in the harbour of Sebastopol. We know that when the treaty of peace came to be negotiated in 1856 Russia was forced to consent to a limitation of her fleet in the Black Sea, in order that she might never in future have a fleet that could menace the security of Turkey. Now, there was a certain cost that was necessarily paid for these things. Some people consider that the cost, when they are going into a war or when they are in it, is not of much consequence. I take a different view. I think the loss of 40,000 men in the prime of life, in their full powers—40,000 men killed in battle, dying from wounds, dying from horrible maladies in horrible hospitals—I think that is something, and I think the payment of 100,000,000*l.* sterling —and that war cost us far more—is a serious thing for a country where there are so many poor people and so many families who live only to-day on the produce of the labour of yesterday. But then the loss we suffered was a very small loss compared to the whole loss. I saw the other day a note in a work to which I will refer by and by, which said that 90,000 Russians were buried on the north side of the city of Sebastopol during that siege, and it was stated in the House of Lords—I think by Lord Lansdowne during the war—that up to the

time of the death of the Emperor of Russia—the Emperor Nicholas—240,000 Russians had died or been killed, and it is stated upon good authority that the whole loss in men to the Russians during that two years' war was not less than 500,000. So that by adding our loss, and the French loss, and the Turkish loss, and the Sardinian loss, Mr. Kinglake reckons that the whole cost of the two years of that war was little if any less than 1,000,000 human lives.

Now, it cannot be wrong, and it cannot be unwise, that we should look back and see what that war cost and what it gained. The result of it was that Russia, for the time and in that particular part of her empire in the Crimea, was vanquished, and a treaty of peace was agreed to at Paris in the year 1856. Now I want to show you just for a moment how mistaken were some of the opinions that were expressed at the time. I will only give you two little extracts. In February of 1854 the *Times* newspaper, which may be taken to be a wide representation, a fair representation, of a vast amount of opinion in this country, said:

"To destroy Sebastopol is nothing less than to demolish the entire fabric of Russian ambition in those very regions where it is most dangerous to Europe. This feat, and this only, would have really promoted the solid and durable objects of the war."

Now, Sebastopol was destroyed, and the Russian fleet then existing was sunk by the Russians to bar the entrance to the harbour of Sebastopol, and Russia was limited for the future so that she should never have a fleet that could be a menace or be any danger to Turkey. Well, the *Times* was not the only authority which made a statement of this kind. There is a work, published lately, to which I will for a moment refer—that is, the third volume of the "Life of the Prince Consort." It is a book which I have read with intense interest, many parts of it with a painful interest. It is a book which gives you an exalted and, I believe, a true picture of the greatness and the nobleness of the character of the late Prince Consort. It is a book to which no doubt her Majesty the Queen has contributed

the main portion of the facts and of the contents. In this work she has built up a monument which probably will last as long as our language of the greatness and the nobleness of the Prince. I doubt not it will last longer than any of those monuments of bronze or marble by which it has been sought to commemorate his name and his character.

Well, in this book there are things, I have said, of painful interest. I have seen some criticisms upon it which go the length of saying that they think the book had better not have been published now, as it is calculated to excite unfriendly feelings to Russia. I have learned rather a different lesson from it. I think it is impossible for anybody of intelligent and impartial judgment to read the book through without coming to the conclusion that the occurrence of that war was an enormous error on the part of our statesmen, and that we are bound now by all regard for our country utterly to condemn it. I will give you just one paragraph from one of the Prince's letters, or, rather, from a memorandum that was submitted to the Government, I think in 1854. He was referring to certain expectations held out to the House of Commons by Lord John Russell as to what the war should result in, and he says:

"I find that the impossibility of allowing Russia to retain her threatening armaments in the Crimea was one of the most prominent of these expectations and the one which gave most satisfaction to the House. Now that vast treasure and the best English blood have been profusely expended towards obtaining that object, the nation has a right to expect that any peace contemplated by the Government should fully and completely realize it."

He admits afterwards during the negotiations that the peace was not such a peace as they would have wished to have had, but it was a peace which was much better than continuing the war with the complications there were then in Europe. But what happened when you had destroyed Sebastopol, and when the fleet was sunk, and when you had limited their fleet in the future by the Treaty of Paris? If you will step over to the

year 1871 you will find that the main article of the treaty—the limitation of the Russian fleet in the Black Sea, the article to which the Russians were, I suppose, more opposed than to any other, because they considered it was more humiliating—that article was surrendered by our Government and by other Governments of Europe—I will not say actually without remonstrance, though I think I might almost say so, but without any strong remonstrance, and without anything like a blow; so that everything has failed. You destroyed a large number of lives, you spent the money, and you disturbed the peace of Europe, and the end of it was that nothing whatsoever was gained, because fifteen years afterwards everything was relinquished, or nearly everything, for which war had been waged. The Russian fleet is no longer limited in the Black Sea. Turkey, for which you made war, is not only not safe, but is in much greater danger than she ever was before; and it is obvious, from what we have seen, that, in comparison with Turkey, Russia is just as powerful as if the war of 1854 had never taken place, and at that time we had, as you recollect, a great ally in the Emperor of the French.

Now, I should like to tell you what sort of an ally he was; fortunately we have not one of that kind now. France never was in favour of the war. The Emperor went into the war, not because he cared about Turkey or cared about Russia, but because he wanted to associate himself with respectable old monarchical institutions—with a respectable old monarchically governed country. He thought that some things that had taken place in his career might be forgotten, and that he would come out able to enter the very high society of the sovereigns of Europe. Now, what the Prince says about this is as follows: writing to his uncle Leopold, the late King of the Belgians, in December, 1855, he says, "I really believe there is not a single soul in France who ever gave himself the smallest concern about the maintenance of the Turkish empire." And he says further, in the year 1856, in February, "We know that England is hated all over the Continent, that

even in France it is the Emperor, and the Emperor alone, who is with us body and soul;" and he added, "Our position in the Conference"—the Conference preceding the treaty of peace—"will be one of extreme difficulty, for, except the Emperor Napoleon, we have no one on our side." Therefore, whilst we were fighting the despotism of the Emperor Nicholas, we had as our principal ally the despotism of the Emperor Napoleon, and we had none of the sympathy of that great nation the French. More than 40,000 Frenchmen laid down their lives in the Crimea in alliance with us for a cause in which they had no interest, and in which their country had no sympathy.

At that time Europe was not with us, and, as you know, Europe is not with us now. In 1855, in May, the Prince says this: "The Crimea was chosen by France and England, forsaken by the rest of Europe, as the only vulnerable point of attack," and he says further, in 1854, "If there were a Germany, and a German sovereign in Berlin, it [that is, the calamity of this war] would never have happened." There is now a Germany, and there is a German Emperor in Berlin, yet the war has not been prevented. You will see, therefore, from this slight sketch that there is nothing but failure, nothing but disappointment in this page of the history of our country; and I want to ask you to-night, and to ask all those of my countrymen who may condescend to read what I am saying, I want to ask them whether they are willing to write such another page in our history—what shall I say?—shockingly terrible and bloody, and as utterly fruitless? Forsaken by Europe! We are forsaken by Europe now. Germany is not with us, Austria is not with us, Italy is not with us, France is not with us—we are alone. We only are constantly meddling, constantly doing or saying something which is supposed to be pleasant to the Turk, and which it is hoped, some people say—which it is often hoped—may be unpleasant to the Emperor of Russia.

Now I must ask you to consider for a moment why it is that we are in this position, so different from the

position of the other nations of Europe. What interest have we at the east end of the Mediterranean which the other nations of Europe have not? We have only one point of interest, and they have it too, only we have it in a greater degree, and that is in the constant free maintenance of the passage through the Suez Canal. We have a vast dependency in India, and, therefore, in regard to military passage, and also in regard to trade —we, I suppose, furnish nearly three-fourths of all the shipping which passes through the canal—we have a greater interest in the canal being kept open than any other country in Europe has. That, of course, I admit. What a strange history has that canal. It is enough to teach us that we ought to examine carefully the declarations of great statesmen and Prime Ministers before we adopt a policy which they recommend to us. I recollect hearing Lord Palmerston denounce that canal. He condemned it as a thing not only of no advantage, but rather to be disliked by England; and he did not believe, if it was ever made, that it could be kept open. And he quoted, I think, the opinion of a distinguished railway engineer with a view to strengthen his argument. The consequence was that the canal was made almost entirely by French money, through the energy of M. Lesseps, who is a very eminent Frenchman, and I am not sure whether a single share in that company was held originally, or has been held from the beginning, by any native of this country.

I maintain that all Europe is interested in the canal, and all Europe would protest against any power, be it the Khedive of Egypt or the Sultan of Turkey, or perhaps what is most unlikely of all, the Czar of Russia, that took any steps to prevent the free passage through the canal, or even dreamed of doing so. As a proof of it, it is, I believe, well known that all the Powers of Europe would be willing to combine with us and with the French company and with France for the purpose of declaring this canal not only a great national or European but a great world's work, and that under no conceivable circumstances shall any Power, or combination of Powers, be permitted to

interfere with it. M. Lesseps, the French promoter of the canal, has over and over again made suggestions of this kind. They have been made to our Government, and I think it is a great misfortune, and have always thought so, that that plan was not adopted, and that the canal was not put in a condition of safety. I think it is in a condition of safety now; but I mean in a condition of safety so clear and distinct and unquestionable that nobody could make use of it for the political objects for which it has been made use of lately. Now, why is it we cannot do this, why is it that at this moment, when talking about the canal in connection with Russia, that Mr. Cross in the House of Commons, among the interests he specified as those which England must maintain, mentioned this interest of the canal? I have heard a very eminent person on his side of the House say, and acknowledge to me, "As for the canal, I think that of the two the canal is in rather more danger from Turkey than it is from Russia." All this arises from an ignorance and, in some quarters, an ignorant jealousy of Russia. That ignorant jealousy has existed in this country for forty years past.

I was reading the other day a book of singular interest to me, the memoirs and correspondence of the late Senator Charles Sumner, a Senator of Massachusetts, in the United States. Charles Sumner was a personal friend of mine, and he corresponded with me for many years. In looking over his memoirs I came upon what I thought was a remarkable passage, which you will permit me to read to you. It is written in one of his letters from England in 1839. It was just previous to that time that there had been so much excitement in this country about Russia, and some people had really so nearly approached to a condition fit for Bedlam that they believed that the Russians were likely to come through the Baltic and to invade the east coast of England, and they persuaded the Government of that day—always too ready to be persuaded on things of this kind—to add 5,000 men to the navy in order that the panic might be put an end to. It is like putting a plaster upon a sore. When people get into a panic

of this kind they vote two millions or five millions of money, five thousand men to the navy, or five thousand men to the army, and then go to their beds and sleep soundly. All there is in it is that next morning they have the tax-gatherer, and they pay. At that time there was living in England a very eminent man, the late Lord Durham. He was a member of the Reform Cabinet; he was one of the members of the committee of that Cabinet who drew up the first Reform Bill. He was a man of very Liberal views; he wished the Cabinet of Lord Grey not to give us a 10*l.* franchise, but household franchise, and to accompany it with the ballot. I will tell you what sort of man he was. He had been Ambassador at the Court of the Czar, at St. Petersburg, and Mr. Sumner says this of him,—"I ventured to ask him what there was in the present reports with regard to the hostile intentions of Russia towards England." "Not a word of truth," he said, "I will give you leave to call me idiot if there is a word of truth." He said that Russia was full of friendly regard for England, and he pronounced the late Mr. Urquhart, who died during the last autumn, somewhere in the South of France, who was then going about the kingdom preaching against Russia, a madman. Well, I have known Mr. Urquhart in the House of Commons. I would not like to say a word against him now that he is not here to answer for himself, but this I may say without wrong, that he was a man so possessed of certain notions that it was scarcely possible to believe him in a condition for fairly reasoning upon them. He believed that the Czar Nicholas managed the whole world by his diplomacy; he believed Lord Palmerston was bribed by the Russian Government to sell the liberties of Europe and the interests of this country to Russia; he believed—and I have heard him say it in the most positive manner—that the war in the Crimea was waged, not to save Turkey, but to place Turkey in the hands of Russia, and that if we would leave Turkey alone, and leave her to fight Russia alone, Turkey was perfectly safe, and Russia would be easily and finally vanquished. These were the views of Mr. Urquhart,

which I believe he held honestly, for he devoted years of his life to preaching them, and Lord Durham said that Mr. Urquhart, in preaching them, was acting like a madman, and was utterly ignorant of the true state of things in Russia.

No nation, I believe, has been in disposition more friendly to this nation than Russia. There is no nation on the Continent of Europe that is less able to do harm to England, and there is no nation on the Continent of Europe to whom we are less able to do harm than we are to Russia. We are so separated that it seems impossible that the two nations, by the use of reason or common sense at all, could possibly be brought into conflict with each other. We have India, and men tell you that India is in jeopardy from Russia. I recollect a speech made last session by Mr. Laing, who has been out to India as Financial Minister, that was conclusive upon that point. But there is one thing that Russia can do in India, and that may be troublesome to us in another way, not in the way of war or of conquest, but in the way of certain irritation and trouble. You persuade the people of India by the writings of the press and the speeches of public men in this country, that we run great hazard from the advance of Russia, and if you have enemies in India of course you feed their enmity by this language, and you make them, if they wish to escape from the government of England, turn naturally and inevitably to Russia as the Power that can help them. The interest of this country with regard to Russia in connection with India is an unbroken amity, and I am sure that that unbroken amity might be secured if we could get rid of the miserable jealousy that afflicts us.

I thought some time ago that we were approaching, and I trust still we are approaching, a better time. The present Emperor of Russia is not the one with whom we made the war. He is a man not given to military display. He is a man whose reign before this war was signalized chiefly by the grand act of the liberation of twenty millions of his people. He at least was willing to forget the unfortunate past. He

consented that his only daughter, the loved child of his heart, should marry the son of the English Queen. And I thought that this was a great sign of a permanent reconciliation, and a very blessed promise of a prolonged peace; and although that has not borne in this political respect all the fruit one could have wished for, still I am delighted to believe that there is a great change growing, and a change for the better, and a change which I believe will be accelerated by what will take place when this unfortunate war comes to an end.

There are still the traditions of the Foreign Office. I once expressed—I was very irreverent towards such an ancient institution—the wish that the Foreign Office might some day be burned down; and at least, correcting myself, that if it should be burned down, that I hoped all its mad, and baneful, and wicked traditions would be burned with it. But these traditions still linger in the Foreign Office, and Lord Derby—to whom they are foreign—endeavouring to fill that eminent office, I believe with a true intention to serve his country, and to do right—has been made the victim of the traditions he finds in the office which he has filled for the last four or five years. But I say the heart of the nation is gradually changing. I met at dinner at a friend's house in Salford only the night before last an old friend of mine, and he came up to me and said, "Do you recollect me twenty-three or twenty-four years ago? You know I walked down Market Street with you that day when you came out of the Town Hall, where you had been hissed and hooted and maltreated, and where you were not allowed to speak to the constituents you were endeavouring to serve, and when you were not allowed to pass down the street without gross insult?" Well, now, a man may have an opinion in favour of peace, and the "dogs of war" will scarcely bark at him.

But still we cannot disguise from ourselves the fact that there is something of a war party in this country, and that it has free access to some, and indeed to not a few, of the newspapers of the London press. If there is any man here who thinks the question of our

policy doubtful, if there is any man in the country who shall read what I say now who is in doubt, I ask him to look back to the policy of twenty-three years ago, and to see how it was then tried, and how it succeeded, or how it failed. The arguments were the same then exactly as they are now. The falsehoods were the same. The screechings and howlings of a portion of the press were just about the same. But the nation now—and if nations learned nothing, how long could they be sustained?—has learned something, and it has risen above this. I am persuaded that there is a great difference of opinion as to Russian policy in the main, or Turkish policy in this war, and men may pity especially the suffering on the one side or the suffering on the other—for my share, I pity the sufferings of both sides,—and whatever may be our differences of opinion, I think it is conclusively proved that the vast bulk of all the opinion that is influential in this country upon this question leads to this—that the nation is for a strict and rigid neutrality throughout this war.

It is a painful and terrible thing to think how easy it is to stir up a nation to war. Take up any decent history of this country from the time of William III until now—for two centuries, or nearly so—and you will find that wars are always supported by a class of arguments which, after the war is over, the people find were arguments they should not have listened to. It is just so now, for unfortunately there still remains the disposition to be excited on these questions. Some poet, I forget which it is, has said:

> "Religion, freedom, vengeance, what you will,
> A word's enough to raise mankind to kill;
> Some cunning phrase by faction caught and spread,
> That guilt may reign, and wolves and worms be fed."

"Some cunning phrase by faction caught and spread" like the cunning phrase of "The balance of power," which has been described as the ghastly phantom which the Government of this country has been pursuing for two centuries and has never yet overtaken. "Some cunning phrase" like that we have now of

"British interests." Lord Derby has said the wisest thing that has been uttered by any member of this Administration during the discussions on this war when he said that the greatest of British interests is peace. And a hundred, far more than a hundred, public meetings have lately said the same; and millions of households of men and women have thought the same. To-night we shall say "Amen" to this wise declaration. I am delighted to see this grand meeting in this noble hall. This building is consecrated to peace and to freedom. You are here in your thousands, representing the countless multitudes outside. May we not to-night join our voices in this resolution, that, so far as we are concerned, the sanguinary record of the history of our country shall be closed—that we will open a new page, on which shall henceforth be inscribed only the blessed message of mercy and of peace?

XIV

THE LAND QUESTION—I

Birmingham, January 26, 1864.

ALTHOUGH I have often stood before you on this platform, yet I can assure you that on no former occasion have I felt it necessary so much to ask your forbearance and your silent attention as on this occasion. I had no hope a week ago that I should be able to attend here to-night, and to address this large audience, but being here in the performance of my duty as one of your representatives, I shall endeavour to lay before you the thoughts which are uppermost in my mind, and which bear upon the questions in which we are all deeply interested.

There are two subjects which have been treated upon by my hon. Colleague, about which I would say a few words before I come to that which I had intended to speak about. The first is the question which now keeps Europe in suspense, which may end in a war, or may end in some diplomatic accommodation of a long-standing

quarrel. I will not go into the history of the Danish and German dispute. I have received since I came here a long and most able letter from a German Professor resident in this country on behalf of the German view of that question—probably he is now within the sound of my voice. I can only tell him, in telling you, that I agree entirely, and from my heart, with every word that my hon. Colleague spoke upon that question; and I will say further, that if there be a Government possible in our day that will plunge this country into war under the pretence of maintaining the balance of power in Europe and sustaining any kingdom there, be it little or great, I say that Government not only is not worthy of the confidence of the people of England, but deserves our execration and abhorrence.

There is one other question to which my hon. Colleague has devoted a considerable portion of his speech. He said, and I believe it, that a year ago he felt it a painful thing to stand here and to avow opinions contrary to those of many of his friends, and contrary to those which I had avowed before. I told you then how painful a thing it was for me to stand up and to controvert on this platform any of the statements which he had made. I came here to-night intending to say no single word as to the question between North and South in the United States. My opinion is that the unanimous judgment of the people of England, so far as that is ever shown upon any public question, is in favour of the course which her Majesty's Government have publicly declared it to be their intention to pursue. I believe that my hon. Friend is mistaken in the view he takes of the meaning of the result of what he calls a recognition of the South. I have seen it stated by authority, North as well as South, and by authority which I may term English, and by authority from France, that in the present condition of that quarrel, recognition, by all the usages of nations, must necessarily lead to something more. And, therefore, although there were no question of slavery, even though it were simply a political revolt, and though there were no special moral question connected with it, I believe, looking to the past usage of

this country with regard to the rebellion of the Greeks against Turkey, and with regard to the revolt of the colonies of South America against Spain, that it can be demonstrated that these cases afford no support whatever to the argument that we are permitted now to recognize the South, and that if such recognition did take place now, it could only exasperate still more the terrible strife which exists on the North American Continent, and would spread that strife even to Europe itself.

I am myself of opinion, as I have been from the first, that the people of America—so numerous, so powerful, so instructed, so capable in every way—will settle the difficulties of that continent without asking the old countries of Europe to take any share in them. I believe that in the providence of the Supreme, the slaveholder—untaught, unteachable by fact or argument, or Christian precept—has been permitted to commit—I will not call it the crime—but the act of suicide. Whether President Lincoln be in favour of abolition; whether the Northerners are unanimous against slavery; whatever may be said or thought with regard to the transactions on that continent, he must be deaf and blind—and worse than deaf and blind—who does not perceive that, through the instrumentality of this strife, that most odious and most indescribable offence against man and against heaven — the slavery of man, the bondage of four millions of our fellow-creatures—is coming to a certain and rapid end.

Sir, I will say of this question that I look forward to the time when I shall stand on this platform with my honourable Colleague, and when he will join with me —for he is honest enough and frank enough to do that —when he will join with me in rejoicing that there does not breathe a slave on the North American Continent, and that the Union has been completely restored. And not only so, but he will rejoice that England did not in the remotest manner, by a word or a breath, or the raising of a finger, or the setting of a type, do one single thing to promote the atrocious object of the leaders of this accursed insurrection.

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I will ask you whether, during past years, you have read any letters in the *Times* newspaper signed by the initials "S. G. O." These letters were written by a gentleman of rare intelligence and of great benevolence. His descriptions I believe may be entirely relied upon. If any of you have read some letters written three or four months ago from parts of Buckinghamshire, and published in the *Star* newspaper, with regard to the condition of that population,—you will know what it is that I mean,—but if you are unwilling to take their evidence, let us take the evidence of a witness that nobody here will call in question, and that is the evidence of the *Saturday Review*. On the 26th of September last there was an article in that journal on "Agricultural Labourers," in which it said—and I beg you to listen to it, for, in point of fact, it is the great part of my speech. The extract from the article reads thus:

"When the dull season of the year comes round [it is between October and the meeting of Parliament] all sorts of odd persons and things have their share of public attention, and even agricultural labourers are pitied and discussed. At other times they live on with no one much to care for them—the farmer looking on them as his natural enemies, the parson's kindly soul getting weary of his long combat with their helpless stolid ignorance, and the squire not knowing what he can do for them further than build two or three Elizabethan cottages, covered with honeysuckle, close to his gates."

And then the writer of the article proceeds to say that when foreigners come here and read of the condition of agricultural labourers they must be much shocked, for he adds:

"We are moved to a languid shame and sadness by thinking how true the picture is, and what *wretched, uncared-for untaught brutes* the people are who raise the crops on which we live."

And then:

"There is a wailing over the dirt and vice and misery that must prevail in houses where seven or eight persons, of both sexes and all ages, are penned up together for

the night in the one rickety, foul, vermin-haunted bedroom. The picture of agricultural life unrolls itself before us as it is painted by those who know it best. We see the dull clouded mind, the bovine gaze, the brutality and recklessness, the simple audacity of vice, the confused hatred of his betters, which mark the English peasant, unless some happy fortune has saved him from the general lot, and persuaded him that life 'has something besides beer that the poor man may have and may relish.'"

He then goes on to declare that "the old feudalism"—feudalism is precisely the thing I mentioned—

"The old feudalism of England—the state of things when there yet were serfs, and when the lords of the soil were almost a different order of beings—still colours the relations of the rich and the poor."

And perhaps you would like to know what he says an agricultural labourer should be. The writer states:

"It is looked on as the duty and place of the poor man to stay in his native village for ever; to work hard for ten or twelve shillings a week, and bring up a large family respectably on the money; to touch his hat to the gentry, to go to church regularly, and to make out as much as he can of the service; to hate the public-house, and feel no longing for company and a bright fire or gossip, and be guided towards heaven by the curate and the young ladies. This is the poor man which modern feudalism actually produces, and who may be seen by anyone who stands opposite the door of the village beershop on a Saturday evening."

Now this is the testimony of the *Saturday Review*, and what do you think the writer of the article from which I have just quoted proposes?—he proposes that instead of a man receiving parochial relief from the parish, he shall be allowed to receive it from that larger area—namely, from the Union; and that a law which he says is hardly ever put in practice should be repealed, by which a working-man breaking a contract to work is treated as a felon. I do not believe those remedies would be sufficient for the terrible malady which he has described in such powerful language. May I ask you

this question? Is it the unchangeable law of Heaven that the agricultural population of this country shall continue in that condition? Writers tell you, that your agriculture is far better than any other agriculture, that you produce a larger quantity of wheat or any other produce over a given surface. We know that there is the greatest market in the world close at their doors, and the means of conveyance to every part of the kingdom. Then I want to know why it is that the labouring population upon the farms of this country are in the condition I have just described. Is it so in the most civilized parts of Euope; is it so in the United States of America? No. I could give you, if it were not that reading evidence from books is not suited to a speech, and to a great meeting like this—I could read you evidence from every kind of man—from the highest in rank —from the most cultivated in mind—from the most extensively known in public affairs—I could prove to you, beyond all doubt, that in all these countries in Europe where the land is divided and the people have a chance of having some of it—those, in fact, who are industrious and frugal—that the condition of the agricultural and peasant population is infinitely superior to anything that is to be seen in Great Britain and Ireland.

Well, then, you may ask me very reasonably,—what is the difference between the laws of these countries and the laws of ours, and what changes do you propose? I will tell you in as few words as I can. In the greatest portion of the Continent of Europe — in France, in Germany, in Belgium, in Holland and in Norway, and in point of fact it is likely to become general throughout Europe, the law follows what is believed to be the natural law of affection and justice between parent and children. The large portion of the property of the parent must be by will (or if not by will the law will so order it) divided amongst the children; not land alone, but all the property of the parent, according to the number of his children. And you are to be frightened by this law of bequests as if it were something very dreadful. It only follows the rule which the majority

of your merchants, your manufacturers, and of all the people in the world have followed in these later days, of treating their children with equal affection and with equal justice. On going to the United States, you find a very different state of the law. There a man may leave his property as he likes amongst his children, because the United States' law believes that natural affection and justice are of themselves a sufficient law in the majority of cases, and therefore that it is not necessary to enforce these moral duties by any statute. But if a man dies without leaving a will, the law of the United States takes his property, and looking upon his children with equal affection and equal justice, makes that distribution which it believes the just and living parent would have made.

But if you come to this country what do you find? You find this, that with regard to all kinds of property, except what is called real property (meaning the land of the country and the houses upon it), the law does exactly the same thing. It divides it equally amongst the children, because it knows that this is what the parent should have done, and would have done, if he had been a just parent. But when it comes to the question of the land, our law is contrary to the European law which makes a statute according to natural justice, contrary to the United States' law, which, when there is no will, makes a distribution also in accordance with natural justice. Thus our law steps in and does that which natural justice would forbid. Now I should like to know if anybody is prepared to deny this. Personalty, that is, property which is not land, is divided equally; the property which is land is not divided equally, but is given to the eldest son in one lump. Now, tell me whether the principle which the law of Europe for the most part wishes to enforce, that which the law of America enforces when there is no will, that which we enforce when land is not in question—whether that is not a more just law, does not approve itself more to the hearts of men, and before the eye of Heaven, than a law by which we send beggars into the world,—it may be half a dozen children,—that

we may make one rich in the possession of unnecessary abundance?

What are the reasons—these things are not done without reasons—ask anybody what are the reasons, and you are told, perhaps, that they are high political reasons. These high political reasons are often very curious. In some countries—in Turkey, for example—it has been the custom for a long time, and is hardly abandoned yet, that the wielder of the sceptre should destroy his younger brothers, lest they should become competitors with him for the throne. What would you think if the law of this country doomed all the younger children to a want of freedom and to a total want of education,—if it conferred all the freedom and all the education on the eldest sons, and left the others to go to the streets? It would be as reasonable to cut off all the younger boys and girls from all education and all freedom, as it is to cut them off from their share of their father's property. But you will find to-morrow morning, in all probability, that the editor in this town,—who does not generally, as I have noticed, serve you up very strong meat,—will say, if he comments on this part of my speech, what use would it be to make a law that the property shall be divided in cases where there is no will, when men die so seldom without making a will, and will argue that the difference will be very small. I will tell you what difference it would make. It would take the tremendous sanction of the law from the side of evil, and put it on the side of good.

There is a case—it is the only one which occurs to me—bearing upon this point. About the time when the American colonies were severed from this country, the laws of primogeniture and entail were enforced in the State of Virginia in the most rigid manner. Mr. Jefferson, who was afterwards President of the Republic, considered it one of the greatest acts of his life that he prevailed upon the Legislature of Virginia to abolish these laws. You will find this statement in his Life: "The class which thus provided for the perpetuation of its wealth also monopolized the civil honours of the colony." You will be able to judge whether that is not

very much the case in this country. Amongst the reasons which he gave for abolishing the law of entails was that he wished "to make an opening for the aristocracy of virtue and talent, which Nature has wisely provided for the direction of the interests of society, and scattered with equal hand throughout all its conditions." And when he came to the abolition of the law and custom of primogeniture, that is, by the enactment of a law that property should be equally divided whenever the parents did not leave a will, it is said by his biographer that these laws—

"Have not merely altered the distribution of that part of the landed property which is transmitted to surviving relatives by the silent operation of law, but they have also operated on public opinion so as to influence the testamentary disposition of it by the proprietors, without which last effect the purpose of the Legislature might have been readily defeated. The cases are now very rare in which a parent makes, by his will, a much more unequal distribution of his property among his children than the law itself would make. It is thus that laws, themselves the creatures of public opinion, often powerfully re-act on it."

And he goes on to show that the effect of the distribution was to lessen the chances of a man being so enormously rich, and to give an opportunity to a large number to become moderately so. He said further, that if there were fewer coaches and six in the State of Virginia, there were twenty times as many carriages and pairs.

I have thus briefly touched upon the question of primogeniture. The question of entails is much of the same kind, and with regard to its effect upon the public I shall only say a sentence or two. The object of entailing land is to keep great estates together, and to keep them in one family. Upon this system land in this country is some times tied up for fifty, or eighty, or a hundred years, no person having power to sell it, however advantageous it might be to the proprietors that the land should be sold. And then, if you come to the question of the difficulties of transfer, I might ask gentlemen near me connected with the law—and

they will tell you that it always takes months, and it sometimes takes years, to prove a title; and the cost of this in money comes to no inconsiderable portion of the purchase money of the property.

Now, may I ask you what is the political reason for which this state of things is maintained? It is for the very reason for which this system was established eight hundred years ago—that there may be in this country a handful of persons, three or four times as many as there are here—twice as many, perhaps—who are the owners of nearly all the land, in whose hand is concentrated nearly all the power, by whom the Government of the country is mainly conducted, and amongst whom the patronage of the Government is mainly distributed. In every country in the world, as far as I know, the possessors of land are the possessors of power. In France, at this moment, we all know perfectly well that, notwithstanding there may be a revolution now and then in the streets of Paris, if you come to the question of voting, the majority of the voting population at this moment are found in the number of the proprietors of the land. Ten or twelve years ago it was their suffrages which conferred the supreme power on the present Emperor of the French. If you go across the Atlantic, and study the political system of the United States, where almost all the farmers are owners of their farms, you will find that they are the holders of political power. The city of New York may denounce the policy of the Government at Washington; but it is the land-owning farmers—the cultivators of the great States in the interior of the country—who are the real holders of political power, and by whose will alone the President of the United States is able to carry on the great matters which belong to his exalted station. It is the same in the Southern States, for the great planting population—the owners of immense plantations—are the life and soul of Southern politics. And if you come to our own country—to your own county, Warwickshire, or any county you choose to walk into—you will find that two or three great landowners can sit down together and determine who shall or shall not

go to Parliament, as the pretended representative of the population in that county.

I believe that with these vast properties, which are of no real advantage to those who hold them—for 100,000*l.* a year, or 200,000*l.* a year, can give no man greater real happiness than 10,000*l.* or 5,000*l.* a year,—I say these great properties, with great political power, form what we call our great territorial system—a system which prevails to an extent in this country which is probably unknown in any other, but which leaves the cultivator of the soil ignorant, and hopeless, and dependent, and degraded. There is, as you know, a great tendency to increase the size of farms throughout the country, a practice which makes it still more difficult for the labourer ever to become a tenant, or to rise from the condition in which he is. You see a ladder—the social ladder—upon which you wish to see the poor, and depressed, and unfortunate nine-or-ten-shillings-a-week-labourer ascend gradually. You would rejoice to see him get up a few steps and become a farmer, although but in a small way; or the owner of a small piece of land. But you find that for six or eight, or ten feet up the ladder, the steps are broken out; and, in his low position, he has not a chance of beginning the ascent. Let there be steps in the shape of small farms and small estates, and land freely bought and sold, and then he will have something to hope for, something to save even his small earnings for, that he may be enabled to purchase or to occupy one of these small farms and get away from the humble and melancholy position in which he is now, to one which I wish, from my soul, every labourer in this country could find himself placed in.

Now, Sir . . . for fear that the Man in the Mask should misrepresent me to-morrow, let me tell you that I am not against great estates, or great farms, or great factories, but I have a very great liking for small estates, small farms, and small factories. In this country, where there is such a rapid creation of wealth, there is always a great power urging to the accumulation of land. I know the case of a nobleman now, in a

southern county, from report, who is stated to have an income of 120,000*l.* a year; and being a wise man, as regards his expenditure compared with his income, he only spends—though it is a mystery to me how he spends it—he only spends 40,000*l.* a year, and he has 80,000*l.* a year left. What does he do with this? He buys up every farm, every estate, big or little, all over the district, and the consequence is that his immense estate is constantly becoming larger. I do not blame him for that. I applaud him so far, that he is a man who does not waste his property, and I have heard that among those with whom he lives he is a man of excellent character. There are persons who come from Manchester, from Leeds, and there are some in Birmingham who are able to purchase large estates. There is a tendency to this in this country, where we have so much manufacturing and commercial industry, and wealth to buy estates with. In addition to this, their possession gives great social position and great political influence. I am not complaining of this. It is a natural, and advantageous, and healthy thing; for it is desirable that farmers should have the stimulus of ambition to have a larger farm, and that the men who have an estate should have an ambition—if they can entertain it honestly—to have a larger estate. The stimulus by which men strive at something honourable is useful to the country; but at the same time, to add to this the force of a most intricate and complicated system of law, to give to this force greater force, is, in my opinion, contrary to all the true interests of England; and I believe if it goes on for another half-century, as it has for the last half-century, it will cause great discontent and great embarrassment within this now peaceful kingdom.

What I propose is this. . . . First of all, that the law shall declare that when any person owning property dies without making a distribution of it by will, the law shall distribute it upon the same principle that it now adopts when it divides—I am now speaking of landed property—any other kind of property. For example: Suppose a man has got money in the bank—I wish everybody had—sup-

pose he has machinery in his mill, merchandise in his warehouse, ships upon the ocean, or that he has shares, or the parchments for them in his safe—if he dies, the Government by the law, or rather the law itself, makes a distribution of all that property amongst all his children, in accordance with the great universal law of natural parental affection and justice. Then, I say, let that principle be extended to all the property which a man may die possessed of; and, so far as that goes, I want no further change. Then, with regard to the question of entails, I would say this: the *Spectator* proposes that a man, by entailing his property—so far as I can understand—shall only prevent himself and his next heir from disposing of it—that there shall be, in point of fact, only two persons in the entail. Now, what I propose is, that a man may leave his property to as many persons as he likes, to A, B, C, D, and E and F, and so on all through the alphabet, if they are all alive at the time he makes his will, and he can put all their names into it. But at present he can leave it to these people, and to a child then unborn, and who shall not be born, it may be, till twenty years after he has made his will. I would cut that off. I contend that it should be left to persons who are in existence, and whose names are in the will, and you will find that as A, B, and C died it would finally come into the hands of a man who would have the absolute disposal of, and who could keep, or sell, or give, or waste it as he pleased.

And I believe it will be much better for the public when that freedom of transfer is given to the possessors of land which is given to the possessors of every other kind of property. If I were to sit down for ten minutes and a lawyer were to take my place, he could tell you what a trouble our law is; and—although I am sorry that some of them think that they make a good thing out of it—what a curse it is to a man who buys landed property or who sells it. Everything which I am proposing is carried out, I believe, through most of the States in the American Union, and to a greater extent on the Continent of Europe, and is being adopted in the Australian colonies. It is the most curious thing

in the world, that whenever an Englishman leaves these shores—whether it is the effect of the salt air, or of sea-sickness, or the result of that prolonged meditation which a voyage of some weeks' duration invites, I do not know—but whenever an Englishman leaves these shores, the effect is to peel off, not the rags of his body, but the verminous rags from his intellect and soul. He leaves behind him in England all the stupidity which some of us cherish, and he lands in Australia with his vision so clear that he can see things in a common-sense manner.

I want to ask you as reasonable men, as men of business—there is not a man who cannot understand this question moderately well—is this spoliation? Is this agrarian outrage? Is this stimulating the working-man and the agricultural labourer to—what shall I say? —to, it may be, incendiarism or to something worse? It is nothing of the kind; it is but laying before them those just principles of law and practice which are admitted to be just in every other country in the world than this, and which we admit to be just with regard to everything else, except the single article of land.

We are charged with all sorts of dreadful things by that gentleman in the Mask. On the 27th of November he wrote this of Mr. Cobden. He said:

"He [Mr. Cobden] stoops down and picks up a weapon which has never yet been used but for anarchy and revolution. Is it not, in fact, to tell the labourer and the workman to look over the fence of the neighbouring proprietor, and learn to think that they have a natural right to a slice of the soil?"

Surely, if they are industrious and frugal, and can save the means to purchase, and there be anybody who would wish to sell, and the law steps in and makes it difficult to sell and to buy, then, I say, that labourer has a right to look over the hedge, and to feel that the law deals a grievous injustice to him.

And it is this gentleman in the Mask that frightens the landed proprietors. I met the other day with a gentleman connected with one of the largest properties in the kingdom. He said to me,—and he is a very

liberal and thoughtful man,—he said to me: "You have no idea of the terror which your speeches create amongst landed gentlemen." Now, I never frighten any of my neighbours. I do not know why I should be so alarming to those gentlemen who live in their great houses and castles. But the fact is the landed gentlemen are not a wise class. There are brilliant exceptions. There are men amongst them, many of whom cannot be surpassed by any of their own class, or of any other class in the world. But as a class, and, perhaps, one might say it of nearly every class—I believe it is true of that to which I belong in Lancashire —they are not a wise class. They know something of agriculture—county Members have to get it up for agricultural dinners—and they know something of horses—and they know all that can be known on the subject of game. But on the principles of law and of government, speaking of them as a whole, and judging of them by their past course, they are dark as night itself. Would you believe it—young men here do not recollect it—that the landed proprietors could never find out, till Mr. Cobden and a few others told them that the Corn-law was a great injury to them? They did not know that it actually lowered the value of their land, and diminished the security of their rents, and that it loaded them with an inconceivable amount of public odium; whilst, at the same time, it beggared hundreds and thousands of the people, and it menaced this nation with rebellion.

Mr. Cobden and I, and others who acted with us, but we chiefly, because perhaps we were the most prominent, were slandered then by the gentleman in the Mask, just as we have been now. The *Times* was as foul-mouthed upon us twenty years ago as it is at this moment. It said that we went about the country setting class against class. It said that our views led to the confiscation of landed property. It said everything that was spiteful and untrue, as it says now. And yet, is there any man in this country who will not admit that property is more secure in consequence of the abolition of that law, which landowners believed to be the anchor of their safety,

and that animosities between class and class have been allayed? And who shall tell how much it is owing to this reform that our Queen at this moment wields an unchallenged sceptre over a tranquil realm? A landowner in the House of Commons, an old Member of the House, a representative of a south-western county, a man of excellent character, for whom I have always had the greatest respect, even when he was most in the wrong,—he told me not long ago, speaking about the Corn-law, that they did not then know the good we were doing to his class. I smiled and said to him: "If you would only have faith, I could tell one or two other things that would do you just as much good if you would let us try them." But he had no faith.

Now, I will just say to the landowners that I was never more their friend than when discussing this question which I am occupied with to-night, without the least animosity to them, and with a belief as firm as I ever had on the question of the Corn-law, that their interests are bound up with the interests of the people in the right solution of this question. I would ask, then, to what are they tending under the operation of these laws? They are becoming every year smaller and smaller in number. The large owners are rapidly eating up the smaller ones. The census returns show that the number of landed proprietors is but a handful in the nation, and every day becoming fewer and fewer. Their labourers remain at the 9*s.* or 10*s.* a week. Somebody will write to the paper to-morrow and say they get 12*s.*; but bear in mind that they do not always receive wages on wet days, and I believe the average money-income of the agricultural labourer throughout the United Kingdom will not exceed—and many persons will say it will not reach—10*s.* a week. Now, the smaller in number these landed proprietors become, the more, it may be, these labourers will become discontented. There may arise some political accident, and political accidents are almost as unlooked-for as other accidents. You do not hear the tread of the earthquake which topples down your firmest architecture, and you do not see—the country gentlemen do not see

—the tread of that danger, it may be that catastrophe, which inevitably follows upon prolonged unjust legislation. There may come a time, and I dare prophesy that it will come if there be an obstinate retention of our present system, when there will be a movement in this country to establish here, not what I believe to be the just and moderate and sufficient plan which I recommend, but a plan which shall be in accordance with that which is established by the Code Napoleon in France, and which is spreading rapidly over the whole of the Continent of Europe. And I would ask them again how do they purpose to keep their population if this system is to be maintained?

And now, addressing you working-men who are here, I beg your attention to two or three observations on this point. America, though three thousand miles off, is not so far off but that people may go there in about twelve days, and may go there for a sum varying from 2*l.* to 5*l.* You know that in this very year—I mean the year which is just passed—150,000 or 160,000 persons have sailed from this country to New York. Every man who settles there is not blinded by the mystifications and the falsities uttered by the New York correspondent of the *Times*. He is there, and can see what the working-man earns, and how he is treated, and what he is, and he writes over to his friends in this country—as has been the case for years in Ireland—and the result is that Ireland is being drained, not of its surplus population, but of the population absolutely necessary to the proper cultivation of the soil.

Let me tell you a fact, and if you do not treasure it up in your minds, I hope some of those gentlemen, the landowners, who think I am very hostile to them, will just consider it, if they have time, as they eat their breakfast and read the paper to-morrow, or the next day. In America there are 140,000,000 of acres of land, surveyed, mapped out, set apart for those who are ready to settle upon them. In the year 1861 (that was the first year before the war attained its present proportions), there were not less than 40,000 new farms, averaging eighty acres each, occupied in the Western

States. But the Government of the United States, not content with that measure of progress, framed an Act which came into operation on the 1st of January, 1863, called the Homestead Act. I have a copy of the Act here, and the circular which was issued from the Department of State, giving directions as to how this Act should be worked throughout the Union. What is the Homestead Act? It is this. It says that any man of twenty-one years of age, or younger, if he has been for a fortnight or a little more in the service of the United States, whether in the army or navy—any man of twenty-one years of age may come into these territories, may choose what is called a section, which is 160 acres of land, being one-fourth of a square mile, and on payment of a fee of ten dollars, which is equal to two pounds English, may apply to have this land conveyed to him for no other payment for a term of five years. It cannot be alienated, he is not allowed to sell it, it remains in his possession. At the end of five years, he having done to it what the Government requires—that is, settled upon it and begun cultivation and so forth, the law gives him what is called a patent, but what we should call a Parliamentary title, and the land is his own absolute freehold for ever. Now it would not take more than 15*l.* for a man to go from Birmingham to the territory where this land is to be disposed of. If he had not got any money by which he could take up 160 acres, he might engage himself to a neighbouring farmer, and would get, I believe, now, about 20*s.* a week wages, besides his board and lodgings, and if he worked as a labourer for two or three years he would be able to save a sum sufficient for him to commence the cultivation of a portion of his farm, and would be settled down there as a farmer and freeholder on his own estate.

Do not let me leave you with the idea that there is no rough and rugged career in this. There is much that is rough and much that is rugged, but there is a good deal of that sort in this country now. And when a man looks upon those children that create even in the poorest house, sometimes, a gleam of joy,—when he thinks what

those boys and girls must be in this country,—that they can never rise one step higher than that which he occupies now as an agricultural labourer, and when he looks abroad and he sees them, not labourers in the sense in which we speak here, not tenants even, but freeholders, and landowners, and farmers of their own property—then, I say, that the temptation held out to men here to emigrate, if men knew all the facts, would be irresistible to hundreds of thousands who have now no thought of moving to another country. But the agricultural labourer is not as he once was, in one respect. There are some feeble efforts made to give him some little instruction. There are newspapers published at a price which at one time was deemed impossible, and these find their way into agricultural villages. And the labourers will gradually begin to open their eyes, and to see that a change of their position is not so impossible as once they thought it was. What is it the United States offer more? They offer social equality—they offer political equality—they offer to every child of every man in whose face I am now looking, education—from the learning of his alphabet to, if he has the capacity to travel so far, the highest knowledge of classics and mathematics which are offered to the best students in the colleges of this country. And all this without the payment of one single farthing, except that general payment in which all the people participate in the school-rate of the various States of the Union.

I ask you if I am wrong in saying to the rich and the great that I believe, if they knew their own interests, that it would be worth their while to try to make this country a more desirable country for the labourer to live in. If they disregard this great question, we, who are of the middle, and not absolutely powerless, class, shall have to decide between the claims of territorial magnates and the just rights of millions of our countrymen. Some men I meet with—and now and then I wonder where they were born, and why they came into the world—regard these territorial magnates as idols before whom we are all to bow down in humble submission. Travellers tell us there is a tribe in Africa so entirely given up

to superstition that they fill their huts and hovels with so many idols that they do not even leave room for their families. It may be so in this country. We build up a system which is injurious to our political freedom, and is destructive of the intelligence, and the comfort, and the morality, and the best interests of our producing and working classes. Now, am I the enemy of any class when I come forward to state facts like these, and to explain principles such as these? Shall we go on groping continually in the dark, and make no effort to strengthen our position? Do not suppose because I stand here oftener to find fault with the laws of my country than to praise them that I am less English or less patriotic, or that I have less sympathy for my country or my countrymen than other men have. I want our country to be populous, to be powerful, and to be happy. But this can only be done—it never has been done in any country—but by just laws justly administered. I plead only for what I believe to be just. I wish to do wrong to no man. For twenty-five years I have stood before audiences—great meetings of my countrymen—pleading only for justice. During that time, as you know, I have endured measureless insult, and have passed through hurricanes of abuse. I need not tell you that my clients have not been generally the rich and the great, but rather the poor and the lowly. They cannot give me place and dignities and wealth; but honourable service in their cause yields me that which is of far higher and more lasting value—the consciousness that I have laboured to expound and uphold laws which, though they were not given amid the thunders of Sinai, are not less the commandments of God, and not less intended to promote and secure the happiness of men.

[The Settled Land Act, passed 1882, has since carried out Mr. Bright's views, to a certain extent, by greatly facilitating the sale of settled estates.]

XV

THE LAND QUESTION—II

Birmingham, January 22, 1876.

Now let me ask your attention to this for two or three minutes. Lord Derby is a man very superior to many of his order and of his party. He has always been industrious; he is well informed; he is not troubled with many prejudices; I am not sure whether he has strong convictions—I know that on many things he has held Liberal opinions, but I confess I am astonished that he should have dared to make statements with regard to the land such as he has made, with the knowledge that he ought to have, even to those uninquiring gentlemen who are called the 3,000 Conservative working-men of the city of Edinburgh, and that he should have made these statements in that city and in that country where the monopoly of land is the closest, probably, of any part of the United Kingdom. From this very return which he has obtained, it turns out that 5,000,000 of acres out of less than 19,000,000 in Scotland—that 5,000,000 acres, or considerably more than one-fourth of the whole of Scotland, are in the possession of twenty-one persons; that 8,000,000 acres, which is not far short of one-half of all Scotland, are in the possession of forty-nine persons; that 14,560,000 acres, or more than three-fourths of all Scotland, are in the possession of 583 persons. And if you were to take all the square miles of all the estates, of all the farms, of all the acres of the surface of Scotland, seventeen out of nineteen are in the possession of 2,583 persons; and of the other—his return shows that there are 132,000 proprietors, but the whole of the rest of them—the whole of the rest of the population do not possess more than the largest proprietor in Scotland, and do not possess more than one-fourth of an acre each. In point of fact, one proprietor in Scotland holds nearly as much land as 3,000,000 of its population.

Now I want to ask you how this comes about? I have given you Scotland; I will give you a fact with regard to Ireland. About a fortnight ago there was a letter in the *Times* from Mr. Fitzgerald, well known as the Knight of Kerry, a very respectable gentleman, whom I have had the pleasure of meeting many years ago. Mr. Fitzgerald wrote a letter to the *Times* in defence of the proprietors of land in Ireland, who are being attacked, as you know, constantly on the subject of tenure and the subject of rent; and he says that in Ireland there are 6,000[1] proprietors and 600,000 occupiers. Well, if there be only 2,583 persons in Scotland to seventeen-nineteenths of the soil, and if there be only 6,000 proprietors in Ireland, which is almost all the extent of Scotland, it would appear that the statement which Lord Derby says that Mr. Mill and I had endorsed cannot be very far from the truth. But if we take England—England and Wales—the acreage is about equal to Scotland and Ireland united, and if in England and Wales land be no more divided than it is in Scotland—I am not going to say it is not, because I believe it is, owing to the greater population and the greater wealth—but if the land in England and Wales were no more divided than it is in Scotland, then seventeen-nineteenths of the whole of the surface of England and Wales would be in possession of 5,166 persons. And take the whole proprietorship of Ireland as given by Mr. Fitzgerald, and take seventeen-nineteenths of Scotland the same proportion of England, and it would leave us with 13,749 proprietors of the soil in the United Kingdom. When we are talking of proprietors of the soil we are not speaking of the man who owns a few yards or a few roods or a quarter of an acre of land, upon which his house stands, but we are speaking of those who are occupying and cultivating the land, or who are letting it to others to occupy and cultivate; and we are speaking of the political power which has been for generations the greatest in this country, which is enormous now, and which, whenever it chooses to act in

[1] Mr. Fitzgerald understated the number of proprietors in Ireland, and subsequently corrected his mistake.

Parliament, in spite of the household suffrage in your boroughs, bears down all your opinions and carries any measure which it thinks necessary for its own interest.

Now, I must ask you a question, which it would be well if Lord Derby would endeavour to answer. My question is—is there not something strange in this partition of the soil I have described to you? Remember that property in the soil is the most universal of any property in the country. You cannot stand anywhere but that you are upon it. It is the most solid of any property in the country; the most certain as a possession and an investment; it is more desired by all classes of people than any other kind of property in the country; and it is the foundation of all other property, yet the people—and I use the term advisedly—are shut out, and a handful of men are the possessors, as I have shown you, of at least seventeen-nineteenths of it. Do not suppose that I am blaming any of these men; not in the least. They have had nothing to do with making any law, or, purposely, of any custom which has led to this state of things. They are, in their circumstances, living as honourably, and acting, probably, as well as possessors of property in any other station of life. But I maintain that there is a cause, and that cause is to be found in the state of our law and in customs which have arisen from and are supported by the law.

May I ask your attention to one argument that has always appeared to me to have great force? Suppose there were no law of Parliament to interfere with the possession of land. You can see at once that there are natural causes which promote accumulation and natural causes which promote dispersion. Of the natural causes which promote accumulation, you would say, for example, the desire to possess land, which appears to be universal, the certain security which it gives to property and to investment, the social position which the possession of land gives, more or less, in almost every country, and the charm which there is in country life. Dr. Johnson, I think, recommended everybody in delicate health to take a walk of two miles every morning before breakfast, and he added a very good piece of advice, if it could

only be followed—that he should take a walk on his own land. If there are these forces of accumulation, there are also forces of dispersion, and the greatest and the chief of these is death. The death of the possessors, as a matter of course, in almost every kind of property—and in this, if it were not for the law—would tend necessarily in some degree to the dispersion of the property. The extravagance of the owner, his folly and his vice, tend also to dispersion; the desire for change of locality, the desire for change of investment. Thus, you see, there are natural forces at work which cause or promote the accumulation of land, and natural forces which as certainly cause and promote the dispersion of land. What we are arguing for is this—that these forces should be allowed to work naturally and freely, and that the law should not in any way interfere with them, but that land should change just as easily, and should go into the possession of other people by that change, as any other kind of property which men possess. And the result of such change in the law would be that land, as a whole, would find itself always in the possession of that class and those classes of the population which would do the best for the land itself and for the people who dwell upon it.

I have read to you the statement of Lord Derby that, in his opinion, there is no obstacle in our law to make the gratification which comes from the possession of land either impossible or difficult. In answer to that I will read to you an extract from a work by a lawyer quite competent to give an opinion on this question, and I shall leave his answer as a complete reply to the question of Lord Derby. The passage I am just going to read to you I have extracted from a work called "The Social Condition and Education of the People in England and Europe." It was written twenty years ago by Mr. Joseph Kay, who is a Queen's Counsel, and most competent to give an opinion on this question. He says:

"These laws were passed, were framed, and have been retained for the express purpose of keeping the land in the hands of a few proprietors, and depriving the

peasants and small shopkeepers of any part of it and of the influence which its possession confers, and of supporting a great landed proprietary class, in order to uphold the system of aristocratic Government, and to give greater strength and stability to the Crown. It may be stated generally that these laws enable an owner of land, by his settlement or will, so to affect his estate that it cannot possibly be sold, in many cases, for about fifty years, and in some cases for sixty, seventy, or a hundred years, after the making of the settlement or will."

Perhaps many persons here may not be aware that this is almost the only country in Europe—I may even say the only country in the world—in which laws of this kind prevail. They exist to some extent in Russia, and in some parts of Austria; but in Germany, Holland, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Switzerland, Italy, France, and the United States these laws are abolished, and every person there can sell or dispose of his land during his own life. If he dies without a will the law divides his land equally between his children. The law does not there make one son rich and leave all other sons and daughters poor. What would you think in this country if any rich landowner, having, say, six children, were to doom five of them to ignorance, to shut them out from education, from the training belonging to their position in life, and should give that training and education only to one child? But it would be no more monstrous than that he should shut them all out from his property, and give the whole of it to the one child. And yet such is our law, such is the custom of the country, based, I will say, upon the most immoral principle which law has ever sanctioned. What we ask is this, for freedom of bequest, not for a forced partition of land. We ask that the land shall be the absolute property of each succeeding generation of men. And what are the results of our system? That our tenantry are less independent, probably, than any other tenantry in the world; and our agricultural labourers, as you know, are, and have been, the most abject and most hopeless class of our labouring population. The

repeal of the Corn Laws did not leave them untouched by its beneficent hand, for I believe that the wages of agricultural labour throughout this country have risen certainly more than 50 per cent. during the last thirty years under the operation of that great change in the law which the present Prime Minister and his party declared was to ruin the land, and especially to beggar the labourer. But although the labourer is better off than he was then, still I am obliged to admit what has been said of him by a paper that I have never before had to quote with approval—I speak of the *Saturday Review*. I recollect two or three years ago reading an article in the *Saturday Review* on this question of the land, and I noticed an observation in it so striking and remarkable that I could not forget it. The writer said that if our agricultural system be a paternal system, our agricultural labourer is its disinherited child.

But the country gentlemen and Lord Derby and his friends are perhaps not aware of this fact—that refusal to come to some just arrangement on this question induces men to turn their eyes in directions some of which, in my opinion, are not only erroneous, but perilous. I think the proposition that I hear made that nobody should have any profit arising from the growth in value of the land he possesses, or that there should be a probate duty levied upon the land to the amount of 10 per cent., and that upon any man's death his property in the soil—one-tenth of all his acreage—shall be taken and divided amongst the peasantry of his neighbourhood, or that we should have a law of equal partition, such as prevails in many parts of Europe—I think these propositions come naturally from our present law and the present state of things, and to adopt any of them would only be going from one extreme of error and of evil to another. And, therefore, I repudiate the laws we have—the partition laws of some foreign countries—those propositions to which I have referred—I repudiate them all. I say there is a sound and a just principle upon which land should pass from one owner to another, by which all men in each generation, possessing land, shall have the power to deal with it as

they like, and that the dead man and the dead hand shall not declare for half a century to come what shall be done with the estate.

XVI

FOREIGN POLICY

Birmingham, October 29, 1858.

[This speech was spoken at a banquet given to Mr. Bright in the Town Hall of Birmingham, on the occasion of his first visit to his constituents there. It treats of the Foreign Policy of the country since the Revolution of 1688, and defends the Foreign Policy advocated by Mr. Cobden and himself.]

THE frequent and far too complimentary manner in which my name has been mentioned to-night, and the most kind way in which you have received me, have placed me in a position somewhat humiliating, and really painful; for to receive laudation which one feels one cannot possibly have merited is much more painful than to be passed by in a distribution of commendation to which possibly one might lay some claim. If one-twentieth part of what has been said is true, if I am entitled to any measure of your approbation, I may begin to think that my public career and my opinions are not so un-English and so anti-national as some of those who profess to be the best of our public instructors have sometimes assumed. How, indeed, can I, any more than any of you, be un-English and anti-national? Was I not born upon the same soil? Do I not come of the same English stock? Are not my family committed irrevocably to the fortunes of this country? Is not whatever property I may have depending as much as yours is depending upon the good government of our common fatherland? Then how shall any man dare to say to any one of his countrymen, because he happens to hold a different opinion on questions of great public policy, that therefore he is un-English, and is to be condemned as anti-national? There are those who would assume that between my countrymen and me,

and between my constituents and me, there has been, and there is now, a great gulf fixed, and that if I cannot pass over to them and to you, they and you can by no possibility pass over to me.

Now, I take the liberty here, in the presence of an audience as intelligent as can be collected within the limits of this island, and of those who have the strongest claims to know what opinions I do entertain relative to certain great questions of public policy, to assert that I hold no views, that I have never promulgated any views on these controverted questions with respect to which I cannot bring as witnesses in my favour, and as fellow-believers with myself, some of the best and most revered names in the history of English statesmanship. About 120 years ago the Government of this country was directed by Sir Robert Walpole, a great Minister, who for a long period preserved the country in peace, and whose pride it was that during those years he had done so. Unfortunately, towards the close of his career, he was driven by faction into a policy which was the ruin of his political position. Sir Robert Walpole declared, when speaking of the question of war as affecting this country, that nothing could be so foolish, nothing so mad as a policy of war for a trading nation. And he went so far as to say that any peace was better than the most successful war. I do not give you the precise language made use of by the Minister, for I speak only from memory; but I am satisfied I am not misrepresenting him in what I have now stated.

Come down fifty years nearer to our own time, and you find a statesman, not long in office, but still strong in the affections of all persons of Liberal principles in this country, and in his time representing fully the sentiments of the Liberal party—Charles James Fox. Mr. Fox, referring to the policy of the Government of his time, which was one of constant interference in the affairs of Europe, and by which the country was continually involved in the calamities of war, said that although he would not assert or maintain the principle that under no circumstances could England have any cause of interference with the affairs of the continent of

Europe, yet he would prefer the policy of positive non-interference and of perfect isolation rather than the constant intermeddling to which our recent policy had subjected us, and which brought so much trouble and suffering upon the country. In this case also I am not prepared to give you his exact words, but I am sure that I fairly describe the sentiments which he expressed.

Come down fifty years later, and to a time within the recollection of most of us, and you find another statesman, once the most popular man in England, and still remembered in this town and elsewhere with respect and affection. I allude to Earl Grey. When Earl Grey came into office for the purpose of carrying the question of Parliamentary Reform he unfurled the banner of "Peace, retrenchment, and reform," and that sentiment was received in every part of the United Kingdom, by every man who was or had been in favour of Liberal principles, as predicting the advent of a new era which should save his country from many of the calamities of the past.

Come still nearer, and to a time that seems but the other day, and you find another Minister, second to none of those whom I have mentioned—the late Sir Robert Peel. I had the opportunity of observing the conduct of Sir Robert Peel, from the time when he took office in 1841; I watched his proceedings particularly from the year 1843, when I entered Parliament, up to the time of his lamented death; and during the whole of that period, I venture to say, his principles, if they were to be discovered from his conduct and his speeches, were precisely those which I have held, and which I have always endeavoured to press upon the attention of my countrymen. If you have any doubt upon that point I would refer you to that last, that beautiful, that most solemn speech, which he delivered with an earnestness and a sense of responsibility as if he had known he was leaving a legacy to his country. If you refer to that speech, delivered on the morning of the very day on which occurred the accident which terminated his life, you will find that its whole tenor is in conformity with all the doctrines that I have urged

upon my countrymen for years past with respect to our policy in foreign affairs. When Sir Robert Peel went home just before the dawn of day, upon the last occasion that he passed from the House of Commons, the scene of so many of his triumphs, I have heard, from what I think a good authority, that after he entered his own house, he expressed the exceeding relief which he experienced at having delivered himself of a speech which he had been reluctantly obliged to make against a Ministry which he was anxious to support, and he added, if I am not mistaken, "I have made a speech of peace."

Well, if this be so, if I can give you four names like these,—if there were time I could make a longer list of still eminent, if inferior men,—I should like to know why I, as one of a small party, am to be set down as teaching some new doctrine which it is not fit for my countrymen to hear, and why I am to be assailed in every form of language, as if there was one great department of governmental affairs on which I was incompetent to offer any opinion to my countrymen. But leaving the opinions of individuals, I appeal to this audience, to every man who knows anything of the views and policy of the Liberal party in past years, whether it is not the fact that up to 1832, and indeed to a much later period, probably to the year 1850, those sentiments of Sir Robert Walpole, of Mr. Fox, of Earl Grey, and of Sir Robert Peel, the sentiments which I in humbler mode have propounded, were not received unanimously by the Liberal party as their fixed and unchangeable creed? And why should they not? Are they not founded upon reason? Do not all statesmen know, as you know, that upon peace, and peace alone, can be based the successful industry of a nation, and that by successful industry alone can be created that wealth which, permeating all classes of the people, not confined to great proprietors, great merchants, and great speculators, not running in a stream merely down your principal streets, but turning fertilizing rivulets into every bye-lane and every alley, tends so powerfully to promote the comfort, happiness,

and contentment of a nation? Do you not know that all progress comes from successful and peaceful industry, and that upon it is based your superstructure of education, of morals, of self-respect among your people, as well as every measure for extending and consolidating freedom in your public institutions? I am not afraid to acknowledge that I do oppose—that I do utterly condemn and denounce—a great part of the foreign policy which is practised and adhered to by the Government of this country.

You know, of course, that about 170 years ago there happened in this country what we have always been accustomed to call "a Glorious Revolution"—a Revolution which had this effect: that it put a bit into the mouth of the monarch, so that he was not able of his own free-will to do, and he dared no longer attempt to do, the things which his predecessors had done without fear. But if at the Revolution the monarchy of England was bridled and bitted, at the same time the great territorial families of England were enthroned; and from that period, until the year 1831 or 1832—until the time when Birmingham politically became famous—those territorial families reigned with an almost undisputed sway over the destinies and the industry of the people of these kingdoms. If you turn to the history of England, from the period of the Revolution to the present, you will find that an entirely new policy was adopted, and that while we had endeavoured in former times to keep ourselves free from European complications, we now began to act upon a system of constant entanglement in the affairs of foreign countries, as if there was neither property nor honours, nor anything worth striving for, to be acquired in any other field. The language coined and used then has continued to our day. Lord Somers, in writing for William III, speaks of the endless and sanguinary wars of that period as wars "to maintain the liberties of Europe." There were wars "to support the Protestant interest," and there were many wars to preserve our old friend "the balance of power."

We have been at war since that time, I believe, with,

for, and against every considerable nation in Europe. We fought to put down a pretended French supremacy under Louis XIV. We fought to prevent France and Spain coming under the sceptre of one monarch, although, if we had not fought, it would have been impossible in the course of things that they should have become so united. We fought to maintain the Italian provinces in connection with the House of Austria. We fought to put down the supremacy of Napoleon Bonaparte; and the Minister who was employed by this country at Vienna, after the great war, when it was determined that no Bonaparte should ever again sit on the throne of France, was the very man to make an alliance with another Bonaparte for the purpose of carrying on a war to prevent the supremacy of the late Emperor of Russia. So that we have been all round Europe, and across it over and over again, and after a policy so distinguished, so pre-eminent, so long-continued, and so costly, I think we have a fair right—I have, at least—to ask those who are in favour of it to show us its visible result. Europe is not at this moment, so far as I know, speaking of it broadly, and making allowance for certain improvements in its general civilization, more free politically than it was before. The balance of power is like perpetual motion, or any of those impossible things which some men are always racking their brains and spending their time and money to accomplish.

We all know and deplore that at the present moment a large number of the grown men of Europe are employed, and a large portion of the industry of Europe is absorbed, to provide for, and maintain, the enormous armaments which are now on foot in every considerable Continental State. Assuming, then, that Europe is not much better in consequence of the sacrifices we have made, let us inquire what has been the result in England, because, after all, that is the question which it becomes us most to consider. I believe that I understate the sum when I say that, in pursuit of this Will-o'-the-wisp (the liberties of Europe and the balance of power), there has been extracted from the industry of

the people of this small island no less an amount than 2,000,000,000*l.* sterling. I cannot imagine how much 2,000,000,000*l.* is, and therefore I shall not attempt to make you comprehend it. I presume it is something like those vast and incomprehensible astronomical distances with which we have been lately made familiar; but, however familiar, we feel that we do not know one bit more about them than we did before. When I try to think of that sum of 2,000,000,000*l.*, there is a sort of vision passes before my mind's eye. I see your peasant labourer delve and plough, sow and reap, sweat beneath the summer's sun, or grow prematurely old before the winter's blast. I see your noble mechanic, with his manly countenance and his matchless skill, toiling at his bench or his forge. I see one of the workers in our factories in the north, a woman—a girl, it may be—gentle and good, as many of them are, as your sisters and daughters are—I see her intent upon the spindle, whose revolutions are so rapid that the eye fails altogether to detect them, or watching the alternating flight of the unresting shuttle. I turn again to another portion of your population, which, "plunged in mines, forgets a sun was made," and I see the man who brings up from the secret chambers of the earth the elements of the riches and greatness of his country. When I see all this I have before me a mass of produce and of wealth which I am no more able to comprehend than I am that 2,000,000,000*l.* of which I have spoken, but I behold in its full proportions the hideous error of your Governments, whose fatal policy consumes in some cases a half, never less than a third, of all the results of that industry which God intended should fertilize and bless every home in England, but the fruits of which are squandered in every part of the surface of the globe, without producing the smallest good to the people of England.

We have, it is true, some visible results that are of a more positive character. We have that which some people call a great advantage—the National Debt—a debt which is now so large that the most prudent, the most economical, and the most honest have given up

all hope, not of its being paid off, but of its being diminished in amount. We have, too, taxes which have been during many years so onerous that there have been times when the patient beasts of burden threatened to revolt—so onerous that it has been utterly impossible to levy them with any kind of honest equality, according to the means of the people to pay them. We have that, moreover, which is a standing wonder to all foreigners who consider our condition—an amount of apparently immovable pauperism, which to strangers is wholly irreconcileable with the fact that we, as a nation, produce more of what should make us all comfortable than is produced by any other nation of similar numbers on the face of the globe. Let us likewise remember that during the period of those great and so-called glorious contests on the continent of Europe every description of home reform was not only delayed but actually crushed out of the minds of the great bulk of the people. There can be no doubt whatever that in 1793 England was about to realize political changes and reforms such as did not appear again until 1830; and during the period of that war, which now almost all men agree to have been wholly unnecessary, we were passing through a period which may be described as the dark age of English politics; when there was no more freedom to write or speak, or politically to act, than there is now in the most despotic country of Europe.

But, it may be asked, did nobody gain? If Europe is no better, and the people of England have been so much worse, who has benefited by the new system of foreign policy? What has been the fate of those who were enthroned at the Revolution, and whose supremacy has been for so long a period undisputed among us? Mr. Kinglake, the author of an interesting book on Eastern Travel, describing the habits of some acquaintances that he made in the Syrian Deserts, says that the jackals of the Desert follow their prey in families like the place-hunters of Europe. I will reverse, if you like, the comparison, and say that the great territorial families of England, which were enthroned at the Revolution, have followed their prey like the

jackals of the Desert. Do you not observe at a glance that, from the time of William III, by reason of the foreign policy which I denounce, wars have been multiplied, taxes increased, loans made, and the sums of money which every year the Government has to expend augmented, and that so the patronage at the disposal of Ministers must have increased also, and the families who were enthroned and made powerful in the legislation and administration of the country must have had the first pull at, and the largest profit out of, that patronage? There is no actuary in existence who can calculate how much of the wealth, of the strength, of the supremacy of the territorial families of England has been derived from an unholy participation in the fruits of the industry of the people, which have been wrested from them by every device of taxation, and squandered in every conceivable crime of which a Government could possibly be guilty.

The more you examine this matter the more you will come to the conclusion which I have arrived at, that this foreign policy, this regard for "the liberties of Europe," this care at one time for "the Protestant interests," this excessive love for the "balance of power," is neither more nor less than a gigantic system of out-door relief for the aristocracy of Great Britain. [Great laughter.] I observe that you receive that declaration as if it were some new and important discovery. In 1815, when the great war with France was ended, every Liberal in England, whose politics, whose hopes, and whose faith had not been crushed out of him by the tyranny of the time of that war, was fully aware of this, and openly admitted it, and up to 1832, and for some years afterwards, it was the fixed and undoubted creed of the great Liberal party. But somehow all is changed. We who stand upon the old landmarks, who walk in the old paths, who would conserve what is wise and prudent, are hustled and shoved about as if we were come to turn the world upside down. The change which has taken place seems to confirm the opinion of a lamented friend of mine, who, not having succeeded in all his

hopes, thought that men made no progress whatever, but went round and round like a squirrel in a cage. The idea is now so general that it is our duty to meddle everywhere, that it really seems as if we had pushed the Tories from the field, expelling them by our competition.

I should like to lay before you a list of the treaties which we have made, and of the responsibilities under which we have laid ourselves with respect to the various countries of Europe. I do not know where such an enumeration is to be found, but I suppose it would be possible for antiquaries and men of investigating minds to dig them out from the recesses of the Foreign Office, and perhaps to make some of them intelligible to the country. I believe, however, that if we go to the Baltic we shall find that we have a treaty to defend Sweden, and the only thing which Sweden agrees to do in return is not to give up any portion of her territories to Russia. Coming down a little south, we have a treaty which invites us, enables us, and perhaps, if we acted fully up to our duty with regard to it, would compel us to interfere in the question between Denmark and the Duchies. If I mistake not, we have a treaty which binds us down to the maintenance of the little kingdom of Belgium, as established after its separation from Holland. We have numerous treaties with France. We are understood to be bound by treaty to maintain constitutional government in Spain and Portugal. If we go round into the Mediterranean we find the litttle kingdom of Sardinia, to which we have lent some millions of money, and with which we have entered into important treaties for preserving the balance of power in Europe. If we go beyond the kingdoms of Italy, and cross the Adriatic, we come to the small kingdom of Greece, against which we have a nice account that will never be settled; while we have engagements to maintain that respectable but diminutive country under its present constitutional government. Then, leaving the kingdom of Greece, we pass up the eastern end of the Mediterranean, and from Greece to the Red Sea, wherever the authority of the

Sultan is more or less admitted, the blood and the industry of England are pledged to the permanent sustentation of the "independence and integrity" of the Ottoman Empire.

I confess that as a citizen of this country, wishing to live peaceably among my fellow-countrymen, and wishing to see my countrymen free, and able to enjoy the fruits of their labour, I protest against a system which binds us in all these networks and complications, from which it is impossible that we can gain one single atom of advantage for this country. It is not all glory, after all. Glory may be worth something, but it is not always glory. We have had within the last few years despatches from Vienna and from St. Petersburg, which, if we had not deserved them, would have been very offensive and not a little insolent. We have had the Ambassador of the Queen expelled summarily from Madrid, and we have had an Ambassador driven almost with ignominy from Washington. We have blockaded Athens for a claim which was known to be false. We have quarrelled with Naples, for we chose to give advice to Naples, which was not received in the submissive spirit expected from her, and our Minister was therefore withdrawn. Not three years ago, too, we seized a considerable kingdom in India, with which our Government had but recently entered into the most solemn treaty, which every lawyer in England and in Europe, I believe, would consider binding before God and the world. We deposed its monarch; we committed a great immorality and a great crime, and we have reaped an almost instantaneous retribution in the most gigantic and sanguinary revolt which probably any nation ever made against its conquerors. Within the last few years we have had two wars with a great Empire, which we are told contains at least one-third of the whole human race. The first war was called, and appropriately called, the Opium War. No, man, I believe, with a spark of morality in his composition, no man who cares anything for the opinion of his fellow-countrymen, has dared to justify that war. The war which has just been concluded, if it has been concluded, had its origin in the

first war; for the enormities committed in the first war are the foundation of the implacable hostility which it is said the inhabitants of Canton bear to all persons connected with the English name. Yet, though we have these troubles in India—a vast country which we do not know how to govern—and a war with China—a country with which, though everybody else can remain at peace, we cannot—such is the inveterate habit of conquest, such is the insatiable lust of territory, such is, in my view, the depraved, unhappy state of opinion of the country on this subject, that there are not a few persons, Chambers of Commerce to wit, in different parts of the kingdom (though I am glad to say it has not been so with the Chamber of Commerce at Birmingham), who have been urging our Government to take possession of a province of the greatest island in the Eastern seas; a possession which must at once necessitate increased estimates and increased taxation, and which would probably lead us into merciless and disgraceful wars with the half-savage tribes who inhabit that island.

I will not dwell upon that question. The gentleman who is principally concerned in it is at this moment, as you know, stricken down with affliction, and I am unwilling to enter here into any considerable discussion of the case which he is urging upon the public; but I say that we have territory enough in India; and if we have not troubles enough there, if we have not difficulties enough in China, if we have not taxation enough, by all means gratify your wishes for more; but I hope that whatever may be the shortcomings of the Government with regard to any other questions in which we are all interested—and may they be few!—they will shut their eyes, they will turn their backs obstinately from adding in this mode, or in any mode, to the English possessions in the East. I suppose that if any ingenious person were to prepare a large map of the world, as far as it is known, and were to mark upon it, in any colour that he liked, the spots where Englishmen have fought and English blood has been poured forth, and the treasure of England squandered, scarcely a country,

scarcely a province of the vast expanse of the habitable globe would be thus undistinguished.

Perhaps there are in this room, I am sure there are in the country, many persons who hold a superstitious traditionary belief that, somehow or other, our vast trade is to be attributed to what we have done in this way, that it is thus we have opened markets and advanced commerce, that English greatness depends upon the extent of English conquests and English military renown. But I am inclined to think that, with the exception of Australia, there is not a single dependency of the Crown which, if we come to reckon what it has cost in war and protection, would not be found to be a positive loss to the people of this country. Take the United States, with which we have such an enormous and constantly increasing trade. The wise statesmen of the last generation, men whom your school histories tell you were statesmen, serving under a monarch who they tell you was a patriotic monarch, spent 130,000,000*l.* of the fruits of the industry of the people in a vain—happily a vain—endeavour to retain the colonies of the United States in subjection to the Monarchy of England. Add up the interest of that 130,000,000*l.* for all this time, and how long do you think it will be before there will be a profit on the trade with the United States which will repay the enormous sum we invested in a war to retain those States as colonies of this Empire? It never will be paid off. Wherever you turn, you will find that the opening of markets, developing of new countries, introducing cotton cloth with cannon balls, are vain, foolish, and wretched excuses for wars, and ought not to be listened to for a moment by any man who understands the multiplication table, or who can do the simplest sum in arithmetic.

Since the "Glorious Revolution," since the enthronization of the great Norman territorial families they have spent in wars, and we have worked for, about 2,000,000,000*l.* The interest on that is 100,000,000*l.* per annum, which alone, to say nothing of the principal sum, is three or four times as much as the whole

amount of your annual export trade from that time to this. Therefore, if war has provided you with a trade, it has been at an enormous cost; but I think it is by no means doubtful that your trade would have been no less in amount and no less profitable had peace and justice been inscribed on your flag instead of conquest and the love of military renown. But even in this year, 1858—we have got a long way into the century—we find that within the last seven years our public debt has greatly increased. Whatever be the increase of our population, of our machinery, of our industry, of our wealth, still our national debt goes on increasing. Although we have not a foot more territory to conserve, or an enemy in the world who dreams of attacking us, we find that our annual military expenses during the last twenty years have risen from 12,000,000*l.* to 22,000,000*l.*

Some people believe that it is a good thing to pay a great revenue to the State. Even so eminent a man as Lord John Russell is not without a delusion of this sort. Lord John Russell, as you have heard, while speaking of me in flattering and friendly terms, says he is unfortunately obliged to differ from me frequently; therefore, I suppose, there is no particular harm in my saying that I am sometimes obliged to differ from him. Some time ago he was a great star in the northern hemisphere, shining, not with unaccustomed, but with his usual brilliancy at Liverpool. He made a speech, in which there was a great deal to be admired, to a meeting composed, it was said, to a great extent of working-men; and in it he stimulated them to a feeling of pride in the greatness of their country and in being citizens of a State which enjoyed a revenue of 100,000,000*l.* a year, which included the revenues of the United Kingdom and of British India. But I think it would have been far more to the purpose if he could have congratulated the working-men of Liverpool on this vast Empire being conducted in an orderly manner, on its laws being well administered and well obeyed, its shores sufficiently defended, its people prosperous and happy, on a revenue of 20,000,000*l.* The State, indeed,

of which Lord John Russell is a part, may enjoy a revenue of 100,000,000*l.*, but I am afraid the working-men can only be said to enjoy it in the sense in which men not very choice in their expressions say that for a long time they have enjoyed "very bad health."

I am prepared to admit that it is a subject of congratulation that there is a people so great, so free, and so industrious, that it can produce a sufficient income out of which 100,000,000*l.* a year, if need absolutely were, could be spared for some great and noble object; but it is not a thing to be proud of that our Government should require us to pay that enormous sum for the simple purposes of government and defence. Nothing can by any possibility tend more to the corruption of a government than enormous revenues. We have heard lately of instances of certain joint-stock institutions with very great capital collapsing suddenly, bringing disgrace upon their managers, and ruin upon hundreds of families. A great deal of that has arisen, not so much from intentional fraud, as from the fact that weak and incapable men have found themselves tumbling about in an ocean of banknotes and gold, and they appear to have lost all sight of where it came from, to whom it belonged, and whether it was possible by any maladministration ever to come to an end of it. That is absolutely what is done by Governments. You have read in the papers lately some accounts of the proceedings before a Commission appointed to inquire into alleged maladministration with reference to the supply of clothing to the army, but if anybody had said anything in the time of the late Government about any such maladministration, there is not one of those great statesmen, of whom we are told we ought always to speak with so much reverence, who would not have got up and declared that nothing could be more admirable than the system of book-keeping at Weedon, nothing more economical than the manner in which the War Department spent the money provided by public taxation. But we know that it is not so. I have heard a gentleman—one who is as competent as any man in England to give an opinion about it—a man of

business, and not surpassed by any one as a man of business, declare, after a long examination of the details of the question, that he would undertake to do everything that is done not only for the defence of the country, but for many other things which are done by your navy, and which are not necessary for that purpose, for half the annual cost that is voted in the estimates!

I think the expenditure of these vast sums, and especially of those which we spend for military purposes, leads us to adopt a defiant and insolent tone towards foreign countries. We have the freest press in Europe, and the freest platform in Europe, but every man who writes an article in a newspaper, and every man who stands on a platform, ought to do it under a solemn sense of responsibility. Every word he writes, every word I utter, passes with a rapidity of which our forefathers were utterly ignorant, to the very ends of the earth; the words become things and acts, and they prŏduce on the minds of other nations effects which a man may never have intended. Take a recent case; take the case of France. I am not expected to defend, and I shall certainly not attack, the present Government of France. The instant that it appeared in the present shape, the Minister of England conducting your foreign affairs, speaking ostensibly for the Cabinet, for his Sovereign, and for the English nation, offered his congratulations, and the support of England was at once accorded to the re-created French Empire. Soon after this an intimate alliance was entered into between the Queen of England, through her Ministers, and the Emperor of the French. I am not about to defend the policy which flowed from that alliance, nor shall I take up your time by making any attack upon it. An alliance was entered into, and a war was entered into. English and French soldiers fought on the same field, and they suffered, I fear, from the same neglect. They now lie buried on the bleak heights of the Crimea, and except by their mothers, who do not soon forget their children, I suppose they are mostly forgotten. I have never heard it suggested that the French Government

did not behave with the most perfect honour to this Government and this country all through these grave transactions; but I have heard it stated by those who must know, that nothing could be more honourable, nothing more just, than the conduct of the French Emperor to this Government throughout the whole of that struggle. More recently, when the war in China was begun by a Government which I have condemned and denounced in the House of Commons, the Emperor of the French sent his ships and troops to co-operate with us, but I never heard that anything was done there to create a suspicion of a feeling of hostility on his part towards us. The Emperor of the French came to London, and some of those powerful organs of the press who have since taken the line of which I am complaining, did all but invite the people of London to prostrate themselves under the wheels of the chariot which conveyed along our streets the revived monarchy of France. The Queen of England went to Paris, and was she not received there with as much affection and as much respect as her high position and her honourable character entitled her to?

What has occurred since? If there was a momentary unpleasantness, I am quite sure that every impartial man will agree that, under the peculiarly irritating circumstances of the time, there was at least as much forbearance shown on one side of the Channel as on the other. Then we have had much said lately about a naval fortification recently completed in France, which has been more than one hundred years in progress, which was not devised by the present Emperor of the French. For one hundred years great sums had been spent on it, and at last, like every other great work, it was brought to an end. The English Queen and others were invited over, and many went who were not invited. And yet in all this we are told that there is something to create extreme alarm and suspicion; we, who have never fortified any places; we, who have not a greater than Sebastopol at Gibraltar; we, who have not an impregnable fortress at Malta, who have not spent the fortune of a nation almost in the Ionian

Islands; we, who are doing nothing at Alderney; we are to take offence at the fortifications of Cherbourg! There are few persons who at some time or other have not been brought into contact with a poor unhappy fellow-creature who has some peculiar delusion or suspicion pressing on his mind. I recollect a friend of mine going down from Derby to Leeds in the train with a very quiet and respectable-looking gentleman sitting opposite to him. They had both been staying at the Midland Hotel, and they began talking about it. All at once the gentleman said, "Did you notice anything particular about the bread at breakfast?" "No," said my friend, "I did not." "Oh! but I did," said the poor gentleman, "and I am convinced there was an attempt made to poison me, and it is a very curious thing that I never go to an hotel without I discover some attempt to do me mischief." The unfortunate man was labouring under one of the greatest calamities which can befall a human creature. But what are we to say of a nation which lives under a perpetual delusion that it is about to be attacked—a nation which is the most combined on the face of the earth, with little less than 30,000,000 of people all united under a Government which, though we intend to reform it, we do not the less respect it, and which has mechanical power and wealth to which no other country offers any parallel? There is no causeway to Britain; the free waves of the sea flow day and night for ever round her shores, and yet there are people going about with whom this hallucination is so strong that they do not merely discover it quietly to their friends, but they write it down in double-leaded columns, in leading articles,—nay, some of them actually get up on platforms and proclaim it to hundreds and thousands of their fellow-countrymen. I should like to ask you whether these delusions are to last for ever, whether this policy is to be the perpetual policy of England, whether these results are to go on gathering and gathering until there come, as come there must inevitably, some dreadful catastrophe on our country?

I should like to-night, if I could, to inaugurate one

of the best and holiest revolutions that ever took place in this country. We have had a dozen revolutions since some of us were children. We have had one revolution in which you had a great share, a great revolution of opinion on the question of the suffrage. Does it not read like madness that men, thirty years ago, were frantic at the idea of the people of Birmingham having a 10*l.* franchise? Does it not seem something like idiotcy to be told that a banker in Leeds, when it was proposed to transfer the seats of one rotten borough to the town of Leeds, should say (and it was repeated in the House of Commons on his authority) that if the people of Leeds had the franchise conferred upon them it would not be possible to keep the bank doors open with safety, and that he should remove his business to some quiet place out of danger from the savage race that peopled that town? But now all confess that the people are perfectly competent to have votes, and nobody dreams of arguing that the privilege will make them less orderly.

Take the question of colonial government. Twenty years ago the government of our colonies was a huge job. A small family party in each, in connection with the Colonial Office, ruled our colonies. We had then discontent, and, now and then, a little wholesome insurrection, especially in Canada. The result was that we have given up the colonial policy which had hitherto been held sacred, and since that time not only have our colonies greatly advanced in wealth and material resources, but no parts of the Empire are more tranquil and loyal.

Take also the question of Protection. Not thirty years ago, but twelve years ago, there was a great party in Parliament, led by a Duke in one House, and by the son and brother of a Duke in the other, which declared that utter ruin must come, not only on the agricultural interest, but upon the manufactures and commerce of England, if we departed from our old theories upon this subject of Protection. They told us

that the labourer—the unhappy labourer—of whom it may be said in this country,—

> "Here landless labourers hopeless toil and strive,
> But taste no portion of the sweets they hive,"

—that the labourer was to be ruined; that is, that the paupers were to be pauperized. These gentlemen were overthrown. The plain, honest, common sense of the country swept away their cobweb theories, and they are gone. What is the result? From 1846 to 1857 we have received into this country of grain of all kinds, including flour, maize, or Indian corn—all objects heretofore not of absolute prohibition, but which were intended to be prohibited until it was not safe for people to be starved any more—not less than an amount equal in value to 224,000,000*l.* That is equal to 18,700,000*l.* per annum on the average of twelve years. During that period, too, your home growth has been stimulated to an enormous extent. You have imported annually 200,000 tons of guano, and the result has been a proportionate increase in the productions of the soil, for 200,000 tons of guano will grow an equal weight and value of wheat. With all this, agriculture was never more prosperous, while manufactures were never, at the same time, more extensively exported; and with all this the labourers, for whom the tears of the Protectionist were shed, have, according to the admission of the most violent of the class, never been in a better state since the beginning of the great French war.

One other revolution of opinion has been in regard to our criminal law. I have lately been reading a book which I would advise every man to read—the "Life of Sir Samuel Romilly." He tells us in simple language of the almost insuperable difficulties he had to contend with to persuade the Legislature of this country to abolish the punishment of death for stealing from a dwelling-house to the value of 5*s.*, an offence which now is punished by a few weeks' imprisonment. Lords, Bishops, and statesmen opposed these efforts year after year, and there have been some thousands of persons

put to death publicly for offences which are not now punishable with death. Now, every man and woman in the kingdom would feel a thrill of horror if told that a fellow-creature was to be put to death for such a cause.

These are revolutions in opinion; and let me tell you that when you accomplish a revolution in opinion upon a great question, when you alter it from bad to good, it is not like charitably giving a beggar 6*d.* and seeing him no more, but it is a great beneficent act, which affects not merely the rich and the powerful, but penetrates every lane, every cottage in the land, and wherever it goes brings blessings and happiness. It is not from statesmen that these things come. It is not from them that have proceeded these great revolutions of opinion on the questions of Reform, Protection, Colonial Government, and Criminal Law—it was from public meetings such as this, from the intelligence and conscience of the great body of the people who have no interest in wrong, and who never go from the right but by temporary error and under momentary passion.

It is for you to decide whether our greatness shall be only temporary or whether it shall be enduring. When I am told that the greatness of our country is shown by the 100,000,000*l.* of revenue produced, may I not also ask how it is that we have 1,100,000 paupers in this kingdom, and why it is that 7,000,000*l.* should be taken from the industry chiefly of the labouring classes to support a small nation, as it were, of paupers? Since your legislation upon the Corn-laws you have not only had nearly 20,000,000*l.* of food brought into the country annually, but such an extraordinary increase of trade that your exports are about doubled, and yet I understand that in the year 1856, for I have no later return, there were no less than 1,100,000 paupers in the United Kingdom, and the sum raised in poor-rates was not less than 7,200,000*l.* And that cost of pauperism is not the full amount; for there is a vast amount of temporary, casual, and vagrant pauperism that does not come in to swell that sum.

Then do not you well know—I know it, because I live among the population of Lancashire, and I doubt

not the same may be said of the population of this city and county—that just above the level of the 1,100,000 there is at least an equal number who are ever oscillating between independence and pauperism, who, with a heroism which is not the less heroic because it is secret and unrecorded, are doing their very utmost to maintain an honourable and independent position before their fellow-men? While Irish labour, notwithstanding the improvement which has taken place in Ireland, is only paid at the rate of about 1*s.* a day; while in the straths and glens of Scotland there are hundreds of shepherd families whose whole food almost consists of oatmeal porridge from day to day, and from week to week; while these things continue, I say that we have no reason to be self-satisfied and contented with our position; but that we who are in Parliament and are more directly responsible for affairs, and you who are also responsible, though in a lower degree, are bound by the sacred duty which we owe our country to examine why it is that with all this trade, all this industry, and all this personal freedom, there is still so much that is unsound at the base of our social fabric?

Let me direct your attention now to another point, which I never think of without feelings which words would altogether fail to express. You hear constantly, that woman, the helpmate of man, who adorns, dignifies, and blesses our lives, that woman in this country is cheap; that vast numbers whose names ought to be synonyms for purity and virtue are plunged into profligacy and infamy. But do you not know that you sent 40,000 men to perish on the bleak heights of the Crimea, and that the revolt in India, caused, in part at least, by the grievous iniquity of the seizure of Oude, may tax your country to the extent of 100,000 lives before it is extinguished; and do you not know that for the 140,000 men thus draughted off and consigned to premature graves, Nature provided in your country 140,000 women? If you have taken the men who should have been the husbands of these women, and if you have sacrificed 100,000,000*l.*, which as capital reserved in the country would have been an ample

fund for their employment and for the sustentation of their families, are you not guilty of a great sin in involving yourselves in such a loss of life and of money in war, except on grounds and under circumstances which, according to the opinions of every man in the country, should leave no kind of option whatever for your choice?

I know perfectly well the kind of observations which a certain class of critics will make upon this speech. I have been already told by a very eminent newspaper publisher in Calcutta, who, commenting on a speech I made at the close of the session with regard to the condition of India and our future policy in that country, said, that the policy I recommended was intended to strike at the root of the advancement of the British Empire, and that its advancement did not necessarily involve the calamities which I pointed out as likely to occur. My Calcutta critic assured me that Rome pursued a similar policy for a period of eight centuries, and that for those eight centuries she remained great. Now, I do not think that examples taken from pagan, sanguinary Rome, are proper models for the imitation of a Christian country, nor would I limit my hopes of the greatness of England even to the long duration of 800 years. But what is Rome now? The great city is dead. A poet has described her as "the lone mother of dead empires." Her language even is dead. Her very tombs are empty; the ashes of her most illustrious citizens are dispersed—

"The Scipios' tomb contains no ashes now."

Yet I am asked, I, who am one of the legislators of a Christian country, to measure my policy by the policy of ancient and pagan Rome!

I believe there is no permanent greatness to a nation except it be based upon morality. I do not care for military greatness or military renown. I care for the condition of the people among whom I live. There is no man in England who is less likely to speak irreverently of the Crown and Monarchy of England than I am; but crowns, coronets, mitres, military display, the

pomp of war, wide colonies, and a huge empire, are, in my view, all trifles light as air, and not worth considering, unless with them you can have a fair share of comfort, contentment, and happiness among the great body of the people. Palaces, baronial castles, great halls, stately mansions, do not make a nation. The nation in every country dwells in the cottage; and unless the light of your Constitution can shine there, unless the beauty of your legislation and the excellence of your statesmanship are impressed there on the feelings and condition of the people, rely upon it you have yet to learn the duties of government.

I have not, as you have observed, pleaded that this country should remain without adequate and scientific means of defence. I acknowledge it to be the duty of your statesmen, acting upon the known opinions and principles of ninety-nine out of every hundred persons in the country, at all times, with all possible moderation, but with all possible efficiency, to take steps which shall preserve order within and on the confines of your kingdom. But I shall repudiate and denounce the expenditure of every shilling, the engagement of every man, the employment of every ship which has no object but intermeddling in the affairs of other countries, and endeavouring to extend the boundaries of an Empire which is already large enough to satisfy the greatest ambition, and I fear is much too large for the highest statesmanship to which any man has yet attained.

The most ancient of profane historians has told us that the Scythians of his time were a very warlike people, and that they elevated an old cimeter upon a platform as a symbol of Mars, for to Mars alone, I believe, they built altars and offered sacrifices. To this cimeter they offered sacrifices of horses and cattle, the main wealth of the country, and more costly sacrifices than to all the rest of their gods. I often ask myself whether we are at all advanced in one respect beyond those Scythians. What are our contributions to charity, to education, to morality, to religion, to justice, and to civil government, when compared with

the wealth we expend in sacrifices to the old cimeter? Two nights ago I addressed in this hall a vast assembly composed to a great extent of your countrymen who have no political power, who are at work from the dawn of the day to the evening, and who have therefore limited means of informing themselves on these great subjects. Now I am privileged to speak to a somewhat different audience. You represent those of your great community who have a more complete education, who have on some points greater intelligence, and in whose hands reside the power and influence of the district. I am speaking, too, within the hearing of those whose gentle nature, whose finer instincts, whose purer minds, have not suffered as some of us have suffered in the turmoil and strife of life. You can mould opinion, you can create political power,—you cannot think a good thought on this subject and communicate it to your neighbours,—you cannot make these points topics of discussion in your social circles and more general meetings, without affecting sensibly and speedily the course which the Government of your country will pursue. May I ask you, then, to believe, as I do most devoutly believe, that the moral law was not written for men alone in their individual character, but that it was written as well for nations, and for nations great as this of which we are citizens. If nations reject and deride that moral law, there is a penalty which will inevitably follow. It may not come at once, it may not come in our lifetime; but, rely upon it, the great Italian is not a poet only, but a prophet when he says,—

> "The sword of heaven is not in haste to smite,
> Nor yet doth linger."

We have experience, we have beacons, we have landmarks enough. We know what the past has cost us, we know how much and how far we have wandered, but we are not left without a guide. It is true we have not, as an ancient people had, Urim and Thummim—those oraculous gems on Aaron's breast—from which to take counsel, but we have the unchangeable

and eternal principles of the moral law to guide us, and only so far as we walk by that guidance can we be permanently a great nation, or our people a happy people.

XVII

PEACE

Edinburgh, October 13, 1853.

[This speech was spoken at the Conference of the Peace Society, held at Edinburgh in the autumn of 1853. The relation of this meeting to the Russian war, then impending, made the gathering more than ordinarily important]

It is a great advantage in this country, I think, that we have no want of ample criticism. Whatever we may have said yesterday and to-day will form the subject of criticism, not of the most friendly character, in very many newspapers throughout the United Kingdom. I recollect when we met in Manchester, that papers disposed to be friendly, warned us as to the course we were taking, and that the time was ill-chosen for a peace meeting. It was said that the people were excited against France, and were alarmed at their almost total defencelessness, and that there was no use in endeavouring to place before them the facts which the peace men offered to their audience. The result showed that they were mistaken, for you will recollect, that, while up to that meeting there was a constantly swelling tide of alarm and hostility with regard to France, from the day the Conference was held there was a gradual receding of the tide, that the alarm and apprehension rapidly diminished, and that by the time the House of Commons met in February we were willing to receive from Lord John Russell and other statesmen the most positive assurances that France was not increasing her force, and that there was not the slightest reason to believe that the Government of France entertained anything but the most friendly feeling towards the Government of this country.

The right time to oppose the errors and prejudices of

the people never comes to the eyes of those writers in the public press who pander to these prejudices. They say, We must not do so and so, we shall embarrass the Government. But rumour says the Government has been pretty well embarrassed already. They say that we shall complicate the question if we interfere; but it cannot well be more complicated than it is; for hardly anybody but the peace men can tell how to unravel it. Next, they tell us that we shall impair the harmony of opinion which there appears to be in the country, from the fact of there having been three or four insignificant meetings, by which the Government is to be impelled to more active and energetic measures. Now, what is it that we really want here? We wish to protest against the maintenance of great armaments in time of peace; we wish to protest against the spirit which is not only willing for war, but eager for war; and we wish to protest, with all the emphasis of which we are capable, against the mischievous policy pursued so long by this country, of interfering with the internal affairs of other countries, and thereby leading to disputes, and often to disastrous wars.

I mentioned last night what it was we were annually spending on our armaments. Admiral Napier says that the hon. Member for the West Riding, who can do everything, had persuaded a feeble Government to reduce the armaments of this country to "nothing." What is "nothing" in the Admiral's estimation? Fifteen millions a year! Was all that money thrown away? We have it in the estimates, we pay it out of the taxes—it is appropriated by Parliament, it sustains your dockyards, pays the wages of your men, and maintains your ships. Fifteen millions sterling paid in the very year when the Admiral says that my hon. Friend reduced the armaments of the country to nothing! But take the sums which we spent for the past year in warlike preparations — seventeen millions, and the interest on debt caused by war—twenty-eight millions sterling; and it amounts to 45,000,000*l.* What are our whole exports? Even this year, far the largest year of exports we have ever known, they may amount to

80,000,000*l.* Well, then, plant some one at the mouth of every port and harbour in the United Kingdom, and let him take every alternate ship that leaves your rivers and your harbours with all its valuable cargo on board, and let him carry it off as tribute, and it will not amount to the cost that you pay every year for a war, that fifty years ago was justified as much as it is attempted to justify this impending war, and for the preparations which you now make after a peace which has lasted for thirty-eight years.

Every twenty years—in a nation's life nothing, in a person's life something—every twenty years a thousand millions sterling out of the industry of the hard-working people of this United Kingdom, are extorted, appropriated, and expended to pay for that unnecessary and unjust war, and for the absurd and ruinous expenditure which you now incur. A thousand millions every twenty years! Apply a thousand millions, not every twenty years, but for one period of twenty years, to objects of good in this country, and it would be rendered more like a paradise than anything that history records of man's condition, and would make so great a change in these islands, that a man having seen them as they are now, and seeing them as they might then be, would not recognize them as the same country, nor our population as the same people. But what do we expend all this for? Bear in mind that Admirals, and Generals, and statesmen defended that great war, and that your newspapers, with scarcely an exception, were in favour of it, and denounced and ostracized hundreds of good men who dared, as we dare now, to denounce the spirit which would again lead this country into war. We went to war that France should not choose its own Government; the grand conclusion was that no Bonaparte should sit on the throne of France; yet France has all along been changing its Government from that time to this, and now we find ourselves with a Bonaparte on the throne of France, and, for anything I know to the contrary, likely to remain there a good while. So far, therefore, for the calculations of our forefathers, and for the results of that enormous expenditure which they have saddled upon us.

We object to these great armaments as provoking a war spirit. I should like to ask, what was the object of the Chobham exhibition? There were special trains at the disposal of Members of Parliament, to go down to Chobham the one day, and to Spithead the other. What was the use of our pointing to the President of the French Republic two years ago, who is the Emperor now, and saying that he was spending his time at playing at soldiers in his great camp at Satory, and in making great circuses for the amusement of his soldiers? We, too, are getting into the way of playing at soldiers, and camps, and fleets, and the object of this is to raise up in the spirit of the people a feeling antagonistic to peace, and to render the people—the deluded, hard-working, toiling people—satisfied with the extortion of 17,000,000*l.* annually, when, upon the very principles of the men who take it, it might be demonstrated that one-half of the money would be amply sufficient for the purpose to which it is devoted. What observation has been more common during the discussion upon Turkey than this—"Why are we to keep up these great fleets if we are not to use them? Why have we our Mediterranean fleet lying at Besika Bay, when it might be earning glory, and adding to the warlike renown of the country?" This is just what comes from the maintenance of great fleets and armies. There grows up an *esprit de corps*—there grows a passion for these things, a powerful opinion in their favour, that smothers the immorality of the whole thing, and leads the people to tolerate, under those excited feelings, that which, under feelings of greater temperance and moderation, they would know was hostile to their country, as it is opposed to everything which we recognize as the spirit of the Christian religion.

Then, we are against intervention. Now, this question of intervention is a most important one, for this reason, that it comes before us sometimes in a form so attractive that it invites us to embrace it, and asks us by all our love of freedom, by all our respect for men struggling for their rights, to interfere in the affairs of some other country. And we find now in this country

that a great number of those who are calling out loudest for interference are those who, being very liberal in their politics, are bitterly hostile to the despotism and exclusiveness of the Russian Government. But I should like to ask this meeting what sort of intervention we are to have? There are three kinds—one for despotism, one for liberty; and you may have an intervention like that now proposed, from a vague sense of danger which cannot be accurately described. What have our interventions been up to this time? I will come to that of which Admiral Napier spoke by and by. It is not long since we intervened in the case of Spain. The foreign enlistment laws were suspended; and English soldiers went to join the Spanish legion, and the Government of Spain was fixed in the present Queen of that country; and yet Spain has the most exclusive tariff against this country in the world, and a dead Englishman is there reckoned little better than a dead dog. Then take the case of Portugal. We interfered, and Admiral Napier was one of those employed in that interference, to place the Queen of Portugal on the throne, and yet she has violated every clause of the charter which she had sworn to the people; and in 1849, under the Government of Lord John Russell, and with Lord Palmerston in the Foreign Office, our fleet entered the Tagus and destroyed the Liberal party, by allowing the Queen to escape from their hands, when they would have driven her to give additional guarantees for liberty; and from that time to this she has still continued to violate every clause of the charter of the country. Now, let us come to Syria; what has Admiral Napier said about the Syrian war? He told us that the English fleet was scattered all about the Mediterranean, and that if the French fleet had come to Cherbourg, and had taken on board 50,000 men and landed them on our coasts, all sorts of things would have befallen us. But how happened it that Admiral Napier and his friends got up the quarrel with the French? Because we interfered in the Syrian question when we had no business to interfere whatever. The Egyptian Pasha, the vassal of the Sultan, became more

powerful than the Sultan, and threatened to depose him and place himself as monarch upon the throne of Constantinople; and but for England, he would assuredly have done it. Why did we interfere? What advantage was it to us to have a feeble monarch in Constantinople, when you might have had an energetic and powerful one in Mehemet Ali? We interfered, however, and quarrelled with France, although she neither declared war nor landed men upon our coast. France is not a country of savages and banditti. The Admiral's whole theory goes upon this, that there is a total want of public morality in France, and that something which no nation in Europe would dare to do, or think of doing, which even Russia would scorn to do, would be done without any warning by the polished, civilized, and intelligent nation across the Channel.

But if they are the friends of freedom who think we ought to go to war with Russia because Russia is a despotic country, what do you say to the interference with the Roman Republic three or four years ago? What do you say to Lord John Russell's Government, —Lord Palmerston with his own hand writing the despatch, declaring that the Government of her Majesty, the Queen of England, entirely concurred with the Government of the French Republic in believing that it was desirable and necessary to re-establish the Pope upon his throne? The French army, with the full concurrence of the English Government, crossed over to Italy, invaded Rome, destroyed the Republic, banished its leading men, and restored the Pope; and on that throne he sits still, maintained only by the army of France.

My hon. Friend has referred to the time when Russia crossed through the very Principalities we hear so much about, and entered Hungary. I myself heard Lord Palmerston in the House of Commons go out of his way needlessly, but intentionally, to express a sort of approbation of the intervention of Russia in the case of Hungary. I heard him say, in a most unnecessary parenthesis, that it was not contrary to international law, or to the law of Europe, for Russia to send an army

into Hungary to assist Austria in putting down the Hungarian insurrection. I should like to know whether Hungary had not constitutional rights as sacred as ever any country had—as sacred, surely, as the Sovereign of Turkey can have upon his throne. If it were not contrary to international law and to the law of Europe for a Russian army to invade Hungary, to suppress there a struggle which called for, and obtained too, the sympathy of every man in favour of freedom in every part of the world, I say, how can it be contrary to international law and the law of Europe for Russia to threaten the Sultan of Turkey, and to endeavour to annex Turkey to the Russian Empire?

I want our policy to be consistent. Do not let us interfere now, or concur in or encourage the interference of anybody else, and then get up a hypocritical pretence on some other occasion that we are against interference. If you want war, let it be for something that has at least the features of grandeur and of nobility about it, but not for the miserable, decrepit, moribund Government which is now enthroned, but which cannot long last, in the city of Constantinople. But Admiral Napier is alarmed lest, if Russia was possessed of Turkey, she would, somehow or other, embrace all Europe—that we all should be in the embrace of the Bear—and we know very well what that is. I believe that is all a vague and imaginary danger; and I am not for going to war for imaginary dangers. War is much too serious a matter. I recollect when France endeavoured to lay hold on Algeria, it was said that the Mediterranean was about to become a French lake. I do not believe that France is a bit more powerful in possessing it. It requires 100,000 French soldiers to maintain Algeria; and if a balance-sheet could be shown of what Algeria has cost France, and what France has gained from it, I believe you would have no difficulty whatever in discovering the reason why the French finances show a deficit, and why there is a rumour that another French loan is about to be created.

But they tell us that if Russia gets to Constantinople,

Englishmen will not be able to get to India by the overland journey. Mehemet Ali, even when Admiral Napier was battering down his towns, did not interfere with the carriage of our mails through his territory. We bring our overland mails at present partly through Austria, and partly through France, and the mails from Canada pass through the United States; and though I do not think there is the remotest possibility or probability of anything of the kind happening, yet I do not think that, in the event of war with these countries, we should have our mails stopped or our persons arrested in passing through these countries. At any rate it would be a much more definite danger that would drive me to incur the ruin, guilt, and suffering of war.

But they tell us, further, that the Emperor of Russia would get India. That is a still more remote contingency. If I were asked as to the probabilities of it, I should say that, judging from our past and present policy in Asia, we are more likely to invade Russia from India than Russia is to invade us in India. The policy we pursue in Asia is much more aggressive, aggrandizing, and warlike than any that Russia has pursued or threatened during our time. But it is just possible that Russia may be more powerful by acquiring Turkey. I give the Admiral the benefit of that admission. But I should like to ask whether, even if that be true, it is a sufficient reason for our going to war, and entering on what perhaps may be a long, ruinous, and sanguinary struggle, with a powerful empire like Russia?

What is war? I believe that half the people that talk about war have not the slightest idea of what it is. In a short sentence it may be summed up to be the combination and concentration of all the horrors, atrocities, crimes, and sufferings of which human nature on this globe is capable. But what is even a rumour of war? Is there anybody here who has anything in the funds, or who is the owner of any railway stock, or anybody who has a large stock of raw material or manufactured goods? The funds have recently gone down 10 per cent. I do not say that the fall is all

on account of this danger of war, but a great proportion of it undoubtedly is. A fall of 10 per cent. in the funds is nearly 80,000,000*l.* sterling of value, and railway stock having gone down 20 per cent. makes a difference of 60,000,000*l.* in the value of the railway property of this country. Add the two—140,000,000*l.* —and take the diminished prosperity and value of manufactures of all kinds during the last few months, and you will understate the actual loss to the country now if you put it down at 200,000,000*l.* sterling. But that is merely a rumour of war. That is war a long way off—the small cloud, no bigger than a man's hand —what will it be if it comes nearer and becomes a fact? And surely sane men ought to consider whether the case is a good one, the ground fair, the necessity clear, before they drag a nation of nearly 30,000,000 of people into a long and bloody struggle, for a decrepit and tottering empire, which all the nations in Europe cannot long sustain. And, mind, war now would take a different aspect from what it did formerly. It is not only that you send out men who submit to be slaughtered, and that you pay a large amount of taxes —the amount of taxes would be but a feeble indication of what you would suffer. Our trade is now much more extensive than it was; our commerce is more expanded, our undertakings are more vast, and war will find you all out at home by withering up the resources of the prosperity enjoyed by the middle and working classes of the country. You would find that war in 1853 would be infinitely more perilous and destructive to our country than it has ever yet been at any former period of our history. There is another question which comes home to my mind with a gravity and seriousness which I can scarcely hope to communicate to you. You who lived during the period from 1815 to 1822 may remember that this country was probably never in a more uneasy position. The sufferings of the working classes were beyond description, and the difficulties, and struggles, and bankruptcies of the middle classes were such as few persons have a just idea of. There was scarcely a year in which there was not an incipient

insurrection in some parts of the country, arising from the sufferings which the working classes endured. You know very well that the Government of the day employed spies to create plots, and to get ignorant men to combine to take unlawful oaths; and you know that in the town of Stirling, two men who, but for this diabolical agency, might have lived good and honest citizens, paid the penalty of their lives for their connection with unlawful combinations of this kind.

Well, if you go into war now you will have more banners to decorate your cathedrals and churches. Englishmen will fight now as well as they ever did, and there is ample power to back them, if the country can be but sufficiently excited and deluded. You may raise up great Generals. You may have another Wellington, and another Nelson too; for this country can grow men capable for every enterprise. Then there may be titles, and pensions, and marble monuments to eternize the men who have thus become great; but what becomes of you and your country, and your children? For there is more than this in store. That seven years to which I have referred was a period dangerous to the existence of Government in this country, for the whole substratum, the whole foundations of society were discontented, suffering intolerable evils, and hostile in the bitterest degree to the institutions and the Government of the country.

Precisely the same things will come again. Rely on it, that injustice of any kind, be it bad laws, or be it a bloody, unjust, and unnecessary war, of necessity creates perils to every institution in the country. If the Corn-law had continued, if it had been impossible, by peaceful agitation, to abolish it, the monarchy itself would not have survived the ruin and disaster that it must have wrought. And if you go into a war now, with a doubled population, with a vast commerce, with extended credit, and a wider diffusion of partial education among the people, let there ever come a time like the period between 1815 and 1822, when the whole basis of society is upheaving with a sense of intolerable suffering, I ask you, how many years' purchase would

you give even for the venerable and mild monarchy under which you have the happiness to live? I confess when I think of the tremendous perils into which unthinking men—men who do not intend to fight themselves—are willing to drag or to hurry this country, I am amazed how they can trifle with interests so vast, and consequences so much beyond their calculation.

But, speaking here in Edinburgh to such an audience—an audience probably for its numbers as intelligent and as influential as ever was assembled within the walls of any hall in this kingdom—I think I may put before you higher considerations even than those of property and the institutions of your country. I may remind you of duties more solemn, and of obligations more imperative. You profess to be a Christian nation. You make it your boast even—though boasting is somewhat out of place in such questions—you make it your boast that you are a Protestant people, and that you draw your rule of doctrine and practice, as from a well pure and undefiled, from the living oracles of God, and from the direct revelation of the Omnipotent. You have even conceived the magnificent project of illuminating the whole earth, even to its remotest and darkest recesses, by the dissemination of the volume of the New Testament, in whose every page are written for ever the words of peace. Within the limits of this island alone, on every Sabbath, 20,000, yes, far more than 20,000 temples are thrown open, in which devout men and women assemble that they may worship Him who is the "Prince of Peace."

Is this a reality? or is your Christianity a romance? is your profession a dream? No, I am sure that your Christianity is not a romance, and I am equally sure that your profession is not a dream. It is because I believe this that I appeal to you with confidence, and that I have hope and faith in the future. I believe that we shall see, and at no very distant time, sound economic principles spreading much more widely amongst the people; a sense of justice growing up in a soil which hitherto has been deemed unfruitful; and, which will be better than all—the churches of the United Kingdom

—the churches of Britain awaking, as it were, from their slumbers, and girding up their loins to more glorious work, when they shall not only accept and believe in the prophecy, but labour earnestly for its fulfilment, that there shall come a time—a blessed time—a time which shall last for ever—when "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

XVIII

FREE TRADE

Rochdale, January 2, 1877.

[On this day, Mr. Bright having been invited to be present at the Anniversary of the Rochdale Working Men's Club, and to deliver them an address, consented to do so. It was a peculiarity of this Club that it was entirely self-supporting, and independent of the patronage of richer persons. Mr. Bright took occasion to show what had been the material progress of the country during the thirty years preceding the time of his address]

MANY of us—the younger generation no doubt—are very ignorant about the change in the working-man's condition during the generation with which I have been connected—I mean during the last forty years. I venture to say that there can scarcely be anything more worth while a working-man's examining and comprehending than the change which has taken place in the condition of his class. When you speak of a working-man, you mean of course a man who is accustomed regularly to some useful employment or work. To be a man at all he must have food, and to be a healthy man one would say that it was necessary he should have a free market for the purchase of his food. To be a working-man he must have materials with which to work, and it would seem reasonable that he should have a free market for the purchase of materials. More than that, as far as possible, he should have a free market for the sale of his materials. A great many people in this country—I hope a diminishing number—

think that because other countries do not allow us to send our goods into their market free of duty, therefore we should not allow them to send their goods to this market free of duty. They think two bad things are better than one. They remind me very much of what it would be if a man had got a sound box on one side of his head, and he was to go about complaining that nobody gave him another sound box on the other side.

Now, we will go back for a period which I remember very well, and which many in this meeting must remember. We will go back to the year 1840. At that time there was great distress in the country. The duties upon goods coming into this country were almost beyond counting. I believe there were at least 1,200 articles on which, by the law of England, taxes were levied when the goods came into Liverpool, or London, or Hull, or Glasgow, or any other of the ports of the kingdom. Everything was taxed, and everything was limited and restricted. Even bread, the common food of the people, was taxed, almost more highly than anything else. Now, you may imagine—nay, you cannot imagine—but you may try to imagine in what kind of fetters all our industry was chained at that time. And you may try to imagine, but now in this day you cannot imagine, what was the amount of pauperism, suffering, and abject misery perpetually prevailing among the great body of the working-classes in the United Kingdom.

I shall only refer to two articles, and from them you may learn what was the state of things with regard to others. I shall ask your attention to two articles only, those of corn and sugar. Up to the year 1846, that is, just thirty years ago—everybody who is fifty years of age ought to remember all about it very well—up to 1846 corn was in reality prohibited from coming to this country from abroad, until our own prices had risen so high by reason of a deficient harvest that people began to complain and began to starve, and it was let in at these very high prices in order in some degree to mitigate starvation, and to make famine less unsafe.

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People that were well off had their tables as well furnished as now. Their loaf never dwindled and became less. They were always well fed, plump in the cheeks, living many of them sufficiently and most of them luxuriously. The suffering was amongst the wages class. Misery most abject, a permanent condition of starvation, all the consequences of this dreadful system, pressed with more and more weight as it came more and more down to the very humblest and very poorest of the people. Well, what was it all done for? It was done under the pretence that it was necessary for the protection of all our great agricultural interests. They did not say much about the rents of landlords, because the landlords had passed the law, but the landlords' rents were the first consideration. The second was the prosperity of the farmers. These Corn Laws were necessary in order that they might be able to pay good rents. And sometimes they even ventured to speak about the agricultural labourer, although it was well known then and is well known now that the agricultural labourer, under the influence of this law, was in the most miserable condition of any of the various classes of labourers into which the working-class population of the country can be divided.

But that law destroyed your trade. You could not receive corn from abroad, and your foreign customers, therefore, could not buy from you, and whilst it raised the price of your food it diminished the demand for your labour, and, as a matter of course, lessened the wages you received for your labour. Now I venture to say here—and one may say it thirty years after the event; one may now say things which would have been probably hurtful to the feelings of some of those who supported that law—in my opinion there is not on the record of any other people at any time, much less of any civilized and professedly Christian people, so astounding a crime against the security of the Government itself, and against the population it was called upon to rule, as the Corn Law of 1815, passed by the Imperial Parliament of this country. If you could turn back to a year of abundant harvests and low prices,

like 1836, and then turn to the years 1840 and 1841, when the harvests had been bad, and when food was dear, you would find three things that would appal you. First of all, that as prices were rising, as the harvest failed, pauperism throughout the whole of the country —amongst the manufacturing population, amongst the farm-labourers—was constantly and steadily increasing, and not only that, but that crime, and every kind of crime, was increasing just about at the same rate.

It was in these times that Ebenezer Elliott, the Sheffield poet—the Corn-law Rhymer—wrote his burning and scathing condemnation of this law. Many of you here are no doubt weavers employed in the cotton or woollen trade of this town, and have read the touching lines in which he is showing how the Corn Law is striking here and there almost everybody, blasting his prosperity and his hopes, and condemning him and his family to daily suffering. He turns at last to the weaver, and he says:

> "Bread-taxed weaver, all may see
> What that tax hath done for thee,
> And thy children vilely led,
> Singing hymns for shameful bread,
> Till the stones of every street
> Know their little naked feet."

And then looking upon the growth of crime, the conspiracies that were constantly afloat, the insurrections which were looked towards by people as a relief, he then addresses the ancient monarchy of his country. He says:

> "What shall bread tax do for thee,
> Venerable monarchy?
> Dreams of evil spare my sight;
> Let that horror rest in night."

He knew, and everybody knew who comprehended the character and operation of that law, that if it should continue to afflict the people as it did through thirty years of its existence, there was no institution in this country, not even its venerable monarchy, that could stand the strain that that law would bring to bear upon

it. But there was another fact shown by the figures of that time—that not only pauperism increased, and crime increased, but mortality increased. Strong men and women were stricken down by the law, but the aged and little children were its constant and most numerous victims. I recollect, in one of those fine speeches which the late Mr. Fox—I mean Mr. Fox who for many years, as you recollect, and not long ago, was one of the representatives of the neighbouring town of Oldham—I recollect an observation, or a passage in a speech of Mr. Fox, spoken, I think, from the boards of Covent Garden Theatre, at one of our great meetings, where he said, referring to the mortality among the people, and the death-rate rapidly increasing when the harvest failed, and when foreign food was prohibited, "The Corn Law is the harvest of Death as well as of the landowner, and Monopoly says to Corruption, 'Thou art my brother.'"

Under the Government of Sir Robert Peel, in 1846, the law was repealed, and three years afterwards—in 1849—all the duties on these articles were taken off, except a shilling per quarter, which has been more recently abolished. Since this happened there has been no fall of rents throughout the kingdom. In point of fact the prosperity of the country has been so increased that the rent of land throughout the country is now higher than it was when that Corn Law was in existence, and the farmers, who were always complaining during the existence of that law, have scarcely ever been heard to complain in the least since it was abolished. They complained for a year or two because they had been greatly frightened, but there has never been, I will say, within the last hundred years a period when the farmers of this country have made less complaint to the public or to Parliament than they have during the last thirty years since the law for their protection was abolished. And what happened to the labourer? The wages of farm-labourers have risen on the whole much more, I believe, than 50 per cent. throughout the whole country; and in some counties and districts, I believe, the farm-labourer at this

moment is receiving double the wages he was when this law was in existence. We ought to learn from this what a grand thing it is to establish our laws upon a basis of freedom and justice. It blesses him who gives and him who takes. It has blessed all our manufacturing districts with a steadiness of employment and an abundance they never knew before, and it has blessed not less the very class who in their dark error and blindness thought that they could have profited by that which was so unjust, so cruel to the bulk of their countrymen.

Now we will just turn for a moment to the article of sugar—these are the great articles of consumption, and therefore I deal with them. The sugar that supplied this country up to a period a little after that when the Corn Laws were abolished came mainly from the West Indies. A good deal came from the East Indies, but I will refer now chiefly to the West Indian colonies, Jamaica, Barbadoes, Antigua, and others. A little before that time, between forty and fifty years ago, the planters of the West Indies were in a very peculiar condition. In the first place they cultivated the sugar-cane by slave labour; they therefore stole the labour by which they grew their crops. No doubt they kept their negroes barely alive, but they paid no wages as we are accustomed to consider wages. But they were not satisfied with stealing the labour with which they grew their crops. They asked the Parliament of this country to give them almost the exclusive use of the English market, so that they might sell their sugar here at a price much higher than they could get in any of the other markets of the world. And many of these planters being people of importance and influence in this country and associated with our land proprietors, and our land proprietors being in the same boat with regard to bread, of course it was only natural that they should be as kind to the West Indian planters at our expense as they had been to themselves; and thus, in addition to the curse of a corn monopoly, you had the curse, a diminished, but still a curse, of a monopoly of sugar. What was the result? I will take the year

1840. In that year this country imported from abroad 4,000,000 cwt. of sugar, which cost 9,000,000*l.* Now what do we import? Last year—I mean the year ended in September—we imported 16,000,000 cwt., that is four times the quantity we imported in 1840. But what did it cost? It did not cost four times as much as in 1840. It did not cost half as much, but instead of costing 9,000,000*l.*, as the 4,000,000 cwt. did, it cost 17,000,000*l.* If the sugar we imported last year had been imported at the same price, the monopoly price, as in 1840, the 16,000,000 cwt. would have cost us 36,000,000*l.* instead of the 17,000,000*l.* which it actually did cost. You see, therefore, that the abolition of the protection upon sugar has just had the same effect in degree that it had upon corn. The quantity imported has been enormously increased, and the price has been to an extraordinary degree diminished.

There are many ladies in this meeting who know—and I dare say there are a great many husbands who know, too, as much about these things as their wives—that sugar has lately risen within the last few months, but till then it has been about as cheap as flour. I recollect, at a meeting held in Surrey during our agitation thirty years ago, that a gentleman stood up and made a speech. He was a stranger. He stated that he was well acquainted with sugar-growing in various parts of the world, and said, "If you abolish the protection on sugar, sugar will be as cheap as turnips." It has not, I believe, been as cheap as turnips, but it has been so cheap that it must have added greatly to the comfort of families, and to the ease with which many other things, fruit and so on, are made palatable, especially to children in families.

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Now, having done with the question of imports, I must just ask you to look at this matter from another side. You all of you know that if 118,000,000 cwt. of grain of one kind and another, and if 16,000,000 cwt. of raw sugar—for I have not dealt with refined sugar, and there is a large quantity of that—if all these quantities come into this country—they are coming

now from many parts all over the world—somebody must pay for them. You buy your sugar in the shop, and the shopkeeper buys it from the wholesale dealer in London or Liverpool, and he brings it from abroad, and payment is made in the articles which the industrious and intelligent workmen of England make, which find employment for all your mills and manufactories of every kind. What they make is sent out abroad to pay for those articles. What must necessarily be the result? That there must be an enormously increased demand for the labour of the workmen; and there has been that demand as you all know. I recollect the time very well when every Monday morning there would be from ten to twenty men and women coming to any factory in this neighbourhood, and asking if there was a place open for them, and wanting to be employed. That sort of thing has been entirely changed. I wish that weaver were living now who, when before a Parliamentary Committee, some forty years ago, said he always noticed that if there were two men running after one master, wages always seemed as if they were inclined to go down; but when there were two masters running after one man, he always noticed that wages were inclined to go up. That was a sensible weaver, an observant weaver; but there were many men in both Houses of Parliament forty years ago who did not understand so very simple a proposition as that; and it took about seven years' lecturing and preaching and arguing before we could get it into their—I will say their very dull heads. But now if you look all over the country, I think you will see, all of you—I mean every man of fifty years of age, and every woman of that age, will see—that there has been a great improvement in the condition of what I call the wages class, the class of persons who get their wages every week or fortnight for a week or a fortnight's work.

There is a book published in Liverpool, an almanack, called the "Financial Reform Almanack." Its price is one shilling. How it can be sold at that price is a marvel. I believe there is no other book published in this country which will give you so much information

with regard to imports and exports, to consumption, to everything that we use, taxation, expenditure of taxes, matters of Government, pensions, and so forth. I believe there is no other publication in the country that is to be compared with the "Financial Reform Almanack"; and every honest man who wants an honest Government ought to have that book somewhere near, so that he can apply to it when he wants information on any of these questions; and I do not know how to express my admiration of the industry and the accuracy with which Mr. M'Queen, who is, I think, the secretary of the association, has compiled this remarkable book. Two or three figures, taken from this book, will tell you what I mean with regard to the changed condition of the people. I go back to 1840, and compare it with 1875. In 1840—I will take the article of bacon; bacon was not allowed to come in in those days at all. Now the 32,000,000 or 33,000,000 of people in the United Kingdom consume, not of home-grown bacon, but of bacon that is imported, more than 8 lbs. weight per individual, that is, an advance of 8 lbs. from nothing at all. The consumption of butter has increased from 1 lb. to 5 lbs. for each individual; of cheese, from 1 lb. to 5½ lbs.; of potatoes from nothing to 16 lbs.; of rice from 1 lb. to 11 lbs.; of tea, from 1¼ lb. to 4½ lbs.; of sugar, from 15 lbs. per head to 53 lbs. per head; of wheat flour, from 42 lbs. per head—and I believe the year 1840 was a year of considerable importation because the prices were high—it has risen from 42 lbs. in 1840 to 197 lbs. per head in 1875. All this has been brought about without any violence, without wronging anybody. There is not a human being in England who has a loaf less or a pound of sugar less, or any of these things less by what has been done. There was no violence, no insurrection, no bloodshed, no disorder, the people have merely become more intelligent, Parliament more intelligent, and statesmen more intelligent; and all this has been done by merely tearing up two or three foolish Acts of Parliament, and allowing people their natural freedom to buy and sell where they could buy and sell to the greatest advantage.

Forty years ago people were all talking about emigration. Why do not the people emigrate? people asked. There were societies for promoting emigration. I read only two or three days ago an article in the *Fortnightly Review*, a review of the life of the late Canon Kingsley, and I found he said that thirty or forty years ago all thoughtful people were appalled at the state of the country. They thought something was going to happen, the state of the country was so bad. The people suffered so much, they were so discontented, that there would before long be a great catastrophe, like a general insurrection or revolution; and people said, why cannot millions go to a country where there is room for them? The people have emigrated, of course, as an active-minded people like this always will emigrate. But emigration has not made this great change. People are far more numerous in the country now than they were then, and yet for all that, they are much better off, there is much greater demand for labour, and the rate of wages in every branch of labour is higher than it was at that time.

I will leave this question of tariffs, and duties, and protection, and free trade, and ask the attention of the members of the Workmen's Club to one or two other points, in order to show the change in their condition. Look at what has taken place in this country with regard to the means of education and the possibility of rearing your children to be intelligent young men and women as compared with what existed at the time to which I have referred. Now nearly everybody has a newspaper if he chooses to have it. I was very much amused some two months ago when I was down at the town of Kelso, in Scotland. It was one of the days when everybody was expecting news from Constantinople. I went into the market square of Kelso with a friend of mine, with whom I was staying, and we called at a shop to get a copy of the *Scotsman* newspaper, and I said, "I never saw such a sight as this before." There was this large square, quite a large space, and all round it there were groups of men, three or four or five or six, standing together, and somebody in each group

reading a paper. The paper was there at hand for everybody who wished to read it and who wished to learn. That is a change which has taken place merely by a change of law. At the time I have been speaking of, the paper upon which a newspaper was printed had a heavy excise duty upon it. As soon as the paper went to the *Observer* office, or the *Manchester Examiner*, or the *Manchester Guardian* office it had to go on to a Government office and have a stamp placed on each paper, and every stamp was charged 4*d*. Then when advertisements were put in, the unfortunate newspaper proprietor had to pay 3*s*. 6*d*. for every advertisement. The charge for advertisements was afterwards reduced to 1*s*. 6*d*., and subsequently the duty was abolished; and now it happens that you can get a newspaper every day for a halfpenny or a penny. Take the *Evening News* published in Manchester, or the *Manchester Examiner*, or the *Manchester Guardian*, or your paper here, the *Observer*. Every paper of that sort cost 7*d*. then; now it costs ½*d*., or 1*d*. at the most. These taxes were not levied for the sake of bringing money into the public Exchequer. They were put on mostly during the reign of Queen Anne, and the object was to limit the number of newspapers, to strangle them, to prevent the people having political information and expressing their political views. And those taxes remained until a few years ago, when the last of them was abolished.

And now what an excellent machine, what an admirable thing a good newspaper is! Your newspapers are larger than those—infinitely better; there are ten in the country for every one there was then; and what do they tell you? Everything. They are not for rich men only. The rich man gives a penny for his paper or 3*d*. for the *Times*, which after all is probably quite as cheap as any of the others from some peculiarities of information with which it furnishes the public; but the rich man can get no more out of his newspaper than one of you who pays a penny for it. What do you get? If you read within the last day or two what did you see? In Canada there is a strike of the engine drivers on the Grand Trunk Railway—they

are no wiser in Canada, it appears, than they are here. If you cross the frontier to the United States, you see an account of the most appalling accident that has ever happened since railways were made, and you see a great discussion about the election of President. If you go a little further south, you read about the division that exists in that unfortunate country of Mexico. If you cross the ocean and go to Australia, you hear that they are discussing the price of wool, and whether one of the colonies shall continue its system of protection, or adopt the system of free trade established in another. If you cross the ocean to the Cape of Good Hope (we see all this in the papers we buy for a penny), you see, not all the discussions, but what is sufficient for you, that are going on with the attempt to make a confederation of the South African Colonies. Then you go to India, and even this very day—Socrates, and Plato, and Epaminondas, and all the ancient Greeks and ancient Romans had never dreamt of such a thing as you see to-day in your newspapers—the account of the grand ceremony which took place yesterday at Delhi, in Northern India, the proclamation made that the Queen of England was henceforth the Empress of her Indian dominions. Then if you go overland to Egypt you read of something which is not pleasant about the Egyptian debt. And then you go to Constantinople, and you hear there that affairs are in a very critical position, and you hear, what I am very glad to see and believe, that the policy of our Government is more in accordance with the policy indicated by the public opinion of this country than it was some time ago. We must always bear this in mind, that the policy with which our Government began their proceedings was supposed at that time to be the policy of the nation. It was the policy of 1856 and of the Crimean war. It was a policy which I was not able to coincide with, and which I always condemned very much, as you know. The Government began that policy, and they adhered to it, I think, some time longer perhaps than after thay ought to have abandoned it. I trust now they have adopted a course more in accordance

with the opinions, and, I believe, with the true interests of this country, than the past policy of England with regard to Turkey. But, if you leave Constantinople—which I see it is very difficult for you to leave—you read that the English fleet has gone from Besika Bay to the Piræus, which is a port of Greece. You read that the Italians, with nobody likely to attack them, are foolishly making 100-ton guns. If you go to Paris you see discussions that are going on between their Senate and their Chamber of Deputies, that is to say, between their House of Lords and their House of Commons, as to who shall have the absolute control of the public purse. And all this you see every day in your newspaper, so far as the editor can do it, accurately and truthfully given, and all this in addition to the information, sometimes amusing, often instructive, often grievous and afflicting, of all that transpires in your own country. All this is brought before you every morning, beautifully printed, and for a price that when you have had it every morning for a week costs you no more than a single quart of very poor beer.

But, then, the newspapers are only one element of instruction. Look at what has been done with regard to schools. The Bill of 1870 was a great measure, deficient in many parts, which, from its deficiency and incompleteness, has been the cause of much dissension in the country. But still it was a great measure, and the future of it will be great. What happens now every year with respect to education? In the parliamentary grants no less than 2,500,000*l.* a year are voted for the school system of England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. Parliament, therefore, is anxious that the whole population of the country should be educated, and it will be the fault of the parents of this generation if the next generation is not much advanced beyond what we are in the education and culture which children shall receive.

I might tell you what science has done. You travel now at the same rate as a royal Duke. There are third-class carriages by every train on some of the principal railways. I do not mean to say that nobody but work-

men go in third-class carriages, because I recollect a story of a rich man in this neighbourhood, who being asked why he travelled third class said, "For a very good reason—because there is no fourth class." Turn now to the Post Office. You write a letter, and put a penny stamp upon it. You receive a letter, and your correspondent has put a penny stamp on it. I recollect paying to the post-mistress in Rochdale, when Mrs. Lee was post-mistress, a long time ago—and she was not always very polite, I remember, when she was in a hurry—paying no less than 25*s.* for the postage of a single letter from Leghorn, in Italy. The postage on such a letter now would be 2½*d.*, or perhaps it might be 5*d.*, as the letter had many inclosures. Look at your telegraphs. By post and telegraph every workman has opportunities and advantages which our forefathers never dreamt of. You can inquire whether work is scarce or abundant, whether there is reason to move to this town or to that. These scientific improvements are of great service to all classes, and they are of more service to the workman than the workmen themselves have fully understood.

There is only one other point to which I shall refer as to changes in the law, and that is with regard to the extension of the borough franchise. You know what a terrible thing it was in prospect, how many people said we were going to Americanize our institutions. They did not know what that meant, but they used the phrase, and what harm has happened? They said that property would not be safe, and how everybody would overturn everybody else. And what has happened? The most conspicuous fact throughout the country is, that there is universal content in all the borough population among those to whom the franchise has been extended. At this moment there are no conspiracies. Your workmen's club is not a political club to get up some movement against the law or the monarchy. There is nothing of that kind now. In time past, even those very persons who were so much afraid of us did not hold their property and their privileges by so secure a tenure as they have held them since the passing of

the law. Nay, the monarch of these realms, popular as she has always been; popular as she has always deserved to be; still, I will undertake to say of her—I say it without hesitation, and without fear of contradiction—that there were times within the last thirty years, and since she came to the throne, when there was a great deal less of an honest and true loyalty than is to be found in this country at the present time.

And you have not only got the franchise, but you have got the ballot to secure you from any compulsion with regard to its exercise. I recollect a peer, whose name you would know very well if I were to mention it, who went about in a state of almost mental agony, saying, "If this Ballot Bill be passed the whole influence of property will be gone." But what has happened? The influence of property, so far as it is a just influence, exists now, and is exercised now, and any exercise which it had before the ballot was conferred was an exercise that it ought not to have had, and was a tyranny over all those upon whom it was exercised.

But I want to tell the working-men of this workman's club what some of them do not—at least what some workmen do not appear altogether to appreciate or comprehend—that they are now the full citizens of a free country, and that on them a great responsibility is devolved. Is it not a grand history, that of the last forty years? Are not the changes such as all of us may be proud of, that they have been effected with so little, in fact with no disturbance? You cannot point, probably, to a revolution of violence in any country of late times where there has been so much done of permanent good, in the same period, as has been done for the people of this country by the wise changes in our law. And yet, I dare say, history will not say very much of these changes. The fact is, history busies itself with other matters. It will tell our children, I dare say, of conquests in India, of annexation, it may be in the Punjaub, of Chinese wars—wars which were as discreditable to us as they have been unprofitable. It will tell your children of the destruction of Sebastopol, and perhaps it may tell them that everything for which

Sebastopol was destroyed has been surrendered, or is being now surrendered, by an English Minister at Constantinople. But of all these changes which have saved the nation from anarchy and an English monarchy from ruin, history will probably say but little. Blood shines more upon her pages, and the grand and noiseless triumphs of peace and of wise and just legislation too often find but scanty memorial from her hands.

But now there may be those who will put this question to me. Some of my critics to-morrow or the day after will say, What has this to do with working-men's clubs? Why talk politics to a meeting which is understood not to be a political meeting? I have not been talking politics. These questions which I have been discussing were politics a few years ago, when the contest was raging round us whether they should be settled justly or not. Now they are not politics, they are not matters of controversy, they are matters of history, and I am treating you to a chapter of history. But then they will say, Why tell us the old story, and go back to the Corn Law and the Sugar monopoly? They will say I wanted to glorify myself before my fellow-townsmen because I had taken a humble part, with hundreds of thousands of others, in carrying these measures. No, I tell you the old story because there are many in this room who are too young to have known much about it, and it is a great and salutary lesson for the members of the workmen's club, and for workmen everywhere to have spoken and read to them. It tells them of freedom, and how freedom was won, and what freedom has done for them, and it points the way to other paths of freedom which yet lie open before them.

The workman of England now is no longer a human machine, minding a spindle or a loom, or working at the bench, or at the forge, or in the mine. He is not a man only to make goods for export, but he is a man into whom, by these changes, has been infused a new life, and to whom is given a new and a wholesome responsibility. Every voting working-man in England is now a ruler of men, and a joint ruler of many nations, and it is worth

while for the working-men of England to look their responsibility in the face. There are some further things which a wise legislature may do for them, but the main thing to be done for them must be done by themselves. There are many teachers and many plans. Some say that co-operation will save everybody. Well, co-operation in this town has been, I believe, of remarkable advantage to those who have been concerned in it. Co-operation in joint-stock companies affords an easy mode for the investment of savings, and is, therefore, a very advantageous though new institution amongst us. Some think that trade unions will set everything right. I am of opinion that trade unions may be useful if they will not depart from sound economic principles, and if they will not interfere with the individual freedom of their members or the freedom of those who have the employment of capital. I recollect last year, or perhaps it was the year before last, in some observations I made at Birmingham, I pointed to the fact that there is no class of persons whose wages have risen more in the last twenty years than the class of domestic servants, and amongst domestic servants there are no trade unions, no committees, no orators to expound their interests and maintain their cause. A great leader in trade unions set himself to answer me, and what was his answer? He said the case of the woman servant is easily explained. It is explained by the vast emigration of young women to foreign countries, seeking there a better livelihood than they could get here. They have diminished the supply and wages have risen. He seemed to have forgotten that there have been three times as many men who have emigrated as women, and if the trade unions to raise wages were not necessary for the women, certainly upon his own argument they could not be necessary for the men. No, the great rise of wages has come from the causes I have indicated, and if they have come from any other cause, by limiting the number of persons to work in a particular trade, and by controlling, and unreasonably controlling, as it has sometimes been, their employers, then that rise of wages is not just, and is not permanently advantageous

to the whole people. It may be for a time advantageous to the particular class by whom it is enforced.

I conclude what I have to say with only one other point, and that is on the question of education. I believe that workmen have need to be taught, to have it pointed out to them, how much their own family comfort and the success and happiness of their children depends on this—that they should do all they can to give their children such education as is in their power. One of the American States is the State of Massachusetts, and it is probably the most educated and intellectual. It has a system of general education. Massachusetts was founded about 250 years ago. From that time to this it has had a system—a very extended system—of public schools. Eight generations of its population have had the advantage of being educated in these schools. The men who were driven from this country by the tyranny of monarch and Archbishop founded this school system—the men of whom the poet I have already quoted speaks in these terms, describing them as—

> "The Fathers of New England who unbound
> In wild Columbia Europe's double chain."

Meaning the chain of a despotic monarchy and of a despotic and persecuting Church. Suppose we had had in this country all that time schools for the education of your children, to what a position this country would have risen by this time!

I want to ask working-men to do their utmost to support the school system. Be it a school belonging to a sect, or be it a school belonging to the School Board; if it be a convenient or a possible school for your children, take care that your children go to school, so that Parliament in voting 2,500,000*l.* for purposes of education—2,500,000*l.* to which you subscribe by the taxes—shall have the cordial and the enthusiastic support of the people in forwarding education to the greatest possible degree in their power. Depend upon it, if you support the school the school will compensate you. You know, I dare say, a passage, which is one of the many striking passages which you may find in the

writings of Shakspere—where he says, speaking of children that are rebellious and troublesome—

> "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is,
> To have a thankless child."

I ask working-men, and I might ask it of every class to a certain extent, how much of the unhappiness of families, how much of the grief and gloom which often overshadow the later years of parents, come from what I may call the rebellion of children against their parents' authority, and against the moral law. If you will send your children to school, encourage them in their learning, make them feel that this is a great thing for them to possess, the generation to come will be much superior to the generations that have passed, and those who come after us will see that prospering, of which we can only look forward to see the beginnings in the efforts which are now being made. And more than this, besides making your families happier, besides doing so much for the success of your children in life, you will also produce this great result, that you will do much to build up the fabric of the greatness and the glory of your country upon the sure foundation of an intelligent and a Christian people.

XIX

PROGRESS OF THE NATION

Birmingham, January 29, 1864.

On the evening of this day Mr. Bright attended a soirée in the Assembly Room of Nock's Hotel. The audience was necessarily small, between two and three hundred. The following address was delivered in answer to a motion of Mr. William Morgan, which called on the audience to recognize "the patriotic labours of the members for the borough." Mr. Scholefield, Mr. Bright's colleague, was unable to be present. Mr. Sturge, the eminent Birmingham philanthropist, is alluded to in pp. 254, 255. The speech was intended to be a familiar comment on the past history and the present interests of the Reformed Parliament.]

I AM afraid that I cannot in such graceful language as would have been heard from the lips of my colleague,

had he been present, express my pleasure at the company of the ladies who have been kind enough to join our party to-night. I can say with the greatest truth that I rejoice on this, as I have on many other occasions, to see them exhibiting an interest in the progress of political questions. It has not only been common, as Mr. Dale has said, to create the impression that what are called serious people should not meddle with politics, but that these public questions were entirely out of the field in which women should exercise themselves. I venture, not diffidently, but confidently, to differ from any such opinion, and to say that politics, by which we understand the science of legislation and government, have a very direct and constant influence upon the happiness of every family in every country where there is a government, and that, therefore, what is done under the form of political action can by no means be indifferent to the mothers, and wives, and sisters, and daughters of England.

I have had the pleasure of meeting, whilst I have been in Birmingham, a gentleman who I suppose, though I have not been told it, does not generally act with our political party, and after much conversation, and after I had told him that some time when I came to Birmingham I would speak on a particular question, he said he should be very glad if some time or other I would make a speech on the bright side of England. You understand, I dare say, the sort of sarcasm there was in that suggestion. I suppose that, as he does not agree with me on all subjects, he thought I took too gloomy a view of the position and prospects of this country. Now, you will admit that there are a great number of speakers and a great number of writers whose business it seems always to persuade everybody that everybody is well treated and perfectly happy—and they advise their hearers or readers to avoid the errors of the French on the one hand, and the mistakes of the people of America on the other. But if everybody was contented and happy, and there was nothing that it was our business to reform, I should stay at home. I have no fondness for political meetings and platform work,

and I should not for the last twenty years have given the whole of my time to public questions if nothing was necessary but to come before an audience and to rejoice with each other at the glorious position we occupy. It is the very existence of grievances which calls me from the quiet of my own home, from the pursuit of my own business, and from attention to my own family; and whenever I find that there is nothing for me to do but to say, "What a happy people we are, and how delightful it is to be under the Government of Lord Palmerston and his Whig colleagues!" then I assure you I will not trouble you with saying it, but I shall leave you to find it out, and I shall stay at home.

But still there is a bright side to the aspect of England, and you may see some of it probably by looking forward, and you may see a good deal of it on looking backward. But the bright side of the history of this country, so long as I have been permitted to take any part in it, is that side in which are delineated the changes that have taken place—the changes which I have the satisfaction of knowing that I have supported—the changes which no doubt many of those who would wish me to speak on in a different tone have to the utmost of their power opposed.

* * * * *

Most of us can remember thirty or thirty-five years ago, and if there be any gentleman who complains of the tone of my speeches in general, I would ask him to bear in mind what are the changes that have been made, and if he can, to measure the results upon the prosperity and upon the happiness of this country.

The first great measure which suggests itself to me is that which gave the right of Parliamentary representation to the whole nation of Ireland, being the Catholic population of that country. Up to the year 1829 no person professing or holding the Christian religion as it is held by the Roman Catholic Church was permitted to sit in the House of Commons. There were at that time, I suppose, five millions, or very nearly, of Roman Catholics in Ireland, but they were not allowed to send to the House of Commons any man agreeing with them

in religious opinions. It is within the recollection of many of us that it required an agitation of a most formidable character, led on by one of the most remarkable men that Ireland has ever produced—the late Mr. O'Connell—to obtain the concession of that right; and bear in mind that it was fiercely opposed by a very powerful body in this country, and there is a party in this country even yet that regrets that the concession was ever made. Therefore, although it may be said that we are in a sense a free country, yet thirty-five years ago 5,000,000 of Catholics in Ireland, and, perhaps, nearly 1,000,000 in England, were shut out altogether from representation, from being able to return any man of their own religious sentiments to Parliament. Every one of them was prevented from becoming a candidate for a seat in Parliament; and therefore, as regards this particular, this was not then a free country.

The next great step which was made was that in which Birmingham took so distinguished a part. It is not certain, I think, but, looking back, we may have some doubt whether the Reform Bill would have been carried at the time it was if it had not been for the strenuous and patriotic efforts of the inhabitants of this great town. The body which has always opposed, and does always oppose every step in advance, ran the country to within twenty-four hours of a revolution before they conceded that measure. And when it was conceded, it was so mutilated, so much changed from the original proposition, and on the whole, though so great, was yet so inefficient, that we look upon it now as leaving the representation of the country in a very unsatisfactory state. Now, after that Bill had passed, as was natural after so great an agitation, there was a powerful swell of Liberal opinion throughout the country, which did not satisfy itself by the passing of that Bill, but carried other measures of great importance. One of them was the Bill by which all the corporations in the towns and cities of the kingdom, with one or two exceptions, were reformed. Up to that time there was no real representation in scarcely any town in the kingdom, but some half a dozen, or a dozen,

or two dozen men, self-elected or elected by some landed proprietor or some lord of the manor, were the municipal authorities. Such were the governors of your town, and formed your Corporation, and the corruption was of a character so foul that the odour of it remains in our nostrils even to this day. Now, although corporations are by no means centres of absolute wisdom—I say that, of course, with great trepidation—in the presence of your worthy Mayor and others who surround him; yet I think it must be acknowledged that the passing of that Bill and the reform of these corporations has been an enormous advantage to this country: and I only hope that corporations generally will become much more expensive than they have been—not expensive in the sense of wasting money, but that there will be such nobleness and liberality amongst the people of our towns and cities, as will lead them to give their corporations power to expend more money on those things which, as public opinion advances, are found to be essential to the health and comfort and improvement of our people.

About the time when that celebrated measure passed there passed another still more celebrated, because it affected, not England alone, but the opinion of the world, and excited emotion in the mind of every good man in every country, and stirred in him, I believe, a lasting admiration for the wisdom and magnanimity of the English people. I speak of the measure which emancipated 800,000 slaves in the colonies of England, and did even more than emancipate 800,000 slaves, for it set an example which the world could not but follow. You may rely upon it that from this great act is to be dated to a large extent the creation of that conscientious feeling in England which has been growing from that day to this, while it is owing to the unteachable spirit of the slaveholders of another country that a great nation has been brought into the throes of a fearful revolution, out of which I trust not only will that nation itself be purified, but that 4,000,000 of slaves will be free. And whilst this passes through my mind, I cannot help for a moment touching upon the fact that one of your citizens

now no more, my personal and intimate friend, was one of the most eminent of those who endeavoured to stir the conscience of the English people to that great act of justice; and I never pass, as I do often pass when I come here, that memorable figure of him which you have erected in one of the most conspicuous places in your town, without hoping that every citizen of Birmingham when he comes to consider public questions, whether regarding this country or that other country to which reference has already been made, and where that great struggle is being carried on, will endeavour to be animated by the disinterested, the noble, and the Christian spirit by which your late eminent townsman was distinguished.

There is another law to which I might refer, but it is not of the same character, though no doubt it has been productive in some cases of great advantage—I mean the law which was passed for reforming the administration of the relief of the poor throughout this country. That law was subjected, I believe, to greater assault than almost any other law, and this for a long time after it was enacted. It had features in it that seemed harsh, and unfortunately its administration was entrusted to the hands of men who seemed to wish to make it as unpalatable as possible. Notwithstanding, I am free to say that, looking back at it as a measure, I believe it to be one which did credit to the Whig administration of the day—to their courage and to their legislative and administrative capacity. I mention it, therefore, as one of those changes which I believe have given satisfaction to the country, and which have passed during the time which I am now sketching. Well, then, after that we came to a very quiet, and, I may say, unsatisfactory time. The Whigs had settled comfortably into their places. They, I believe, have a motto, which they have not publicly announced. It is this: "A place for every man, and every man in his place." That means, of course, every man of their own respectable party. Well, at this time they became very much indisposed to go further, and the satisfaction of the country with them was considerably diminished. Their majorities in

Parliament were reduced, and, finally, they came to a general election in the year 1841, but nine years after the passage of that great measure of Reform. They were thrown out of office by the constituencies, and Parliament re-opened with a majority against them of a little under a hundred votes. At this time there came another great change in the State—the adoption of the principle of Free Trade. This question was brought before the public very much in consequence of the sufferings which arose from the bad harvests that we had immediately before that general election. It took from the year 1838 to the year 1846 to bring about the great change of the abolition of the Corn Law. Parliament was elected in 1841 with a majority of ninety pledged to oppose the abolition of the law. Sir Robert Peel was the great leader of that great party, and as these men found themselves in Parliament with this enormous majority, they looked down with contempt upon all who were moving in that question, and considered that they were absolutely sure to maintain the law and to maintain their places. The result shows how much is to be done by continuous and disinterested labour on behalf of a great cause, and by appealing to the sympathies of the whole nation. In 1846, partly at that moment owing, no doubt, to the failure of the harvest and the difficulties which threatened from an impending famine in Ireland, this vast majority melted away. Men who had pledged themselves in every form of language to their constituents in 1841, who had attended meetings opposed to Free Trade, subscribed to newspapers which opposed it, found their whole power melting away, and their leader himself converted to the necessity of a change; and the change took place—a change so great that there were members of both Houses of Parliament, and I believe a majority of the House of Lords, who believed that to them at least the world was brought nearly to an end. I recollect that a lady—a relative of mine—sat below the bar of the House of Lords on the night when the Corn Law Repeal Bill was read a second time. It was very late — or, rather, early in the morning — when the

division was approaching, and a lady sitting near her, who was a connection of some peer, spoke with him as he came from the House, and she said, "How will it go?" It was just before the division, and, pointing up to the clock, as it were in an agony of excitement, he said, "In twenty minutes"—or in some number of minutes which it would take to go to a division—"we shall be no better than dead men." Well, now, the Corn Law was abolished, and if they had not told the farmers—those poor terrified farmers, and landlords still more terrified—I am not sure that any of them would ever have found it out. The country would have found that it was much better off, and the people would have discovered that by some power, the force of which they could not perhaps understand, loaves of bread and provisions to the amount of more than twenty millions sterling per annum had been deposited in their homes for the sustenance and enjoyment of their families, and they would scarcely have known how it was brought about. But we know that it was brought about by the repealing of a single Act of Parliament. It was not by a number of benevolent ladies and gentlemen forming societies all over the country and giving people alms, but it was by repealing the Corn Law—by a simple act of justice, an act that was so just that I have never heard a man, or have scarcely heard a man deny its justice, except on something which they call political considerations, which means that there were political reasons why that great act of justice should not be done. I recollect that a pious banker whom I happened to be travelling with in the North of England, admitted that it was very unjust that there should be a law to make food scarce and dear, but said, "I accept it because I believe it necessary to maintain the hereditary aristocracy of this country." And further, he said that he thought that our greatness in the eye of the world depended very much upon the maintenance of the wealth and power and the display of the aristocracy of England. That is exactly the sort of reason which people give. Weak-minded men are taken by reasons of this kind, and they give you reasons now

that are not a bit better for opposition to many changes which wiser men wish to promote, and which doubtless by and by will be effected. And then results will show that the reasons of those who have opposed them were just as silly and just as little worth as those of my fellow-traveller the pious banker.

But that question of the Corn Law was not all; there was the question of sugar. In 1840—it is not very long ago—the single article of sugar in this country cost, by reason of the monopoly, not less than six millions sterling more than it would have cost if you could have bought it freely in the market of the world, while the fall of the corn monopoly, which was the keystone of the arch, let everything belonging to it and supported by it down. The sugar monopoly fell, and I do not now know how much more. One was connected with the supply of timber from abroad; and another, still more important, was the monopoly which our shipowners had, and the abolition of which has been found to be injurious, I believe, to nobody, and greatly advantageous to the whole country. When all this was done the course was perfectly easy, for our Chancellor of the Exchequer has had nothing but driving downhill since that time. Once we had a tariff, that upon which Sir Robert Peel began his reform, with 1,000—I am not sure that there were not 1,200 items on which duties were raised at the ports, some of them articles which, when the names were read off in the House of Commons, raised a general laugh, for people turned to each other and asked what they were. There were things so minute that nobody in the House had ever heard of, and yet they were articles upon which duties were levied. Then the tariff was simplified, until now there are perhaps only twelve or fifteen articles upon which duties are levied. All other things can come freely into the country; we have made a very great clearance, and the result has been that we have obtained fiscal reforms which are more comprehensive and more just to the country than probably have ever been made in the same time by any other Government in any country in the world. I do not think those who were most active in promoting these changes were regarded

by certain people with much more confidence than before. But the changes were made, and they worked well for the nation.

We may now come down to one or two other topics, one of them the question of the treaty with France. We were taught when we were children—I was born just before the termination of that monstrous and wicked war which was so long carried on with France—at any rate, the school-books of those days were filled with charges against the French people. The representations on the stage, I am told by those who frequented theatres at the time, were to the same effect, and there was a general feeling that there was some risk to Englishmen if they became too well acquainted with the French, and if by any possibility they should learn to believe that the French were not the natural enemies of Englishmen. Well, my friend Mr. Cobden—who, as you know, is occasionally mentioned with very abusive language by several of the great instructors of the press—thought that the Emperor of the French and some persons who are occasionally consulted by him would be very glad to have more intimate relations with the people of this country, and he went over to Paris. He saw the Emperor, and discussed the matter with him. He found the Emperor most willing, and not only most willing, but most anxious that the people of the two countries should be introduced to each other through the medium of extended commerce, and that his object was—for I heard him say it—that the people being thus united together, it should not be in the power of rulers and statesmen to induce them hereafter to enter into those dreadful struggles which, now we look back upon them, we can say have for centuries disfigured the history of the two nations. Now, there is another fact which ought to have some interest, but which I shall merely mention, that it was not—and I was glad to see it noticed by Mr. Milner Gibson at Ashton the other day—it was not one of your official diplomatists who effected that treaty; it was done solely by my friend Mr. Cobden, who, as the cricketers would say, got it entirely off his own bat: and I venture

to say that as long as the history of England and France is read it will be read of him that he, a simple citizen of this country, interested in its welfare, interested in peace between France and England, interested in the spread of great and enlightened principles and commerce throughout the world, that he went over to Paris, and there negotiated with the Emperor of the French a treaty, which, I believe, is the most important document of the kind that has ever been signed by the rulers of any two nations in Europe.

From this I pass to the last of these reforms that I shall touch upon, and that is to another kind of freedom, in which no persons in Parliament were more actively engaged than Mr. Milner Gibson, Mr. Cobden, and myself—that is, the freedom of the press. You pay a penny for your admirable newspaper in this town, and when doing so you are not conscious, perhaps, of what happened only a very short time ago. The paper on which it was printed, say ten years ago, had a stamp of a penny upon it, the paper itself did not cost probably more than a halfpenny, and therefore there was over 100 or perhaps 200 per cent. of taxation upon the paper before our friend Mr. Jaffray could touch it. Well, then—I am not speaking now of the stamp—there was also a tax of, at one time, threepence, and at another time three-halfpence per pound upon paper itself at the paper-mill. This unfortunate article seemed to be thought the greatest of all nuisances and trespassers. The moment it was made out of the meanest rags and rubbish, the Chancellor of the Exchequer put a tax upon it of three-halfpence per pound: and the moment it was sent to the newspaper office, unless the manufacturer had already done it, the proprietor must send it to the Government office to have a stamp of a penny put upon it; and when he ran it through his machine and printed the columns of letterpress, if he put in a short paragraph that a cook wanted a place, or that anybody wanted a tutor, although it was only three words or only one word, it was an advertisement, and for every one of these he must pay a tax of 1*s.* 6*d.* to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The newspapers were, as

you know, not very long ago many times the price that they are at present. People said then that we had a free press. We denied it, and we asserted that unless the Chancellor of the Exchequer would undertake really to free the newspaper press there was not a single thing else that he undertook to do which we would not oppose. Therefore, by getting the Chancellor of the Exchequer into a difficulty of this nature, and by absolutely insisting upon an act of justice, we used the skill and ingenuity with which Mr. Gibson conducted that question in Parliament to obtain what we desired. Now, what has followed? We have a gentleman so eminent as the Speaker of the House of Commons the other day, at a meeting, expressing himself in terms of the very highest commendation and admiration of the penny newspapers in this country. But what did all the people say who opposed us? They said first of all, "You will steal everything from the *Times*." Well, I do not think anything else could by possibility make a paper so bad as stealing everything from the *Times*. I recollect the prophecies of the *Globe* newspaper, which I believe values itself at 4*d*. or 5*d*., while other papers quite as good and as large are selling for a penny. The *Globe* newspaper declared that these cheap papers would do nothing but crib paragraphs and news from the respectable press, which they would not acknowledge. Why, the *Globe* newspaper itself is made up almost entirely of "scissor-work," and I have seen in it little paragraphs which it has copied from the penny press of the morning, and which it has copied without acknowledgment. I venture, then, to say that every prophecy of the opponents of a free press, so far, has failed; and that whether it be in quality of writing, in elevated and moral tone, in the industry with which facts and news are collected and offered to the people, I believe that the newspapers which are sold at a penny will bear comparison with any of their dearer neighbours, and that there is but one opinion throughout the whole kingdom—except it be in the mind of some particular man who never could find out anything himself, and never could be taught anything by others,—

there is, I say, but one opinion as to the inestimable benefit which the freedom of the press has conferred upon this country. Is it not a very curious thing that every one of the things I have mentioned is now almost by general consent admitted to have been a just and beneficial change? You can hardly find a Tory now. It is a blessed thing, but somehow or other either the Tories die off, or they change themselves, or they do certainly take a little different colour. You can hardly find any of them now but will admit that a great number of these changes—some will admit that all of them—have been wise changes, and beneficial to the country. And yet it is very odd that the very same men at this moment set up to be authorities in politics. They opposed every one of these changes; they have obstructed every one to the extent of their power; they have told you at every step that every change was destructive to the best interests of the country, and they have rushed to the poll with what I should call a frantic blindness of patriotism to put off the good day when these beneficial changes should take effect. And, having been wrong in every single thing for twenty-five years back—and if they have lived as long, for fifty years back—at this very moment, without a blush, without the slightest appearance of difficulty or embarrassment, they will call upon a constituency now to believe that they are the men, and that wisdom will die with them. If there had been no violent party spirit, if these men would have given themselves, if they were capable of it, to some intelligent thought on these questions, is it not very likely that many of these changes might have been made at an earlier period, and that the public might have had, say for twenty years, the advantage of these reforms, which, owing to the obstinacy of opponents, they have only enjoyed, it may be, for five or ten years? I suppose there are not many of this class of gentlemen here—or else I might try to improve the occasion, and see if I could not reach—reach, as the preachers say—their intellect and their conscience. There are other questions to which these men might turn their minds if they like, unless they have been so long standing still,

that, like a weather-vane, they have become rusted, and cannot turn at all.

There is a question that has been discussed of late years, and that will come on again for urgent discussion before long—the question of Parliamentary Reform. It is thirty years or more since the Reform Bill passed. It was not a good Bill, though it was a great Bill when it passed; and to show you how insufficient it was, I have already mentioned that in nine years after passed, so entirely had the old governing class recovered from its fall, that it entered Parliament in 1841 with a majority of ninety. And when we know that it leaves an immense number of small boroughs that are assailable and open to management, and that it leaves the county constituency as it now is, in many counties entirely in the hands of three or four or half a dozen landed proprietors, and that it shuts out the great body of the people from the franchise everywhere, it is not to be wondered at that we should have found ourselves, nine years after the passing of the Reform Bill, in a minority in the House of Commons, and at this moment in a position when nobody seems to know exactly whether there is a majority or a minority. What has taken place since 1832? Surely, nearly all the changes I have mentioned. What else has taken place? Not these changes only, and not those changes only which Mr. Wright has said have taken place in Birmingham, but similar changes all over the kingdom. Have not your schools extended to a great degree? Have not the habits of industry and frugality become more prominent? Is not the country more peaceful? Is not the law generally better observed? And are not magistrates and all men in authority held in better regard than they were thirty or forty years ago? Don't we all feel that there is a more kind, generous, merciful, and just spirit spread amongst the people, and animating great masses of them? And unless we are prepared to say that the English Constitution is not a Constitution by which representative Government is favoured; that we have no right to a share in the administration of the affairs of our country, but that a small, a powerful, and

a rich class acting upon a small portion of the middle class, and banded so that their influence becomes almost irresistible, should appropriate the Constitution; and that the Government shall be handed over to them for the furthering of their special purposes—unless we are prepared to say this, we have no right to call ourselves free men living in a free country—unless we determine before long that there shall be another substantial measure of reform.

The other night I referred to the question of emigration from this country. I am told, though I have not seen it in print, that a newspaper, which does not care to improve its character by being fair to those whom it judges, declared that I put myself up as an advertising agent for the American Government. Let me tell you that the advertising agents, the practical advertising agents to the American Government, are those who refuse to do justice to the English people. Mr. Bancroft, the best historian of his country, has declared in words that Europe should never forget that the history of the colonization of America is the history of the crimes of Europe. We know perfectly well how it was that those noble men who colonized New England—and whose spirit yet lives on that continent, and is now, I will venture to say, directing the energies of the American Government in the preservation of their Union and in the establishment of freedom from the pole to the gulf—first settled in that country. We know that those men were driven from this country by the oppressions of despotic monarchs and of an insolent Church. And we know that from that time to this there have landed in the United States millions of persons, who have emigrated from the United Kingdom, the largest portion of them from Ireland. I have said before, and it is well to say it on every suitable occasion, that such has been the conduct of the Government of England to the people of Ireland, that wherever the Irishman plants his foot in any foreign land, having quitted for ever his native soil, there he stands as an enemy of England, whom nothing can reconcile to this country. But if the Government of England in Ireland

had been a just Government, if it had been just even since the time of the Union, sixty years ago, all that hostile feeling might have been cleared away long since, and Irishmen would have been as loyal and contented as any class of Englishmen. And if they had found it necessary from any cause to transport themselves to the United States, you would have found in the United States the feeling that they had not been driven by injustice from their native land, but that, turning back to that land with the loving, longing gaze of patriots, they might have said:

> "Breathes there a man with soul so dead,
> Who never to himself hath said,
> This is my own, my native land?"

But now—now under the feelings created by a long course of misgovernment, continued from father to son, directed against their social, their political, and their religious feeling, there is hardly an Irishman in the United States who is not the victim of any man who chooses to make political capital by exciting hostility against England. There can be no just government of Ireland until you abolish the Irish Protestant Church. There have been no feelings in the history of the world that have so stirred men's love, and so stirred their hate, as the feelings connected with their religious belief. There was never an act at once so unjust and so unwise as that of the English Government when it maintained a Church in Ireland that never could call within its fold more than about one-tenth of the whole people, and which from the day of its establishment to this has probably never been able to convert—I was going to say, a single real Catholic to Protestantism—but which, having found Catholicism a belief of the people, has made it also a patriotism. For every Catholic has not only had the ordinary reasons for adhering to his Church which every man has who learns the doctrines and teachings of his religion from his mother, but he has this further reason—that the Church which is sought to be imposed upon him is imposed upon him by another nation, and, to him, by an alien Government. And, therefore, every feeling of reverence for

God, and every feeling of self-respect which he has as a free man, makes him resolve that he never will come within the pale of such a Church as that.

And, now, but one more matter, which it would be wrong to pass by at this moment. This is the situation of foreign affairs, and the doctrine of non-intervention. The people of England must, and will before long, make up their minds on this great question—whether they will accept the doctrine of non-intervention in its entirety and completeness, or whether they will allow it when it is convenient, and repudiate it when their passions have been a little stirred. Bear in mind that one of two eminent Ministers of the present Cabinet certainly was in office as long ago as some years before I was born. He comes down, then, from a generation that is almost passed away. Lord Palmerston, the Prime Minister, is that man. Lord Russell, though not so old, also goes back into that early time. They are both naturally—I am not imputing it to them as a crime, because, possibly, it was what they could not help—but they naturally have been saturated with those theories and doctrines upon the question of non-intervention and foreign affairs which prevailed near the beginning of this century, and they may fancy in their old age that what was taught them and practised in their youth is right now, and was right during the time of the Italian war, I mean the war between Austria and France, in which, it is thought, Italy gained much in the direction of liberty. I went one day in the session of Parliament during which these events occurred to spend an hour with the late Lord Aberdeen. He had been Prime Minister, and Foreign Secretary for many years. He was a man of very sound judgment, of great moderation, and of many good qualities, which his political opponents did not always give him credit for. He spoke about the war which was then beginning between the French and the Austrians, and he said that when he was young there was not a statesman in England of any party who would have hesitated for one single moment to go into that war on the side of Austria against France, with the view of preventing the increase of French influence in Italy and

in Europe. But he said that he hoped, and he thought it was probably true, that statesmen had grown wiser since that time. Well, we did not go into the war in Italy; our Government did not take sides with Austria, nor yet with France. The people generally, I think, were rather in favour of France, because they thought that France was in favour of freedom in Italy. But, suppose these statesmen of the old time, of Lord Aberdeen's youth, had carried out their principles and had gone into that war, it is difficult to see that things would have been any better than they now are in Italy; it is not difficult to see that probably they would have been much worse, and that no doubt thousands of our fellow-countrymen might have been lying in their graves on the continent of Europe; that great sea-fights might have taken place with great destruction; that the French Treaty certainly would not have existed, and that the harmony which now exists between the peoples of these two great nations might have been intercepted for many years. I won't go back to the Russian war; you know the part I took in regard to that. I have, on my part, to thank it for only one thing, and that is, that it is owing, I believe, to the part I took in that question that I now stand here in this borough as one of your Parliamentary representatives. But how were you dragged, or beguiled, or excited into that war? By the impulse of these two aged Ministers. They could not keep themselves out of it. I am not imputing to them other than honourable motives, but saturated as they were—I say saturated—with the doctrines of a by-gone time, a time, I hope, never to return, they fancied it was the duty of this small island to take care of a rotten Government and of a country devastated by the oppressions and excesses of that Government. The result was that amongst the various contending nations, at least four hundred thousand men's lives were sacrificed, and probably more than as many millions of treasure were thrown entirely away; and instead of the affairs of Europe being settled on a permanent basis—that is always their cry—you find that the affairs of Europe at this moment are not settled on a permanent

basis, and that Europe has doubled the armed men and doubled the military expenditure that it had before that war.

And now we come to another topic, and that is the question between Denmark and Germany. I am one of those, I hope, who sympathize even with men who wear crowns when they are in trouble, and the difficulty which has overtaken the King of Denmark does not appear to have been a difficulty of his own seeking. There has been a difficulty for many years with regard to those Duchies. It is not yet settled, though perhaps it may be settled. But I do not know; I doubt extremely whether anything that England could do by sending 25,000 men into Schleswig, and by putting a fleet in the North Sea, or the Baltic, or Adriatic, would permanently settle that question. You may rely upon this, that questions of that nature are only permanently settled when they are brought to a conclusion by those alone who are deeply interested in them. We are not deeply interested in this question—I do not mean interested in the sense of the Prince of Wales marrying a daughter of the King of Denmark. I think nothing would be more unfortunate than that, whilst the members of the Royal Family are not allowed to marry from English citizens, they should, in marrying abroad, therefore embroil Englishmen in the quarrels of foreign countries. I can imagine nothing more likely to make Englishmen doubt whether Royal alliances can have any pleasant interest to them than if such a course is taken. We see it reported in the papers that the Guards have had orders, and that the fleet is to come to some place or other. These, I fancy, are mostly at present paragraphs put out as feelers or paragraphs of bluster, intended to operate upon Austria or Prussia. But I cannot understand the object of Austria and Prussia, unless it is that they are afraid of a revolution in Germany, and are therefore taking a lead in great operations which may save them from any unpleasant change which may be impending. But if I were speaking to members of her Majesty's Government, I should remind them of this, that in 1853-4

there were members of that Government, who talked of peace, and for peace. In Mr. Gladstone's speech at Manchester the burden was a hearty wish for peace, and peace doubtless was the wish of the Queen and the Prince. And yet the Government went into war. They take steps which they fancy do not mean war, but they are gradually brought nearer and nearer to the verge of it, and then under some pretence that they have gone so far that they cannot honourably retreat, they plunge over into the abyss. On that occasion I believe there were members of the Cabinet who had not the slightest idea that they were going into war.

And that leads me to speak about a curious custom of the Cabinet on which the people generally are ignorant, but concerning which I now feel it my duty to inform them. When a Government is made, a list is drawn up of about thirteen gentlemen who are to form a Cabinet, and who are summoned to the meetings of the Cabinet. But there is an inner Cabinet, and it is generally compounded of the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary, and occasionally one other Minister. While Lord Derby was a member of Sir Robert Peel's Cabinet, he knew nothing whatever of a most important memorandum or understanding which had been drawn up on an agreement come to between Sir Robert Peel, the Duke of Wellington, and the late Emperor Nicholas of Russia. Until he came to be Prime Minister he had never seen that memorandum, and never knew of its existence. Well, I have been told that there was an attempt made when Lord Derby's Government was formed to keep the whole of that interior Cabinet in the hands of himself and Lord Malmesbury, the Foreign Minister, but that a certain other Minister, who knew the responsibility which attaches to the deliberations of such an inner Cabinet, would have nothing to do with the responsibility of its great decisions unless he were made acquainted with all the facts and with everything belonging to them. And, therefore, the secret Cabinet in Lord Derby's Government was composed of three, and not of two members. But take this present Cabinet. I will undertake to say, by what I know of what has

been done on past occasions, that a great deal of the most delicate business of foreign affairs is conducted almost entirely by Lord Palmerston and Lord Russell. Do not let me be supposed to insinuate that Lord Palmerston has not had a most lengthened experience in foreign affairs, and do not let me be supposed to say that Lord Russell is not anxious to have the affairs of the country transacted in such a way as he thinks will best serve the interests of the nation. But there may be members of that Cabinet at this moment who are not aware of the steps that are being taken from day to day, of despatches that are being written, of suggestions that are being thrown out, and of resolutions that are partly come to, and which being once arrived at and determined upon by the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary, will plunge the country in war. If there be any member of that Cabinet who is not in that secret knowledge, and he finds that these matters are advancing towards war, let me beseech him, as he values the price of his conscience during his lifetime, and his reputation also with his fellow-men, which is of much less real value, that he will take care to know everything that is done, that he will not be made the partner, it may be in great errors, it may be in great crimes, which he and his country, if the war should come, may have occasion to regret. I have not seen a paper written out of London which argues in favour of war, and I do not think the London press generally has yet stimulated the country to violent action. But let us here—we, the people everywhere—have our eyes wide open at this moment, and by every means in our power show that, while we are willing to sympathize with any monarch, it may be, or any State under any difficulties of any kind, we also consider it our duty in the present and future interest of the people of these islands to show in addition that, looking over our past history for the last two hundred years, we have come to the fixed determination that the power of England shall not be exerted, the blood of England shall not be spilt, the wealth created by the toils of Englishmen shall not be squandered, except it be in some great cause in which

the solid and permanent interests of this country are engaged.

I fear you will think I have been preaching you a too long political sermon. I wish this to be a free country—not to be afraid of anything that is good because they say it is French, or of something good because they say it is American, or to stand by something that is clearly evil because they say it is old. A very eminent writer, not long ago, said that England to a large extent was still as it were fettered in the grave-clothes of the middle ages. But we have a competition to run with other nations, and, most of all, with that nation which is now distracted and in the throes of a great Civil War. We have also within our shores, and within the limits of these islands, a great and a noble people. We have within us the elements of a nation far greater in the future than anything that has been in the past, even in the most renowned and glorious days. We can set ourselves free from the prejudices and from the darkness of the past. We can give to our people education, we can open up to them new sources of industry, we can reduce the expenditure of our Government, we can invite another million or two of our people within the pale of the constitution, and taking them, we can ask counsel of them that we may assist each other in the wise government of this great nation. All this we can do, and all that is wanted is that in working out our political problems we should take for our foundation that which recommends itself to our conscience as just and moral. I have not the slightest regard for that statesmanship which is divorced from the morality which we say ought to guide us in our private life, which we gather for a nation as for individuals from the religion which we profess. Time, persistent labour, fidelity to the great principles which we hold and believe in, will certainly give us the victory over existing evils, as similar qualities and similar conduct have given the victories which I have described to you in the observations I have made.

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