

The dispute was not yet ended. At a meeting at Salisbury, lord Brougham made some strong remarks upon lord Durham. At another meeting at Glasgow, lord Durham said that the Chancellor had been pleased to challenge him to meet him in the House of Lords. "I fear him not; I will meet him there."

There were two most unexpected events which deranged the completion of these hostile purposes. First, the two peers could not meet on the old battle-ground. The Houses of Parliament were destroyed by fire on the 16th of October. It was between six and seven o'clock on that evening, that flames were seen bursting forth from the roof of the House of Lords, in that part of the building opposite to Henry the Seventh's Chapel, and in the corner next Westminster Hall. By nine o'clock all the apartments of that portion of the parliament buildings, including the Painted Chamber and the Library, were in flames, and the whole interior was in a few hours destroyed. The fire extended to the House of Commons, first destroying the large offices of the House, and next seizing upon the Chapel of St. Stephen. When all the interior fittings were destroyed, this building, which had been famous as the seat of English legislation from the time of Edward the Sixth, was a mere shell. It had stood in its strength and beauty like a rock amidst the sea of fire, and had arrested the force which had till then gone on conquering and overthrowing. The Speaker's official residence was also partially destroyed. There was one time when the destruction of Westminster Hall seemed almost inevitable. To those who mixed amongst the crowd in Palace Yard, and knew that the antiquities of a nation are amongst its best possessions, it was truly gratifying to witness the intense anxiety of all classes of people to preserve this building, associated with so many grand historical scenes. "Save the Hall!" "Save the Hall!" was the universal cry. There was a more efficient interposition than the destruction of the House of Lords to the purpose of the two peers to enter the lists where the Mowbray and Bolingbroke of modern times were to decide their quarrel.

"The king has thrown his warder down."

William the Fourth, without a word of preparation, intimated to lord Melbourne, on the 14th of November, that his ministry was at an end.

### CHAPTER VIII.

The King's dismissal of the Melbourne Ministry.—Sir Robert Peel's Narrative of his appointment to the Premiership.—The Peel Administration formed.—Parliament dissolved.—The Tamworth Manifesto.—Strong Parliamentary Opposition.—Mr. Abercromby elected Speaker.—London University Charter.—Irish Church.—Repeated defeats of Ministers.—Resignation of Sir Robert Peel.—Lord Melbourne's New Ministry.—Exclusion of Lord Brougham.—His Resolutions on the subject of Education.—Reform of Municipal Corporations.—Report of the Commission of Inquiry.—Conflict between the two Houses.—The Bill passed.—Departing glories of Municipal Pomp.

MUCH that was obscure in the circumstances connected with the extraordinary act of the King in the removal of his ministers has been brought to light in the "Memoirs by Sir Robert Peel." In his "Memorandum as to my appointment to the office of First Lord of the Treasury in 1834, and to the administration over which I presided," he says: "The time will come when these records will be interesting, and may throw a light on the history of the period which they embrace." Sir Robert states that he left England for Italy on the 14th of October, 1834, little foreseeing the probability of his sudden recall, and having had no communication previously to his departure with the duke of Wellington, or any other person, respecting the position and prospects of the administration which existed at the time when he quitted England. He treats with contempt the report that there had been some previous concert or understanding with the king in contemplation of events that took place in November. Sir Robert Peel was in Rome when a letter reached him from the king, dated November the 15th, in which his Majesty says, that having had a most satisfactory and confidential communication with the duke of Wellington, on the formation of a new government, he called upon Sir Robert Peel to return without loss of time to England, to put himself at the head of the administration. The messenger at the same time brought a letter from the duke of Wellington, pressing his immediate return home, and announcing that his grace held for the present the offices of First Lord of the Treasury and Secretary of State for the Home Department, till Sir Robert should return. The copy of a letter

from the king to lord Melbourne was enclosed by the duke, in which the ostensible ground for the dismissal of lord Melbourne is, that lord Althorp, by the death of his father, having been removed to the House of Peers, the general weight and consideration of the Government would be so much diminished in the House of Commons as to render it impossible that they should continue to conduct the public affairs. The duke of Wellington writes a confidential letter to sir Robert Peel, accompanying his official dispatch, in which, plainly implying that the king was not quite justified in being "so ready to seize upon the first notion of difficulties resulting from lord Spencer's death," he concludes by saying, "I don't think that we are at all responsible for his quarrel with them. It was an affair quite settled when he sent for me." Sir Robert Peel received this important communication on the night of the 25th of November. He left Rome the next afternoon. On his journey he had ample opportunities, he says, for considering various important matters coolly and without interruption. His habitual caution is strikingly manifested in his description of his meditations during his journey, which terminated in London on the 9th of December. "In my letters to the King and the duke of Wellington from Rome, I had merely given an assurance that I would return without delay to England. As I should, by my acceptance of the office of First Minister, become technically, if not morally, responsible for the dissolution of the preceding government, although I had not the remotest concern in it, I did not at once, upon the hurried statement which was sent to me of the circumstances connected with it, pledge myself to the acceptance of office. I greatly doubted, indeed, the policy of breaking up the government of lord Melbourne at that time. I entertained little hope that the ministry about to replace it would be a stable one—would command such a majority in the House of Commons as would enable it to transact the public business. I was not altogether satisfied by the accounts I first received with the sufficiency of the reason for the dissolution of the late government—namely, the removal of lord Althorp to the Lords—and the objections of the king to lord John Russell as lord Althorp's successor in the lead of the House of Commons."\*

The sensation produced in London by the reported dismissal of the ministry was a natural consequence of the suddenness of the act, as it presented itself to the body of the people;—of its really unconstitutional character, as it appeared to thoughtful and well-informed men. On the morning of Saturday, the 15th of Novem-

\* "Memoirs by Sir Robert Peel, vol. ii. p. 30.

ber,—the day when the duke of Wellington was writing his confidential letter to sir Robert Peel,—the "Times" had this startling announcement, given in the words of a communication which had been received at an early hour that morning: "The king has taken the opportunity of lord Spencer's death to turn out the ministry, and there is every reason to believe that the duke of Wellington has been sent for. The queen has done it all." The act of the king was wholly without precedent. He might have become converted to the politics of the Opposition. He might have been alarmed at the possible scandal of the quarrel between the Chancellor and lord Durham. But there was no disunion in the Cabinet. The ministry had retained the confidence of Parliament up to the last day of the session. They had pressed no opinions upon his Majesty which could be disagreeable to him. The government of lord Melbourne had more elements of Conservatism than were agreeable to many Reformers, and therefore appeared unlikely to excite the fears of the king and of his Court. The sovereign has a constitutional right to dismiss his ministers, but it must be on grounds more capable of justification to Parliament than the simple exercise of his personal will. The suddenness of the resolve rendered an arrangement necessary which could not be justified by any precedent, except on one occasion of critical emergency in the last days of queen Anne.\* The duke of Wellington, from the 15th of November to the 9th of December, was First Lord of the Treasury and the sole Secretary of State, having only one colleague, lord Lyndhurst, who held the Great Seal, at the same time that he sat as Chief Baron of the Court of Exchequer. This temporary government was called a Dictatorship. "The great military commander" was told that he "will find it to have been much easier to take Badajoz and Ciudad Rodrigo than to retake the liberties and independence of the people."† The famous caricaturist of the day, H. B., represented the duke multiplied into ten or a dozen members of the cabinet, seated at the council board. Journalists exclaimed, Why is the business of the country to be suspended till a stray baronet should return home from his pleasure tour? There were meetings and there were addresses, but there was no violence, and very little alarm. The majority of the people, whose zeal for a continued course of improvement had not been shaken by some reverses and shortcomings, knew perfectly well that what was called a Conservative gov-

\* See a very able view of the constitutional question in Mr. May's "History," vol. i. pp. 120-125.

† Lord Durham—Speech at Newcastle on the 19th of November.

ernment could not meet the present parliament. There must be a dissolution to afford them any chance of a continuance in office. They would reserve their zeal for a practical issue of the contest between Reform and Conservatism.

And so, as to the inevitable necessity of a dissolution, thought sir Robert Peel. In spite of his doubts of the policy of breaking up the government of lord Melbourne, he had become convinced that he had no alternative but to undertake the office of Prime Minister instantly on his arrival. He at once waited upon the king, and accepted the office of First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer. With the king's permission he applied to lord Stanley and to sir James Graham, earnestly entreating them to give him the benefit of their co-operation as colleagues in the cabinet. They both declined. Lord Stanley manfully said, "The sudden conversion of long political opposition into the most intimate alliance,—no general coincidence of principle, except upon one point, being proved to exist between us,—would shock public opinion, would be ruinous to my own character, and injurious to the government which you seek to form."\* When sir Robert arrived he found one important question practically decided,—the dissolution of the existing parliament. He does not appear to have been sanguine that the indications of a very great increase of the Conservative strength in the new House of Commons would be sufficient to insure the stability of his government. He looked beyond the immediate present. "It would certainly be sufficient to constitute a very powerful Conservative body, controlling a future government leaning upon Radical support." He tried to make a government as strong as he could with Conservative materials. The re-establishment, he says, of the duke of Wellington's government in 1830 would have saved him much trouble, but would have diminished the little hope he ever entertained of being able to make a successful struggle. So, amidst the reproaches of those who regarded the minister as doing them positive wrong by not reinstating them in their former offices, he constructed a ministry of which the duke's name was a tower of strength, and of which lord Lyndhurst as Chancellor gave the assurance that it would have the support of one man of great talents. The high qualities of statesmanship which distinguished lord Aberdeen were not yet sufficiently recognized. It was not a popular ministry, but it could not be held to comprise any of that band of violent anti-reformers who would have imperilled everything by resisting the declared opinion of the Prime Minister that

\* "Memoirs by Sir Robert Peel," vol. ii. p. 39.

he considered the Reform Bill as a final and irrevocable measure.\* The facilities which the political constitution and the social habits of our country afford for the official expression of State policy, were never more remarkably displayed than in the course adopted by sir Robert Peel immediately that he had formed his administration. The Prime Minister was one of the representatives of Tamworth, a borough with a population under four thousand. To the electors of this comparatively unimportant place he addressed what has been denominated "the Tamworth manifesto." It was not a hasty expression of individual opinion, but a declaration of the general principles upon which the government proposed to act, and the address was submitted to the Cabinet for their consideration. Foreigners, who were looking with intense anxiety upon the ministerial crisis in London, might well be surprised that a little country town should be the first recipient of the government's confidential disclosures, and be thus the representative of the entire population of the United Kingdom. It is unnecessary to go over the various points of this long and comprehensive document. In his "Memoirs" sir Robert Peel declares that he held no language and expressed no opinions in this address which he had not previously held while acting in opposition to the government; that he did not attempt to mitigate hostility by any new profession, or to court popular favour by promises of more extensive reforms than those to whose principles he had previously assented; that although he therein made an explicit declaration that he considered the measure of Parliamentary Reform final and irrevocable, that language was not new, but was used by him when he took his seat as a member of the first parliament summoned under the Reform Act.

\* Sir Robert Peel's Cabinet was arranged as follows:—

Right Hon. Sir Robert Peel . . .	First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer.
Lord Lyndhurst . . .	Lord Chancellor.
Earl of Rosslyn . . .	President of the Council.
Lord Wharnccliffe . . .	Lord Privy Seal.
Right Hon. H. Goulburn . . .	Secretary of State for the Home Department.
Duke of Wellington . . .	Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.
Earl of Aberdeen . . .	Secretary of State for the Colonies.
Earl De Grey . . .	First Lord of the Admiralty.
Right Hon. Sir H. Hardinge . . .	Chief Secretary for Ireland.
Lord Ellenborough . . .	President of the Board of Control.
Right Hon. Alexander Baring . . .	Master of the Mint and President of the Board of Trade.
Right Hon. Sir E. Knatchbull . . .	Paymaster of the Forces.
Right Hon. J. C. Herries . . .	Secretary at War.
Right Hon. Sir George Murray . . .	Master-General of the Ordnance.

The anticipations of sir Robert Peel that the Conservative party would be strengthened by a general election were, to a considerable extent, realized. So, also, was his apprehension that the increase of strength would not be sufficient to give stability to the new government. Before the parliament met it was calculated that the anti-ministerialists had a majority of a hundred and thirty-three, but that eighty-two votes were doubtful. Looking at the extraordinary efforts that had been made on both sides at this general election, and at the violence of party feeling which had been necessarily called forth, it appears almost surprising that, from the opening of parliament on the 9th of February, the ministry should not have been driven from their position before the 7th of April. Temporary accommodation had been provided for the business of the two Houses on the site of those destroyed by the fire on the 16th of October. On the 9th of February, when the House of Commons proceeded to the election of a Speaker, a larger number of members were assembled than ever had been known before to have been congregated at one time. Six hundred and twenty-two members divided on the question whether sir Charles Manners Sutton should be re-elected, or the right hon. James Abercromby be chosen to fill the chair. The votes for Abercromby were three hundred and sixteen; for Sutton, three hundred and six.

On the 24th of February the King opened the business of the session. The two last paragraphs of the King's speech expressed his Majesty's reliance on the caution and circumspection which would be exercised in altering laws which affected extensive and complicated interests, and were interwoven with ancient usages; and that, in supplying that which was defective, or renovating that which was impaired, the common object would be, to strengthen the foundations of those institutions in Church and State which are the inheritance and birthright of the people. In the House of Lords viscount Melbourne moved an amendment upon the two paragraphs, to the effect that their Lordships hoped his Majesty's councils would be directed in the spirit of well-considered and effective reform, and lamenting the dissolution of the late parliament, as having interrupted and endangered the vigorous prosecution of measures to which the wishes of the people were directed. This amendment was negatived without a division. In the House of Commons, lord Morpeth proposed a similar amendment, which, after three nights' debate, was carried by a majority of seven, the numbers being 309 against 302. However the eloquence of sir Robert Peel might fail to carry the complete approbation of the House of Commons, it unquestionably produced a powerful effect

upon the country, inducing a very general desire that a fair chance should be given to the administration for carrying forward their professions into satisfactory results. It is my first duty, said sir Robert Peel, to maintain the post which has been confided to me; to stand by the trust which I did not seek, but which I could not decline. Receive, at least, the measures which I propose; amend them if they are defective; extend them if they fall short of your expectations. "I offer you reduced estimates, improvements in Civil Jurisprudence, reform of Ecclesiastical Law, the settlement of the Tithe question in Ireland, the Commutation of Tithe in England, the removal of any real abuse in the Church, the redress of those grievances of which the Dissenters have any just ground to complain. I offer you these specific measures, and I offer also to advance, soberly and cautiously it is true, in the path of progressive improvement. I offer also the best chance that these things can be effected in willing concert with the other authorities of the State—thus restoring harmony, ensuring the maintenance, but not excluding the reform, where reform is really requisite, of ancient institutions."\*

Satisfactory as such a declaration of general principles might appear to a large portion of the nation, those who were familiar, not only with the comparative strength of parties, but with the violent differences of opinion that would necessarily arise upon questions that would seem beyond the limits of party, would know perfectly well that the day of violent collision could not be far off. The government had been beaten in the choice of a Speaker; it had been out-voted on the amendment to the Address; its first diplomatic appointment could not be persisted in, for, on the 13th of March, the strong expressions used in the House of Commons as to the qualifications of the marquis of Londonderry to be Ambassador to Russia were sufficient to induce him to state in the House of Peers, on the 16th, that he had declined the post offered to him by the government. Another signal defeat of the Ministry involved a question which some deemed to be one of principle, but which we may now regard as belonging to the ancient confusion of principle with intolerance. On the 26th of March Mr. Tooke moved for an "Address to his Majesty, beseeching him to grant his Royal Charter of Incorporation to the University of London, as approved in the year 1831 by the then law officers of the Crown, and containing no other restriction than against conferring degrees in divinity and in medicine." Mr. Goulburn, the member for the University of Cambridge, moved, as an amendment, that they should

\* Hansard, vol. xxvi. col. 242.

address the Crown for a copy of the memorials in this case to the Privy Council, and a statement of the proceedings. The real objection, which sufficiently appeared in the speech of sir Robert Inglis, the member for Oxford University, was contained in the fear that the motion for a Charter to grant degrees only in Arts and Law, was merely an attempt to get the small edge of the wedge in, and that the rest was sure to follow in time. The London University, it was implied, having no religious education in its system of instruction, was in a position of hostility to the Church. Sir Robert Peel supported the amendment. He was not opposed to some provision being made that should accord to Protestant Dissenters the power of acquiring academical distinctions; but he was opposed to a hasty resolve in favour of the terms on which the Charter should be granted to the London University.\* The original motion was carried by 246 to 136. Such were the skirmishes previous to the grand battle.

On the 30th of March lord John Russel, after a debate of four nights, carried a resolution by a majority of thirty-three, that "the House do resolve itself into a Committee of the whole House to consider the temporalities of the Church of Ireland." On the 3rd of April lord John proposed a resolution in that Committee "that any surplus of the revenues of the Church of Ireland not required for the spiritual care of its members, should be applied to the general education of all classes of the people without religious distinction." After a debate of two nights the resolution was carried by a majority of twenty-five. On the 7th of April the report of the Committee was brought up. Lord John Russell proposed a resolution, "that it is the opinion of the House that no measure upon the subject of tithes in Ireland can lead to a satisfactory and final adjustment which does not embody the principle contained in the foregoing Resolution,"—namely, in the resolution agreed to on the previous night. Upon the division there appeared—ayes, 285; noes, 258; majority 27.

The division of the 7th was fatal to the existence of the Ministry. Sir Robert Peel's sagacity had distinctly seen that if the government were beaten upon the motion about to be made by lord John Russell for the alienation from ecclesiastical purposes of any surplus revenues of the Irish Church, there would be no other course but for the government to resign. On the 25th of March he addressed "a Cabinet Memorandum" to his colleagues, in

\* In 1835 what is now known as "University College" was called, according to the original idea of its establishment, the "University of London." In 1837 the government institution of the "University of London," for conferring degrees on graduates of University College and King's College, and of other places of instruction, was established.

which he said—"Nothing can, in my opinion, justify an administration in persevering against a majority, but a rational and well-grounded hope of acquiring additional support, and converting a minority into a majority. I see no ground for entertaining that hope."\* On the 8th of April the duke of Wellington, in the House of Lords, said that in consequence of the Resolution of the House of Commons, the Ministry had tendered their resignations to the King. Sir Robert Peel made a similar explanation to the House of Commons. "For himself, the whole of his political life had been spent in the House of Commons—the remainder of it would be spent in the House of Commons; and, whatever might be the conflicts of parties, he for one, should always wish, whether in a majority or in a minority, to stand well with the House of Commons. Under no circumstances whatever, under the pressure of no difficulties, under the influence of no temptation, would he ever advise the Crown to resign that great source of moral strength which consisted in a strict adherence to the practice, to the principles, to the spirit, to the letter of the Constitution. He was confident that in that adherence would be found the surest safeguard against any impending or eventual danger, and it was because he entertained that belief that he, in conformity with the opinions of his colleagues, considered that a government ought not to persist in carrying on public affairs, (after the sense of the House had been fully and deliberately expressed,) in opposition to the decided opinion of a majority of the House of Commons."† The immense cheering of the House during this brief speech, and at its close was in many respects a reflection of the general public opinion that no minister during a short term of power had conducted the public affairs, under the pressure of extraordinary difficulties, with greater temper, honesty of purpose, and strict adherence to constitutional obligations. "After a conflict of four months," says M. Guizot, "the vanquished had grown far greater than his conquerors."‡ At any rate we may acknowledge that there was no individual amongst the victors who could fairly compete with the fallen minister in those qualities of practical statesmanship which consist not only in knowing what is best to do, but how and when to do it, and what to leave undone. The interest which the country generally felt in the duration of the ministry was not very vehement, nor, on the other hand, was there any intense desire for its fall. After three years of excitement the people rather desired a term of repose. An intelligent foreigner, Von Raumer, who came to London at this

\* "Memoirs by Sir Robert Peel," vol. ii. p. 89.

† Hansard, vol. xxvii. col. 984.

‡ "Memoirs of Peel," p. 77.

time, has described his sensations at the contemplation of the public calm during a great crisis. He goes on the 9th of April to the public dinner for the relief of decayed actors. The toasts, the music, the spouting, and the cheering greatly amuse him; but he says, "all these particulars lost their interest with me in comparison with one thought: In this very same hour the ministry was dissolved; and this dissolution was not (as it so often is in France) a mere concern of *coteries* and *tracasseries*, but had a real substantive meaning, and tended to real and efficient changes. What a deal of wit, good and bad—what angry passions—what hope and fear—what praise and blame—would have foamed over, like *champagne mousseux*, in such an hour in Paris! Here, not a trace of the kind. . . . It seemed as if all that was passing without were but a light ripple on the surface of the waters. The weal of England, her riches, her laws, her freedom, seemed moored to some immovable anchor in the securest and serenest depths of ocean, whence neither winds nor waves can ever tear them loose. The clouds which flit along the face of heaven, and so often seem, to us timid spectators, to portend a coming storm, may here be regarded as but the passing fleeces of a summer sky; or rather as the proof and the earnest of an equable and safe state of the atmosphere."\*

On the 18th of April viscount Melbourne, in moving the adjournment of the House of Lords, stated that the King had been pleased to appoint him First Lord Commissioner of the Treasury, and that he and his friends who had taken office had received from his Majesty the seals of their respective departments. The other House would adjourn to the 12th of May, as some time must necessarily elapse before ministers in that House, waiting their re-election, could proceed to business. On the 12th of May the Houses accordingly met.† The exclusion of lord Brougham from the ministry, by putting the Great Seal in Commission, was necessarily the subject of popular wonder. This exclusion was not to be explained at the time; it has never been satisfactorily explained at any subsequent period. The ultra-liberals exulted that those principles which the Chancellor had proclaimed at the Grey banquet had now no expression in the Cabinet; the friends of Education and of Law-reform lamented that the energy with which these great objects had been pursued was now to be confined to the

\* "England in 1835," vol. i. p. 77.

† The Cabinet as formed at this time was the same as in the list given at page 381, with the exception that the Great Seal was in Commission, lord Cottenham being appointed Chancellor in 1836.

independent exertions of a peer building his hope of success upon his own powers alone. It was a painful situation for one of such restless activity. To deliver elaborate judgments in the Court of Chancery; to be ready for every meeting of the Cabinet; duly to be in his place on the woolsack at three o'clock, rarely abstaining from taking a part in debate; after the adjournment of the House to sit up half the night writing out his judgments; occasionally to dash off an article in the "Edinburgh Review;" discoursing, writing, haranguing, on every subject of politics, or science, or literature, or theology; and then suddenly to have all the duties of official life cut away from him—to sink into the state which he of all others dreaded and despised, that of a "Dowager Chancellor;"—this, indeed, was a mortification not very easy to be borne, and we can scarcely be surprised if it were sometimes impatiently submitted to. Nevertheless, there was a great career of usefulness before Henry Brougham. It would be a longer career; and thus, after the lapse of a quarter of a century, we look back upon the unofficial labours of this remarkable man, to whom repose was an impossibility; and, measuring him with the most untiring of recorded workers, deem it marvellous that he has accomplished so much, and with few exceptions has accomplished it so well. He very soon proclaimed to the world that his comparative leisure would not be a season of relaxation. On the 21st of May he submitted to the House of Lords a series of resolutions on the subject of Education. His speech was a most elaborate review of whatever had been done, and a practical exposition of what he thought remained to be done. In these resolutions will be found the germ of many of the principles which have become established axioms in the education of the people. The main feature of his plan was the establishment of a Board of Education, empowered to examine into the state of endowed charities, and to compel a due application of their funds. These resolutions collectively affirmed that although the number of schools where some of the elementary branches of education are taught had greatly increased, there was still a deficiency of such schools, especially in the metropolis and other great towns; they maintained that the education given at the greater number of the schools established for the poorer classes of the people is of a kind by no means sufficient for their instruction, being for the most part confined to reading, writing, and a little arithmetic; they called upon Parliament to provide effectual means of instruction, doing nothing, however, to relax the efforts of private benevolence; they set forth that for the purpose of improving the kind of educa-