

CHAPTER XVI.

General Sir Charles Napier.—War in Scinde.—Destruction of Emaun-Ghur.—Battle of Meanee.—Annexation of Scinde.—Napier the beneficent Administrator.—Gwalior.—Recall of Lord Ellenborough.—Trial of O'Connell.—Debates on Corn Laws in the Session of 1844.—Position of Sir Robert Peel.—Renewal of the Bank Charter.—Regulation of Labour in Factories.—Lord Ashley's ten-hours' Clause rejected.—Debates on Sugar-Duties.—Opening Letters by the Secretary of State.—Reports of the Committees.—Lady Hewlet's bequest.—O'Connell's Sentence reversed by the House of Lords.—Difference with France on the treatment of the British Consul at Tahiti.—Visit of King Louis Philippe to the Queen.—Prince de Joinville's Pamphlet on the Naval Forces of France.

IN Trafalgar Square, under the shadow of the Nelson Column, is a statue of "Charles James Napier, General." The inscription bears that it was "erected by Public Subscription, the most numerous Contributors being Private Soldiers." This renowned warrior is ordinarily termed "Conqueror of Scinde." By the side of this figure was erected, also by public subscription, a statue of one of the scientific benefactors of the human race, Edward Jenner. That statue has been removed to Kensington Garden. An objection was raised that one whose science had so materially conduced to the prolongation of life, and to the consequent increase of the population of the world, was somewhat out of place in his close proximity to a great soldier—especially great in the estimation of the "Private Soldiers" whom he had led to triumph—whose vocation was, according to the belief of an ancient poet, "to ease the earth of her too numerous sons." But the "Conqueror of Scinde," taking a broad and just view of his career, was a promoter of civilization, by which alone the earth is adequately peopled; and thus he had also a claim to be recorded as a benefactor of mankind in his successful endeavour to make his conquest a source of good to the conquered people. He was the just and beneficent Administrator of Scinde. His "victories of Peace," are "not less renowned than those of War." He was the warlike instrument of injustice; but the aggression, which resulted in triumphs as brilliant and as decisive as any other of the wonderful events of the career of the British in India, may be received as a remarkable addition to the many instances of dangers and difficulties overcome, as if some special working out of the decrees of a superintending Provi-

dence, which does not permit the supremacy of a dominant nation for the gratification of its own ambition, but through that agency carries forward the great law of Progress.

Scinde, a country capable of an almost boundless increase of agricultural and commercial wealth, having the river which bears its name (as well as that of Indus) flowing through its whole extent, was, in 1842, under the rule of a body of despotic nobles, the Ameers, who about seventy years before had dispossessed the legitimate sovereigns. The original inhabitants, who groaned beneath the yoke of these conquerors, cultivated the fields less for themselves than for their tyrannous masters, to whom the land was little better than a hunting ground, whilst their idea of government was simply that of exacting tribute by their fierce military retainers, the Beloochees. Whatever were the relations of these rulers to the people whom they misgoverned, the British authorities in India had repeatedly entered into treaties with them, and in the treaty of 1820 these words were used: "The two contracting parties mutually bind themselves from generation to generation never to look with the eye of covetousness on the possessions of each other." But the passage of troops through Scinde was necessary for carrying on the war with Afghanistan. The Ameers remonstrated, but were compelled to yield. Something more was required by a subsequent treaty. Kurrachee and Tatta were ceded to the British, with power to station troops there; and the free navigation of the Indus was stipulated as another condition of our friendship. At an earlier period some of the Ameers had expressed their fears that Scinde was gone—"the English had seen the river." After he had withdrawn from Ghuznee, and when the terror of the British name was no longer sufficient to command a compliance with enforced engagements, the Ameers began to manifest hostile designs. Sir Charles Napier, having learned that they had assembled an army of twenty-five thousand men, resolved upon a direct and immediate act of hostility, instead of allowing them to gain time by delays and negotiations. He "had permission," he has said, "from the Governor-General to assemble an immense force to impose his final treaty;" he told the Governor-General it could be done with the troops he, Napier, already commanded. Boldness and promptitude in this short war effected more than unlimited reinforcements. Emaun-Ghur, in the desert of Beloochistan, was a stronghold where the mercenaries of the Ameers could gather together, safe from pursuit. Napier resolved to attack this fortress, whither upon his approach a large body of troops were marching. But having ascertained that the Beloochees had muti-

nied and turned back upon reaching the wilderness where there was no water, he saw that a march of eight days from the Indus was impossible for a numerous army. On the night of the 5th of January, 1843, he commenced a perilous adventure. With three hundred and sixty of the 22nd Queen's regiment on camels, with two hundred of the irregular cavalry, with ten camels laden with provisions and with eighty carrying water, he set forth to traverse this arid waste, defying the armed bands on every side. After a few days the camels which drew the howitzers were unable to draw them over the sand-hills, and the unshrinking Irish soldiers took their place. When the fortress, which no European eye had before seen, was reached, it was found deserted. The governor had fled with his treasure, but he had left immense stores of ammunition behind. Napier resolved to destroy Emaun-Ghur; and having mined it in twenty-four places, by a simultaneous explosion all the mighty walls of the square tower, which stood as it were the monarch of the vast solitude, crumbled into atoms, and the wild bands who went forth to plunder and harass the populous Scinde, had to retire still further into the desert. Napier and his hardy companions, after undergoing great privations on their march back by a different route, rejoined the main army on the 23rd near Hyderabad. In the House of Lords in 1844, upon a motion for the thanks of Parliament to Sir Charles Napier and his army, the duke of Wellington said that the march to Emaun-Ghur was one of the most curious military feats which he had ever known to be performed, or had ever perused an account of.

The British Resident at Hyderabad was Major Outram. On the 12th of February, the Ameers with one exception, the Ameer of Khyrpore, signed the treaty which in the previous December had been tendered to them, and which, as was to have been expected from its hard conditions, they had evaded signing. This was Lord Ellenborough's "final treaty," which Napier was to have imposed upon them by an immense force. The day after the signature Major Outram was attacked in the Residency by eight thousand Beloochees. He had only a hundred foot-soldiers with him. In the river, however, there were two war steamers. To these he effected his retreat, by presenting a bold front to his assailants, whilst the guns of the steamers swept the flanks of the pursuers. With the loss only of three men killed and two wounded the gallant officer joined the main army. The force which Napier commanded could scarcely however be termed an army, if that name is to be applied only to a large body of soldiers. It consisted of four hundred British of the 22nd, and two thousand two hundred

sepoys and other native troops. The 22nd were under the command of Colonel Pennefather, a name of renown in the Crimean war. The artillery consisted of twelve guns. With this force the battle of Meanee was fought on the 17th of February. On this day Napier wrote in his journal, "It is my first battle as a commander: it may be my last. At sixty, that makes little difference; but my feelings are, it shall be *do or die*." Whatever deeds have been done by heroic Englishmen under the inspiration of duty never was there a greater deed of warfare than the victory of Meanee, which was won by two thousand six hundred men against twenty-two thousand. The Beloochees were posted on a slope behind the bed of the river Fulailee, which was for the most part dry. The half-mile between the two armies was rapidly passed; the bed of the river was crossed; up the slope ran the intrepid 22nd, and from the ridge looked down upon the Beloochees "thick as standing corn." The Beloochees covering their heads with their large dark shields, and waving their bright swords in the sun, rushed with frantic gestures upon the front of the 22nd. The Irish soldiers, with shouts as loud and shrieks as wild and fierce as theirs, met them with the bayonet, and "sent their foremost masses rolling back in blood."* The native infantry came up; the artillery took a commanding position, and mowed down the Beloochees with round-shot and canister. Upon the slope went on the deadly conflict for three hours, the assailants rushing upwards against an enemy who resolutely held his ground, the gaps in his ranks being closed up as fast as they were made. The result was at one time uncertain. The greater number of the European officers were killed or wounded. Napier was in the thick of the fight, and though surrounded by enemies was unharmed. Had he fallen, there would have been a tale to be told of rashness courting destruction. Like Nelson, his daring was his safety; but then it was under the direction of his genius. He saw, what the eye only of a great commander can see, the opportunity for closing a doubtful struggle by one decisive blow. He ordered a charge of cavalry. Defying the guns on the top of the ridge, the chosen band of horsemen charged right into the enemy's camp. Those who had so long stood firm on the hill fell into confusion. The 22nd and the sepoy gained the ridge, and drove the Beloochees over. The mighty host of the Ameers was thus beaten by a handful of troops led on to victory by one who had gained his experience in the great battles of the Peninsula; by one who knew that large masses of men, however brave and strong, are comparatively

* Sir W. Napier.

weak unless their movements are directed by some master-mind, bold in the conception of his plans, cool in their execution, and having all the resources of strategy at his command at the instant when all would be lost by ignorance or incertitude.

Sir Charles Napier followed up his victory the next day by a message sent into Hyderabad that he would storm the city unless it surrendered. Six of the Ameers came out, and laid their swords at his feet. He returned their jewelled weapons to the humbled chiefs. He refused to intrude upon their privacy by occupying their splendid palaces, heroically abiding in his humble tent. There was another enemy yet unsubdued—Shere Mahomed of Meerpoor. On the 24th of March Napier, who had been reinforced and had now five thousand troops, attacked this chief who had come with twenty thousand Beloochees before the walls of Hyderabad to recover the city. It was a hard-earned victory, which was followed up by the British occupation of Meerpoor. The spirit of the Beloochees was so broken that after two slight actions in June, when Shere Mahomed was routed and fled into the desert, the war was at an end. Scinde was annexed to the British possessions, and Sir Charles Napier was appointed its Governor. He ruled the country for four years. He saw the great natural resources of Scinde, and he led the way in rendering them available for commercial purposes by costly public works. The great branch of the Indus was opened to restore the fertility of Cutch. A gigantic pier was constructed at Kurrachee, by which a secure harbour was formed; and now the port is connected with the Indus by a railway. He made the revenue of the province sufficient to support the expenditure for its civil and political administration. But above all, he made the native population prosperous and contented under the British rule. The state of the people under his wise government is thus described by the historian of the Scinde war: "The labourer cultivates in security his land; the handicraftsman, no longer dreading mutilation of his nose or ears for demanding remuneration for his work, is returning from the countries to which he had fled, allured back by good wages and employment. Young girls are no longer torn from their families to fill the zenanas of the great, or sold into distant slavery. The Hindoo merchant and Parsee trafficker pursue their vocation with safety and confidence; and even the proud Beloochee warrior, not incapable of noble sentiments, though harsh and savage, remains content with a government which has not meddled with his right of subsistence, but only changed his feudal ties into a peaceful and warlike dependence. He has, moreover, become personally attached to a conqueror

whose prowess he has felt in battle, and whose justice and generosity he has experienced in peace." * The best proof that this high praise is not exaggerated is furnished by the fact that during the great period of danger through which we have passed, when so many enemies of the British power raised their heads in revolt, Scinde was faithful.

The close of the year 1843 was marked by another great military success in India. The state of Gwalior was in 1804 placed under the protection of the British government. The successor of the Rajah who died in 1843 was a minor, and a Regent was appointed, with the approbation of the Governor-General. The Regent was expelled by the Mahrattas, and the British Resident was insulted. Lord Ellenborough, to whom war appeared a noble pastime in which an amateur might laudably indulge, immediately sent sir Hugh Gough from Agra with fourteen thousand troops; and on the 29th of December he fought the battle of Maharajpoor, when the Mahrattas were defeated with great loss. On the same day Major-General Grey also defeated the Mahrattas at Punniar. The usurping government immediately submitted, and the strong fortress of Gwalior was occupied by a British governor. These warlike proceedings, however brilliant and successful, were not acceptable to the majority in the direction of the East India Company. In Parliament, on the 21st of April, 1844, sir Robert Peel, in answer to a question put to him by Mr. Macaulay, said, "I beg to state that on Wednesday last Her Majesty's Government received a communication from the Court of Directors, that they had exercised the power which the law gives them to recall at their will and pleasure the Governor-General of India." There were loud cheers from the Opposition benches. Mr. Macaulay then stated that he should not now bring forward a motion of which he had given notice, respecting the occupation of Gwalior. In the House of Lords the duke of Wellington declared that the Government had not concurred in the measure adopted. There was a prevailing opinion in Parliament and in the country that the recall of a Governor-General upon their sole authority was a dangerous power to be entrusted to the Court of Directors; nevertheless there was a feeling that India would be safer under sir Henry Hardinge, who had seen too much of war to be inflated by its "pride, pomp, and circumstance."

When the Session of Parliament was opened by the Queen on the 1st of February, 1844, there was a State trial proceeding in Ireland, which excited more attention throughout the country even

* Sir W. Napier.

than the royal speech. This speech could not avoid an indirect reference to the circumstances which had placed Daniel O'Connell and seven others at the bar of their country. It was the fifteenth day of this trial in the Court of Queen's Bench, in Dublin. At this remarkable juncture her Majesty said to the Lords and Commons—and she uttered these words with a marked emphasis—"At the close of the last Session of Parliament, I declared to you my firm determination to maintain inviolate the Legislative Union between Great Britain and Ireland. I expressed at the same time my earnest desire to co-operate with Parliament in the adoption of all such measures as might tend to improve the social condition of Ireland, and to develop the natural resources of that part of the United Kingdom. I am resolved to act in strict conformity with that declaration." It was the 12th of February, the twenty-fourth day of the trial, when O'Connell and the other traversers were, under various counts of the indictment, found guilty of conspiracy. As the Queen's speech could not offer "observations on events in Ireland, in respect to which proceedings are pending before the proper legal tribunal," so the attack upon the policy of the government, which was inevitable, could not be opened with propriety whilst the great legal issue was in suspense. But on the 13th of February the question was raised in both Houses. The marquis of Normanby moved a resolution pledging the House of Lords to examine into the causes of the discontent prevalent in Ireland, and to carry into effect the true principles of Union by securing to that country equal rights. After two nights' debate the resolution was rejected by 175 votes against 78. In the House of Commons, lord John Russell moved for a Committee of the whole House on the state of Ireland. The debate was continued for nine nights, Mr. O'Connell himself taking a part in it. It would be wearisome to attempt to follow its course, even in the barest outline. Perhaps the most impressive as well as the most truthful sentiment uttered was contained in the conclusion of sir Robert Peel's speech: "I do earnestly trust that the influence of public opinion, as well as that of the laws, may control this agitation—may convince those who are concerned in it, that they are prejudicing the best interests of Ireland—impeding its improvement, preventing the application of capital, and hindering the redress of those grievances which can, I think, be better redressed by the application of individual enterprise than by almost any legislative interference. I have the firmest conviction that, if there were calmness and tranquillity in Ireland, there is no part of the British dominions which would make such rapid progress as that country; for I know that there are fa-

cilities for improvement, opportunities for improvement, which would make that advance more rapid than that of any other part of our empire. I do hope—and I will conclude by expressing that earnest hope,—that this agitation and all its evil consequences may be permitted to cease."* On the division on the 23rd of February the numbers for lord John Russell's motion were, 225,—against it 324. The sentence against Mr. O'Connell was not pronounced till the 30th of May, when he was adjudged to be imprisoned for twelve months; to be fined 2000*l.*; and to be bound in his own recognizances, and by two sureties, to keep the peace for seven years. The other persons convicted, with the exception of one not brought up for judgment, were sentenced to nine months' imprisonment, and to a fine of 50*l.*, with smaller sums for their own recognizances, with sureties, to keep the peace for the like terms of seven years.

When sir Robert Peel met the House of Commons in the Session of 1844, he was enabled with justice to take a favourable view of the condition of the country as the best justification of his financial policy of 1842. There had been a disposition, he said, to draw too hasty a conclusion as to the operation of the great change in the Customs' Duties. The Government had asked for time properly to judge what would be the effect of that alteration. It was now admitted that there was a material improvement in some branches of manufacture. With regard to Revenue, he was enabled to state that the course of deficiency had been suspended, and that the revenue of the current year would be amply sufficient to meet the existing charges. He explicitly declared that he had not contemplated, and did not contemplate, an alteration in the present Corn-Laws. Neither on account of the price of corn, nor on account of variations in that price, was he led to form a more unfavourable opinion with respect to the operations of the existing law, than he entertained at the time when he proposed it.

The improvement in the condition of the people was attributed by members of the Opposition less to the measures of the Government than to the effects of a plentiful harvest. To this cause may be ascribed the diminished agitation for the repeal of the Corn-Laws. But the League held firmly together, and continued its salutary course of endeavouring to enlighten the public upon the permanent results of those laws. During the Session there were two formal discussions on the subject of Protection to Agriculture. Mr. Cobden, on the 12th of March, moved for a Committee to inquire into the effects of protective duties on agricultural tenants

* Hansard, vol. lxxiii. col. 254.

and labourers. The motion was negated by a majority of 91. On the 25th of June, Mr. Villiers proposed Resolutions which contemplated the total repeal of the Corn-Law. These Resolutions, after a debate of two nights, were rejected by a majority of 204. In this debate, as at the beginning of the Session, sir Robert Peel maintained his determination to stand by the existing law. He avowed himself an advocate for protection to agriculture, not for the sake of the landlords, but from a conviction of the evils which the sudden removal of protection would inflict upon general interests, domestic and colonial. He looked to those general interests; he looked especially to Ireland, of which agriculture was the great staple.

The principles avowed and the measures proposed by sir Robert Peel in his legislative career must be viewed under two aspects. He is the minister of expediency, holding a party together by deference to the opinions of the majority that placed him in power, and in this capacity we may always trace in his speeches some evasion of the logical points of a controversy—some inclination to skirmish on the outside of the field of debate instead of encountering the risks of a general conflict of principles. Thus he always deals with the question of Protection, and especially of Protection to Agriculture. His adversaries tell him again and again that he is speaking against his own convictions. Mr. Villiers closed the debate of the 25th of June, by saying that sir Robert Peel had just made a speech with which the agriculturists were well pleased; but he had made the same sort of speech for them in 1839, and had thrown them overboard afterwards, because the state of the season and the distress of the people had made it indispensable to give some relief to the country: the same thing would happen again. Mr. Milner Gibson averred that sir Robert Peel would not say that he meant to make Protection permanent, but his will must give law to his party, for they could not make a Ministry without him. As a party-leader we must therefore regard the First Lord of the Treasury when he deals with questions upon which the majority appeared to be irrevocably committed. Now and then, indeed, there was a slight indication that the powerful minister, under some pressure of circumstances, might think for himself and risk the consequences of an independent judgment. The extreme Protectionists were occasionally restless and suspicious under his reserved and cautious demeanour. There were men amongst them quite ready to become their leaders in the character of advocates; but the doubt always arose—could they govern as statesmen? The nation forbade the experiment in its support of

the temperate Conservatism of sir Robert Peel. Those who suspected more than ever that he was losing the "undoubting mind" of a party-leader, could not affirm that he was acting against a secret conscientious belief that should have urged him forward with or without his following. For him, the abandonment of Protection was not a purely scientific question. Representative Government imposed upon him, for a time at least, the inevitable distinction between speculation and action. Essentially different was the course of the minister when some great policy could be safely treated without reference to the chances of a division. When such an occasion arose, the timid partisan threw off his trammels and became the confident legislator.

The question of the renewal of the Bank Charter furnished such an opportunity, which real statesmanship knew how to seize. He was now consistently acting upon principles which he had tardily adopted upon conviction a quarter of a century before. Considering, he said, the part which he took in 1819 in terminating the system of inconvertible paper-currency, and in re-establishing the ancient standard of value, it would be to him a source of great personal satisfaction, if he should obtain the assent of Parliament to proposals, which were in fact the complement of these measures, which were calculated to guarantee their permanence and to facilitate their practical operation. He chiefly looked forward as the result of these proposals to the mitigation or termination of evils such as had at various times afflicted the country, in consequence of rapid fluctuation in the amount and value of the medium of exchange. The leading proposals which he submitted to the House of Commons on the 6th of May, were, briefly, as follows:—to continue for a limited time, under certain conditions, the privileges of the Bank of England; to provide by law that the Bank should be divided into two departments, one confined to the issue and circulation of notes, the other to the conduct of banking business; to limit the amount of securities upon which it should be lawful for the bank to issue Promissory Notes payable upon demand; to provide that a weekly publication should be made by the Bank of the state both of the circulation and the banking departments. With regard to other banks the issue of promissory notes payable to bearer on demand was prohibited to any bank not then issuing such notes, or to any bank hereafter to be established; and the banks of issue that were to continue were to be subject to limitations of the extent of issue, and to various regulations, including the weekly publication of the amount of notes issued. The bill founded on sir Robert Peel's Resolutions was carried, with very slight opposi-