



D'ISRAELI (EARL OF BEACONSFIELD)

LORD BEACONSFIELD

BENJAMIN DISRAELI, EARL OF BEACONSFIELD, British statesman, novelist, and man of letters, and a unique and picturesque figure in English politics, was born at Islington, London, Dec. 21, 1804, and died at London, April 19, 1881. He was the son of Isaac D'Israeli, author of the "Curiosities of Literature," and the "Amenities of Literature," whose father, of Hebrew stock, had fled from the Spanish Inquisition and settled in England in 1747. The latter's brilliant grandson, after receiving a good education, entered an attorney's office to study law; but tiring of the drudgery, he made his debut as a somewhat dazzling novelist, and after a period of travel made several attempts to get into Parliament, the object of his great ambition. His purpose in this, however, suffered repeated defeats, as well as discomfiture when he did gain entrance into the Commons, for his manner and style of speaking so excited the "risibles" of the House that he had to take his seat amid laughter and derision. As he did so, he exclaimed: "I shall sit down now, but the time will come when you will hear me!" Ere long his prophecy came true, for what with his fame as a novelist—his "Vivian Grey" and other stories, with their portraiture of notable personages under thin disguises, won him success in full measure—and his gifts as an eloquent speaker and parliamentary tactician, the House *did* hear him and admire his cleverness and audacity and dubbed him chief of the "Young England party." His powers of invective and sarcasm were great, while his loyalty to political principle was at first not conspicuous. Both of these characteristics were ere long manifested in his vituperative attacks upon Sir Robert Peel, who, Disraeli affirmed, had been elected as a champion of protection and had betrayed his party—or, as he wittily said of Sir Robert's adoption of Liberal measures, "The right honorable gentleman caught the Whigs bathing and walked away with their clothes." Disraeli's own inconsistency at this period is obvious when it is recalled that he sought at first to enter Parliament as a Liberal, and even a Radical, under the banner of Hume and O'Connell, the latter of whom, it will be remembered, once spoke tauntingly of Disraeli as "a lineal descendant of the impenitent thief upon the cross." There is no doubt, however, of what he became when he took office in the Conservative Lord Derby's cabinet, in 1852, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, passing in time to a full-fledged Imperialist, as Prime Minister in 1868, and again in 1874, on to his elevation, in the year of the Berlin Treaty (1878), to the House of Lords and the Peerage. One of the most noted acts of his at this time was the creation of the title of Empress of India conferred upon the late Queen Victoria. The character of Disraeli has been extensively discussed, but even those who regard him unfavorably usually concede that he was a great statesman, if not always a wise one. His speeches exhibit clear, concise argument, almost unequalled satire, and could always hold an audience. His appearance at any period of his life was striking, and both in youth and age lent itself readily to the purposes of caricature. As a novelist he was very unequal, but had he devoted himself wholly to fiction he might have been among the greatest.

"CONSERVATISM"

MANCHESTER, APRIL 3, 1872.

I HAVE not come down to Manchester to deliver an essay on the English Constitution; but when the banner of Republicanism is unfurled—when the fundamental principles of our institutions are controverted—I think, perhaps, it may not be inconvenient that I should make some few practical remarks upon the character of our Constitution—upon that monarchy limited by the co-ordinate authority of the estates of the realm, which, under the title of Queen, Lords, and Commons, has contributed so greatly to the prosperity of this country.

Gentlemen, since the settlement of that Constitution, now nearly two centuries ago, England has never experienced a revolution, though there is no country in which there has been so continuous and such considerable change. How is this? Because the wisdom of your forefathers placed the prize of supreme power without the sphere of human passions. Whatever the struggle of parties, whatever the strife of factions, whatever the excitement and exaltation of the public mind, there has always been something in this country round which all classes and parties could rally, representing the majesty of the law, the administration of justice, and involving, at the same time, the security for every man's rights and the fountain of honor. Now, gentlemen, it is well clearly to comprehend what is meant by a country not having a revolution for two centuries. It means, for that space, the unbroken exercise and enjoyment of the ingenuity of man. It means for that space the

continuous application of the discoveries of science to his comfort and convenience. It means the accumulation of capital, the elevation of labor, the establishment of those admirable factories which cover your district; the unwearied improvement of the cultivation of the land, which has extracted from a somewhat churlish soil harvests more exuberant than those furnished by lands nearer to the sun. It means the continuous order which is the only parent of personal liberty and political right. And you owe all these, gentlemen, to the throne.

There is another powerful and most beneficial influence which is also exercised by the crown. Gentlemen, I am a party man. I believe that, without party, parliamentary government is impossible. I look upon parliamentary government as the noblest government in the world, and certainly the one most suited to England. But without the discipline of political connection, animated by the principle of private honor, I feel certain that a popular assembly would sink before the power or the corruption of a minister. Yet, gentlemen, I am not blind to the faults of party government. It has one great defect. Party has a tendency to warp the intelligence, and there is no minister, however resolved he may be in treating a great public question, who does not find some difficulty in emancipating himself from the traditionary prejudice on which he has long acted. It is, therefore, a great merit in our Constitution, that before a minister introduces a measure to Parliament, he must submit it to an intelligence superior to all party, and entirely free from influences of that character.

I know it will be said, gentlemen, that, however beautiful in theory, the personal influence of the sovereign is now absorbed in the responsibility of the minister. Gentle-

men, I think you will find there is great fallacy in this view. The principles of the English Constitution do not contemplate the absence of personal influence on the part of the sovereign; and if they did, the principles of human nature would prevent the fulfilment of such a theory. Gentlemen, I need not tell you that I am now making on this subject abstract observations of general application to our institutions and our history. But take the case of a sovereign of England who accedes to his throne at the earliest age the law permits, and who enjoys a long reign—take an instance like that of George III. From the earliest moment of his accession that sovereign is placed in constant communication with the most able statesmen of the period, and of all parties. Even with average ability it is impossible not to perceive that such a sovereign must soon attain a great mass of political information and political experience. Information and experience, gentlemen, whether they are possessed by a sovereign or by the humblest of his subjects, are irresistible in life. No man with the vast responsibility that devolves upon an English minister can afford to treat with indifference a suggestion that has not occurred to him, or information with which he had not been previously supplied. But, gentlemen, pursue this view of the subject. The longer the reign, the influence of that sovereign must proportionately increase. All the illustrious statesmen who served his youth disappear. A new generation of public servants rises up, there is a critical conjunction in affairs—a moment of perplexity and peril. Then it is that the sovereign can appeal to a similar state of affairs that occurred perhaps thirty years before. When all are in doubt among his servants, he can quote the advice that was given by the illustrious men of his early

years, and, though he may maintain himself within the strictest limits of the Constitution, who can suppose, when such information and such suggestions are made by the most exalted person in the country, that they can be without effect? No, gentlemen; a minister who could venture to treat such influence with indifference would not be a constitutional minister, but an arrogant idiot.

Gentlemen, the influence of the crown is not confined merely to political affairs. England is a domestic country. Here the home is revered and the hearth is sacred. The nation is represented by a family—the royal family; and if that family is educated with a sense of responsibility and a sentiment of public duty, it is difficult to exaggerate the salutary influence they may exercise over a nation. It is not merely an influence upon manners; it is not merely that they are a model for refinement and for good taste—they affect the heart as well as the intelligence of the people; and in the hour of public adversity, or in the anxious conjuncture of public affairs, the nation rallies round the family and the throne, and its spirit is animated and sustained by the expression of public affection. Gentlemen, there is yet one other remark that I would make upon our monarchy, though had it not been for recent circumstances, I should have refrained from doing so. An attack has recently been made upon the throne on account of the costliness of the institution. Gentlemen, I shall not dwell upon the fact that if the people of England appreciate the monarchy, as I believe they do, it would be painful to them that their royal and representative family should not be maintained with becoming dignity, or fill in the public eye a position inferior to some of the noblest of the land. Nor will I insist upon what is unquestionably the fact, that the revenues of

the crown estates, on which *our* sovereign might live with as much right as the Duke of Bedford, or the Duke of Northumberland, has to his estates, are now paid into the public exchequer. All this, upon the present occasion, I am not going to insist upon. What I now say is this: that there is no sovereignty of any first-rate state which costs so little to the people as the sovereignty of England. I will not compare our civil list with those of European empires, because it is known that in amount they treble and quadruple it; but I will compare it with the cost of sovereignty in a republic, and that a republic with which you are intimately acquainted—the republic of the United States of America.

Gentlemen, there is no analogy between the position of our sovereign, Queen Victoria, and that of the President of the United States. The President of the United States is not the sovereign of the United States. There is a very near analogy between the position of the President of the United States and that of the Prime Minister of England, and both are paid at much the same rate—the income of a second-class professional man. The sovereign of the United States is the people; and I will now show you what the sovereignty of the United States costs. Gentlemen, you are aware of the constitution of the United States. There are thirty-seven independent States, each with a sovereign Legislature. Besides these, there is a confederation of States, to conduct their external affairs, which consists of the House of Representatives and a Senate. There are two hundred and eighty-five members of the House of Representatives, and there are seventy-four members of the Senate, making altogether three hundred and fifty-nine members of Congress. Now each

member of Congress receives £1,000 sterling per annum. In addition to this he receives an allowance called "mileage," which varies according to the distance which he travels, but the aggregate cost of which is about £30,000 per annum. That makes £389,000, almost the exact amount of our civil list.

But this, gentlemen, will allow you to make only a very imperfect estimate of the cost of sovereignty in the United States. Every member of every Legislature in the thirty-seven States is also paid. There are, I believe, five thousand and ten members of State Legislatures, who receive about \$350 per annum each. As some of the returns are imperfect, the average which I have given of expenditure may be rather high, and therefore I have not counted the mileage, which is also universally allowed. Five thousand and ten members of State Legislatures at \$350 each make \$1,753,500, of £350,700 sterling a year. So you see, gentlemen, that the immediate expenditure for the sovereignty of the United States is between £700,000 and £800,000 a year. Gentlemen, I have not time to pursue this interesting theme, otherwise I could show that you have still but imperfectly ascertained the cost of sovereignty in a republic. But, gentlemen, I cannot resist giving out one further illustration.

The government of this country is considerably carried on by the aid of royal commissions. So great is the increase of public business that it would be probably impossible for a minister to carry on affairs without this assistance. The Queen of England can command for these objects the services of the most experienced statesmen, and men of the highest position in society. If necessary, she can summon to them distinguished scholars or men most celebrated in

science and in arts; and she receives from them services that are unpaid. They are only too proud to be described in the commission as her Majesty's "trustworthy councillors"; and if any member of these commissions performs some transcendent services, both of thought and of labor, he is munificently rewarded by a public distinction conferred upon him by the fountain of honor. Gentlemen, the government of the United States has, I believe, not less availed itself of the services of commissions than the government of the United Kingdom; but in a country where there is no fountain of honor, every member of these commissions is paid.

Gentlemen, I trust I have now made some suggestions to you respecting the monarchy of England which at least may be so far serviceable that when we are separated they may not be altogether without advantage; and now, gentlemen, I would say something on the subject of the House of Lords. It is not merely the authority of the throne that is now disputed, but the character and the influence of the House of Lords that are held up by some to public disregard. Gentlemen, I shall not stop for a moment to offer you any proofs of the advantage of a second chamber; and for this reason. That subject has been discussed now for a century, ever since the establishment of the government of the United States, and all great authorities, American, German, French, Italian, have agreed in this, that a representative government is impossible without a second chamber. And it has been, especially of late, maintained by great political writers in all countries, that the repeated failure of what is called the French republic is mainly to be ascribed to its not having a second chamber.

But, gentlemen, however anxious foreign countries have

been to enjoy this advantage, that anxiety has only been equalled by the difficulty which they have found in fulfilling their object. How is a second chamber to be constituted? By nominees of the sovereign power? What influence can be exercised by a chamber of nominees? Are they to be bound by popular election? In what manner are they to be elected? If by the same constituency as the popular body, what claim have they, under such circumstances, to criticise or to control the decisions of that body? If they are to be elected by a more select body, qualified by a higher franchise, there immediately occurs the objection, why should the majority be governed by the minority? The United States of America were fortunate in finding a solution of this difficulty; but the United States of America had elements to deal with which never occurred before, and never probably will occur again, because they formed their illustrious Senate from materials that were offered them by the thirty-seven States. We, gentlemen, have the House of Lords, an assembly which has historically developed and periodically adapted itself to the wants and necessities of the times.

What, gentlemen, is the first quality which is required in a second chamber? Without doubt, independence. What is the best foundation of independence? Without doubt, property. The Prime Minister of England has only recently told you, and I believe he spoke quite accurately, that the average income of the members of the House of Lords is £20,000 per annum. Of course there are some who have more, and some who have less; but the influence of a public assembly, so far as property is concerned, depends upon its aggregate property, which, in the present case, is a revenue of £9,000,000 a year. But, gentlemen,