

# INTRODUCTION

NEARLY a century ago there flourished at Cambridge one of those groups of clever and enthusiastic young men, who form themselves into societies to read papers, to hold discussions and to formulate theories of private and public well-being. The Universities are, and always have been, the natural homes of societies founded with every kind of intellectual ideal, and for every kind of intellectual exercise, and it is often from these societies that ideas emerge into the world to produce practical results. It is but rarely, however, that a society which consists of men of the same or similar views. whose ideals are but slightly academic, and whose members are for the most part so young, attains to such general and lasting fame as did the "Apostles." Led by Frederick Denison Maurice, and counting among its members such men as Alfred Tennyson, Monckton Milnes, R. C. Trench, Charles Buller, and Arthur Hallam, this Society gave birth and inspiration at the University to what afterwards became in politics the Young England Party. Looked at more broadly the Society was itself a part of a wider movement which affected not only England but the whole of Europe early in the nineteenth century. In literature it appeared as the Romantic Revival, in government as a return of political faith, and an appreciation of the duties of the classes and of the rights of the masses. It finally swept away the coarse materialism, the infidelity, and the sentimental artificiality of the eighteenth century, and gave birth to a vigorous belief in the legitimacy of the desire to live and to enjoy life, to be swaved by generous emotions, and to give allegiance to noble causes. Call it the Romantic Revival, call it the heritage of the French Revolution, call it what you will; it was Vigour and Faith usurping the place of Apathy and Infidelity.

In England, however, there was no apparent upheaval which marked this change. There was no one year, one movement, one body of men, which appears in history as the hinge upon which the door leading to the new ideals opened. In France the appearance of the great Encyclopædia was the

first sign, the assembling of the States-General, and the fall of the Bastille are cardinal events. England had never had to bear the burden of aristocracy, either civil or ecclesiastical, as France or even Germany had to bear it. Neither of these influences was at work to unite in revolt her philosophers and her peasants, her men of genius and her paupers.

The constitutional liberty of England was, as every schoolboy knows, founded at Runnymede far back in the thirteenth century. After many interruptions and many experiments the machinery of this constitutional liberty has, by a long series of almost automatic changes of detail, lasting from 1641 or 1688 down to the present day, been brought to something approaching completion. It cannot be said that it was the Grand Remonstrance of 1641, or the Convention Parliament of 1688, or the growth of Cabinet Government under Walpole in the eighteenth century, or the Reform of Parliament under Earl Grey, Lord John Russell, and Mr. Gladstone in the nineteenth, which was the actual turning point in the history of our constitutional development. The reforms, or rather the advances, have been slow and tentative, and for the most part peaceful. It has long been the custom to regard the Reform Bill as the English Revolution. Disraeli himself called it so, and to the men who lived through the delirious period of its passing, no doubt it seemed a revolution. But as a matter of fact it did little more than arrange the practical working of an accepted principle. Class interest, prejudice, and views of expediency were opposed to it, consequently it created an uproar, but it was not a revolution.

The political and the social aspects of a revolution are not identical, and are but rarely contemporaneous. Rarely it happens that a sweeping change in the machinery of government is accompanied by a change in the status, well-being, and happiness of the individual citizen. More often the constitutional changes precede by many years, and only partially and remotely cause the social amelioration of a people. Men believe that better machinery will immediately conduce to better conditions of life and government. Generally constitutional reform and social reform are two things produced by the same movement and inter-acting to help each other forward. In this light may political affairs in England during the first half of the nineteenth century be regarded. The constitutional reforms of a century and a half did not and could not produce the results expected of them by their authors.

All the difficulties caused by the introduction of machinery and the consequent shifting of the population were not cured because Manchester was represented in Parliament. The sordid ideals and the gross materialism of the eighteenth century were not swept away by the Reform Bill or Catholic Emancipation. Poverty was not done away with by the Poor Laws, nor crime by the Criminal Law Reforms.

In 1844, the year of the publication of Coningsby, the political situation was uncertain and difficult. The great reform ministry had gradually broken up, and the Whigs had definitely fallen from power. Already, however, Peel was embarking on that course which caused Disraeli to say of him that he "had caught the Whigs bathing and run away with their clothes." Chartism was still alive and the terrors it engendered in the public mind were still fresh. Mass meetings were being held from end to end of the country to denounce the principles of Protection, and to urge the cause of Free Trade. O'Connell and his followers were setting fire to the fuel in Ireland by their systematised agitation for the repeal of the Union. The Reform Bill had been passed, the Criminal Law reformed, Catholics emancipated, and the Poor Laws recast. Yet social distress and constitutional grievances were still evolving the monster of Revolution and none knew how to banish it. Each question settled.each reform passed, seemed to call into existence new questions, new\_ grievances and new difficulties. Puzzling as this might be to the men of the time, the reasons for it are clear enough to-day. Whole classes, towns, and districts had existed before the Reform Bill, powerless in politics, unless it were for agitation. but each and all with their special political and social needs. grievances, and aspirations. Year by year the numbers and powers of this new nation were growing; year by year each section of it came to a clearer perception of what it had not got, and what it wanted. When political power came to these men, it was but a beginning. They or their friends had now in their hands the instrument with which to bring about the changes they desired; in the use of that instrument they were as yet unskilled and ignorant.

To classify statesmen who were faced with these difficulties as Whig or Tory is not enough. At this time the party labels merely served to show with what associates the men were for the time being acting. At any moment either party was liable to a complete dissolution, and the party-divisions might

on any given question be formed anew. By whatever names we call them, there were in regard to the questions of the day four main bodies in Parliament. In the first place there were those who had opposed and still murmured at the Reform Bill; the old high Tories, that landed aristocracy which followed the Duke of Wellington, the Duke of Buckingham and, in his earlier days, Sir Robert Peel. Next came two groups who were officially opposed to one another, but whose gradual tendency during this period was towards union. The first of these consisted of those members of the Tory party who now accepted the principle of the Reform Bill and who could be convinced of a need for further and consequent reform, but who did not give unqualified adherence to what may be regarded as the Whig doctrines of civil and religious equality. The views of this party were those of Peel's famous Tamworth Manifesto of 1834. He had then said that he considered "the Reform Bill as a final and irrevocable settlement of a great constitutional question," and had also said, "if the spirit of the Reform Bill implies merely a careful review of institutions, civil and ecclesiastical, undertaken in a friendly temper, combining with the firm maintenance of the established rights, the correction of proved abuses and the redress of real grievances -in that case, I can for myself and colleagues undertake to act in such a spirit and with such intentions." Almost identical with these were the views of the official Whig party. They were at this date only just recovering from the shock of their great successes. It was impossible that people called Whigs should coalesce so soon after the Reform Bill with people called Tories, but, save for the name, the two groups might, as regards their guiding principles of government, have been classed together. Lastly, there was the comparatively small body of the statesmen who saw in the Reform Bill but the means of introducing a long series of further reforms. 1844 this body was small and its members were generally regarded as agitators and fanatics; before long it became the preponderating force in the Whig party. For the sake of clearness these four parties at this transition stage may be called Tory, Conservative, Whig, and Radical.

Such was the position of political parties when Disraeli produced Coningsby in 1844.

Since the appearance of Vivian Grey in 1826 he had not been idle. He had travelled in Spain, Italy, the Levant, and the south-east of Europe. He had stood four times for

Parliament before he was elected member for Maidstone in 1837. He had become one of the best-known figures in English society, and was beginning to be a power in politics. was as an author that he was, as yet, most famous. Besides Vivian Grey he had written The Young Duke, Contarini Fleming, Popanilla, The Wondrous Tale of Alroy, The Rise of Iskander, The Revolutionary Epic, Venetia, and Henrietta Temple. It was through these works and through his position in London society that Disraeli had attained to his extraordinary reputation, but it is not for these things that this period of his career is chiefly important. Before his election to Parliament he had appeared before the public as a correspondent on political subjects to the newspapers, and he had published four important political pamphlets. Some knowledge of these pamphlets, as well as of the history of his early years in the House of Commons, is necessary to show how he came to hold the views of parties and policies which we shall find in Coningsby as the tenets of young England.

What is He? The Present Crisis Examined, A Vindication of the British Constitution, and the Runnymede Letters are the four pamphlets from which Disraeli's political position in the years before he entered Parliament may be learned. Much has been made of his inconsistencies during these early years of his political life; he has been represented as a time-server and a political traitor; he has been accused of obscurantism and charlatanism. "He who anticipates his century," said Mr. Sievers in *Vivian Grey*, "is generally persecuted when living, and is always pilfered when dead." Perhaps Disraeli anticipated his century, or perhaps he only committed the crimes of being a novelist as well as a statesman, of being more interested in principles of life and of government than in details of livelihood and administration. At all events he used every effort to make his position clear. He may have been right or he may have been wrong in his ideals; what irritated his opponents and what raised a scornful smile where it did not force an angry retort was the fact that he possessed ideals at all.

The first, second, and third articles of his political creed were his opposition to Whiggism. "If there be anything on which I pique myself," he said in 1835, "it is my consistency. Here is my consistency. I have always opposed with the utmost energy the party of which my honourable opponent is a distinguished member." And what was his reason for

this hostility to the Whigs? Was he opposed to the principle of civil and religious equality, which may be taken as the foundation of the Whig position? This was a principle in which Disraeli probably had but little faith. Such equality he very likely conceived as neither desirable nor possible. Still it was not this which provoked his chief opposition. He expressed his objection clearly enough when he wrote in one of his pamphlets, "A Tory, and a Radical, I understand; a Whig, a democratic aristocrat, I cannot comprehend." Looking at the history of the Whig party broadly, and after an interval of time, we can discern its leading principles. Viewed at close quarters at the time of Disraeli's entrance into political life, those principles appeared to him unreal or paradoxical. It was essential, he maintained, that the country should have a strong government. And in view of the condition of the country described above he was right. It was clear that neither the Tories nor the Whigs could provide such a government. What was the reason? Because neither of them had a principle on which to govern. The choice lay between the aristocratic and the democratic principles. The Whigs were an aristocratic party, and had tried to make their aristocratic sway permanent by the Reform Bill. The Bill itself was therefore an aristocratic measure, but the way in which it had been passed against the will of the House of Lords had destroyed the aristocratic principle. The advance to the democratic principle was now necessary or no government could be strong. The Whigs would not and could not make this advance. The Tories must coalesce with the Radicals and form a National Party.

These are the main lines of Disraeli's political creed in his early political life, and he was consistent enough in his adherence to them. Towards individual measures his views changed from time to time and he frankly acknowledged the fact. Triennial Parliaments he thought, in 1832, essential in order to break the power of the Whig oligarchy; at the same date he conceived that the Ballot alone could "give country gentlemen a chance of representing neighbouring towns where they are esteemed, instead of the nominees of a sectarian oligarchy." By 1835 it was evident that the power of the Whigs was not permanent, and Disraeli was willing to admit that he had been mistaken in his view that the constitution could not be efficient without the passing of these two measures.

The first five years of his Parliamentary life were, save for his historic failure in his first attempt, and his sympathetic speech on the Chartist petition, uneventful to the public view. He was at first unpopular, an object of derision for the peculiarities of his dress and manner, of suspicion for his nationality, and of fear for his powers and his ideals. British statesmen naturally enough resented their political parties being refounded and educated, and their leading men being attacked by such an individual as they imagined Disraeli to be. Meanwhile his ideals of a Tory Democracy remained as strong as ever, and he had learned by experience that to win he must wait and work and plan. When he found that the Torv party would not listen to his teaching, and before Peel's conversion to Free Trade gave him the glorious opportunity of capturing the old Tory allegiance, he sought to lay the foundations of the National Party by means of Young England.

Young England was never really a political party, nor was it at any time an organised force of any kind. It was originally one of those spontaneous associations of men with kindred aims which occur from time to time in all politics. It had no compulsory creed, though, as the guiding principles of its members were similar, their views on individual matters were usually the same. It arose among the young Tories first returned to the Parliaments of 1837 and 1841; it broke up over Peel's proposal to increase the grant to the Maynooth College in 1845. But it was out of its fragments and on the basis of its ideals that Disraeli built up the Tory Democracy which was completed in 1874. A few scattered speeches, some paragraphs, chapters, and magazine articles, the verses of Lord John Manners, and the "Historic Fancies" of Lord Strangford; these, besides Disraeli's novels, are the only direct and definite records of Young England. Yet its spirit permeated English political parties and perhaps the whole of English life.

The power, the inspiration, the splendour of "glittering youth" was its first belief, and perhaps this fundamental article of its creed has had the greatest influence of all as the years have gone on. This belief in youth, shadowed forth in Vivian Grey, was definitely stated again and again in the pages of the novels written specifically to expound the Young England principles and in the speeches made by Disraeli and his Young England friends at the time. Enough perhaps was said to make this clear in the introduction to Vivian Grey.

But in *Coningsby* a definite group of individuals is portrayed, and their school and University life and subsequent entrance into Parliament are sketched. It is essentially a study of young men, and in a great measure of certain particular young men—the Young England group. The *New Generation* is the second title of the work, and it is to the new generation that its teachings were addressed. Youth and the power of the individual are its constant theme. "It is a holy thing to see a state saved by its youth," said Coningsby.

And it was not only a belief in the power at all times of youth that Young England professed, but also a belief in the special importance and influence of youth at that particular epoch. The new conditions of social and political life brought about by the inventions of steam and electricity, by the wide distribution of the franchise and by the assuring of civil and religious equality, had put a special trust into the hand of the voung men of the day. "The youth of a nation," said Disraeli in a speech at the Manchester Athenæum in 1844. "are the trustees of posterity; but the youth I address have duties peculiar to the position which they occupy. They are the rising generation of a society unprecedented in the history of the world, that is at once powerful and new. In other parts of the kingdom the remains of an ancient civilisation are prepared tooguide, to cultivate, to influence the rising mind. but they are born in a miraculous creation of novel powers, and it is rather a providential instinct that has developed the necessary means of maintaining the order of your new civilisation, than the nurtured foresight of man. This is their inheritance. They will be called on to perform duties-great duties. I, for one, wish for their sakes, and for the sake of our country that they may be performed greatly. I give to them that counsel which I have ever given to youth, and which I believe to be the wisest and best-I tell them to aspire. believe that the man who does not look up will look down; and that the spirit that does not dare to soar is destined perhaps to grovel." .

But, as Sidonia says, it is not youth, but genius when young, that is divine. Enthusiasm, strength, youth, all are invaluable as adjuncts to the wise promulgation of true ideals; of themselves they are nothing. What was it that the youth of England were to do, when they had recognised their responsibilities? For the answer to this question we must turn to the pages of the novels, Coningsby, Sybil, and Tancred.

Coningsby was doubtless originally intended to embrace the exposition of the whole creed and of all the problems which had to be solved. But its author found, while writing it, or after its conclusion, that the subject was too extensive for a single work. Therefore while only touching, in the conversations and in a few of the incidents, on the present state of the country and the proposed remedies for its ills, his chief purpose was, as he said himself in the preface to the fifth edition in 1849, "to vindicate the just claims of the Tory party to be the popular political confederation of the country."

But before proceeding to the examination of the method in which these claims are vindicated, let us pause for a moment and estimate the literary value of Coningsby. Has it any claim to rank with the great novels of its day? Dickens was in 1844 already a popular favourite; Thackeray was in the field; Lytton had completed much of his work. And what made Coningsby so eagerly welcomed, so widely read, and so universally criticised at such a time? The wit and originality of the dialogue, the piquancy lent to the characters by their suggestions of portraiture or caricature, the fascination of having the contents of the daily papers presented in the perspective of a story, all these, no doubt, would have arrested for a few weeks or months the attention of Londoners and a few others. But Coningsby lived to be read and re-read down to the present day; it was translated into French; it has always been eagerly studied in America. Witty dialogue. piquant portraiture, and above all contemporary allusions are not enough to win such support as this.

And further, it must be admitted that Coningsby cannot claim a plot which is in all respects ideal, for the incidents are liable to straggle in a somewhat disorderly manner after the fundamental ideas. Nor are all of the characters the delineations of a master-hand. Coningsby himself is a prig and is meant to be a hero; Sidonia is a perfect piece of intellectual and practical mechanism, and is meant to be an inspiring and powerful man; and indeed most of the characters leave upon us the impression of a set of opinions or a number of actions rather than of human beings. The caricature is a different matter, but there is not enough of it in Coningsby to sustain the interest of the reader by itself. It may confidently be asserted that neither in 1844, nor to-day will the fascination of the novel be found to emanate from its plot, nor to any

great extent from the characters and their originals, nor alone from the attractive qualities mentioned above.

A work of art to live must create. And the superficial excellences of Coningsby as a work of art would not have been enough to overcome its defects, had it not created something which was of more than local and temporary power and interest. The first part of Vivian Grey had been an attempt at this creation, and had been hailed by Guizot as the first political novel. Coningsby was the development of Vivian Grey. High life was represented in novels like Pelham and the tales of Mrs. Gore, middle and low life by Dickens, adventurous life by Scott and his followers, domestic life by Jane Austen, Susan Ferrier, and John Galt. But there had not vet been a novel of political life. In an age of politics, the romance, the personnel, and the incidents of political life had, before the appearance of Coningsby with its initial experiments Vivian Grey, Popanilla, and Contarini Fleming, gone unrepresented. Disraeli had created a new type. The novel is essentially political, written to expound a political creed, and read in its own day to learn what that creed was. It is for this reason that, without a full appreciation and study of the purely political chapters, the book is only half appreciated. The lapse of sixty years has rendered the thinly disguised allusions and references obscure to the reader, and some analysis and explanation has become essential. A dozen such political stories might be written, which would never deserve to be exhumed. Coningsby is an exception. It is an exception because of the brilliance of its wit, the keenness of its satire, and the force of its ideals; it is also an exception because the political circumstances are less remote from our own than at first sight appears, and because it deals not only with isolated incidents and with party moves, but also with universal principles of government and statesmanship.

The great accusation Young England brought against the Whig party was, that it had caused England to be governed since the accession of the House of Hanover by what Disraeli calls The Venetian Constitution. The government, as in Venice, had been carried on by a close oligarchy. A certain fixed and inelastic number of noble families had been available for the councils, and these had selected and controlled the royal prisoner. The people as a whole had had no control of the Government either directly or indirectly, and the forms of the constitution precluded them from the possibility of

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obtaining it. The Whigs, he maintains, from the time they first existed under Charles I., had consistently and intentionally aimed at making England into a Venetian Republic. At their first definite attempt they overreached themselves, and, as Coningsby said, "Geneva beat Venice." The Puritan Republic was more than England could stomach, and more than the Whigs desired or could control, and the attempt failed. From this time onwards they had steadily and consistently pursued the same object. Their next definite move was the importation of William III. But "William III. found them out." He told their Whig leaders, "I will not be a Doge." He balanced parties, he baffled them as the Puritans baffled them fifty years before. With Anne the Venetians were more successful. "Two great Whig nobles, Argyle and Somerset, worthy of seats in the Council of Ten, forced their sovereign on her death-bed to change the ministry." And so the Whigs brought in the House of Hanover and dictated their terms to the Georges. From that time till the Reform Bill the English Sovereign had been a Doge, and the great families, for the most part Whig, had formed the Councils. The Newcastles, the Churchills, the Godolphins, the Carterets, the Foxes, the Pitts, and a few other families had practically controlled the government of England for a century.

To this form of government the principal objection was that the people were unregarded. Both the Sovereign and the Church, whose special charge is the whole nation and not a class or faction, were under the control of these oligarchs; and of a Parliamentary Monarchy and a Parliamentary Church Coningsby says that "the first has made government detested, and the second religion disbelieved."

But this was not all the charge that Young England, as shown in *Coningsby*, had to bring against the Whigs. Their power, "based upon the plunder of the Church," they had devoted to the formation of an exclusive constitution. They had, as we have seen, succeeded for the most part in the exclusion of the mass of the nation from the control of affairs, but the Napoleonic wars and the example of the Whigs enabled the Tory families to put themselves in the same position. From early in the nineteenth century the Tories had obtained the control of affairs, and had retained the exclusive constitution which the Whigs had formed. For the Whigs to recover power appeared difficult; for them to retain it permanently, as they hoped to do, seemed impossible.

# CONINGSBY

### BOOK I

### CHAPTER I

It was a bright May morning some twelve years ago, when a youth of still tender age, for he had certainly not entered his teens by more than two years, was ushered into the waiting-room of a house in the vicinity of St. James's Square, which, though with the general appearance of a private residence, and that too of no very ambitious character, exhibited at this period symptoms of being occupied for some public purpose.

The house door was constantly open, and frequent guests even at this early hour crossed the threshold. The hall table was covered with sealed letters; and the hall porter inscribed

in a book the name of every individual who entered.

The young gentleman we have mentioned found\_himself in a room which offered few resources for his amusement. A large table amply covered with writing materials, and a few chairs were its sole furniture, except the grey drugget that covered the floor, and a muddy mezzotinto of the Duke of Wellington that adorned its cold walls. There was not even a newspaper: and the only books were the Court Guide and the London Directory. For some time, he remained with patient endurance planted against the wall, with his feet resting on the rail of his chair; but at length in his shifting posture he gave evidence of his restlessness, rose from his seat, looked out of the window into a small side court of the house surrounded with dead walls, paced the room, took up the Court Guide, changed it for the London Directory, then wrote his name over several sheets of foolscap paper, drew various landscapes and faces of his friends; and then, splitting up a pen or two, delivered himself of a yawn which seemed the climax of his weariness.

And yet the youth's appearance did not betoken a character that, if the opportunity had offered, could not have found amusement and even instruction. His countenance, radiant with health and the lustre of innocence, was at the same time thoughtful and resolute. The expression of his deep blue eye was serious. Without extreme regularity of features, the face was one that would never have passed unobserved. His short upper lip indicated a good breed; and his chestnut curls clustered over his open brow, while his shirt collar thrown over his shoulders was unrestrained by handkerchief or ribbon. Add to this, a limber and graceful figure, which the jacket of his boyish dress exhibited to great advantage.

Just as the youth, mounted on a chair, was adjusting the portrait of the duke which he had observed to be awry, the gentleman for whom he had been all this time waiting entered

the room.

"Floreat Etona!" hastily exclaimed the gentleman in a sharp voice, "you are setting the duke to rights. I have left you a long time a prisoner; but I found them so busy here,

that I myself made my escape with difficulty."

He who uttered these words was a man of middle size and age, originally in all probability of a spare habit, but now a little inclined to corpulency. Baldness perhaps contributed to the spiritual expression of a brow, which was however essentially intellectual, and gave some character of openness to a countenance which, though not ill-favoured, was unhappily stamped by a sinister character that was not to be mistaken. His manner was easy, but rather audacious than well-bred. Indeed, while a visage which might otherwise be described as handsome was spoilt by a dishonest glance, so a demeanour that was by no means deficient in self-possession and facility, was tainted by an innate vulgarity, which in the long run, though seldom, yet surely, developed itself.

The youth had jumped off his chair on the entrance of the

gentleman, and then taking up his hat, said:

"Shall we go to grandpapa now, sir?"

"By all means, my dear boy," said the gentleman, putting his arm within that of the youth; and they were just on the point of leaving the waiting-room, when the door was suddenly thrown open and two individuals, in a state of very great excitement, rushed into the apartment.

"Rigby—Rigby!" they both exclaimed at the same moment.

"By G— they're out."
"Who told you?"

"The best authority; one of themselves."

"Who-who?"

"Paul Evelyn; I met him as I passed Brookes', and he told me that Lord Grey had resigned, and the king had accepted his

resignation."

But Mr. Rigby, who, though very fond of news and much interested in the present, was extremely jealous of any one giving him information, was sceptical. He declared that Paul Evelyn was always wrong; that it was morally impossible that Paul Evelyn could ever be right; that he knew, from the highest authority, that Lord Grey had been twice yesterday with the king; that on the last visit nothing was settled; that if he had been at the palace again to-day, he could not have been there before twelve o'clock; that it was only now one quarter to one; that Lord Grey would have called his colleagues together on his return; that at least an hour must have elapsed before anything could possibly have transpired. Then he compared and criticised the dates of every rumoured incident of the last twenty-four hours (and nobody was stronger in dates than Mr. Rigby); counted even the number of stairs which the minister had to ascend and descend in his visit to the palace, and the time their mountings and dismountings must have absorbed (detail was Mr. Rigby's forte); and finally, what with his dates, his private information, his knowledge of palace localities, his contempt for Paul Evelyn, and his confidence in himself, he succeeded in persuading his downcast and disheartened friends, that their comfortable intelligence had not the slightest foundation.

They all left the room together; they were in the hall; the gentlemen who brought the news looking somewhat depressed but Mr. Rigby gay even amid the prostration of his party, from the consciousness that he had most critically demolished a piece of political gossip, and conveyed a certain degree of mortification to a couple of his companions; when a travelling carriage and four with a ducal coronet drove up to the house. The door was thrown open, the steps dashed down, and a

youthful noble sprang from his chariot into the hall.

"Good morning, Rigby," said the duke.

"I see your grace well, I am sure," said Mr. Rigby, with a very softened manner.

"You have heard the news, gentlemen?" he continued.

"What news? Yes - no - that is to say - Mr. Rigby thinks -- "

"You know, of course, that Lord Lyndhurst is with the king?"

"It is impossible," said Mr. Rigby.

"I don't think I can be mistaken," said the duke smiling.

"I will show your grace that it is impossible," said Mr. Rigby. "Lord Lyndhurst slept at Wimbledon. Lord Grey could not have seen the king until twelve o'clock; it is now five minutes to one. It is impossible, therefore, that any message from the king could have reached Lord Lyndhurst in time for his lordship to be at the palace at this moment."

"But my authority is a very high one," said the duke.

"Authority is a phrase," said Mr. Rigby; "we must look to time and place, dates and localities, to discover the truth."

"Your grace was saying that your authority—" ventured to observe Mr. Tadpole, emboldened by the presence of a duke, his patron, to struggle against the despotism of a Rigby, his

tyrant.

"Was the highest," rejoined the duke smiling; "for it was Lord Lyndhurst himself. I came up from Nuneham this morning, passed his lordship's house in Hyde Park Place as he was getting into his carriage in full dress, stopped my own, and learned in a breath, that the Whigs were out, and that the king had sent for the chief baron. So I came on here at once."

"I always thought the country was sound at bottom," exclaimed Mr. Taper, who, under the old system, had sneaked

into the Treasury Board.

Tadpole and Taper were great friends. Neither of them ever despaired of the Commonwealth. Even if the Reform Bill were passed, Taper was convinced that the Whigs would never prove men of business; and when his friends confessed among themselves that a Tory government was for the future impossible, Taper would remark in a confidential whisper, that for his part he believed before the year was over, the Whigs would be turned out by the clerks.

"There is no doubt that there is considerable reaction," said Mr. Tadpole. "The infamous conduct of the Whigs in the Amersham case, has opened the public mind more than any-

thing."

" Aldborough was worse," said Mr. Taper.

"Terrible!" said Tadpole. "They said there was no use discussing the Reform Bill in our house. I believe Rigby's great speech on Aldborough has done more towards the reaction than all the violence of all the political unions together."

"Let us hope for the best," said the duke mildly. "'Tis a bold step on the part of the sovereign, and I am free to say I

could have wished it postponed; but we must support the king

like men. What say you, Rigby? You are silent."

"I am thinking what an unfortunate circumstance it was for the sovereign, the country, and the party, that I did not breakfast with Lord Lyndhurst this morning, as I was nearly doing, instead of going down to Eton."

"To Eton, and why to Eton?"

"For the sake of my young friend here; Lord Monmouth's grandson. By the bye, you are kinsmen. Let me present to your grace—Mr. Coningsby."

#### CHAPTER II

THE political agitation which for a year and a half had shaken England to its centre, received if possible an increase to its intensity and virulence, when it was known in the early part of the month of May, 1832, that the Prime Minister had tendered his resignation to the king, which resignation had been graciously

accepted.

The amendment carried by the opposition in the House of Lords on the evening of the 7th of May, that the enfranchising clauses of the Reform Bill should be considered before entering into the question of disfranchisement, was the immediate cause of this startling event. The Lords had previously consented to the second reading of the bill with the view of preventing that large increase of their numbers with which they had been long menaced; rather indeed by mysterious rumours than by any official declaration; but nevertheless in a manner which had carried conviction to no inconsiderable portion of the opposition that the threat was not without foundation.

During the progress of the bill through the Lower House, the journals which were looked upon as the organs of the ministry, had announced with unhesitating confidence, that Lord Grey was armed with what was then called a "carte blanche" to create any number of peers necessary to insure its success. Nor were public journalists under the control of the ministry, and whose statements were never contradicted, the sole authorities

for this prevailing belief.

Members of the House of Commons, who were strong supporters of the cabinet, though not connected with it by any official tie, had unequivocally stated in their places that the

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