

Lord Beaconsfield and English Society

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Lord Beaconsfield and English Society.

The life and literary characteristics of Lord Beaconsfield, the English statesman and author, better known in the world of letters as Benjamin Disraeli, is just now an interesting study. Lord Beaconsfield has now been dead twenty years so that all political animosities have been forgotten, and sufficient time has elapsed for a fair and critical analysis of the work of this great man. To the American citizen, whose nation has taken such a sudden and unexpected turn in its foreign affairs in the last few years, Lord Beaconsfield's foreign policy should be very instructive, although it is safe to say that very few in this country identify the author of "Coningsby" and "Lothair" with the Minister who placed England in control of the Suez Canal. Lord Beaconsfield is at the present time much better known as a statesman than as an author. Few people held, even at the height of his literary fame, that his novels ranked with those of the English masters, while the English nation is just now beginning to appreciate the magnitude and far-sightedness of his foreign policy. It may be that the present generation will forget the very names of his novels of English society, but they are not likely to forget the Empress of India and the Suez Canal.

Rather singularly the early life of Lord Beaconsfield has remained somewhat of an enigma, for neither the exact year nor place of his birth can now be ascertained. (1). He was born either in 1803 or 1804 (2); but the place is still more indefinite, most probably in the King's Road, Grey's Inn, London, although the Adelphi, and Islington are sometimes claimed. His isolation by the fact of his Hebrew parentage served, no doubt, to obscure his early years, and the mystery-loving Jew was probably unwilling to part with this legendary air for the sake of mere historical accuracy. (3). This mysteriousness and remoteness concerning his boyhood piques the fancy and curiosity, and the lack of information has produced a sort of myth which the Prime Minister was nothing loath to use for the purpose of enamouring his followers. This much is certain; his father, Isaac D'Israeli, was a man much noted in the literary circles of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as a man of learning and the author of "Curiosities of Literature", and that his grandfather, Benjamin D'Israeli, came to England from Venice in the reign of George II. For more than this no proofs have

1. 'Early Life of Lord Beaconsfield', Quar. Rev. 168: 4.

2. Disraeli himself gives 1805 - Brandes gives Dec. 21, 1804. Brandes, p. 20.

3. Nation 30: 420.

been produced, while to Lord Beaconsfield fact and fable had much the same value. However all his biographers up to the present time accept his statements as facts and they agree very well with history. He says in his introduction to his father's "Curiosities of Literature", that his ancestors were driven by the Inquisition from Spain to the Venetian Republic at the end of the fifteenth century, that they were of the Sephardim, or South Europe, branch of the Jewish race, and on reaching the shores of Venice they "dropped their Gothic surname...., and grateful to the God of Jacob who had sustained them through unprecedented trials and guarded them through unheard of perils, they assumed the name of Disraeli, a name never borne before, or since, by any other family, in order that their race might be forever recognized".(1).

The earliest date that is definitely known in Benjamin Disraeli's life is July 31, 1817, when the poet, Samuel Rogers, took the young Jew, then about the age of thirteen, to St. Andrew's church, Holborn, and had him baptized into the Church of England.(2). It might be said that his actual English existence began with this date. After this he went for a time to a private school at Winchester, but owing to the strong anti-Semitic prejudices of his fellow-students his stay was short and exceedingly unpleasant. His education after this was

1. Curiosities of Literature, pp.4 and 5.

2. Brandes, p. 20.

carried on in his father's house and was extremely desultory. Later he was put by his father to the uncongenial task of studying law in a lawyer's office. Being presumably employed in making out briefs, he used his time in writing a novel which he published when he was scarcely twentyone years old. "Vivian Grey" was immediately successful ; the fact that "we are all in it together" appealed to the social leaders and at once Benjamin Disraeli had the freedom of the best society of London. Up to this time ~~the~~ society to which he had been accustomed was mainly that of literary men, and, while undoubtedly the best, it was not to be compared to the drawing-rooms of Mayfair and the salon of Lady Blessington. His amazed father is said to have exclaimed on the publication of "Vivian Grey", "Dukes? Sir, what does my son know about Dukes? He never saw ~~one~~^{any} in his life". (1).

Thus his literary and social career began simultaneously, and such astonishing success would have turned the head of any youth but Benjamin Disraeli. There was one thing more that he desired, political success . Fame he had already within his grasp, then why not aspire to power? It was absolutely necessary for the satisfaction of his boundless ambition. His earliest novel gives evidence that he planned to be nothing less than Prime Minister. We can hear Disraeli's ~~voice~~ voice on Count Fleming's lips when he asks, " Would you

1. "Lothair" Ed. . Rev. 132: 275.

rather have been Homer or Julius Caesar, Shakspeare or Napoleon"?(1). In grasping the coveted power he had to undergo successive defeats and nothing but his overmastering self-confidence carried him through. In 1837 Benjamin Disraeli, together with Mr. Wyndham Lewis (2), was elected to Parliament from the borough of Maidstone, after five previous attempts and four direct defeats. (3). William IV died in June 1837, and in November the new Parliament met for a short session, (4), so Disraeli's political career began precisely with the reign of Victoria. He had been a Radical when he first attempted to enter Parliament, but when at last successful he had become an ardent Tory, an opposer of the New Poor Law and of the repeal of the Corn Laws. (5).

In recounting the political history of Benjamin Disraeli's life, the incident of his maiden speech in the House of Commons may be passed over as too painful as well as too familiar to linger upon. His threat of "Ay, sir, I will sit down now, but the time will come when you will hear me", (6) became a prophecy of his future career. The memory of this insult must ever have been with him, spurring his ambition on to the end, when his threat was more than fulfilled and the peace of Europe lay in his hands as well as the control of

1. "Contarini Fleming" p. 155.

2. The husband of Lord Beaconsfield's future wife.

3. Brandes, p. 171.

4. Parliament is not now dissolved by the death of the sovereign.

5. Ed. Review, 155:553.

6. Brandes, p. 177.

England . On the disaffection of the Conservative party from its leader, Sir Robert Peel, through his advocacy of the repeal of the Corn Laws,(1), Disraeli became its leader and maintained himself at its head for thirtyfive years, " the longest political leadership recorded in Parliamentary history".(2). During this time he was three times Chancellor of the Exchequer, twice Prime Minister, and finally Earl of Beaconsfield and Knight of the Garter.

The English reviews of Lord Beaconsfield's career commonly begin with a statement to the effect that he was and still is an enigma, and express profound astonishment that a man of his parentage and rank should attain to such heights of social and political power. And, curiously enough , American writers follow the English view. Mr. Towle begins his biography with a quotation guaranteed by age and constant usage:" Mr. Disraeli is a curious puzzle . Nobody ever mentions his name without a smile; nobody hears ~~him~~ without a corresponding smile . It awakens that sense of incongruity in the perception of which we are told that humor consists. Among the staid respectabilites of English politics, Mr. Disraeli is a *Fifine* at court, or turned duenna" (3). Such statements as these do not appeal to the American student of history, nor does it appear to him to be quite the correct view. He places it along with the English charge of charlatanism against Lord

1. January, 1846.

2. Blackwood's ,149\$87.

3. Towle's Lord Beaconsfield, pp. 1 and 2.

Beaconsfield . American institutions are such that the political eminence he attained causes much less wonder and merriment in our own country than in England. The meteoric careers of some of our well known statesmen are not wholly dissimilar in many respects, and here it occasions neither a great deal of ridicule nor of wonder, much less the charge of charlatanism. The very fact that Lord Beaconsfield received the highest honors the British public has the power to bestow and that he was for so many years the leader of the aristocratic Tory party disproves this charge. "Does staid old England bestow such trust, confidence, and honors upon a 'charlatan'?" (1). It appears from this that Lord Beaconsfield can better be judged here in America where he has aroused no political prejudices and where he is better understood by reason of the ~~En.~~ English temperament. While Herr Brandes does not expressly admit that Lord Beaconsfield's career is enigmatical, yet his book is a long and rather futile attempt to explain it (2). There is a sort of political code in the United States that as long as a man keeps within the latitude of legitimate politics, he can use all his powers to further his own aims. This course is generally followed, often praised, and rarely condemned. Conservative England does not wholly understand this, nor does she like to admit that it is a motive worthy of her statesmen and Prime Ministers. This explains

1. North American Review, 147: 669.

2. "Lord Beaconsfield", Georg Brandes.

the general misunderstanding of Disraeli in England , and on this account it is much to be lamented that his literary executor , Lord Rowton, to whom he intrusted his papers and correspondence, has never yet written his biography or edited his papers.

In treating of Lord Beaconsfield and his attitude toward English society, this society falls naturally into three divisions; the nobility, the middle classes , and the lower classes. Benjamin Disraeli by virtue of his efficacious baptism into the Church of England was admitted to the political rights of an English Commoner, the Third Estate of the realm, and as such he was the first of his race to enter Parliament.(1). One would expect him under such circumstances- those of his parentage and social rank - to ally himself with the powerful Radicals. Being entirely without political connections or prejudices of any kind , he at first inclined toward this party, but in a short time, as was said before, he turned to the Conservatives. His apostacy has been the subject of much bitter criticism and he has been accused of changing his political faith merely for the sake of personal gain. This is a grave charge , especially so since it is almost wholly founded upon personal and political enmity. That it was accepted as true by many members of both parties at that time is undoubtedly the case. Even the Tories were somewhat afraid he

1. A Jew professing the Jewish religion did not enter Parliament until 1858. This was Baron Lionel De Rothschild the original Sidonia. ~~No. Am. 14700~~ *North Am. Review 177: 669.*

would desert them as he had done the Whigs, 'catch them', as he said of Peel, 'in bathing, and walk away with their clothes'. (1). However it is certain from his earliest books that he inclined toward the nobility. In "Vivian Grey", "Contarini Fleming", and the "Young Duke", those early productions in which Disraeli recorded his own hopes and ambitions, the heroes are invariably from noble and wealthy families. In his "Life of Bentinck" he tells us that "all the tendencies of the Jewish race are Conservative. Their bias is to religion, property, and natural aristocracy.....". (2). Not bound to any party by ties of kinship or tradition, and being utterly without any early political education, he was at first drifting, as it were, on an unknown sea and it was only after repeated failures and ship-wrecks that he entered upon his true course. When he had gained wisdom from experience it was the natural thing for him to join that party which recognized the principles he had adopted. It is hard to see just in what way he could have expected to gain any personal advantage from joining the aristocratic Tory party. Sir Robert Peel, Lord Derby, and Lord George Bentinck were the leaders of the party, and no one could as yet foretell the change that was to take place in Peel's policy toward protection and his subsequent loss of power, or Lord George Bentinck's sudden

1. Brandes, p. 260.

2. " p. 363-4.

death. " It was an odd destiny which derived the champion of the British territorial interest and landed aristocracy from a race debarred from owning property in land, and from a city in which from the nature of the case a territorial aristocracy could not exist". (1).

are Benjamin Disraeli allied himself with the English aristocrats and ultimately became their leader in politics, but there is some question whether they ever regarded him in any other light than that of an imposter. On the other hand there are two distinct views of the way Benjamin Disraeli regarded the aristocracy. While neither one denies that his Oriental love of splendor led him to express at all times his admiration for the fine houses, gardens plate, and ornaments of the nobles, yet one denies that he ever felt anything but contempt, or at least toleration, for their owners; while the other affirms that his admiration for the nobility amounted to servility. All of Benjamin Disraeli's ten novels, with only "Sybil" excepted (2), deal with the pursuits and politics of the ruling class. This wholesale cataloguing of their virtues and vices began when Benjamin Disraeli was scarcely twenty years old and only ended with his death in 1881, and the range of style and treatment is correspondingly broad. In the earlier novels "Vivian Grey", "The Young Duke", and "Contarini Fleming",

1. Littell's Liv. Age, 137: 276, Part 1.

2. Satires and Tales not included.

his acquaintance with English society had as yet been limited, so that his views concerning the relations of the classes were mostly ideals, and he pictures the "upper ten thousand" as he sees them in his imagination. However he had seen enough of the nobility to enable him, with his keen insight into societies and men, to gratify his taste for satire by attacking in an amusing way some of its weaknesses. This is the period of his life in which he wrote some of the best satires in our language, ranking only below Swift whom he imitated in "The Voyage of Captain Popanilla". Indeed it seemed that his reputation as a writer was to rest on satires alone, for "Popanilla" was followed by "The Infernal Marriage", and "Ixion in Heaven", the latter, especially, being exquisite. If this early in his career his love of sarcasm exerted itself with such force, it would not be strange if the novels of this period contained satirical touches.

Nevertheless on this ground alone it would be presuming too much to say that the very young Disraeli despised the English nobles. He would seem rather to have been very much enamoured with them and to have resolved that by some means or other he would reach a position as high as the one they occupied. It also appeared to him this early that there was but one way to gratify his ambition and that was through politics. It was no easy task that he had mapped out for himself and he could not have been ignorant of the ignominy and insults that would be heaped upon him because of his Jewish descent. In "Vivian Grey" the youthful hero- in this case the youthful author-

indulges in a reflection some what of this nature: 'How many great nobles only want brains to become ministers, and what does Vivian Grey want to become one? Nothing but the influence of such a noble. If these two work together as they should only one thing more is necessary and that is courage'. (1).

Vivian Grey is not scrupulous in his choice of means and it does not appear that the author to whom he owed his existence would be particularly so. Disraeli at this time resembled the young Lothair,' his opinions were already formed on every subject; that is to say on every subject of importance; and, what is more, they would never be changed'. (2).

If in the earlier part of Disraeli's career he made epigrams at the expense of the old English families, and more than admired their magnificence, he cannot be said to have offered homage to mere rank at any time. His political ~~life~~ life brought him chiefly into contact with the higher classes but these he never sought to conciliate, and whatever rank he has attained has been won by the superiority of his intellect. The English duke in "Lothair" and "Endymion" is no more an real English aristocrat than the duke in "Vivian Grey". This the critics have been so persistent in pushing before the eyes of the public that a few people in England and some in America have come to the conclusion that under an exaggeration of weaknesses and the riot of an Ori-

1. "Vivian Grey" p. 19. Brandes, p. 63.

2. "Lothair" p. 12.

ental imagination there may be a strong foundation of truth, and that the British aristocracy may not be of divine origin after all. Such characters as the Duke of Monmouth, the Egremonts, and the Earl de Mowbray effectually silence any claim that the Earl of Beaconsfield worshiped rank abstractly and indiscriminately. He never tired of telling the proudest nobility of the world that their ancestors were roaming in the forests, companions of wild beasts, when his had dwelt in palaces for a thousand years. (1). There are some people who still believe "Lothair" to be a sort of poem in praise of the English aristocracy. (2). Considered in this light it is difficult to see how those people ever got farther than the first pages of the book, for the Duke and his family history would be infinitely disgust^{ing} if viewed in any other light than that of a burlesque. If Lord Beaconsfield rather despised the English nobility he did thoroughly admire their houses and clothing, and, more than this, he envied them the possession of the power he would like to have shared. It was this scorn of their meanesses and weaknesses that he felt that he could turn to the account of his own ambition (3), and being an alien in more than one sense, he felt no prickings of conscience in so doing. " In the curious mixture of servility and mockery which runs through his description of the lives and conver-

1. The Jew in English Fiction, p. 113.

2. Atlan. 32:641.

3. Liv. Age, 137: 657.

sation of the high nobility, where reverence ends and contempt begins it is impossible to say. They are both obviously there, and, inconsistent as they may seem, they are inextricably mixed ".(1). Lord Beaconsfield's readers may not have any cause to complain of the society to which he introduces them (2), yet at times they may cry out with the over-burdened critic, " Why will Mr. Disraeli be so fond of Dukes"?(3). In dealing with the nobility among whom his life was mainly spent, two Hebrew characteristics influenced his modes of thought: first, the idea of personal advantage ; second, the strong Oriental and Jewish enjoyment of splendor and riches , whose charm he never tried to conceal, while he never stinted his indulgence in it.

If Disraeli was so fond of dukes , in what light did he consider the great middle classes ? The answer almost resolves itself into simply this, he does not consider them at all. It would be unfair to advance any theory as the true one which is based merely on a study of a few examples of the middle classes he has placed in his novels. But we do know from his political life and speeches that Lord Beaconsfield had a supreme contempt for the modern political economy and industries that have called this great mass of the population into being. Without factories and with all the land in the

1. Liv. Age, 137: 657.

2. Nation , 10: 372.

3. Ed. R. 86: 138.

possession of the great feudal noble there could be no middle class, and this was the ideal state of society to Lord Beaconsfield. The middle class was modern, much more so than the nobility whom he taunted with the fact, and he never could grasp the meaning of political economy. To him it was something to be shunned like the plague. This appears strange to those who, on account of his foreign triumphs, are accustomed to consider him a broader statesman than was usual in England at that time. The fact is that he was not broad, but narrow in a different way than the Anglo-Saxon. His narrowness was the narrowness of the Jew who has by a tentative policy and by adaptation to circumstances, prospered in every clime, but has clung obstinately to long worn out ideas and customs. In Patriarchal times there was no middle class, neither was there such a class in the Venitian Republic, so of what use was it? For this reason the society which Lord Beaconsfield portrays is a very peculiar one. In most of his books it consists entirely of those who are as rich as Croesus and of the rank of Lords, with a suitable army of retainers and servants to gratify their royal whims and to attend them in their elegant leisure. However we are at once initiated into a state of society much stranger than this from the modern point of view. In "Sybil" there are two classes, or "nations", the very rich and the very poor, who are bound together by no ties of common interest. Since they are the only two classes and their causes for strife are so numerous and

bitter, there is no remedy; " a house divided against itself cannot stand ", unless it surrenders the direction of affairs into the hands of the Young England party. "The eyes of Young England can discover in the body politic what they consider the head of gold and the feet of clay;— the heart, which carries on the circulation forms no part of that body". (1).

Among the very few examples of the English manufacturing and professional classes that Disraeli made use of in his novels, two are best known and best illustrative of his opinions. These are Job Thornberry in "Endymion" and Mr. Putney Giles, the solicitor, in "Lothair". Job Thornberry is known to be Benjamin Disraeli's conception of the great Richard Cobden. He is the apostle of Free Trade and through him all the Free Trade doctrine is clearly and consistently advanced. In this bare outline of the character of the great Commoner we can only guess at many of the details, but there is the touch of the master's sympathetic hand in even this. We can only lament that the man who so tenderly handles Job Thornberry should have considered it beneath his literary dignity to picture the class from which he came. Thornberry was the son of a tenant farmer and, as a young man, he became dissatisfied with his life in the country, for he had a good education and was quick to see that the position his father occupied would not satisfy him and was inconsistent with the opinions

he held. He left the Manor Farm and with a very small borrowed capital began manufacturing. In this he prospered and in time became the owner of one of the largest factories in England. By this time he had become thoroughly imbued with the one idea, Free Trade. His business declined on account of failures in America and the increased prices caused by the Corn Laws, and he soon after found himself in Parliament. Here by the force of his wonderful oratory and his devotion to his principle he quickly became a leader. Of his career in Parliament Benjamin Disraeli notes but a few facts, the rest may be readily taken from the life of Richard Cobden. Disraeli sums up the character of Job Thornberry very comprehensively and briefly. "Thornberry was a man of original mind and singular energy; and, although of extreme views on commercial subjects, all his conclusions were founded on extensive and various information, combined with no inconsiderable practice. The mind of Thornberry was essentially a missionary one. He was always ready to convert people. And Thornberry, like all propagandists, was more remarkable for his zeal and his convictions than for that observation and preception of character which are the finest elements in the management of men and affairs". (1). This summary of the character of Cobden, aside from the exigencies arising from its adaptation to fiction, is original and, in the larger measure, true especially the latter part. Of all the descript-

1. "Endymion", p. 199-200.

ions of homes in palaces that Disraeli has written none seem so life like as that of the simple home of Job Thornberry and his family at Hurstley, and none show the marks of so gentle a treatment by the author. The perplexity at his domestic affairs and at "finding his whole future career chalked out, with out himself being consulted", makes this fine and simple character all the more lovable. There is nothing in the flat uninteresting account of the unfailing success of the hero, Endymion, that deserves to outlive this portrait of Richard Cobden.

Mr. Putney Giles, Lothair's attorney, is of an entirely different mould. If Disraeli had any spite at the lawyers by reason of his early and distasteful apprenticeship, he must have vented it all on Mr. Putney Giles. Giles is akin to that class of individuals that are hangers-on of the nobility, and for the sake of an invitation to dinner or to a country house, make it their business to be generally useful and amusing. To be useful and amusing are no sins in themselves, but to pander to all the whims of wealth for the sake of just so much attention as a pet dog might receive is exceedingly disgusting. Mr. Putney Giles undertakes all the arrangements of the festivities in honor of Lothair's coming of age. But he does not do this for a just and honorable compensation, but for the opportunity that he and his "pushing, tuft-hunting wife" may hob-nob for a brief time (1).

1. Nation, 10 : 372.

among notabilities. In the character of this man Disraeli exhibits all the contempt that he felt for the people of this class. It is true we may say that he is only one of the many, but there remains the difficulty that Lord Beaconsfield did not consider that ~~the~~ the middle class had any right to exist as a class. He had formed his opinion in early youth and a half century of changes had left no impression on them, although they were only half true in the beginning. In planning the political measures of his party he long advocated a combination of the landlords and the people, as he called the lower classes, against the middle class and the Whigs. (1). The Whigs were principally recruited from the middle classes, and the particular object of Lord Beaconsfield's hatred were the Whigs.

This union of the landed aristocracy with the laboring class against the Whigs was the pet theory of Lord Beaconsfield's life, and he carried it into effect as far as he could when he became the head of the government. In "Sybil" especially he has given his readers his ideas of a policy that was to regenerate the country. This was a plan of a young enthusiast and outlined to give popular circulation to what might be called in American terms the 'platform' of the Young England party. The impression is widely prevalent that Lord Beaconsfield's expressions of sympathy with the laboring classes were not genuine, that is, that they were bids for political favor, and that the Reform Bill of 1867 was a sudden

ion of Great Britian than any other legislation in the country's history. These were preceded by the Reform Bill of 1867, which the Opposition vainly tried to discredit. Indeed the time was ripe for the change, but it was the indomitable will of Lord Beaconsfield that forced the Tories into passing a most sweeping measure, much more radical than the Whigs had ever dared propose. His previous political history shows that this was not forced on him but was the direct outcome of opinion of long standing. No doubt Lord Beaconsfield staked the popularity of the Conservatives on this one bill. He declared it to be his belief that the reform would have a conservative tendency rather than revolutionary, and his belief was fully justified. (1). The charge of inconsistency has been made against Lord Beaconsfield so many times that it will be well to call attention to the career of Gladstone. At the beginning of it he was an ardent Tory, much more so than Disraeli was a Whig. Indeed Macaulay described him as the "rising hope of the unbending Tories"; Gladstone and Lord Beaconsfield ~~have~~ exactly changed places, yet it has never been said of Gladstone that he was inconsistent (2).

In "Sybil" he outlined the policy of the party formed under his leadership, and which was known by the name of Young England. His political sagacity was so keen that he saw the only hope of a regenerated Toryism was in a policy that in-

1. Atlan. 32 : 645.

2. " " .

cluded the needs and aspirations of the laboring classes. If he succeeded in forming a formidable alliance between the nobility and the laborers, then it was safe to say that the Whigs could be easily frightened and overcome. It must not be deduced from this that political motives alone actuated him, because he certainly felt a genuine sympathy for the factory population of Great Britain. He had passed through the trying times of 1844, which had stirred the souls of Carlyle, Mill, Cobden, and Bright. (1). The immediate cause of "Sybil" was a journey taken in company with Lord John Manners and the Honorable George Smythe through the factory towns of North England. In "Coningsby" the emancipation of the Crown was to bring about a reformation in the condition of the laboring population. In "Sybil" another element is added, the emancipation of the Church. "This was the triple foundation- the church, the monarchy, and the people- on which the new toryism was based(2). These are the ideas expressed in the novel but they are often obscured and clouded with dim and fantastic forms. A party formed on such a basis as this and held together only by the personal popularity and ability of its leader could not long withstand the ridicule aimed at it. The definition at that time of Young England was "a clique of young gentlemen in white waistcoats, who wrote bad verses".(3). In addition to Lord John Manners

1. Forum , 18 : 192.

2. Dictionary of National Biography, Vol. XV, p. 105.

3. Brandes, p. 195- 6 .

who was the poet laureate of the party, both Tennyson and Whytehead belonged to it.

"Sybil" is difficult on account of the vagueness of the ideas. The Church is to be restored to all the freedom and property it possessed before the reign of Henry the Eighth, although it does not appear from the book that Disraeli had the intention of making it so dependant on Rome. Whatever doctrine it might adopt it did not matter so much as long as it regained its old estates and was thereby enabled to dispense unlimited alms. The whole book shows the greatest misconception possible of the relations of society at the present time. Disraeli failed to realize that feudalism was gone never to return, and that the poor ask not alms but work at fair wages. The factory system had come to stay, and however much he might lament the change from hand-labor, he could never restore it. That he realized this in his later years is shown by the Factory Acts, Employers and Workmen Act, and a number of others aimed at the ~~re~~ amelioration of the evils of factory labor but not at the destruction of the system. The Character of Sybil, the heroine, is one of the most beautifully ideal ones that Benjamin Disraeli has created, and it is equaled only by Theodora. Sybil stands for the Church in all its purity and devotion to a noble cause. Through her, Disraeli brings about the cherished union of the nobility and the poor, but the reader is left in doubt at the end whether this union will accomplish what was intended, because Sybil turns out to

be of the nobility, too. The impression left by the ending of of the novel is not a clear one, and the best explanation is that Disraeli himself was not at all certain that the remedy proposed was the correct one. His own policy in after years is proof that he found it a partial failure. It cannot be said, however, to be entirely so, for it is not disputed that the agitation of the Young England party is the cause of the present improved condition of the laboring classes. In "Sybil" the secret associations, as in "Lothair", are portrayed with a remarkable accuracy and sympathy. The especial interest of the book lies in its picturing the whole Chartist movement from its beginning. The presentation of the great petition of May, 1842, containing over three million three hundred thousand signatures, the debate on it in Parliament and its rejection, together with a powerful speech on it by Charles Egremont is the climax, and it certainly is strongly drawn. The speech of Egremont had been delivered by Disraeli himself in this same debate, and in many other ways he is to be identified with the author. From this speech and his actions in the events following Egremont is looked upon as a Chartist and as a probable leader. That he is not and does not look upon the movement as successful is shown by his conversation with Sybil in which he tells her that the people are not strong and cannot be, and that the new generation of the English aristocracy are not tyrants but are the natural leaders

of the people.(1). As to the characters, Stephen Morley, Walter Gerard, Lord Marney, and the Earl de Mowbray, so unlike in every way, they are very fully and carefully drawn, although the feeling is left that Morley is treated worse than he deserved.

In "Sybil" the rights of the people are sustained against an unfeeling aristocracy; the Parliamentary system is vehemently attacked as being in no sense representative of the people; the church is upheld for it is to aid in the regeneration of England. The last pages are devoted to a presentation of the author's views in his own name on the subjects he has introduced into the novels of "Coningsby" and "Sybil". He says: "The written history of our country for the last ten reigns has been a mere phantasma; giving to the origin and consequence of public transactions a character and colour in every respect dissimilar to their natural form and hue. In this mighty mystery all thoughts and things have assumed an aspect and title contrary to their real quality and style: Oligarchy has been called Liberty; an exclusive Priesthood has been christened a National Church; Sovereignty has been the title of something that has had no dominion, while absolute power has been wielded by those who profess themselves the servants of the People. In the selfish strife of factions, two great existences have been blotted

(1). "Sybil", pp. 319-20.

out of the history of England, the Monarch and the Multitude; as the power of the Crown has diminished, the privileges of the People have disappeared; till at length the sceptre has become a pageant, and its subject has degenerated again into a serf.

"That we may live to see England once more a free Monarchy, and a privileged and prosperous People, is my prayer; that these great consequences can only be brought about by the energy and devotion of our Youth is my persuasion. We live in an age when to be young and to be indifferent can be no longer synonymous. We must prepare for the coming hour. The claims of the Future are represented by suffering millions; and the Youth of a Nation are the trustees of Posterity." (1).

In all the years that have elapsed since the first appearance of Benjamin Disraeli on the horizon of ~~the~~ public life much has been spoken and written concerning him. He has suffered all the misrepresentation public men have to bear, and a great deal more on account of his Jewish origin and peculiar temperament. Essentially Oriental, possessing Hebrew characteristics alone, an alien and social pariah in England, he arose through sheer force of will and intellect to the highest rank, besides gaining no little fame as an author. Thus it appears ~~that he was not an ordinary man,~~ and it is

(1). "Sybil", pp. 488-9.

not strange that he has been ~~generally~~ generally misunderstood. So far there has been no unprejudiced account of his political ~~life~~ life offered to the public, and such meager biographies as have been published are in the nature of attacks on him or defenses, and are in all cases incorrect even in the main details. There is an urgent demand for a fair and accurate biography, as well as for an edition of his papers. In studying the relation of Lord Beaconsfield to English society the difficulty arises in obtaining authentic material at first hand. His earlier political pamphlets^h are out of print, and some are lost entirely. His letters, such as have been given to the public, are nearly^{all} purely social in nature and contain no information of importance as to his views on classes and class distinction. The only materials available are his speeches, even the best known are hard to obtain, and his novels. The novels are the principal source of information on this subject, and here ~~the~~^a very serious difficulty is met with in interpreting aright such views as are, or seem to be, set forth in the form of fiction. We already know the conflict of opinion concerning Lord Beaconsfield's views that has arisen from two ways of looking at his novels. Therefore any attempt to interpret these novels must be made with extreme care and always with reference to such of his political actions as are familiar to his readers.

In conclusion, Lord Beaconsfield both in fiction and in politics divided the English nation into two classes, and these only did he consider worthy of attention, although the third, or middle class, was somewhat troublesome in politics. He was jealous of the power the aristocracy possessed, power that was denied him and which he had resolved to ^{ob}tain at any cost. He was also by his Oriental temperament fond of show and glitter, so that the estates and jewels of this class exercised an irresistible fascination over him, but he was neither fascinated nor dazzled by their owners. He looked upon the nobility of England as an upstart aristocracy, lacking in brains and ability what they possessed in land and jewels, and he knew his power to turn this contempt to his own account. He was not altogether unsuccessful in this. In the new generation of the nobility and the Tories he had more faith. Directed and educated by him they were to resume the power they had inadvertently let slip from their hands. They should become in reality what they were in theory, the ruling class of Great Britain. This would make them the natural leaders of the people whom he considered a down-trodden race without any leaders able to help their cause. In this coalition he expected the Conservative cause to gain strength sufficient to overthrow the Whigs and the manufacturers who were ruling the country in their own interest, neglectful of the interests of land and labor. Whig, manufacturer, and middle class were to him

synonymous terms , so that without understanding modern conditions he cordially hated them because they were responsible for the disorganization and demoralization of England at that time, and his reasoning was not illogical. Throughout his whole career he consistently and sincerely expressed his sympathy with the oppressed laborers. Their conditions at that time was beyond imagination; Disraeli himself said that the descriptions of their terrible suffering he had given in "Sybil" were not true to life, because the truth would not be believed. Moreover, whatever the Opposition may have said concerning his sincerity, the fact remains that Lord Beaconsfield, the statesman, did more than any other Prime Minister for the amelioration of the English laborer's condition. Lord Beaconsfield's name will go down in history as the defender of the rights of the Crown , the People, and the Church, as the regenerator and greatest leader of the Tory party , as ~~one of~~ England's most successful diplomat , as a novelist of no mean rank , and as an example of what will and energy may accomplish. The day has not yet come when he is fully appreciated, yet it is fast approaching, and then he will be no longer considered an " enigma" , a "sorcerer", a "charlatan", but an honorable , far-sighted statesman , who labored for the good of the nation and ever upheld the dignity

of England. To England Primrose Day in April is like the twenty-second of February to the United States, a day on which a nation does honor to the memory of one who labored unceasingly through almost unsurmountable difficulties for the unity and peace of his country.

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