

got rid of me as a minister; and now they want me to put my neck in the halter for them. As if I cared one farthing for their personal influence, or for their boroughs either, except that I know the importance of the latter to the balance of power in the state."

Among the consequences of the agricultural riots of 1829-30 was the re-enrolment, in various parts of England, of corps of yeomanry cavalry; one of which was raised, mainly through the exertions of the Earl of Winchelsea, in East Kent. Lord Winchelsea, when he began to recruit, was one of the warmest supporters of Earl Grey; and, as a matter of course, an equally warm denouncer of the Duke of Wellington and his policy. But times were now changed; and Lord Winchelsea, like many other Tory peers, after vainly striving to become reconciled to the ministerial Reform Bill, had broken off from his Whig connexions, and placed himself again under the political guidance of the Duke. He invited the Duke this autumn to Eastwell Park, where a grand review of his regiment took place; and where the reception awarded to the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports by upwards of 400 well-mounted and well-armed yeomen, could not fail to be very gratifying to him.

But small triumphs like this were far from compensating to the Duke for the graver and more trying disappointments which seemed, day by day, to gather round him. In the House of Commons not one convert could be reckoned upon. Indeed the rejection of the Bill by the Lords seemed but to strengthen the determination of the majority to admit of no compromise even if ministers themselves were to propose it. And more distressing than even this, in the Duke's estimation, were the symptoms of wavering which began to be exhibited among the Lords themselves. A considerable section of the Upper House, headed by Lords Wharncliffe and Harrowby, felt and said that they had done enough, and that in the coming session they must no longer attempt to stop, but be satisfied with accepting and as much as possible modifying the ministerial measure. Now this was entirely opposed to the Duke's view of

things. He admitted that to avoid a measure, and a large measure, of Parliamentary Reform was no longer possible; but he contended that it should not be left to Lord Grey's Administration to carry that measure, because, in the first place, Lord Grey would never consent to modify his own plan, however slightly, and in the next place, his supporters out of doors would not allow him to do so, were he ever so much disposed. The Duke's argument amounted to this: If you are prepared to accept the Bill as it is, pass the second reading when it comes into the House of Lords. If you are not prepared for this, throw the Bill out. There will be a little rioting out of doors, as there was before; but that is all. Ministers will resign; a new Government will be formed; and a new Reform Bill introduced by that Government. It will please the political unions, and the mob, less than Lord Grey's Bill, but it will satisfy all reasonable men of all shades of opinion, and by and by the country will settle down to its old pursuits and habits of thinking.

When threatened with another prorogation, to be followed with a creation of peers on such a scale as virtually to extinguish the House of Lords, his answer was, "I don't believe that Lord Grey will recommend, or the King consent, to so violent a proceeding,—at all events till the experiment of a change of Government is tried. But if I be mistaken, it is surely better that the House of Lords should suffer this outrage from the Government than from us. For if against our consciences we vote for the second reading, we shall do so from intimidation, and the influence which we now exercise over public opinion will be lost. Besides, what will you gain by reading the Bill a second time. If Lord Grey be capable of destroying the constitution in order to secure the second reading, do you think he will be more scrupulous if he find himself in danger of being defeated in committee?" It was thus that the Duke continued to urge open opposition in the Lords—being convinced of two things, first, that the passing of the Bill, as it then stood, would undermine the whole fabric of the constitution; and next, that its rejection would be attended with no evils which a

change of Government, and a little firmness, as well as concession, could not easily remove.

The voluminous correspondence which the Duke carried on with Lord Wharncliffe and others will be found in the larger edition of this work. It had the same object in view throughout, but the object was not attained. Lords Wharncliffe and Harrowby entered into negotiations with Earl Grey. They waited upon him by appointment at Sheen, and failed to obtain a single concession. Strange to say, they still persuaded themselves that when the measure came into committee, his Majesty's ministers would yield collectively much which the chief of the Cabinet individually refused. And so believing, and persuading others so to believe, they voted for the second reading, which, after a debate protracted throughout three nights, was carried by a majority of nine.

The Duke felt this parliamentary defeat pretty much as he would have done the loss of a great battle in the field. Grieved and mortified he did not conceal that he was, yet to all outward appearance at least he never lost heart. With Lord Wharncliffe and his friends he declined to continue upon terms of confidence. He consulted them no more upon the course to be pursued in committee, far less gave any countenance to the negotiations which they opened afresh with Earl Grey. Lord Lyndhurst was now, as he had always been, his chief adviser. With his own hand, he drew up the sketch of a new bill, for which he and his friends agreed to contend. The principal features in this modified plan were these, that no borough should return less than two members; that no addition should be made to the number of metropolitan members; and that voters for boroughs should not claim the right of voting for counties also. Into schedule A it was proposed so far to introduce modifications, that room should be left for the representation of the Colonies in Parliament. As to keeping knots of boroughs in the hands of individual proprietors, the Duke was not prepared to fight such a battle as that. And if after all the thought reverted to his mind, that no new arrangements could serve the monarchy as the old had

done, he found comfort in believing that his modifications, if accepted, would render change more gradual, and therefore less dangerous to the great institutions of the country.

The Duke sent copies of his proposed amendments to many peers. He wrote about them likewise to some of his friends who were not peers, and I think that the following brief correspondence will better show than any narrative of mine in what channel his thoughts were at the moment running.

“ Ash, near Wingham, 1st May, 1832.

“ MY DEAR LORD DUKE,

“ I have read your Grace's letter with profound sorrow, because its tone corresponds but too well with my own previous notions of the existing state of things. Perhaps you will say that I need not trouble you with a letter in order to say this, nor would I, except that it occurs to me that the very projects which you tell me are entertained, must prove eminently mischievous. The Conservative peers may rely upon it, that the period when opposition might have been made to good purpose has passed away. By admitting the Bill to a second reading, they have given up the principle; and matters of detail are not only not worth contending for, but the victories gained will all be productive of evil.

“ Supposing that the King does not make peers, what will follow? You must pass the Bill in some shape or another. You cannot, by any alterations in committee, render it materially less mischievous than it is. But you will alter it considerably, so considerably as to make it unpalatable to all parties. If passed in its integrity, I am sure that it will, sooner or later, disappoint its advocates; if passed with your mutilations, it will disappoint them also. But in the latter case you will be blamed for evils which are founded, not in your alterations, but in the Bill itself.

“ Of course your Grace knows much better than I what to do; and, were I a peer, I should put myself implicitly into your hands; but my firm persuasion is, that your best policy now is to let the measure go through the third read-

ing as it stands, and so to cast all the odium of its consequences on the shoulders of its authors.”

“MY DEAR ———,

“London, 2nd May, 1832.

“I have received your letter of the 1st instant, which affords a good deal of room for reflection. Is it true that we cannot do any good by mending the Bill ?

“The metropolitan representation is ruin. We may, possibly we shall, get rid of that. The democracy has, by the Bill, a positive gain of sixty-four members. We may reduce those members very considerably. We may improve Schedules A and B. We may improve the £10 franchise. All this would be important, if the measure is to be carried into execution.

“You say truly, that it will not give satisfaction. In our state of society nothing will give satisfaction. It would be best to remain as we are ; but not being able to remain as we are, I think that we ought not to pay attention to the charges of responsibility for the real improvements, and the principle of conservatism, which we may introduce into the Bill.

“I admit that nothing that we can do would make the Bill safe. The country will have to pass through a severe crisis ; but let us meet that crisis on the best grounds that we can, rather than leave all to chance,—or to what we know is as bad as possible.”

The issues of the attempt to take the management of Parliamentary Reform out of the hands of the Government, are well known. Lord Grey did exactly as the Duke had foretold that he would do ; he adjourned Parliament as soon as the Bill was read a second time. From Lord Wharncliffe he learned that amendments would be proposed in committee, and after the recess made a move as if to conciliate the opposition. He proposed that the cases of condemned boroughs should be considered, not collectively, but one by one, whereupon Lord Lyndhurst moved as an amendment, that before the House proceeded to disfranchise any borough at all, it should determine what and how many new boroughs

were to be created. A debate ensued, in which the Ministers opposed the resolution, and the votes being taken, they found themselves in a minority of 25.

A meeting of the Cabinet followed, when it was determined to go no farther with the Bill till the King should have consented to create as many peers as would enable ministers to carry their measure in its integrity. Earl Grey and Lord Chancellor Brougham were deputed to negotiate with the King, who refused to come in to their terms, and the ministers resigned. It was an event for which the Conservative peers were not unprepared. The Duke being sent for, assured his Majesty that everything possible would be done to extricate him from his difficulties. He expressed himself willing to go, in the way of change, to the utmost limits of safety, and undertook on his own personal responsibility to maintain order in the country. At the same time he advised the King to place a member of the House of Commons at the head of the new Cabinet, and named Mr Peel. Mr Peel, as is well known, declined the charge. Mr Manners Sutton, the Speaker of the House of Commons, was then thought of. But communications from the city and from all parts of the country came in to say, that apart from Mr Peel, there could be no confidence in any Conservative member of either House as First Lord of the Treasury, except in the Duke himself. What could the Duke do? If he also refused to serve, how was the authority of the Crown to be maintained? and if at such a crisis, through any backwardness on his part, the Sovereign should fall into the hands of men who seemed to him to have arrived at a settled determination rather to humble the King, and to destroy the House of Lords, than to modify in any degree their pet measure, how should he ever be able again to hold up his head in society? It was not in the Duke's nature to hesitate. He accepted the charge of forming an Administration, and day and night, for a fortnight together, he laboured to bring the work to a successful issue.

It was in the House of Commons that the great obstacle to the accomplishment of his purpose lay. As to the excitement out of doors, the Duke treated it with in-

difference. He held as little formidable both the strong language of the press and the threats of the political unions ; and even Lord Milton's refusal to pay taxes, and the advice given to the country at large to follow so bad an example, gave him no serious alarm. Not so the refusal of one after another of the Conservative leaders in the Lower House, to share with him the responsibilities of office. Mr Goulburn and Mr Herries both held back. Mr Wynne doubted the possibility of forming a Conservative Government at all. Sir George Murray and Sir Henry Hardinge were, indeed, at the Duke's disposal, and Mr Alexander Baring, afterwards Lord Ashburton, gave a reluctant consent to become his Chancellor of the Exchequer. Mr Manners Sutton also, after a good deal of hesitation, agreed to take office. But except in these and a few instances besides, friends and foes seemed alike determined to stand aloof from him. Sir Robert Inglis, for example, could draw no line of distinction between public and private honour. He was unable, therefore, to see how statesmen who had expressed themselves so strongly against reform, in any shape, could, without a total loss of character, accept office, on the condition of bringing in a Reform Bill. Meanwhile Lord Ebrington proposed, and carried a vote to the effect, that the House of Commons could not repose confidence in any other than the Administration which had just been removed from office. And to sum up all, Mr Baring himself, after he had agreed to accept the Chancellorship of the Exchequer, did not hesitate to say in his place that it would be better for the country, that those who had prepared the Reform Bill should carry it into law, and that whatever he might do in opposition to this course, he would do reluctantly.

I have alluded to the state of feeling out of doors. Nervous persons watched it with deep alarm ; for mobs are always noisy, and when the functions of Government are suspended, they are, up to a certain point, dangerous. The Duke was not influenced by it for one moment ; yet he received at this time some curious letters, of which the following is a specimen :—

“ Birmingham, 13th May, 1832.

“ MY LORD,

“ I have the honour to inform your lordship, that as soon as the rumour arrived in this town of your lordship's appointment to be the Prime Minister of William IV., five hundred of us simultaneously bound ourselves by a solemn engagement that we would prevent such an event; and that, if not preventing it, your continuance in office should be of short duration, and *we have no doubt* but our endeavours shall be crowned with success.—We have the honour to be your lordship's humble advisers, by order of the meeting,

“ JOHN WM THOMPSON.”

To the same purport, though in a different spirit, a Mr Anderton wrote, on the 14th, to say that the cry in Birmingham was for a £10 franchise; and that, coerced by a large meeting which had taken place on the previous day, many respectable people had enrolled their names as members of the political union, while others were petitioning for the passing of the ministerial Bill, though their own convictions and wishes were against it.

The Government had been in abeyance long enough, when, on the 15th of May, the Duke waited on the King, and informed his Majesty of what had passed in the House of Commons on the previous evening. He represented at the same time that he no longer entertained the hope of being able to form such an Administration as could lead the House of Commons, or be able to conciliate public confidence. He therefore advised his Majesty to recall his former ministers; and when his Majesty, of his own accord, proposed to write to Earl Grey, and to prevail upon him, if he could, to forego the desire for an extension of the peerage, and to introduce such amendments into his Bill as might satisfy the more moderate of its opponents, the Duke offered no objection to the arrangement. He was not, however, so sanguine as to anticipate any very favourable issue to the endeavour; and he was right. Lord Grey answered the King's letter immediately. He assured his



Sovereign that he would do what he could, though it would be impossible, after recent events, to deviate from any leading principle of the measure. A few alterations in details might be admitted, but beyond that the Government could not go. As to the King's request that the demand for new peers should not be repeated, his lordship took no notice of it. The King was in his hands, and in the hands of the House of Commons, and of the political unions; and his Majesty was made to feel that he must do whatever might be desired of him.

There was but one line of action now open to the Duke, and he did not hesitate to enter upon it. The House of Lords must at every hazard be saved, by taking away from the minister the remotest pretext for swamping it with a large creation of new peers. At the interview which led to the re-opening of communications between the King and Earl Grey, the Duke assured his Majesty that he would offer no further opposition to the progress of the Bill; indeed, that he would cease to attend in his place in Parliament till after it should have passed into law. A like pledge was given by Lord Lyndhurst, and his Majesty breathed more freely. But all the Duke's difficulties were not yet over. Peer after peer asked to be informed as to the course which he wished them to follow, while many besought him to join with them in remonstrating against the threatened creation of new peerages. To the latter proposal he replied, as he had replied before, that he could be no party to a resolution of the House which, besides amounting to an attack upon the prerogative, would probably bring on the very evil which it was intended to avert. To the former he stated, without reserve, his own intentions, assigning his reasons, but carefully avoiding to advise his friends. Meanwhile, a few of the more excitable of the party expressed strong disapprobation of all that had been done. After defeating the Whigs, he ought, according to their view of the case, to have risked all, even the dangers of a dissolution, rather than suffer the reins of Government to pass again into the enemy's hands. Even with such correspondents the Duke kept his temper, being satisfied to

demonstrate to them the utter helplessness of their schemes, and the impossibility, without great danger to the public peace, of maintaining the state of suspense one day longer than he had done.

On the other hand there were, among his friends, several who, adhering to the opinion that the battle had been lost at the second reading, wrote to congratulate him on having escaped from the situation of peril and difficulty into which his chivalrous sense of duty to the Crown had thrown him. One specimen of the manner in which he replied to these communications I subjoin, because it places in a clear light the motives which guided the Duke in his management of those delicate affairs, and the view which he took of the inevitable consequences of his failure.

“ London, 21st May, 1832.

“ MY DEAR ———,

“ I have received your note of yesterday, for which I return my best thanks.

“ I think that the mistake made by my friends is this. First, in not estimating the extent of the advantage of taking the thing out of the hands of the Radicals,—that is, in reality, of giving the country the benefit of some Government. Secondly, in not estimating the farther advantage of diminishing the mischief of the Reform Bill; and particularly that of the Scotch Bill.

“ In my opinion the advantage first mentioned more than compensates for all that would have been lost by our having anything to say to the Reform Bill.

“ We shall have the Bill in its worst form. In the mean time we have no Government. God knows whether this country can have one again without passing through a crisis in its affairs.

“ One advantage, however, has resulted from the transactions of the last week. The country perceives that the King is against what is doing.”

I need not pursue further the progress of affairs, which have long since become matters of history. After a brief

adjournment, to afford time for the reconstruction of the Cabinet, Parliament again met, and on the 17th of May the Duke and Lord Lyndhurst entered into a full explanation of their conduct during the late recess. This done, they quitted the House, and a considerable body of peers following their example, the arena was left clear to the ministers. They took up the Bill at the point where it had been dropped, and carried it, clause by clause, through committee. In due course, after being read for the third time, it received the assent of the Crown, and became law.

The mob had gained their end, and the joy of its members was, or seemed to be, as unbounded as their anxiety had of late been painful. But there was no admixture of generosity in it. Not satisfied with having triumphed over the opposition of the great Duke, they followed him with the most rancorous personal hatred, and escaped the everlasting disgrace of dipping their hands in his blood only by a sort of miracle. He took occasion on the 18th of June to visit the Mint, which he did on horseback, attended by a single groom. Some ill-disposed persons recognized him as he was returning, on Tower Hill, and he was instantly surrounded by a crowd, which grew more dense and more furious as he proceeded westward. The Duke's countenance underwent no change. He never put his horse out of a walk, and the groom rode after him as calm and self-possessed as his master. It was in vain that the city police, attracted by the throng, and by the yells and cries which proceeded from it, endeavoured to gather round him; they were pushed aside, and one fellow, seizing the bridle of the Duke's horse, endeavoured to dismount him. But the groom, riding up, forced the man back, and a gentleman who was driving a phaeton, placed the carriage with great presence of mind close to the tail of the Duke's horse, and so broke the violence of the pressure from behind. Other well-dressed persons likewise came to the assistance of the police, and he was saved from personal outrage. At last they reached the end of Chancery Lane, up which the Duke turned, the crowd still following. He proceeded to Lincoln's Inn, to the chambers of the Solicitor to the Treasury,

with whom he had business ; and where he had appointed the Earl of St Germans, Lord Granville Somerset, and Lord Francis Conyngham to meet him. But my readers would scarcely thank me were I to describe what followed in other words than those of an actor in the scene. The following is Lord St Leonard's version of this remarkable story, kindly sent in reply to a communication from myself.

“On the 18th of June our Equity Courts were not sitting. I was, therefore, in chambers ; and as I sat working near the window on the ground-floor, I was startled by three horsemen passing towards Stone Buildings, with a mob at their heels, shouting, hooting, and hissing. I sent my clerk to see what was the matter, and upon his return, finding that the Duke of Wellington was the object of displeasure, I sent the clerk, with some others, round to the men's chambers, to beg them to come at once to protect the Duke. I found that the Duke, with Lord Granville Somerset and Lord Eliot (the present Earl of St Germans), had been to the Tower on official business, and were then at the chambers in Stone Buildings of Mr Maule, the Solicitor to the Treasury, with whom the Duke had an appointment. In making my way to Mr Maule's, I found a considerable mob in Stone Buildings and its approaches, and their conduct was most violent. When I joined the Duke, we considered what was the best mode of protecting him and his companions. He would not listen to any mode of retreat by which he might avoid the mob. I assured him that the Lincoln's Inn men would effectually prevent any violence, and he determined to get on horseback again, and to ride through the streets. I then went down-stairs, and ordered the small gate, leading to Portugal Street, to be shut and guarded, so as to prevent the people from getting round that way to interrupt us when we went through the great gates into Carey Street ; and I ordered those gates to be shut as soon as the Duke should have passed. I addressed a few words to the gentlemen, who had assembled in considerable numbers, and requested them to occupy the

stone steps which the Duke would have to descend, in order to reach his horse. This they did with great heartiness, and they exhibited, I may say, a fierce determination to defend the Duke against all comers. A butcher was bawling lustily against the Duke, when a young gentleman, a solicitor, seized him by the collar with one hand and knocked him down with the other, and the mob seemed rather amused at it. The Duke, upon my return up-stairs, asked how he was to find his way out of the Inn. I told him that I would walk before him. He would allow no one to hold or to touch his horse whilst he mounted. He was pale, with a severe countenance, and immovable on his saddle, and looked straight before him, and so continued whilst I was with him. Lords Granville Somerset and Eliot rode on each side of him, and of course his groom behind. I walked in front, and shortly a brother barrister came up and asked me if he might walk with me. I gladly accepted his arm, and we moved on, the mob all the time being in a state of fury. When we reached Lincoln's Inn Fields a policeman made his appearance, and drawing his staff prepared for an onslaught. I called to him, and told him that the Duke's progress was under my direction, and that I desired he would put up his truncheon and keep himself quiet until I called upon him to act, and that he would communicate this order to the other policemen as they came up. This kept them perfectly quiet. As we proceeded, the noise of the mob attracted the workmen in the shops and manufactories, particularly in Long Acre, where the upper windows were quickly opened by workmen who, with their paper caps, rushed to join the people; but nowhere was any personal violence offered to the Duke, and the respectable portions of the crowd would promptly have crushed any attempt at violence. I had walked from the West End to my chambers that morning, and I recollected that there was an excavation at the west end of Long Acre, and a large mass of paving and other stones collected there. I ordered several of the police to go there in advance quietly and occupy the ground, so as to prevent any one from making use of the stones. This they did; but, scandalous as the

conduct of the mob was, I must do them the justice to say that they showed no disposition to get at the stones. When we reached the West End streets the people tailed off a good deal. As the Duke passed the United Service Club he maintained his rigid posture, and cast no glance that way, whilst a few men, who had rushed out of the Club upon hearing the noise, looked on with wonder. Nothing more occurred; and when we got opposite to the clock of St James's Palace I, for the first time, turned round, and there being only a few stragglers left, the Duke and his companions shook hands with me, and thanked me, and putting their horses into a trot, reached Apsley House without further annoyance. On that day the gentlemen of Lincoln's Inn did their duty. The Duke received addresses from the inhabitants of the parishes whose lower orders had disgraced themselves. The deputations included men of the highest consideration. He afterwards gave a dinner to the deputations, at which I was a guest. Harry Baring, who was one of the guests, told me that he had dined with most of the princes of Europe, but that he had never seen such a magnificent display as at this dinner. When we consider the man and the day, the scene in the streets must have been most painful to the Duke; yet he never once recurred to it in any communication which I had with him. The scene is vividly before me. It is singular that I should be asked, at the end of twenty-eight years, to describe it. I have to trust wholly to memory, as I never before wrote down any incident of this painful day."

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE DUKE AFTER THE REFORM BILL—HIS GREAT INFLUENCE  
IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS—LORD MELBOURNE MINISTER—  
HIS DISMISSAL—SIR ROBERT PEEL'S GOVERNMENT—THE  
DUKE CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.

THE opinion which the Duke had so often expressed in regard to the consequences of the ministerial measure while it was yet in progress, underwent no change after the Reform Bill became law. He believed, and among his intimate friends never hesitated to say, that the foundations of England's greatness were sapped. There was, indeed, a moment when this conviction took such fast hold of him, that he thought seriously of withdrawing for ever from public life; and spoke, half in joke half in earnest, of making a provision against the evils to come, by investing a portion of his property in foreign securities. But the Duke was too much of a patriot to abandon the path of duty because of the increased difficulties with which he believed it to be beset. "The bill is now the law of the land," he used to say, "and as good citizens and loyal subjects we must conform ourselves to it. It has effected the greatest revolution that ever occurred without bloodshed in any country; and we, or those who come after us, will be taught that fact, sooner or later. But in the mean while, it is our duty to keep the crisis as long as we can at a distance, and to render the fall of our great institutions so gradual, that it shall do as little damage as possible, both to individuals and to the community." Accordingly, he set himself at once

to collect and consolidate a party, which should act together, not for the purpose of wresting office from those who held it, but with a view to keep the powers of Government, as far as might be, in the King's hands, and to hinder the King's ministers from being driven too rapidly along the declivity on which they appeared to have placed themselves. And this, in the House of Lords, he found to be, comparatively speaking, an easy task. His unswerving adherence to principle, during the late struggle; the temper and moderation which he exhibited on all occasions; his indefatigable industry, and the patience with which he bore with the whims and crotchets of men less wise than himself; had earned for him an amount of deference and respect, such as was probably never before yielded by the peers of England to any individual belonging to their order. He became, so to speak, master of the Upper House of Parliament. Perhaps no member of that august body ever had so many proxies entrusted to him; none certainly ever spoke with more authority, from his place. Not that the Duke either was, or pretended to be, an orator. His speaking, on the contrary, was, to the last, laboured, his articulation indistinct; but somehow or other he contrived always to say the right thing at the right moment, and to clothe his sentiments in language which, if not artistically eloquent or even correct, was invariably forcible. The storm of unpopularity also which broke upon him during the Reform struggle, passed away. In 1832 he was insulted in the streets, and had the windows of his house broken. His very life was threatened in the manner described in the last chapter, and when he went on a certain occasion to preside at a Pitt dinner in the Freemasons' Tavern, he was obliged to drive thither armed with loaded pistols, in a carriage of which the doors were fastened by a spring. In 1833 individuals began again to salute him respectfully as he passed, and here and there the old cry was raised, "There he goes, God bless him!" With all his apparent indifference to such matters, with all his real contempt for the sort of popularity to obtain which men stoop to do mean and mischievous things, the Duke was touched



by this evidence of the place which he had established for himself in the affections of the English people. "I'm getting up in the market," he observed, with a cheerful laugh, one day, as he dismounted from his horse after a run with the fox-hounds at Strathfieldsaye. "What has happened; did the people cheer you?" "No, not that, but they did what was much better; every man in the field seemed anxious to be kind to me, by making way for me, and opening gates, and that sort of thing." The Duke was right. He rose in the market so rapidly, that before twelve months were over, all, except the men who had most deeply slandered and done him wrong, seemed to have forgotten that he ever opposed himself to their wishes. And of all the speeches delivered by him in the House of Lords, none was so frequently quoted with approval as that in which he declared, that had he refused to go to the King's assistance when the resignation of his Whig ministers left his Majesty surrounded by difficulties, "he would have been ashamed to show his face in the streets."

I have alluded elsewhere to the mortification of some of the Duke's admirers when they beheld him stoop from the eminence on which he stood at the close of the war, to become, as they expressed it, a party politician. If the results of his labours in that capacity seemed to justify their prognostications of evil, it is impossible to deny that he more than atoned for the mistake, if a mistake it was, by subsequent years of the wisest and most disinterested statesmanship. Never throughout his long and busy life did the Duke of Wellington render more important service to his country than during that protracted season of trouble, anxiety, and danger which followed the passing of the Reform Bill. Had he been less wise, less temperate, less far-seeing, less patriotic, nothing could have averted from England the horrors of a revolution—for the exasperation of parties was then more bitter than the present generation can easily understand, while the position of the King's ministers, in reference to the Sovereign on the one hand, and to their own supporters on the other, abounded with difficulties. Men called each other by hard names in those

days, and here and there believed what they said. No sane person now suspects, either that the Duke of Wellington harboured designs against the liberties of the people, or that Earl Grey or Lord John Russell were hostile to the monarchy. But Earl Grey and his colleagues were undoubtedly, through the force of circumstances, dependent for support not a little upon politicians to whom the Church, the House of Lords, and perhaps the throne, were objects of small reverence. And for this perhaps, among other reasons, the King made no concealment of his dislike both to his ministers and their policy. Now such a condition of affairs offered the strongest inducement to a harassing guerilla warfare on the part of the opposition, of which the effects, had they received any encouragement from high quarters, must have been fatal.

The opposition, weak in the Commons, but from wealth, intelligence, and station, powerful in the country, fretted under the state to which they were reduced, and burned to escape from it. Eager to fight on every possible occasion, and confident of victory in the House of Lords, they charged their leaders with lack of courage or good faith, or both, because they restrained instead of exciting so rash a spirit. The Government, on the other hand, often put to their shifts by pressure from without, brought forward measures of which they themselves scarcely approved; and sometimes, as has been admitted, would have thankfully accepted defeats from which the Duke saved them. His great object in all this was to gain time for the re-establishment throughout the country of that respect for law and the legislature which recent events had shaken. In the House of Commons ministers were, or seemed to be, all powerful. The Duke was constantly on his guard to prevent a collision between the Lords and the Commons, out of which, as he well knew, the Lords, in the existing state of public feeling, could never come victorious. In like manner he set his face against the formation in the provinces of societies of which he approved the objects. He was anxious to allay, not to irritate, party feelings which were then rife, arguing that associations for political purposes, other than

the Houses of Lords and Commons, were not only unconstitutional, but unsafe. These were high ends, worthy of the great man who sought them; and the means by which he laboured to bring them about, were as wise as the ends themselves. Nobody ever came to the Duke for advice and went away without it. By letters, in personal interviews, now directly, at other times through the medium of a third party, he laboured to impress his own views of things upon others, and he succeeded to an extent which is without a parallel in the history of the human mind. Hence many a debate took place, in which the argument on the opposition side prevailed, or was assumed to prevail, yet no division followed hostile to the minister. The Duke would enter a protest in the Journals of the House, which other Conservative peers signed with him, and the measure, whatever it might be, became law, through the will of a minority.

It is not worth while to particularize all the occasions on which the Duke exercised this control over himself and others. It was thus that the Irish Reform Bill passed the House of Lords; that the interference of the Government in the quarrel between Belgium and Holland was not averted; that in the civil war which broke out in Portugal, England was allowed to take part; and that the quadruple alliance in favour of the Queen of Spain, though censured, was not prevented. To this latter arrangement and the inconveniences arising out of it, the Duke never referred in private except with indignation; and of his opinion of King Ferdinand he made no secret. "I can conceive nothing more wicked," he used to say, "than the conduct of that man. He misgoverned his country as long as he lived, and at his death bequeathed to it a legacy of civil war; and we forsooth, because Ferdinand's executors call themselves Liberals, must help them to carry his bad purposes into effect. I dare say it is great weakness on my part to retain my interest in nations which, God knows, never behaved too well to me; but it makes my heart bleed to see Spain and Portugal given over to anarchy, when a little firmness and moderation on the part of the English Government might have prevented it."