THE NOVELS OF BENJAMIN DISRAELI

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by

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CHAPTER I

THE EARLY YEARS

Disraeli himself maintained that he was born in a library! This was true if intended as a description of the erudite atmosphere that pervaded the home where, on the 21st December 1804, Benjamin Disraeli, the son of Maria and Isaac D'Israeli was born. His father was an author of note, preoccupied with the curiosities of literature, whose literary studies led him into the realm of political history - he published an inquiry into the literary and political character of James I, and was awarded an Honorary degree at Oxford, for a work on the Life and Reign of Charles I. He was in contact with the intelligentsia of the age and numbered among his admirers men of the calibre of Byron, Scott, Southey, Rogers and Murray. Although he revered Byron, his truer mental affinity was with the eighteenth century, as exemplified by Pope. We can thus form an idea of the influences which, even unconsciously, would be brought to bear on the young Disraeli.

Isaac D'Israeli gave but formal adherence to his synagogue, visiting it only on rare occasions; then there was an open breach with the synagogue, owing to Isaac's refusal to take office on its Board of Management. For a while the family drifted without any congregational ties. Yielding at last to the importunities of Christian friends, he had the children baptised in the Christian faith, his son Benjamin being then in his thirteenth year. He and his wife, however, continued in the Jewish faith to the end. That this grafting of his children upon another religious faith was not unattended by struggles and heart-

aches is made quite clear in the little volume which he issued a short time after this event, seemingly as an explanation, apology and appeal, and which he entitled The Genius of Judaism. The ideas expounded here are familiar forerunners of those that his son was to champion so consistently:

> "The laws of other legislators have passed away, for their views were transient as the glory of the people to whom they were administered - there was no holy principle in them of enduring potency to carry them beyond the state they governed. But the laws of Moses - unaltered as they were first delivered to his race, breathing the inspiration in which they originated, and binding together the spirit of religion with the spirit of polity - after countless ages are now operating on their unchangeable people, still ancient and still our contemporaries . . . the law of this people constitutes their religion. A legal ordinance becomes a moral duty, the civil order from that moment was bound up with the ecclesiastical, the 'alliance between Church and State' was never so indissolubly built up together as among the religious Hebrews."[1]

Thus Disraeli grew up in a home where the spirit of Judaism was not negated, although the letter of the religious law went unobserved. His was a mind cast from the beginning in the semitic mould.

His schooling was irregular in the sense that he did not receive the conventional public school education. He was, however, free from the traditional historical and political strictures, and his more liberal education enabled him to come to his own conclusions on important matters.

In 1821 he was articled to a firm of solicitors in

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1. Isaac D'Israeli, The Genius of Judaism, p. 126. London, 1833.

London. At this time he proceeded to lay the foundations of a wide and thorough knowledge of history, literature and languages. His precocious brilliance was apparent to Murray, the publisher of Isaac D'Israeli's books, who before Benjamin had completed his 18th year, sought his opinion as to the merits of a tragedy which there was some thought of producing. In May 1824 Benjamin submitted a short manuscript for publication, later requesting that it be destroyed.

Plagued already by the ill-health that never ceased to dog his footsteps throughout his life, he embarked on a six weeks tour in 1824, together with his father and a friend, Meredith. In his letters home he reveals his capacity for description and his flair for communicating with verve and style the passing interests of their travels. On this tour he determined that he would not be a lawyer.[1]

In 1825 he engaged in financial speculations on the Stock Market - speculations that ended disastrously, involving him in debt that was only finally resolved thirty years later. Disraeli's first publications were issued in this year, publications of no literary importance - a pamphlet under the title of An Enquiry into the Plans, Progress, and Policy of the American Mining Companies, shortly followed by another entitled Lawyers and Legislators: or, Notes on the American Mining Companies. Murray also published a short pamphlet The Present State

1. Nine years later, Disraeli wrote: "I determined when descending those magical waters that I would not be a lawyer."
William Flavelle Moneypenny, The Life of Benjamin Disraeli Earl of Beaconsfield, Vol. I, p. 53. London, 1910.

of Mexico, which was merely a translation of a report by a minister. He then proceeded with the first and last piece of hack work he ever did for Murray - he prepared an edition for the press of a Life of Paul Jones. He embarked with Murray on an ambitious enterprise to establish a daily paper in the Conservative interest which should surpass The Times in influence. There exists at this stage of the venture a letter, written by John Murray to J.G. Lockhart, testifying to the ability of the young Disraeli:

> "He is a good scholar, hard student, a deep thinker, of great energy, equal perseverance, and indefatigable application, and a complete man of business. His knowledge of human nature, and the practical tendency of all his ideas, have often surprised me in a young man who has hardly passed his twentieth year, and above all, his mind and heart are as pure as when they were first formed."[1]

When the venture collapsed, Moneypenny points out:

> "He had shown amazing energy, amazing self-confidence, and amazing powers of winning to his views men older and riper in experience than himself. His faults had been the faults of youth, an over-sanguine temperament, and immaturity of judgement."[2]

He published his first novel Vivian Grey, in 1826. This novel, which is really a social fairy story about English society, is interesting mainly because its themes, stylistic qualities and philosophy are prophetic of the later literary work of Disraeli. We are struck by the dazzling imagination, buoyant vitality and satirical wit that characterize the work. There are severe structural

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1. William Flavelle Moneypenny, The Life of Benjamin Disraeli Earl of Beaconsfield, Vol. I, p. 67. London, 1910.
2. Ibid. Vol. I, p. 74.

defects, there is artificiality, melodrama, fantasy and illogicality - the creative joy evaporates and the second volume ends abruptly. The very inequality of its merits, however, justifies the contention of the author that it was a "hot and hurried sketch . . . like its subject; for what is youth but a sketch - a brief hour of principles unsettled, passions unrestrained, powers undeveloped, and purposes unexecuted!"[1]

The couplet:

> "Why then the world's mine oyster
> Which I with sword will open."[2]

makes the attitude of Vivian explicit. He is a hero actively engaging in combat with life. Political motives are early brought into prominence. Fired with ambition, Vivian pants for the senate. He attaches himself to the Marquis of Carrabas, a conventional type of self-seeking aristocrat, and proceeds to organise a political faction. The action, however, is always "placed" and evaluated in relation to a moral scheme. We are never completely lost in the intrigue and deceit. A letter from Vivian's scholarly father sounds a cautionary note for the reader as well as for Vivian, warning of "masked" associates:

> "Is it not obvious, my dear Vivian, that true Fame and true Happiness must rest upon the imperishable social affections? I do not mean that coterie celebrity which paltry minds accept as fame, but that which exists independent of the intrigues of individuals: nor do I mean that glittering show of perpetual converse with the world which some miserable wanderers call Happiness; but that which can only be drawn from the

1. B.R. Jerman, The Young Disraeli, p. 67. London, 1960.
2. These lines which appear as the motto on the title page of Vivian Grey are quoted from Shakespeare's The Merry Wives of Windsor.

> sacred and solitary fountain of your own feelings."[1]

He continues:

> "Let me warn you not to fall into the usual error of youth in fancying that the circle you move in is precisely the world itself."[2]

Despite these timely reminders, Vivian's plans are confounded by the evil machinations of a Mrs. Felix Lorraine. Vivian emerges from this mêlée of melodramatic revenge and destruction with a shattered faith and constitution. He then starts his "Wanderjahre" and encounters more companions and strange adventures on his travels. One of the most polished portraits in the novel is that of the statesman Beckendorff, a man who embodies the essence of Disraeli's romantic philosophy - the hero who can transform reality into what he wishes it to be. Beckendorff, believing that circumstances are the creatures of man, expounds the theme that is echoed in every subsequent novel:

> "We are free agents, and man is more powerful than matter. I recognise no intervening influence between that of the established course of nature and my own mind. Truth may be distorted, may be stifled, be suppressed. The invention of cunning deceits may, and in most cases does, prevent man from exercising his own powers. They have made him responsible to a realm of shadows, and a suitor to a court of shades. He is ever dreading authority which does not exist, and fearing the occurrence of penalties which there are none to enforce. But the mind that dares to extricate itself from these vulgar prejudices, that proves its loyalty to its Creator by devoting all its adoration to His glory; such a spirit as this becomes a master-mind, and that master-mind will invariably find that circum-

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Vivian Grey, p. 132. Hughenden Edition. London, 1881.
2. Ibid. p. 132.

> stances are its slaves. . . . . .
> . . . . . .
> If, in fact, you wish to succeed, success, I repeat, is at your command."[1]

Vivian Grey, however, considers himself beyond redemption and ultimately is killed. A Byronic consciousness of lost youth and promise pervades the action. Disraeli mourns the passing of his romantic hero. Vivian Grey has dreamed his vain dreams. "The Disappointment of Manhood succeeds to the delusion of Youth: let us hope that the heritage of Old Age is not Despair."[2]

Disraeli himself declared that Vivian Grey resulted from "imagination, acting upon knowledge not acquired by experience. Of such circumstances, exaggeration is a necessary consequence, and false taste accompanies exaggeration."[3] There is, however, in Vivian Grey, no total lack of art. The style is light and vivacious and, for all its extravagance, there is a sense of power. In many ways it is the embodiment of Disraeli's feelings.

In 1827, Colburn published a satirical sketch entitled Popanilla. It was really Disraeli's first political essay and reveals his liberal outlook and aversion to narrow dogmatism. Popanilla is a burlesque of Benthamism, at which Disraeli scoffs irreverently.

On the luxuriant isle of Fantaisie, undiscovered by explorers and unvisited by missionaries, exists a "Natural" society living out its pleasurable existence. One of their number, Popanilla, comes across some Utilitarian literature washed ashore, and tries to impose a philosophy

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Vivian Grey, p. 369. London, 1881.
2. Ibid. p. 487.
3. Benjamin Disraeli, Vivian Grey. Advertisement. London, 1881.

of utility on those around him. He fails and is despatched abroad. He arrives at the Isle of Vraibleusia (England) and establishes himself in Hubbabub (London), the capital city. His initial impressions confirm him in his prejudices against a state of nature. He later begins to suspect, however, that man might exist in too artificial a state. The sketch abounds in wit and clever parody. The British Constitution, economy, public debt and poor relief are all brilliantly ridiculed. It is a sparkling jeu d'esprit.

After a few years of illness and despondency Disraeli yearned to travel to the east, but realized that the funds necessary for the venture were to be supplied by his own literary efforts. The Young Duke, written before Disraeli left England, but published in the spring of 1831 when he was far removed from England, showed evidences of pandering to a public taste created by publishers who knew their readers. Disraeli was using his pen to entertain, yet, though undoubtedly hack-work, it is done with so much imagination that it takes on artistry and merit. Disraeli himself, in a letter dated December 9th 1874, remarked to Lady Chesterfield: "I am ashamed of Vivian Grey and The Young Duke and wish I could have suppressed them. They are too puerile!"[1] The Young Duke, a novel of "more than" fashionable life, is full of interest for the modern reader. It is, as the subtitle so aptly indicates, "A Moral Tale, Though Gay" and the novel is one of veiled satire against the frivolity and irresponsibility

1. The Letters of Disraeli to Lady Bradford and Lady Chesterfield. Edited by the Marquis of Zetland. Vol. I p. 180. London, 1929.

of the youth of the aristocracy. The note of satire is so light, however, that we are not surprised that the critics indignantly reviewing the book on its release misinterpreted the prevailing tone as one of sanction, not censure, and could not perceive that it was an exposure of fashionable folly. The less discerning readers were enlightened in October 1853, when Disraeli wrote of The Young Duke: "Though its pages attempt to portray the fleeting manners of a somewhat frivolous age, it is hoped that they convey a moral of a deeper and a more permanent character."[1]

The rakish young duke is the spoiled darling of society. His preoccupation with himself is his prime concern. His knowledge is not of mankind but of manners. His career of dissipation, the succession of glittering entertainments, the business of pleasure, grows wearisome. His life is without aim or purpose. Acknowledged as a brilliant ornament of English society, his dreams prove delusions. He keenly feels the absence of a contented mind, and is appalled by the consequences of his mode of living. His redemption is effected through the good graces of a beautiful girl, for whose charms he makes a Pro-Catholic Emancipation speech in the House of Lords, thereby winning the heroine and his self-respect. The latent possibilities of the duke are realized through his application to public duty. Evil is thwarted and good impulses are developed and rewarded.

The drama of the elements of good and evil contending for dominion within the human soul takes on the

1. Benjamin Disraeli, The Young Duke. Advertisement. Hughenden Edition. London, 1881.

colouring of a morality play:

> "How nearly, too, had he been shipwrecked in this moral whirlpool! With what gratitude did he not invoke the beneficent Providence that had not permitted the innate seeds of human virtue to be blighted in his wild and neglected soul! With what admiration did he not gaze upon the pure and beautiful being whose virtue and whose loveliness were the cause of his regeneration, the sources of his present happiness, and the guarantees of his future joy!"[1]

The writing is spiced with wit, a keen sense of the ridiculous and some bitter political satire. The scenes are powerfully conceived, particularly the gambling scene with its vivid description of the desperate efforts of the players. One senses, however, that the writer experienced the greatest relish while dwelling on the Parliamentary questions and debates. Every irrelevant aside betrays his enthusiasm:

> "One thing is clear, that a man may speak very well in the House of Commons and fail very completely in the House of Lords. There are two distinct styles requisite: I intend, in the course of my career, if I have time, to give a specimen of both. In the Lower House, Don Juan may perhaps be our model; in the Upper House, Paradise Lost."[2]

In 1830, Disraeli journeyed to the East. He returned to England an enthusiast for the Orient. Contarini Fleming is a product of this journey. In a letter to Lady Bradford dated September 27th, 1875, Disraeli states: "My books are the history of my life - I don't mean a vulgar photograph of incidents, but the psychological development of my character. Self-inspiration may

1. Benjamin Disraeli, The Young Duke, p. 324. London, 1881.
2. Ibid. p. 287.

be egotistical, but it is generally true."[1] It is this quality of sincerity which characterizes the novel. Heine was charmed with it and declared that modern English literature had not produced its equal. Goethe, generally chary with his praises, was profuse in his admiration of it.

In Disraeli's soul there existed a conflict between the spheres of literature and politics. Political ambitions vied with the calls of an artistic temperament.[2] These same ambiguous desires torture Contarini Fleming. He is a youth who forever oscillates between a ravenous desire for power and greatness, and a life to be spent in the study and the creation of the beautiful. Contarini is a dreamer whose truest life is in the region of the imagination. The statement of this theme of the meditative versus the active elements in Contarini's psychological make-up, from his introspective boyhood to his irresolute manhood, forms the main body of the novel. As a picture of the artist as a young man, it is an original and sincere literary effort.

Disraeli, in a preface written in 1845, defined the theme as the "development and formation of the poetic character." He conceived of a character "whose position in life should be at variance, and, as it were, in constant conflict with his temperament; and the accidents of whose birth, nevertheless, tended to develop his psychology."[3] The book itself is represented as the poetic

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1. The Letters of Disraeli to Lady Bradford and Lady Chesterfield. Edited by the Marquis of Zetland. Vol. I, p. 286. London, 1929.
2. Ibid. Vol. II, p. 252. Letter to Lady Bradford dated December 8th, 1879.
3. Benjamin Disraeli, Contarini Fleming, preface, p. vi. Hughenden Edition. London, 1881.

creation of Contarini, seeking relief from the burden of his thoughts. This first person narrative technique projects us into the heart of what is being felt, thought, or enacted. Contarini wears no mask. The result is a warmth and immediacy of contact. In childhood his artistic temperament separates him from those around him. Susceptible as he is to emotion, his loneliness is alleviated only by the feeling that he is loved by his father. Through the power of his imagination he escapes from a sense of isolation, though the world he conjures up is in sad contrast to reality. On being recalled to the trivia and irritations of domestic life he realizes that "I was no longer a grave knight, I was a child."[1] The horror of the disparity between his imaginative creations and the truth of his situation overwhelms him. His schoolboy-friendships are unreal, as they are filtered through the transmuting light of his poetic imagination. "I was in truth rather enamoured of the creature of my imagination than the companion of my presence."[2] Hitherto a creature of dreams, Contarini, spurred on by a growing sense of ambition, arrives at the conviction that his is a poetic destiny: "Yes - beautiful beings, I will release you from the prison-house of my brain! I will give you to freedom and to light! You shall exist not only for me, you shall go forth to the world to delight and to conquer."[3] This resolve is weakened by his mortifying attempts at composition. Defeated, his thirst for artistic expression finds gratification in prayer to the Holy Magdalen.

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Contarini Fleming, p. 9. London, 1881.
2. Ibid. p. 32.
3. Ibid. p. 40.

The attraction that Roman Catholicism exercises over Contarini is a theme that undergoes constant exploration throughout Disraeli's novels. An appreciation of the ritual and an awareness of the relationship between Judaism and this daughter-church finds fullest expression in the later novels, particularly Lothair.

At this unhappy stage of his development, Contarini meets an artist, Winter, who assures him that feeling is truth. He advises Contarini to read more and ponder less. Contrary to the edict of this artist, Baron Fleming urges Contarini to repress his feelings (Baron Fleming is a practical statesman who requires action not thought). In observing his father, Contarini pinpoints the warring emotions that jostle within himself. He is struck at the contrast between all this greatness achieved and moving before him in its proud reality, and his own weak meditations of unexecuted purposes and dreamy visions of imaginary grandeur. Under his father's supervision, Contarini enters worldly society and cultivates social arts and graces.

Contarini is by now well aware of his divergent nature, the blend of creative and worldly wisdom, the poet and the statesman. His father, who regards imagination as a great enemy, urges action. He tells Contarini that "A man of great energies aspires that they should be felt in his lifetime."[1] He whets Contarini's growing sense of ambition. Contarini becomes deeply and successfully involved in political intrigue. Despite this political training, his essential nature reasserts itself. Recoil-

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Contarini Fleming, p. 155. London, 1881.

ing in disgust from his mode of life, he returns to his former poetic aspirations.

Seized with a wish to shine in literature, he publishes a satirical sketch Manstein. Contarini determines to re-educate himself according to the dictates of his inner nature. He countermands his father's orders, abandons a London post and begins a long series of travels. From a structural point of view, the marked break once the plot is abandoned for a Byronic travelogue, detracts from the unity of tone and feeling. The writing here is, however, characterized by eloquence and vitality. We see how Contarini's creative ability, freed from restraint, develops itself. With his romantic imagination now the paramount force in his life, Contarini has no difficulty in rejecting the reality of his past duties and connections. "My days are indeed a dream, but a dream of long delight. I gaze upon the beautiful and my mind responds to the inspiration, for my thoughts are as lovely as my visions."[1]

His ambition remains unquelled, however, and he can still declare "there is that within me, which may yet mould the mind and fortunes of my race . . ."[2] He marries a Venetian bride and his "life was only love."[3] With the death of his wife it is the artist in Contarini that articulates his grief. The sensitive rendering of Contarini's painful search to find his destiny evokes the sympathy of the reader. We understand the complexity and variety of his feelings. He strengthens his resolve to be a poet and realizes that "if I possess the organisation of a poet,

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Contarini Fleming, p. 223. London, 1881.
2. Ibid. p. 223.
3. Ibid. p. 247.

no one can prevent me from exercising my faculty . . ."[1] The vicissitudes of his life, love - poetic creation - sorrow, have all enabled Contarini to arrive at self-knowledge.

Contarini receives a letter from his dying father, justifying his scheme of a practical education as necessary for Contarini's poetic nature:

> "I resolved that my child should be happy. I desired to save him from the misery that clouded my own youth. I would have preserved him from the tyranny of impetuous passions, and the harrowing woe that awaits an ill-regulated mind. I observed in him a dangerous susceptibility that alarmed me. I studied to prevent the indulgence of his feelings. I was kind, but I was calm. His imaginative temperament did not escape me. I perceived only hereditary weakness, and would have prevented hereditary woe. It was my aim to make him a practical man. Contarini, it was the anxiety of affection that prevented me from doing justice to your genius."[2]

Stupefied by the additional blow of his father's death, Contarini is roused from his indifference to life by the reappearance of his friend and spiritual mentor, the artist Winter. He urges Contarini to turn from meditation to creative action: "It is well to think until a man has discovered his genius, and developed his faculties, but then let him put his intelligence in motion. Act, act, act; act without ceasing, and you will no longer talk of the vanity of life."[3]

Contarini resolves to pass his time in the study and the creation of the beautiful. He knows this to be his

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Contarini Fleming, p. 268. London, 1881.
2. Ibid. p. 367.
3. Ibid. p. 370.

desire, but doubts whether it will be his career. Devoted to Italy, he is resolved to participate in the political regeneration of that country. His poetic insight enables him to see man not only as he is but the ideal of man, as man should be. His belief in the ultimate perfectibility of man will lead him to ameliorate society through the propagation of truth. Contarini's fortune and intelligence have blended together to form a character that approximates closely to Disraeli's delineation of the statesman, Bolingbroke, in his pamphlet Vindication of the English Constitution, a man who possessed "that intuitive knowledge of his race which creative minds alone enjoy, all the wisdom which can be derived from literature, and a comprehensive experience of human affairs . . ."[1] In this fusion of worlds, literary creation and poetic imagination contribute to the greatness of the consummate politician. The underlying idea emerges that the imagination empowers man to do the greatest practical things, as man is governed less by reason than by imagination. The valuable trait of poetic feeling forms an integral part of Disraeli's ideal of an organic society, in which the Crown, People and Church are indissolubly linked through imaginative awareness, contact and loyalty.

Disraeli's journey to the East, particularly his visit to Palestine, the land of his fathers, made a powerful impression on him, an impression that largely coloured his later life. He pondered over the ruins of Palestine's one-time glory. Israel's past spoke to him in Palestine

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Vindication of the English Constitution, p. 186. London, 1835.

as Israel's present had never spoken in England. He made his Jewish origin a matter of pride. Henceforth the spirit of the Orient breathes through the best of his novels. One after the other of his heroes he takes to Palestine, and puts into their mouths words about the Jewish people such as England, long fed on stories of the Barabbas and Shylock kind, had never heard before. Alroy - a Wondrous Tale appeared after his return to England, and belongs to the same period of literary production as Contarini Fleming. A wondrous tale it proved indeed, wondrous in conception, in oriental style and imagery, in its pictures of Israel's past and its dream of Israel's future. Its heroes are mostly Jewish. You are in Biblical lands and hear Biblical speech. You sit at the feet of Jewish patriarchs and patriots, and mingle with Jewish High Priests, princes and prophets. In its very opening chapter you hear one of the characters say:

> "God of my fathers! . . . By the memory of Sinai, let me tell thee that some of the antique blood yet beats within these pulses, and there yet is one who fain would commune with thee face to face, commune and conquer.
>
> And if the promise unto which we cling be not a cheat, why, let him come, come, and come quickly, for thy servant Israel, Lord, is now a slave so infamous, so woebegone, and so contemned, that even when our fathers hung their harps by the sad waters of the Babylonian stream, why, it was paradise compared with what we suffer. . . . . .
>
> . . . . . .
>
> My fathers, my heroic fathers, if this feeble arm cannot redeem your heritage; if the foul boar must still wallow in thy sweet vineyard, Israel, at least I will not disgrace you." 1

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Alroy, pp.8, 9. Hughenden Edition. London, 1881.

After the destruction of Jerusalem, the Eastern Jews, while they acknowledged the supremacy of their conquerors, gathered themselves together for all purposes of jurisdiction under the control of a native ruler, a reputed descendant of David, whom they dignified with the title of "The Prince of the Captivity." Their chief residence was Bagdad, where they remained until the eleventh century. Alroy, a descendant of David, conceives the idea of winning back the independence of Israel and restoring her departed glory.

In the very first chapter we realise that the hero has come to think, feel and act as a rebel even before circumstances force him to assume that role. Vivian Grey rebels against his middle-class birth; Contarini Fleming resents his Northern land of adoption; and true to this Malcontent tradition, Alroy yearns to throw off the yoke of oppression:

> "I know not what I feel, yet what I feel is madness. Thus to be is not to live, if life be what I sometimes dream, and dare to think it might be. To breathe, to feed, to sleep, to wake and breathe again, again to feel existence without hope; if this be life, why then these brooding thoughts that whisper death were better?"[1]

He is sustained by his sister, whose serene spirit calms the welter of emotion that continually rages within him. She fears the arrogance of his ambitions, and pleads: "What we have been, Alroy, is a bright dream; and what we may be, at least as bright a hope; and for what we are, thou art my brother."[2]

He is restrained not only by the moderating influence

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Alroy, p. 8. London, 1881.
2. Ibid. p. 10.

of his sister's counsel, but by the voice of Reason, his uncle. He knows that Alroy can not succeed in his ambition. According to the author, however, great accomplishment always belongs to the realm of the improbable, and consequently Alroy accepts the messianic responsibility for restoring the sceptre of Judah. His spiritual mentor is a Holy priest, Jabaster, who is well versed in Cabalistic knowledge. Filled with religious zeal, he believes in a revival of the kingdom of Israel in its true and sacred traditions. His belief in David Alroy is implicit. "He is clearly summoned. The Lord is with him. Be he with the Lord, and we shall prosper."[1] Alroy, roused by his sense of Moslem oppression to the highest point of heroism, raises the banner of his people and for a time restores the fallen fortunes of his nation.

The reader becomes convinced of the reality of the heroic in human experience. The narrative swells into a hymn to youth and heroic achievement. Confidence and enthusiasm in the series of conquests are further inspired by the assurances of the prophetess, Esther:

> "Lo! A decree hath gone forth, and it says, Hamadan shall be to thee for a spoil, and desolation shall fall upon Babylon. And there shall the wild beasts of the desert lodge, and howling monsters shall fill their houses, and there shall the daughters of the ostrich dwell, and there shall the screech-owl pitch her tent, and there shall the night-raven lay her eggs, and there shall the satyrs hold their revels. And wolves shall howl to one another in their palaces, and dragons in their voluptuous pavilions. Her time is near at hand;

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Alroy, p. 34. London, 1881.

> her days shall not be prolonged; the reed and the lotus shall wither in her rivers; and the meadows by her canals shall be as the sands of the desert. For, is it a light thing that the Lord should send his servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel? Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth, and break forth into singing, O mountains, for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted!"[1]

After forming his kingdom at Bagdad, Alroy becomes an intoxicated conqueror dissatisfied with his original aspirations. Gradually a political, military and religious situation evolves which Alroy fails to master. He marries Schirene, an infidel, thus compromising the cause and the faith of the Hebrews, yet his heart is still true to the god of his fathers. The "wondrous" part of Alroy's career is his rise. His decline is swift and sure. With the murder of Jabaster, the fortune of war turns against him and he is overwhelmed by his adversaries. Aware of his self-sufficient pride, the humbled Alroy now cries, "O! my God, I have deserted thee, and now thou hast deserted me!"[2] Having placed confidence in his genius, he finds himself defeated and deserted. His sister consoles him in his desolation, and endows even failure with significance:

> "You have shown what we can do and shall do. Your memory alone is inspiration. A great career, although baulked of its end, is still a landmark of human energy. Failure, when sublime, is not without its purpose. Great deeds are great legacies, and work with wondrous usury. By what Man has done, we learn what Man can do; and gauge the power and prospects of our race."[3]

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Alroy, p. 103. London, 1881.
2. Ibid. p. 204.
3. Ibid. p. 240.

The reception that was accorded to this novel was unprecedented, and its influence far-reaching. It directed the eyes of England towards Palestine, and its thought towards the Jews, and, though the work of a Jew, its author had no longer need of publishing it anonymously. He was assured of an eager reading world. Of course, there were hostile critiques, but the review that appeared in The Athenaeum of the 9th March, 1833, is fairly representative of the opinion that prevailed:

> "Those who read to the fortieth page of this tale then close the work for ever and call the author a wild enthusiast, who deals in extravagant legends and supernatural fictions, will do him the greatest injustice. Wild his work is assuredly - extravagant sometimes to an utmost wish, and supernatural even to the very limits of poetic belief, but then genius is stamped on every page, feelings such as the muse delights in abound, nay overflow; while a true heroic loftiness of soul, such as influenced devout men of old when they warred for their country, glows and flashes through the whole narrative. Nor is this all - there is a deep infusion of the spirit of Judah in it - that martial and devout spirit which kindled in the Hebrew bosoms of old when their daughters sang, 'Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands.'"

In Alroy the mockery of the west is absent, instead there is the belief and mysticism of the East. In harmony with the East is the magnificence and hyperbole of the language. The prose poetry is in accordance with the poetical subject. The language rises with the passions of the speakers and subsides in unison with their sinking emotions. Disraeli, in a letter to Lady Bradford, written on January 5th, 1876, wrote:

> "When I wrote it (Alroy) I was very young and had the fancy that I could form a new style, founded in some degree on Arabian prose, which admits rhythm and sometimes - as in the Korân which is a classic - even rhyme. But I wanted to combine all this with the familiar treatment of more familiar things, so that the style should vary with the subject; and though the occasion should be taken for the highest bursts of poetry, were I capable of them, the simplest narrative, the most natural dialogue, and even comic and sarcastic pictures of life, should be alike admitted. The world was then satiated by a generation of great poets. People shrank from verse and I sought to give them poetry without numbers - or not too much of them. Society decided against the experiment and it was a disappointment to me. Alroy has lived from other qualities."[1]

In Alroy Disraeli displays his exotic talent. The dramatic tale, lyric melody and poetical subject contribute to the impact which this national epic has on the reader, even today. As historical fiction it might strain the credulity of the average reader, but it merits serious evaluation as a work of literature.

As a contrast to Alroy, Disraeli published at the same time a novelette, The Rise of Iskander, setting forth the history of a Christian hero placed in a similar position to Alroy's, but achieving a very different end. Iskander is the Scanderbeg of Gibbon, the Albanian prince who won his independence in the days of Mohammed the Conqueror. Iskander is an impossibly ideal character. Alroy, fired by ambition and pride desires to be a prince without fetters, whereas Iskander declares altruistically: "I shall be rewarded if I leave freedom as an heritage to

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1. The Letters of Disraeli to Lady Bradford and Lady Chesterfield. Edited by the Marquis of Zetland. Vol. II, p. 9. London, 1929.

my countrymen; but for the rest I feel that I bid farewell to every joy of life, except the ennobling consciousness of performing a noble duty."[1] This historical romance is not specially characteristic of the author. We notice that he is capable of writing objectively and with detachment. From here on Disraeli is less introspective.

Between 1832 and 1834, Disraeli contributed several sketches to Colburn's New Monthly magazine of which Bulwer was the editor. In Ixion in Heaven Disraeli used the classical myth of the King of Thessaly who was carried to Olympus and there fell in love with the queen of the Gods. The classical details, however, are merely a vehicle for contemporary satire and the Gods are truly brought up to date. Ixion is lucky enough to arrive in Heaven during the Olympian "season" - a transcript of the activities of the artificial Mayfair set. In the courtly world of leisure and idleness, the ennui of existence makes immortality a bore. Although a mortal, Ixion is not awed by the world around him and examines their God-head with a cool scepticism. Believing that "Adventures are to the Adventurous,"[2] he becomes commanding and arrogant. He falls inevitably through excess of daring, having loved Juno, the Queen of Heaven. Cupid intervenes to save Juno from the wrath of Jupiter, enveloping them (the guilty pair) in a mist to enable her to make her escape "with your reputation only under a cloud."[3] Ixion is condemned. It is a fine moral and demonstrates the usual infelicity that attends unequal connections. Ixion, however, has

1. Benjamin Disraeli, The Rise of Iskander, p. 401. Hughenden Edition. London, 1881.
2. Benjamin Disraeli, Ixion in Heaven, p. 285. Hughenden Edition. London, 1881.
3. Ibid. p. 295.

the last word and cries, "I defy the immortal ingenuity of thy cruelty. My memory must be as eternal as thy torture: that will support me."[1]

In a letter dated February 7th 1833, to his sister Sarah, Disraeli remarked: "Ixion is thought the best thing I ever wrote . . ."[2] The piece certainly sparkles with impertinent wit and mockery. The light satirical dialogues are conceived in the manner of Lucian. Yet the sketch is free from malice and breathes a spirit of innocent mischief.

A companion piece to Ixion was The Infernal Marriage, published in the following year. Here, however, a deeper current of thought can be traced, for it is a witty allegory in mythical dress of contemporary society and politics. We are introduced to a capricious little Proserpine who asserts her queenship over gloomy Hades by banishing the "fond and faithful Cerby,"[3] Pluto's celebrated watch-dog of Hell, by snubbing the Furies and alleviating the misery of the tortured mortals. Her match with Pluto is sanctioned by Jupiter who believes that it is better for Proserpine to reign in hell than to serve in heaven. When the Queen of Hell pays a visit to Elysium, we discover recognizable allusions to contemporary manners and morals. She finds there a few thousand families who spend their time in the splendid luxury of absolute idleness, high-born beings without a duty to perform, supported by the toil of a million gnomes. After exhaust-

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Ixion in Heaven, p. 297. London, 1881.
2. Home Letters written by Lord Beaconsfield 1830-1852. Edited by Ralph Disraeli, p. 118. London, 1928.
3. Benjamin Disraeli, The Infernal Marriage, p. 303. Hughenden Edition. London, 1881.

ing every form of amusement they are ready to perish from boredom. The humour rises to sparkling wit.

Between the period in which he was engaged in writing these sketches and the appearance of the more complete novels of 1837, Disraeli's pen was not idle. He attempted an epic poem in heroic verse, dealing with the Revolutionary principle. In a letter to Mrs. Austen, Disraeli revealed the thematic scheme he contemplated:

> "I imagine the Genius of Feudalism and the Genius of Federalism appearing before the Almighty Throne and pleading their respective and antagonistic causes. The pleading of the Feudal Genius, in which I say all that can be urged in favour of the aristocratic system of society, forms the first book: the pleading of the Federal, the second: the decree of the Omnipotent is mystical. It declares that a man is born of supernatural energies and that whichever side he embraces will succeed, or to that effect. The man is Napoleon just about to conquer Italy. The spirits descend to earth to join him. He adopts the Federal or Democratic side. The Feudal stirs up the Kings against him . . . The next two books contain the conquest of Italy, very little vulgar fighting but highly idealised."[1]

The poem is a negligible contribution to letters. If the conception was not "sublime," the execution was less so. Disraeli did not resume his poetic epic after the first three cantos were published and unfavourably received.

In these years Disraeli also wrote and published a number of political pamphlets, which mainly gave an account of his early ideas. The imagination and inven-

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1. William Flavelle Moneypenny, The Life of Benjamin Disraeli Earl of Beaconsfield, Vol. I, p. 238. London, 1910.

tion of the novelist is to be found in all his political writings. As in the novels, we find expressed a reverence for the past, a deep feeling for religion and a desire for order.

He was associated with the production in 1832 of a political diatribe entitled England And France; or A Cure For The Ministerial Gallomania, a pamphlet devoted to the field of foreign policy, for he believed that the safety as well as the glory of a great Empire depended upon a foreign policy. Elsewhere we find a statement that is elucidated more fully in the later political trilogy: "I am neither Whig nor Tory, my politics are described by one word, and that word is England."[1]

In 1833 a short article appeared entitled What is He? By the Author of Vivian Grey. It is an ambitiously neutral manifesto in view of the fact that England had not yet become aware of the genre "liberal conservatism", which was to be always associated with Disraeli's brand of Democratic Toryism. The pamphlet is an argument in favour of a National Party, and an explanation of the principles on which it should be founded. The eloquence of the novels is not absent and in the conclusion we read:

> "In the sedate but vigorous character of the British nation we may place great confidence. Let us not forget also an influence too much underrated in this age of bustling mediocrity - the influence of individual character. Great spirits may yet arise to guide the groaning helm through the world of troubled waters - spirits whose proud destiny it may still be at the same time to maintain the glory of the Empire

1. Benjamin Disraeli, England And France; or, A Cure For The Ministerial Gallomania, p. 13. London, 1832.

> and to secure the happiness of
> the People."[1]

Even though a political tract, we perceive traits characteristic of the successful novelist - the insight, fantasy, imagination and deep consistency.

In 1834 Disraeli published The Crisis Examined, originally a speech which he delivered at High Wycombe. It is brilliant in thought and eloquent in expression.

In 1835, a tract entitled Vindication of the English Constitution in a Letter to a Noble and Learned Lord, by Disraeli the Younger, appeared. This is the fullest exposition of his political creed that preceded Coningsby. In it we find the "far deeper consistency which has its roots in a highly original mind, in a strong intellectual grasp of certain cardinal ideas."[2] In his attack on the Utilitarians, he reveals the romantic's dislike of the unimaginative, for he believed that "imagination governs mankind."[3] The Vindication also provides the fullest authoritative exposition of Disraeli's views on the Constitution. As he stresses natural disposition in Contarini Fleming, so too does he dwell here on the value of national character. He also established a new basis for Toryism in his slashing criticism of Whig Oligarchs who sought to impose their will on the nation by "reducing the English monarch to the character of a Venetian Doge. . . ."[4] The style is perfect, curt and flashy

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1. What is He? in Whigs and Whiggism. Edited by William Hutcheon, p. 22. London, 1913.
2. William Flavelle Moneypenny, The Life of Benjamin Disraeli Earl of Beaconsfield, Vol. I, p. 229. London, 1910.
3. Benjamin Disraeli - Mutilated Diary, September 1st, 1833.
4. Benjamin Disraeli, Vindication of the English Constitution, p. 139. London, 1835.

diction is rejected for a flowing stream of thought and expression graceful yet possessing innate strength.

In 1836 the Letters of Runnymede were re-published with a short tract The Spirit of Whiggism. The style is that of the Vindication, as is the argument.

Henrietta Temple, published a few months before the end of 1836, is a transitional work. It follows the introspective novels and precedes the political works of fiction. There is no secondary political purpose. It is a pure love story; love is the theme and lovely women the inspiration. Disraeli in a preface in 1845 said he had aimed to "commemorate feelings more enduring than public passions. His attempt to paint these delicate emotions lacks the merit and interest necessary to secure the novel a permanent place in English Literature.

The hero, Ferdinand Armine, has dutifully accepted his proposed marriage to an heiress, Katherine Grandison, as an opportunity to restore the depleted fortunes of his house. He falls in love, however, with Henrietta Temple. In the face of this irresistible and frenzied emotion he abandons all thought of a loveless marriage. Complications naturally arise. The final reconciliation and marriage of Ferdinand and Henrietta fulfils the implications of their first meeting.

The spiritual innocence which pervades the love of Henrietta and Ferdinand is eloquently captured in the writing:

> " . . . to feel an overwhelming conviction that with that fair form for ever our destiny must be entwined; that there is no more joy but in her joy, no sorrow but when she grieves; that in her sigh of love, in her

> smile of fondness, hereafter is all bliss; to feel our flaunty ambition fade away like a shrivelled gourd before her vision; to feel fame a juggle and posterity a lie; and to be prepared at once, for this great object to forfeit and fling away all former hopes, ties, schemes, views; to violate in her favour every duty of society; this is a lover, and this is love!"[1]

Disraeli sketches this delirium of love with passionate and tender care. Before the book concludes, however, the creative impulse (as in Vivian Grey) seems to spend itself. Understandably, the romance of imagination between Ferdinand and Henrietta evokes a sincere and true response from the reader; whereas the delineation of the romance of reason between Lord Montfort and Henrietta is an insipid sketch by the author, lacking conviction and force. It is the worldly Disraeli who writes: "If it be agonising to be deserted, there is at least consolation in being cherished."[2]

One character does enliven the last section of the novel considerably - the Count Mirabel, "a regular Nob." With his "mon ami, mon cher Armine . . ."[3] he breezes across the scene and effervesces with gaiety and charm. He is boldly drawn and characterized with verve and enthusiasm. The contemporary review of the novel that appeared in The Athenaeum is still valid as an evaluation of the novel's worth: "This vexatious, high-flown, foolish, clever work."

In 1837, Venetia, an idealization of the lives of Byron and Shelley, was published. Again the direct

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Henrietta Temple, p. 78. Hughenden Edition. London, 1881.
2. Ibid. p. 298.
3. Ibid. p. 389.

4.

A dedication to Lord Lyndhurst is prefixed to Venetia. In this Disraeli states that he attempted to delineate "two of the most renowned and refined spirits that have adorned these our latter days." In Venetia Cadurcis represents Byron, and Herbert is a generalised portrait of Shelley. The division of episodes is complicated as the circumstances of Byron's life are attributed equally to Cadurcis and Herbert. Most aspects of the novel parallel the lives and work of these two English poets. The boyhood of Cadurcis clearly corresponds with that of Byron - there is the same wayward childhood, vulgar mother and tempestuous career. Cadurcis reveals the genius and personality of Byron. Even Byron's relationship with Lady Caroline Lamb is introduced under the guise of a romance between Cadurcis and Lady Monteagle. Cadurcis, as Byron did, frequents the fashionable society of London, and wakes, as his prototype did, to sudden poetic success. In addition, he gives himself to the same absorbing egotism and vanity. Byron's subsequent unhappy marriage, however, is transferred to Herbert, who otherwise embodies the genius of Shelley. The hostility of England to Byron is depicted in the violent hatred Cadurcis is exposed to before he leaves for the continent, which prompts Disraeli to reflect that "he was the periodical victim, the scapegoat of English morality, sent into the wilderness with all the crimes and curses of the multitude on his head." (Venetia P. 320, London, Undated). His subsequent friendship with Marmion Herbert sincerely reflects the admiration Byron cherished for Shelley's reforming zeal. In Venetia Marmion Herbert discourses at length on Platonic concepts, which mirrors the enthusiasm of Shelley for translating from the dialogues of Plato. In the discussion between Herbert and Cadurcis, Herbert expounds views expressed by Shelley in an essay entitled On the Literature, the Arts, and the Manners of the Athenians. Disraeli draws freely from the text of Shelley's essays as can be seen in the following quotation:

> " 'You are wrong, Cadurcis,' said Herbert, 'poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.'" (Venetia, P. 438, London, undated).

This is a direct transcript from Shelley's A Defence of Poetry. In Venetia both poets are involved in the common end of Shelley - death by drowning. A slight attempt is made to veil the fateful locality, the Gulf of Spezia becomes "Spezzia" in Venetia.

2

In Venetia the quotation used as an epigraph is derived from Byron's Childe Harold's Pilgrimage (Canto 3, verse CXIII). The child Byron refers to is "Ada! sole daughter of my house and heart." (Canto 3, verse I).

In a letter dated March 21st 1837, which Disraeli sent to Lady Blessington, he identifies "The child of love" in Venetia with Ada!

> "In spite of every obstacle in the shape of harassed feelings and other disagreeable accidents of life, I have not forgotten the fair Venetia, who has grown under my paternal care, and as much in grace, I hope, as in stature, or rather dimensions. She is truly like her prototype -
>
> 'The Child of love, though born in bitterness,
> And nurtured in convulsion'"

(William Flavelle Moneypenny, The Life of Benjamin Disraeli Earl of Beaconsfield Vol. I, P. 360. London, 1910).

political motive is absent, but the love theme, though deep and bringing into play a whole range of feelings, is less frenzied and less rhetorical than that in Henrietta Temple.

Disraeli, in a letter to Lady Bradford, dated July, 1874, wrote:

> "I should like you very much to read Venetia. It is a very different book from The Young Duke. It was written in the maturity of my youth when I was thirty, eight years after The Young Duke, and I had travelled much and seen a good deal of the world in the interval, and thought over what I had seen. When you read Venetia you will see what it is for a woman to have a man of imagination for a lover. It is hoped, however, in this prosaic age, these turbulent animals have become extinct."[1]

Venetia is the child of Lady Annabel and one of those "turbulent animals," her poet-husband Marmion Herbert. She is:

> "The child of love, though born in bitterness
> And nurtured in convulsion."[2]

In depicting the child-life of Venetia, there is a remarkable freshness of feeling. The development of Venetia's sentiments is treated with power and pathos.

The convincing portrait of Lord Cadurcis is brilliantly executed, revealing the complexity of his inward conflicts. His youth is shown as a period of bitterness under the reign of a tyrannical mother, a despised and vulgar woman, yet his "one friend in this world."[3] He is shown as subject to ungovernable passion and even vindictiveness. He dominates the action of the novel and compels our sym-

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1. The Letters of Disraeli to Lady Bradford and Lady Chesterfield. Edited by the Marquis of Zetland. Vol. I, p. 114. London, 1929.
2. Benjamin Disraeli, Venetia - motto prefixed to title page. New Edition. London, undated.
3. Ibid. p. 89.

pathy throughout.

The portrait of Marmion Herbert is a pendant to that of Cadurcis. His collision with Orthodoxy in Church and State, envelops the book in an atmosphere of revolutionary ardour. Herbert too, is presented in a sympathetic light.

The concentrated resentment of Lady Annabel against her estranged husband is well suggested. This feeling is later extended to include Venetia's suitor, Cadurcis. She bears her burdens with exalted resignation, but Disraeli sketches in human touches of narrowness and self-assurance. Her first reconciliation with her husband is inconsistent with the foregoing evidences of her character, and is a revealing sign on the part of the author of hasty and imperfect workmanship.

In the novel as a whole, there is precision of thought and language. The quietness of romantic reverie and scenes of pastoral delight is balanced by impassioned outbursts such as that of Cadurcis when rejected by Venetia because of the latter's devotion to her father:

> "A genius and a poet! . . . are these fit terms to use when speaking of the most abandoned profligate of his age? A man whose name is synonymous with infamy, and which no one dares to breathe in civilised life; whose very blood is pollution, as you will some day feel; who has violated every tie, and derided every principle by which society is maintained; whose life is a living illustration of his own shameless doctrines; who is, at the same time, a traitor to his king and an apostate from his God!"[1]

Again there is the contemplative and philosophic vein that roots the novel in significant and tranquil depths:

> "'As for sexual love,' said Herbert, 'of which you were speaking, its

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Venetia, p. 201. London, undated.

> quality and duration depend upon the degree of sympathy that subsists between the two persons interested. Plato believed, and I believe with him, in the existence of a spiritual antitype of the soul, so that when we are born, there is something within us which, from the instant we live and move, thirsts after its likeness. This propensity develops itself with the development of our nature. The gratification of the senses soon becomes a very small part of that profound and complicated sentiment, which we call love. Love, on the contrary, is an universal thirst for a communion, not merely of the senses, but of our whole nature, intellectual, imaginative, and sensitive. He who finds his antitype, enjoys a love perfect and enduring; time cannot change it, distance cannot remove it; the sympathy is complete.'"[1]

The presentation of the themes in Venetia, although the line between fiction and biographical reality was purposefully confused, demanded courage, for the age was saturated with the notion of respectability. D.L. Murray called this novel the most perfect of Disraeli's novels in literary form. After reading Venetia, one can understand why Dickens mourned that politics robbed literature of such a brilliant writer as Disraeli.

In 1839, Disraeli published a poetic tragedy in five acts, Count Alarcos. The play is packed with Websterian horrors, strong passions, enormous crimes and profound superstition. Disraeli's last attempt at poetry possesses a certain measure of skill in the development of the dialogue. The plot is interesting and the situations dramatic. Although an attempt to contribute to the revival of English tragedy, it is too strange and terrible for

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Venetia, p. 429. London, undated.

success on the stage.

The years ahead saw the publication of the main body of Disraeli's writings. His mature ideas find expression in a political trilogy, a series of three major novels, which constitute the beginnings of the genre which became a valuable and permanent addition to the literature of English fiction - the political novel.

CHAPTER II

CONINGSBY

One of the most fashionable terms thrown around in current literary discussion is "commitment." Curiously so, because critics have always been rather embarrassed by the committed writer. Perhaps the most disturbing feature of committed writing is its apparent naïveté, its need to divide the world into black and white, or good and bad. To put everyone on the side of either "Us" or "Them" necessarily distorts, and the sensitive reader looking for art and craft, rather than argument, is put off. An important reason for the discouragement of commitment in England may be that until now, perhaps, there has rarely been quite the same degree of intimacy between life and literature that has always been found in countries like France and particularly Russia. There, no nineteenth century novelist would ever have thought that the concerns of everyday life had no place in his books. If political discussion was important in the streets and homes it was important in fiction. How many English novelists of the same period can honestly be described as committed? How many of them discuss the political issues which were shaping the rapidly changing and developing industrial nation they were writing about?

The writers in England <u>were</u> concerned with social phenomena. The gross hideousness of urban existence obtruded itself upon the consciousness of all interested in the welfare of their fellow men. But a writer like Dickens crystallized the feelings that were fermenting on the surface of the social conscience. He made people aware

of factors which they already dimly knew. His impassioned vision of suffering humanity was larger than life. It required the imagination of a novelist, yoked to the calculating intellect of a brilliant statesman, to penetrate to the root causes of the threatening upheavel. As a result of such an unique synthesis, Disraeli established a new genre in English literature. The world he chose to describe was one in which he was a participant, not just an onlooker. His specialized knowledge enabled him to do more than paint a Dickensian social background. His analysis was based as much on intellectual perception as artistic intuition. He does not, however, prostitute the novelist's art by using the novel merely as a journalist's medium for ideas. He interprets his values in concrete terms that are aesthetically satisfying. The profundity of the political theory is transcended by the primary success of the work as a novel aiming to entertain, albeit on an erudite and sophisticated level.

The novel was published in May 1844, its full title being Coningsby; or, The New Generation. Implicit in the title is the moral challenge that faces the hero of the tale. A change is necessary to avert disaster. Will the New Generation progress along the path of self-knowledge with undeviating honesty? Will they apply their findings to the solution of contemporary problems? Will they repeat the compromises and failures of their predecessors? Or will they in truth prove a New Generation? These enigmas are centred in Coningsby himself.

We are introduced to Coningsby and the current political situation at one and the same time. The cry of "Floreat

Etona"[1] mingles with the frantic exclamation "By G- they're out!"[2] (The Whigs, of course). We immediately realise that ideas will vie with human personalities for capturing the reader's attention. The corrupt background against which the young Coningsby is first projected is sketched with deft and economic strokes. The existing amoral standard is embodied in the figures of Coningsby's grandfather, Lord Monmouth, a man never wanting in energy when his own interests are involved, as well as in his political stooge, Rigby. The prevailing norm is established in a paragraph such as the following:

> "He was just the animal that Lord Monmouth wanted, for Lord Monmouth always looked upon human nature with the callous eye of a jockey. He surveyed Rigby, and he determined to buy him. He bought him; with his clear head, his indefatigable industry, his audacious tongue, and his ready and unscrupulous pen; with all his dates, all his lampoons, all his private memoirs, and all his political intrigues. It was a good purchase. Rigby became a great personage, and Lord Monmouth's man."[3]

The tone is one of hard and shrewd callousness, of cold opportunism. We realize that human personalities, (including that of Coningsby) are so many chips on a roulette table, to be shuffled here and there according to Lord Monmouth's schemes.

Thus, in the first two chapters, we receive pointed indications as to the backdrop against which the action is to be played. The stage is set. The style of the writing, too, is characteristic. There is the ironic accuracy of statement: "This polished composition, so full of good

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, p. 6. Hughenden Edition. London, 1891.
2. Ibid. p. 6.
3. Ibid. p. 12.

feeling and comprehensive views, and all in the best taste, was not published. It was only privately printed, and a few thousand copies were distributed among select personages as an especial favour and mark of high consideration."[1] Present too, is that distinctively witty and aphoristic note: "Each copy given away seemed to Rigby like a certificate of character; a property which, like all men of dubious repute, he thoroughly appreciated."[2]

The character traits faintly suggested, are consistently developed and underscored. The introduction of Coningsby to his grandfather enables Disraeli, in a great set scene, to eliminate any indecisive half-lights and to present the two figures in the round. The contrast is striking. Even in his unformed boyhood, Coningsby represents, in embryo, the sensitivity and warmth so urgently needed to infuse common humanity into the cold aristocratic order. His grandfather's hatred of feeling counterpoints Coningsby's tender-heartedness.

One never loses sight, however, of the political crisis that is always "there", a crisis to which all action seems to be related. We are soon shown the little men, or rather they soon expose themselves: the back-benchers whose concept of the necessities of the age is that they should be in office. This criticism of political parasites finds a natural target in the admirably sketched "wire-pullers", Taper and Tadpole. We sense Disraeli's intolerance of cant in his satire on these party hacks. Their characters are not differentiated and there is a measure of confusion from the very beginning in the read-

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, p. 13. London, 1891.
2. Ibid., pp. 13, 14.

er's grasp of their "separate" existence. We tend to think of Taper and Tadpole collectively, not as individuals in their own right. This response to the author's satirical creation vindicates his criticism of these self-seeking automata. We feel this way precisely because they lack any distinguishing characteristics of their own, any positive individuality. They are the anonymous bottle-washers of party politics.

The political conversation that dominates Coningsby's first dinner with his grandfather, is a natural springboard for some brilliant analysis of the contemporary situation. We enter into observations, deftly woven into the texture of the novel, which are those of a shrewd spectator of life:

> "The Duke of Wellington has ever been the votary of circumstances. He cares little for causes. He watches events rather than seeks to produce them. It is a characteristic of the military mind. Rapid combinations, the result of a quick, vigilant, and comprehensive glance, are generally triumphant in the field: but in civil affairs, where results are not immediate; in diplomacy and in the management of deliberative assemblies, where there is much intervening time and many counteracting causes, this velocity of decision, this fitful and precipitate action, are often productive of considerable embarrassment, and sometimes of terrible discomfiture. It is remarkable that men celebrated for military prudence are often found to be headstrong statesmen. In civil life a great general is frequently and strangely the creature of impulse; influenced in his political movements by the last snatch of information; and often the creature of the last aide-de-camp who has his ear."[1]

In this we see from the beginning Disraeli's recognition of the importance of character and personality in the

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, p. 31. London, 1891.

moulding of events. The political diatribe is not just interlarded comment that remains extraneous to the action of the novel. It may be stated from the outset that the "action", as such, is slight. But the mental growth, the exposure of ideologies, with the consequent re-formulation of creeds - all this is made significant by the enlightening asides of the author. The insight that informs these incursions into the realm of political theory enables the reader to weigh the decisions of the protagonists with intelligence and skill. We are "put in the know," and thus are in command of different levels of awareness, that of the character and the superior one of the narrator.

On his return to Eton, Coningsby adopts the superior attitude of the Tory aristocrat and decries the addition to his clique of the son of an "infernal manufacturer", Millbank. The character of young Millbank is directly related to the consciousness that he belongs to a class debarred from its just position in the social system. His admiration for Coningsby becomes devotion after Coningsby saves him from drowning. "Pride was a sentiment that could no longer subsist before the preserver of his life."[1] The artificial barriers are removed and their friendship flourishes. In deference to his grandfather's wishes, however, Coningsby cannot include Millbank in his party at "Montem." In this dilemma we see the seeds of a future conflict between the ideology of the "New" generation and the deep-rooted prejudices of the old order. For the moment, it is Lord Monmouth who prevails.

From the world of Eton, the author turns to the ele-

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, p. 45. London, 1891.

gant ease of life among the privileged aristocracy. The home of Coningsby's friend, Henry Sidney, is Beaumanoir, one of those palatial seats of great noblemen. The period is a crucial one. With the irrepressible wit that characterizes even the most profound utterances, we learn that the "guests came not merely to slaughter the Duke's pheasants, but to hold council on the prospects of the party, which, it was supposed by the initiated, began at this time to indicate some symptoms of brightening."[1] A long disquisition follows, tracing the blunders of the foregoing ministries. The account, evoking as it does historic and social processes leading up to the turbulent present, succeeds in embedding the characters in a context of tradition. We feel the palpable link between the past and the present. A note of censure is not absent. A valuable point of view is established that impresses by its very truth: "Great minds must trust to great truths and great talents for their rise, and nothing else."[2] A cabinet of mediocrities, however, use: expediency as a director, instead of referring to principles as their guide. Again we are struck by the precision of language: "Having fulfilled during their lives the duties of administration, they were frightened because they were called upon, for the first time, to perform the functions of government."[3] The nicety of the intellectual distinction is brilliantly captured in the subtle feeling for language. We tend, too, to accept the statements of the author as authoritative because of the balanced structure of the syntax which

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, p. 54. London, 1891.
2. Ibid. p. 56.
3. Ibid. p. 59.

gives his writing the quality of the historian, e.g. "Like all weak men, they had recourse to what they called strong measures."[1]

All these factual realities give the dramatis personae their reality. Mr. Rigby is represented as in a state of bustling activity during the ministerial crisis:

> "Here, during the interregnum occasioned by the death, or rather inevitable retirement, of Lord Liverpool, Mr. Rigby contrived to scrape up a conviction that the Duke was the winning horse, and in consequence there appeared a series of leading articles in a notorious evening newspaper, in which it was, as Tadpole and Taper declared, most 'slashingly' shown, that the son of an actress could never be tolerated as a Prime Minister of England. Not content with this, and never doubting for a moment the authentic basis of his persuasion, Mr. Rigby poured forth his coarse volubility on the subject at several of the new clubs which he was getting up in order to revenge himself for having been black-balled at White's."[2]

As Rigby is drawn as a character who neither thinks nor feels, but only possesses an instinct for baseness, we are not surprised to read that Canning is to be Prime Minister. The necessities of the new era require qualities of the highest order: "a compact and sinewy intellect, nurtured in a class of learning not yet honoured in colleges, and which might arrive at conclusions conflicting with predominant prejudices."[3]

Here we sense the underlying urge for reform. Not a blatant reform of policy, but the far deeper one, a reform of attitude and approach. The aim here is the same as that stated explicitly in the dedication to Henry

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, p. 59. London, 1891.
2. Ibid. pp. 65, 66.
3. Ibid. p. 67.

Hope, dated 1844, to "induce us for the future more carefully to distinguish between facts and phrases, realities and phantoms."[1] This entails a penetration into the inmost soul of politics. To this end nothing escapes Disraeli's searching criticism. Duplicity and hypocrisy are revealed. Tadpole, hoping to re-enter the assembly, becomes a fervent admirer of the Wesleyans, whose vote is essential for his success. Taper pointedly underlines the expediency of these sentiments: "I am all for a religious cry, . . . It means nothing, and if successful, does not interfere with business when we are in."[2] Many virtues are attributed to the aristocratic Lady of the House, to whom it is ironically conceded by the perceptive author: "Although the best of wives and mothers, she had some charity for her neighbours."[3]

With vivacious wit and brio, Disraeli intellectualizes the elements of the political milieu. We see people and scenes in vivid, short, epigrammatic descriptions:

> "Here might be marked a murmuring knot of grey-headed privy-councillors, who had held fat offices under Perceval and Liverpool, and who looked back to the Reform Act as to a hideous dream; there some middle-aged aspirants might be observed who had lost their seats in the convulsion, but who flattered themselves they had done something for the party in the interval, by spending nothing except their breath in fighting hopeless boroughs, and occasionally publishing a pamphlet, which really produced less effect than chalking the walls. Light as air, and proud as a young peacock, tripped on his toes a young Tory, who had contrived to keep his seat in a Parliament where he had

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation. New Edition. London, 1876.
2. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, p. 72. London, 1891.
3. Ibid. p. 70.

> done nothing, but who thought an Under-Secretaryship was now secure, particularly as he was the son of a noble Lord who had also in a public capacity plundered and blundered in the good old time. The true political adventurer, who with dull desperation had stuck at nothing, had never neglected a treasury note, had been present at every division, never spoke when he was asked to be silent, and was always ready on any subject when they wanted him to open his mouth; who had treated his leaders with servility even behind their backs, and was happy for the day if a future Secretary of the Treasury bowed to him; who had not only discountenanced discontent in the party, but had regularly reported in strict confidence every instance of insubordination which came to his knowledge; might there too be detected under all the agonies of the crisis; just beginning to feel the dread misgiving, whether being a slave and a sneak were sufficient qualifications for office, without family or connection. Poor fellow! Half the industry he had wasted on his cheerless craft might have made his fortune in some decent trade.
>
> In dazzling contrast with these throes of low ambition, were some brilliant personages who had just scampered up from Melton, thinking it probable that Sir Robert might want some moral lords of the bed-chamber. Whatever may have been their private fears or feelings, all, however, seemed smiling and significant, as if they knew something if they chose to tell it, and that something very much to their own satisfaction. The only grave countenance that was occasionally ushered into the room belonged to some individual whose destiny was not in doubt, and who was already practising the official air that was in future to repress the familiarity of his former fellow-strugglers."[1]

The confusion that prevails in political circles is captured in lively dialogue. In these fragments of conversation we see the author investigating human aspirations, as in:

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, pp. 78, 79. London, 1891.

> "'Do you hear anything?' said a great noble who wanted something in the general scramble, but what he knew not; only he had a vague feeling he ought to have something, having made such great sacrifices.
>
> 'There is a report that Clifford is to be Secretary to the Board of Control,' said Mr. Earwig, whose whole soul was in this subaltern arrangement, of which the Minister of course had not even thought; 'but I cannot trace it to any authority.'
>
> 'I wonder who will be their Master of the Horse,' said the great noble, loving gossip though he despised the gossiper."[1]

But these flippant speculations do not satisfy the novelist who is looking for the truth. Once again he lays stress on the necessity "to lead the public mind to the investigation of principles. . . ."[2] Moved by a sense of human destiny in the balance, he explores the Conservative claims with his discriminating intelligence:

> ". . . the awkward question naturally arose, what will you conserve? The prerogatives of the Crown, provided they are not exercised; the independence of the House of Lords, provided it is not asserted; the Ecclesiastical estate, provided it is regulated by a commission of laymen. Everything, in short, that is established, as long as it is a phrase and not a fact . . . To reconcile this theory and this practice, they produce what they call 'the best bargain;' some arrangement which has no principle and no purpose, except to obtain a temporary lull of agitation, until the mind of the Conservatives, without a guide and without an aim, distracted, tempted, and bewildered, is prepared for another arrangement, equally statesmanlike with the preceding one."[3]

The high seriousness of the literary tone that is adopted here is relieved by one of poignant sarcasm. The trans-

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, p. 79. London, 1891.
2. Ibid. p. 81.
3. Ibid. p. 82.

ition from profound thought to light banter is well modulated and expertly handled:

> "'Ah, Tadpole,' said Mr. Taper, getting a little maudlin; 'I often think, if the time should ever come, when you and I should be joint Secretaries of the Treasury!'
>
> 'We shall see, we shall see. All we have to do is to get into Parliament, work well together, and keep other men down. . . .'
>
> '. . . That we should ever live to see a Tory Government again! We have reason to be very thankful.'
>
> 'Hush!' said Mr. Tadpole. 'The time has gone by for Tory governments; what the country requires is a sound Conservative government.'
>
> 'A sound Conservative government,' said Taper, musingly. 'I understand: Tory men and Whig measures.'"[1]

The elements that constitute the administrative world of National government are all present in the microcosmic world of Eton. There, among Coningsby and his friends, a spirit of inquiry into political questions is evident. But the friendship between Millbank and Coningsby makes Coningsby aware of "influential classes in the country, who were not noble, and were yet determined to acquire power."[2] The realization dawns that politics is not just a struggle between Whig nobles and Tory nobles for the powers of government. The author focuses attention on the development of Coningsby's beliefs. It is the ideas that take root in his being that are the real heroes of the political novel. These ideas do not come into existence by analysis or comment alone, but appear as dramatized perceptions. Coningsby's painful progress to knowledge of the right creed is part of his quest to know himself.

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, p. 85. London, 1891.
2. Ibid. p. 87.

He turns in vain for enduring convictions to his elders, then thinks that his own generation is the only potential solution. He is spurred on to independent thinking by his encounter with Sidonia, who provides an explicit statement of values for a framework of reference. It is Sidonia who makes Coningsby think. Coningsby desires to be great, to affect the mind of his generation; Sidonia convinces him that the spirit of Faith can change an age of infidelity.

The meeting between Sidonia and Coningsby is the most crucial psychological episode in the novel. Yet it is not just an episode, for it is well integrated into the scheme of construction. In thinking of Sidonia and the relation he bears to the other characters in the novel, one is tempted to define him in terms of Henry James' "central intelligence", the character whose consciousness is the touchstone by which the other persons and events in the novel are judged. The character of Sidonia is splendidly realized. His highly articulate disposition enables Disraeli to project with extreme clarity some of his fundamental beliefs. The novelist as mediator almost disappears when Sidonia makes his entrance. The obvious affinity which Disraeli felt for Sidonia gives this creation of his pen, warmth and immediacy. As Coningsby does, we too seem to share Sidonia's consciousness, with a consequent gain in intimacy. Like Beckendorff in Vivian Grey, he expounds his philosophy of the individual's ability to master circumstance: "The Spirit of the Age is the very thing that a great man changes."[1] Coningsby, oppressed

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, p. 97. London, 1891.

by the lack of experience that besets his youth, doubts; but is assured by Sidonia that "Great men never want experience . . ."[1] He adds, "Nuture your mind with great thoughts. To believe in the heroic makes heroes."[2] He impresses on Coningsby that there is a divine influence in the power of the creative mind which enables it to dispense with experience and achieve greatness in youth.

The satirical background that has been sketched throws into clearer relief a man of genius like Sidonia, who has insight into the mystery of life. Although the swiftness of narration in this chapter limits the exchange of views between Sidonia and Coningsby, the boldness of his thinking irradiates the confused state of Coningsby's mind. He is a receptive hero, deriving his guidance from Sidonia, who thus becomes the central figure in the intellectual movement of the novel. Sidonia himself cannot put his dreams into effect, for he is Jewish and is consequently limited by his environment. His philosophy is not one of excessive romanticism, but an authoritative statement of principles, a belief in the power of the imagination to do the greatest practical things.

The sanctimonious sentiments that Rigby trots out for Coningsby's edification contrast admirably with the insight, sympathy and comprehension of Sidonia:

> "Mr. Rigby began by ascribing everything to the Reform Bill, and then referred to several of his own speeches on Schedule A. Then he told Coningsby that want of religious Faith was solely occasioned by want of churches; and want of Loyalty, by George IV. having shut

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, p. 98. London, 1891.
2. Ibid. p. 99.

> himself up too much at the cottage in Windsor Park, entirely against the advice of Mr. Rigby. He assured Coningsby that the Church Commission was operating wonders, and that with private benevolence - he had himself subscribed £1,000, for Lord Monmouth - we should soon have churches enough. The great question now was their architecture. Had George IV. lived all would have been right. They would have been built on the model of the Budhist pagoda. As for loyalty, if the present King went regularly to Ascot races, he had no doubt all would go right. Finally, Mr. Rigby impressed on Coningsby to read the Quarterly Review with great attention; and to make himself master of Mr. Wordy's History of the late War, in twenty volumes, a capital work, which proves that Providence was on the side of the Tories."[1]

In the ironical light in which these remarks are presented, and in their context, coming as they do after the revelation of Sidonia's mastery of life, we see Disraeli's keen sense of the ridiculous.

At Beaumanoir, we have a picture of high life at its best. Although elsewhere we have seen the author as the satirist of the vices and follies of the aristocracy, here we are shown refinement coupled with duty, beauty paired with charity. With the entrance of the ladies of the house, we perceive Disraeli's extreme courtesy towards and appreciation of women, as shown in the following passage:

> "Lady Everingham thoroughly understood the art of conversation, which, indeed, consists of the exercise of two fine qualities. You must originate, and you must sympathise; you must possess at the same time the habit of listening. The union is rather rare, but irresistible. Lady Everingham was not a celebrated

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, pp. 102, 103. London, 1891.

> beauty, but she was something infinitely more delightful, a captivating woman. There were combined in her, qualities not commonly met together, great vivacity of mind with great grace of manner."[1]

Intent as Coningsby is on pursuing every question to its core, we see how partly from Sidonia's suggestions and partly from his own musings, he begins to work out a shadowy political creed. In the fragments of after-dinner-conversation that we are permitted to hear, we have expressions of opinions on social and political subjects. Once again we see that this is no crude party pamphleteering, but an endeavour "to elevate the tone of public life, (to) ascertain the true character of political parties."[2]

An excursion is undertaken to St. Genevieve, the mansion of a young Catholic, Mr. Lyle, who has re-instituted the ceremonial traditions that are so scoffed at in the age of Utility. His justification though romantic in its idealism is deeply felt: "Ceremony is not, as too commonly supposed, an idle form. I wish the people constantly and visibly to comprehend that Property is their protector and their friend."[3] This is the first expression of the idea that is to form one of the central tenets of the "Young England" philosophy, the return to the days of a paternal aristocracy and an ordered society in which duty would be assigned, and due security and maintenance assured to the lower orders by their conscientious superiors. This trend is expressed strongly in terms of Lyle's character. Like

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, p. 112. London, 1891.
2. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, Dedication to Henry Hope. New Edition. London, 1876.
3. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, p. 119. London, 1891.

Coningsby, he too is sustained by the conviction that there are still great truths to be worked out, "that Government, for instance, should be loved and not hated, and that Religion should be a faith and not a form."[1] The study of Lyle is a sympathetic one worked out within its narrow limits with intensity. The characters that flit across the pages devoted to Coningsby's brief stay at Beaumanoir, although not characterized in any depth, have the satisfying presence of vivid sketches, e.g. the London dandy Mr. Melton.

Coningsby proceeds to Manchester, the embodiment of the industrial spirit of the new machine age. He visits the model factory owned by Millbank and makes the acquaintance of Oswald's lovely young sister and father. This new environment is pregnant with ideas, thoughts and feelings for Coningsby. With his creative mind, he grasps the essential situation of his time: "he perceived that this wealth was rapidly developing classes whose power was imperfectly recognised in the constitutional scheme, and whose duties in the social system seemed altogether omitted."[2] In the sketch of Edith Millbank, we see Disraeli's admiration for things Saxon. ("Edith; a Saxon name, for she is the daughter of a Saxon.")[3] Here, foreshadowed in Coningsby, is one of the central themes of Sybil. It is part of the lyrical enthusiasm for the spirit that informed the past.

Coningsby is not political in a crude or partisan sense. Coningsby's desire to rise above factious aims

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, p. 121. London, 1891.
2. Ibid. p. 128.
3. Ibid. p. 135.

and limitations sharpens his insight, comprehension and tolerance. These qualities enable him to converse rationally with Millbank in a spirit of simplicity and directness. Millbank echoes back the secret intuitions of Coningsby:

> "(your natural aristocracy is) Among those men whom a nation recognises as the most eminent for virtue, talents, and property, and, if you please, birth and standing in the land. They guide opinion; and, therefore, they govern. I am no leveller; I look upon an artificial equality as equally pernicious with a factitious aristocracy, both depressing the energies and checking the enterprise of a nation. I like man to be free, really free: free in his industry as well as his body."[1]

In the light of these views, he believes that "the House of Commons is a more aristocratic body than the House of Lords."[2] He rebels against the concept of "restraining the powerful by the weak".[3] Coningsby assimilates all these diverse views. He is shown to have faith in his youthful dream, a truly national party. It is this romantic ideal that plays such a supreme role in the scheme of the novel as a work of art. Aside from the fact that a genuine satirist requires a serious creed, the spirit of faith and harmony that is engendered by the constructive outlook of "Young England" serves as a point of rest, a calm counterbalance to the exposure of the ignoble and the artificial. In addition, the broad and disinterested politics of Coningsby and his friends envelop the action in a spirit of generosity, a spirit that is a happy indi-

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, p. 139. London, 1891.
2. Ibid. p. 139.
3. Ibid. p. 140.

cation to the author of "that development of the new and, as I believe, better mind of England."[1] The very sympathy that Coningsby is shown capable of feeling for the sentiments of Millbank reveals a broad disregard of the common arts of party popularity.

Coningsby's second encounter with his grandfather is portrayed in a realistic social picture. Disraeli again displays his sense of theatre in another set scene that is an excellent example of the style of his mature period - the accuracy of observation, the power of vivid description, the ability to build up to a sustained climax and the dramatic contrast in character. Once again, in accord with the consistency with which the characters are worked out, we see Lord Monmouth as the grand gentleman of his day whose freedom from all scruples and whose sublime selfishness are carried to the pitch of absolute perfection. We are shown the lack of affectation in Coningsby's earnest and simple greeting, "How do you do, grandpapa?"[2] Lord Monmouth's reaction is devoid of feeling. His quick brain immediately sizes up his grandson's potential as a valuable tool with so many negotiable assets.

Coningsby soon adapts himself to the glittering society around him. His native kindliness is stressed. In the brilliant repartee, the choice metaphors and the happy illustrations, the author successfully evokes the brittle splendour of the aristocratic circle. The whole thing is pervaded with sparkling wit, whether it be in the pithy content of some epigrammatic phrase or in a masterly

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, Dedication to Henry Hope. New Edition. London, 1876.
2. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, p. 150. London, 1891.

characterization such as the one of Lucretia: "She indeed generally succeeded in conveying an impression to those she addressed, that she had never seen them before, did not care to see them now, and never wished to see them again. And all this, too, with an air of great courtesy."[1] The sketches of character, however, unless obviously caricatured, are drawn with care and attention. We see the scrupulous honesty of the writer operating in the following quotation: "All that he (Lord Monmouth) required in life was to be amused; perhaps that was not all he required, but it was indispensable."[2] Here we see the author giving the devil, a very splendid one, his due.

Coningsby meets Sidonia again. As a type of pure intellect, Sidonia's function in the novel is to educate Coningsby, who in his turn is to educate the New Generation. Sidonia is the literary embodiment and expression of the author's Hero-philosophy. In recounting the background that played its part in the formation of Sidonia's character, we have a moving record of historical phenomena. This section vibrates with the passion of deeply felt observation. We are shown how his illustrious forbears during the period of the Spanish Inquisition, in common with two-thirds of the Arrogonese nobility, secretly adhered to the ancient faith of Sinai, the rites and observances of the laws of Moses. No sooner was Sidonia's father established in England than he openly professed Judaism. He also sent for several of his brothers "who were as good Catholics in Spain as Ferdinand and Isabella

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, p. 165. London, 1891.
2. Ibid. p. 168.

could have possibly desired, but who made an offering in the synagogue, in gratitude for their safe voyage, on their arrival in England."[1] The young Sidonia's intellectual development was astounding, despite the fact that he was "shut out from universities and schools which were indebted for their first knowledge of ancient philosophy to the learning and enterprise of his ancestors."[2] Sidonia had exhausted all the sources of human knowledge, he was "master of the learning of every nation, of all tongues dead or living, of every literature, Western and Oriental. He had pursued the speculations of science to their last term, and had himself illustrated them by observation and experiment."[3] Although susceptible of deep emotion, the only human quality that interested him was intellect. Coningsby's political philosophy is shaped by "a great philosopher, who took comprehensive views of human affairs, and surveyed every fact in its relative position to other facts, the only mode of obtaining truth."[4] Sidonia's powers of acute observation enabled him to formulate his concept of the role national character, decisiveness of personality and power of imagination play in the destiny of a people. His clear and vigorous intellect, social knowledge and penetrating judgment make Sidonia the ideal mentor for the questioning Coningsby.

At Coningsby Castle, we are shown indeed a side of aristocratic life in which Disraeli finds scope for some of his most effective satire - grandeur without heart or soul, ostentatious luxury, riot and confusion. There is,

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, p. 172. London, 1891.
2. Ibid. p. 173.
3. Ibid. p. 175.
4. Ibid. p. 177.

too, the saucy superficiality and insolent ignorance of Rigby. With pungent wit we are informed of the arrival of Mr. Ormsby, who had come straight from London "full of rumours, had seen Tadpole, who, hearing he was on the wing for Coningsby Castle, had taken him into a dark corner of a club, and shown him his book, a safe piece of confidence, as Mr. Ormsby was very near-sighted."[1] Trivia like these provide abundant food for the thoughts that are fermenting in Coningsby's mind. He realizes that man is ever subject to routine, but is conscious that in the old days it was a routine of great thoughts, whereas now it is a routine of little ones. The people at the Castle are happy as long as they have fine clothes, good dinners and amusing entertainment. It is those, however, who possess an intellect of greater capacity and reach, a deep judgment allied to passion and daring, who are troubled by the empty selfishness of this type of existence. Coningsby is possessed of an integrity determined to face all the facts of life without seeking refuge in illusion. One is able to draw these conclusions less from his exposure of himself in his own words than the novelist's delineation of him, though we do see in operation his capacity for audacious inquiry. In his conversations with Sidonia, he emerges as a character anxious to explore the moral implications of certain "Ideas".

The friendship that grows between Coningsby and Sidonia enables Coningsby to draw on the depth of reflection, the variety of knowledge and the richness of illustrative memory that distinguishes Sidonia. As the outsider who

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, p. 179. London, 1891.

got inside, Sidonia is capable of a certain measure of objectivity. At variance as he is with the political constitution of the day, his criticism is based on his evaluation of certain eternal principles. His ultimate appeal is to our knowledge of the nature of man and of the nature of his relations with his fellows. Sidonia is thus the hard intellectual core of that area of life that Disraeli the novelist has concerned himself with most. The view Sidonia takes of the political position in England is troubled, but not dark. Aware that the depository of power is always unpopular, he maintains one must look for hope "In what is more powerful than laws and institutions, and without which the best laws and the most skilful institutions may be a dead letter, or the very means of tyranny; in the national character. It is not in the increased feebleness of its institutions that I see the peril of England; it is in the decline of its character as a community."[1]

In an age of social disorganisation, he believes that England should think more of the community and less of the government. The character of England should be an assemblage of great qualities. He traces the decline of public virtue to the fact that the various classes of the country are hostile to each other. Economic causes are secondary. The causes of revolutions are not physical. When the imagination of the country is astir, it will sacrifice even physical comfort to follow its impulses. He sums up by affirming that "A political institution is a machine; the motive power is the national character. With that it

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, p. 192. London, 1891.

rests whether the machine will benefit society or destroy it."[1] A reconstruction of society on the principle of Utility, of material motives and calculations, must fail. Human reason is limited. "Man is only truly great when he acts from the passions; never irresistible but when he appeals to the imagination. Even Mormon counts more votaries than Bentham."[2] Here is a new development in the English novel. Not only does the character come alive through the exposition of political theory, but these ideas in their imaginative form give purpose to the novel. Although the subject matter is political, the urgency of the writing brings us into contact with the characters. The tone is unmistakably that of the artist: "Man is made to adore and to obey: but if you will not command him, if you give him nothing to worship, he will fashion his own divinities, and find a chieftain in his own passions."[3] We see that this is not a discussion of the passing accidents of the hour, but the promulgation of the eternal principles of human nature. Coningsby elicits not opinions but truths from Sidonia, who embodies universal answers to universal questions in his explanation of the situation in England. In this way, Coningsby transcends the topicality of its themes and remains an important novel. Shaped by their environment, the characters are yet more than the products of social trends, as in the case of Sidonia who rises above the restrictions that would otherwise have limited his activities. Sidonia is deeply conscious that for him the realms of speculation and action can never

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, p. 193. London, 1891.
2. Ibid. p. 194.
3. Ibid. p. 194.

blend. This forms another theme which is embedded in the texture of the novel. The Hebrew intellect, it is shown, exercises a vast influence on the affairs of Europe: its laws and literature. Yet the tragic fact remains that "in exact proportion as we have been favoured by Nature we have been persecuted by Man."[1] In balanced prose, Sidonia recalls the degradation and destruction that the Jewish people have endured at the hands of an ungrateful Europe that owes to the Jew the "best part of its laws, a fine portion of its literature, all its religion."[2]

Disraeli finds a remedy for the wrongs in a more enlightened intelligence, (Sidonia says: "I bow to intellect in every form"[3]) rather than in warmer hearts. He is objective where sentiment is concerned and consequently a little blunted to the feeling of the pathetic in life. ("What we call the heart," said Sidonia, "is a nervous sensation, like shyness, which gradually disappears in society . . . The affections are the children of ignorance; when the horizon of our experience expands, and models multiply, love and admiration imperceptibly vanish."[4]) We must not, in this appraisal, confuse the absence of the "heart" in Sidonia's philosophy, with a lack of "passionate and creative genius,"[5] which indeed he deems "the nearest link to Divinity".[6] The author demonstrates that the infusion of creative feeling into the realms of government and legislation represents vitality and promise in a system that would otherwise be composed of lifeless men and measures.

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, p. 204. London, 1891.
2. Ibid. p. 204.
3. Ibid. p. 194.
4. Ibid. p. 200.
5. Ibid. p. 204.
6. Ibid. p. 204.

In satirizing unimaginative forms of government, Disraeli took the lid off the sordid intrigues of everyday political life; intrigues which still play a considerable part behind the mask of respectability world leaders attempt to present. In this novel, then, the ideal and real exist side by side. And though the former is often exaggerated, so much so that the modern reader takes much of it as high romance, the latter remains accurate and convincing. He accurately reproduces the flatness and dreariness of political cackle of the class of little men: "a peculiar class, that; 1,2001. per annum, paid quarterly, is their idea of political science and human nature. To receive 1,2001. per annum is government; to try to receive 1,2001. per annum is opposition; to wish to receive 1,2001. per annum is ambition."[1]

From the shallow political ideas of a man like Tadpole we move to the Cambridge group who question the validity of party institutions. Coningsby is a dreamer of an ideal, noble world. He realises that the nobility have to be made to see themselves as others see them, in order that they might repair the breach before all is lost. The self-revelation must come first, however, then the constructive vision of Young England. It is here that we see how paramount Sidonia's influence is in the shaping of Coningsby's outlook. Among his friends, Coningsby urges: "Let us think of principles, and not of parties . . ."[2] Even though the Whigs are worn out, Conservatism a sham and Radicalism is pollution, they may yet discover some great principles to guide them which, if true, will ultimately

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, p. 211. London, 1891.
2. Ibid. p. 214.

guide and control others. We can easily trace in the thoughts of Coningsby the nucleus of Sidonia's ideas. Fervently Coningsby believes that "Man that is made in the image of the Creator, is made for God-like deeds. Come what come may, I will cling to the heroic principle. It can alone satisfy my soul."[1]

Although the emerging consciousness of the young group at Cambridge is the central hope of the political future, it is only one element, albeit a very important one, in a composite picture. The election battle is fought on many fronts. The Liberal deputation from Darlford seeks a candidate to oppose that fine English gentleman, Rigby. One of the merits of the novel is the freedom with which Disraeli satirizes every shade of opinion, Whig, Tory, Papist, Anglican and Liberal. We are told that the Liberal secretary returns with a young gentleman "whose diminutive stature would seem, from his smooth and singularly puerile countenance, to be merely the consequence of his very tender years; but Mr. de Crecy was really of age, or at least would be by nomination-day. He did not say a word, but looked like the rosebud which dangled in the button-hole of his frockcoat."[2] Mr. Millbank, however, saves them from the embarrassing position in which they find themselves by offering himself as a candidate. He is "resolved that the free and enlightened community, with which he must necessarily hereafter be much connected, should not become the nomination borough of any Peer of the realm without a struggle, if they chose to make one."[3] The manliness and reality of Millbank's stand are presented

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, p. 215. London, 1891.
2. Ibid. p. 221.
3. Ibid. p. 222.

with verve and sympathy. He is a compromise between the aristocracy and the Bourgeoisie, for "though he had 'no handle to his name', and was somewhat impractical about pledges, his fortune was so great, and his character so high, that it might be hoped that the people would be almost as content as if they were appealed to by some obscure scion of factitious nobility".[1] In the ironic flavour of these sentiments, the author shows that despite Democratic enthusiasm there is a basic feeling of loyalty to the Aristocracy. In the description of the election that follows, we see the strength of the descriptive and histrionic powers of the writer. The element in which these people live and the emotional climate that the election fever generates are captured, thereby successfully localising the action of the novel. We see Disraeli's power to create political character and situation. The element of comedy is ever present in the clash between illusion and reality, as demonstrated in one of Rigby's electioneering speeches:

> "He brought in his crack theme, the guillotine, and dilated so elaborately upon its qualities, that one gentleman below could not refrain from exclaiming, 'I wish you may get it.' This exclamation gave Mr. Rigby what is called a great opening, which, like a practised speaker, he immediately seized. He denounced the sentiment as 'un-English', and got much cheered. Excited by this success, Rigby began to call everything else 'un-English' with which he did not agree, until menacing murmurs began to rise, when he shifted the subject, and rose into a grand peroration, in which he assured them that the eyes of the whole empire were on this

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, p. 222. London, 1891.

> particular election; cries of 'That's true,' from all sides; and that England expected every man to do his duty.
>
> 'And who do you expect to do yours?' inquired a gentleman below."[1]

In the presentation of Millbank, the clear and terse language contrasts strikingly with that of the grandiloquent Rigby. In these election scenes, there is a lot of remplissage - a little pruning of the incident and material might have made the points more succinct.

The loss of the election to Millbank and the marriage of the Duke of Monmouth to Princess Lucretia give the author added scope for sarcastic barbs at Rigby, as in: "He had some cause for reflection, and though we did once venture to affirm that Rigby never either thought or felt, this perhaps may be the exception that proves the rule."[2] Also: "she sprang at him like a tigress balked of her prey, and poured forth on him a volume of epithets, many of which Rigby really deserved. But after all, in the present instance, he was not treacherous, only base, which he always was."[3]

Coningsby travels to Paris, the "University of the World."[4] This vacation visit by Coningsby to his grandfather provides an opportunity for pictures of glittering Parisian society. This sequence of events is lightened by touches of humour and irrepressible wit, as shown in the following passage:

> "The common white pottery, for example, which is in general use, and

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, pp. 226, 227. London, 1891.
2. Ibid. p. 238.
3. Ibid. pp. 236, 237.
4. Ibid. p. 241.

> always found at the cafés, will not bear vicinage to a brisk kitchen fire for half an hour. Now, if we only had that treaty of commerce with France which has been so often on the point of completion, the fabrics of our unrivalled potteries, in exchange for their capital wines, would be found throughout France. The dinners of both nations would be improved: the English would gain a delightful beverage, and the French, for the first time in their lives, would dine off hot plates. An unanswerable instance of the advantages of commercial reciprocity!"[1]

It is here that Coningsby again meets and falls in love with Edith Millbank. Her uncle is Sir Joseph Wallinger, a politician. Although Disraeli can be solemn when his pet ideas are in question, he has a "curious and refreshing habit that atones for such transgressions."[2] He is always ready to anticipate the laugh against himself. We see this in the perplexity of Sir Joseph at the view Coningsby expounds. He informs the bewildered Sir Joseph:

> "That he looked upon a government without distinct principles of policy as only a stop-gap to a wide-spread and demoralising anarchy; that he for one could not comprehend how a free government could endure without national opinions to uphold it; and that governments for the preservation of peace and order, and nothing else, had better be sought in China, or among the Austrians, the Chinese of Europe. As for Conservative government, the natural question was, What do you mean to conserve? Do you mean to conserve things or only names, realities or merely appearances? Or, do you mean to continue the system commenced in 1834, and,

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, p. 251. London, 1891.
2. William Flavelle Moneypenny, The Life of Benjamin Disraeli Earl of Beaconsfield, Vol. II, p. 221. London, 1912.

> with a hypocritical reverence for the principles, and a superstitious adhesion to the forms, of the old exclusive constitution, carry on your policy by latitudinarian practice?
>
> Sir Joseph stared; it was the first time that any inkling of the views of the New Generation had caught his ear. They were strange and unaccustomed accents. He was extremely perplexed; could by no means make out what his companion was driving at; at length with a rather knowing smile, expressive as much of compassion as comprehension, he remarked,
>
> 'Ah! I see; you are a regular Orangeman.'
>
> 'I look upon an Orangeman,' said Coningsby, 'as a pure Whig; the only professor and practiser of unadulterated Whiggism.'
>
> This was too much for Sir Joseph, whose political knowledge did not reach much further back than the Ministry of the Mediocrities; hardly touched the times of the Corresponding Society. But he was a cautious man, and never replied in haste. He was about feeling his way, when he experienced the golden advantage of gaining time, for the ladies entered."[1]

In the further delineation of Lord Monmouth's character, we discover attractive traits that tend to humanise his arrogant grandeur. We realize how finely conceived and drawn the characterization is, for in a few quick strokes we are shown the dignified and selfish patrician bestowing kindliness on the actress Flora:

> "He had reached the top of the flight of stairs; he withdrew his arm from Flora, and thanked her with all his courtesy.
>
> 'You are not hurt, then, sir?' she ventured to ask with a look that expressed the infinite solicitude which her tongue did not venture to convey.
>
> 'By no means, my good little girl;'

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, pp. 260, 261. London, 1891.

> and he extended his hand to her,
> which she reverently bent over and
> embraced."[1]

Deeming himself to be disappointed in love, Coningsby reverts to his dreams of public greatness and political distinction. His re-union with Oswald Millbank takes place in Oxford on the eve of their entering the world, having obtained their University degrees. It is now that Coningsby concerns himself not only with principles but with an astute analysis of the state of Political Parties in the country. Here we see the effect of Parliamentary speaking on Disraeli's literary style. Coningsby delivers a lecture. He is convinced that the man who enters public life "has to choose between Political Infidelity and a Destructive Creed."[2] He is resolved that "We should now so act that, when the occasion arrives, we should clearly comprehend what we want, and have formed an opinion as to the best means by which that want can be supplied."[3] It is now, having first imbibed the spirit in which these ideas are to be evolved, that Coningsby declares the truths of his policy. He believes that "The proper leader of the people is the individual who sits upon the throne."[4] He proposes the "idea of a free monarchy, established on fundamental laws, itself the apex of a vast pile of municipal and local government, ruling an educated people, represented by a free and intellectual press."[5] In addition, he maintains that the church is not in a position as regards the community, "consonant with its original and essential character, or with the welfare of the nation."[6] The estate of

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, p. 269. London, 1891.
2. Ibid. p. 283.
3. Ibid. p. 285.
4. Ibid. p. 285.
5. Ibid. pp. 285, 286.
6. Ibid. p. 286.

the Church should be the estate of the people as long as the Church is governed on its real principles. Their converse ends with a challenge issued to Coningsby by Millbank, to save the state. This impassioned view of their political ideals leads them with all the ardour of youth to believe that "It is our privilege to live in an age when the career of the highest ambition is identified with the performance of the greatest good."[1] This concept naturally appeals to Coningsby, who unites in his nature the ambition to acquire fame and the desire to perform heroic deeds.

Coningsby is now working within a definite compass of potent and constructive ideas; the proposed revival of Crown and Church influence, with the object of restoring national spirit and unity and securing an improvement in the lot of the poor. This concept receives detailed attention in the later novels. As the author's knowledge and insight deepens, the picture becomes more complex until in Sybil he reveals the deep schism that divides "the People" into two nations - the Rich and the Poor. Coningsby now sees two great realities, the throne and the people. We have seen that these ideas are not the product of cold intellect alone; they are as much the result of comprehensive vision. It was the spirit that generated the policy, a policy so broad as to discount any accusations of party pamphleteering. It cannot be said that the manifesto of Young England was an attempt to vindicate contemporary Tory claims. The author surveys all with judicial impartiality and both parties come in for his slashing satire.

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, p. 289. London, 1891.

Despite the intensity of the feeling that motivates the New England group, and the obvious sympathy of the author with their political aspirations, Disraeli "was only half taken in by what he saw and that, even when most impressed, he still found the spectacle rich enough in its oddity to give us other outsiders a huge wink."[1] His wit plays an important role in the novel, for it reveals the double perspective obtained by an outsider who nonetheless got inside. His unique position enabled him to retain artistic objectivity while immersed with fervent enthusiasm in the schemes of Coningsby and his associates. This is seen in Sir Joseph's pained surprise:

> "'The Ministers of the Crown are responsible to their master; they are not the Ministers of Parliament.'
>
> 'But then you know virtually,' said Sir Joseph, 'the Parliament, that is, the House of Commons, governs the country.'
>
> 'It did before 1832,' said Coningsby, 'but that is all past now. We got rid of that with the Venetian Constitution.'
>
> 'The Venetian Constitution!' said Sir Joseph.
>
> 'To be sure,' said Millbank. 'We were governed in this country by the Venetian Constitution from the accession of the House of Hanover. But that yoke is past. And now I hope we are in a state of transition from the Italian Dogeship to the English Monarchy.'
>
> 'King, Lords, and Commons, the Venetian Constitution!' exclaimed Sir Joseph.
>
> 'But they were phrases,' said Coningsby, 'not facts. The King was a Doge; the Cabinet the Council of Ten. Your Parliament, that you call Lords and Commons, was nothing more than the Great Council of Nobles.'
>
> 'The resemblance was complete,' said Millbank, 'and no wonder, for it was not accidental; the Venetian Constitution was intentionally copied.'

1. Walter Allen, The English Novel, p. 151. London, 1954.

> 'We should have had the Venetian Republic in 1640,' said Coningsby, 'had it not been for the Puritans. Geneva beat Venice.'
>
> 'I am sure these ideas are not very generally known,' said Sir Joseph, bewildered.
>
> 'Because you have had your history written by the Venetian party,' said Coningsby, 'and it has been their interest to conceal them.'
>
> 'I will venture to say that there are very few men on our side in the House of Commons,' said Sir Joseph, 'who are aware that they were born under a Venetian Constitution.'"[1]

The love of Coningsby for Edith is sketched with sensitivity, yet for the modern reader the style deteriorates into mawkish sentimentalism: "Edith required repose. She tried to seek it on the bosom of her aunt, as she breathed to her the delicious secret of her life."[2] It is here that we are aware of the artificiality of style. The strong character portrayals are studies of political character. Edith is a rather weak accessory and insubstantially drawn. Yet it is as an accessory that love is depicted. The central morality of life is the rectifying of wrong, political and social, and woman is absorbed into this aim. We hear Millbank say:

> "Amid my career of travail, there was ever a bright form which animated exertion, inspired my invention, nerved my energy, and to gain whose heart and life I first made many of those discoveries, and entered into many of those speculations, that have since been the foundation of my wide prosperity."[3]

This is not to say that Disraeli minimises the importance of love. He accords the influence of love full recognition. He believes in the power that pure and devoted

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, pp. 295, 296. London, 1891.
2. Ibid. p. 302.
3. Ibid. p. 309.

love can generate. It is this aspect of love that enters into the public life of men. His romantic imagination combined with a hard-headed realism.

The lovers exchange vows, but Coningsby is dismissed by Millbank. Presently, Lord Monmouth, ignorant of all that has happened, sends for his grandson, in anticipation of a general election, to arrange that he should come forward as Millbank's opponent. The scene that follows between the old generation and the new is one of the best in the book. The revelation of Monmouth's gross selfishness comes only when Coningsby's creed has fully evolved, and thus the juxtaposition of the actual and ideal elevates Disraeli's art from that of the mere mocker to that of the serious satirist. After mulling thoughts over, Coningsby has at last arrived at a stage where he can be authoritative about his ideas. With conviction he states:

> "Power has left our order; this is not an age for factitious aristocracy . . . What we want, sir, is not to fashion new dukes and furbish up old baronies, but to establish great principles which may maintain the realm and secure the happiness of the people. Let me see authority once more honoured; a solemn reverence again the habit of our lives; let me see property acknowledging, as in the old days of faith, that labour is his twin brother, and that the essence of all tenure is the performance of duty; let results such as these be brought about, and let me participate, however feebly, in the great fulfilment, and public life then indeed becomes a noble career, and a seat in Parliament an enviable distinction."[1]

He makes it clear that he has no wish to revive obsolete institutions, but wishes only to regain the essential spirit of the old Toryism. He is interested in restoring a nat-

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, p. 330. London, 1891.

ional spirit and securing an improvement in the lot of the poor.

Coningsby's self-control and respect for his grandfather are well suggested. The remarks he addresses to Lord Monmouth are respectfully tempered versions of the convictions that we can feel seething beneath the surface. He realizes, however, that members of Lord Monmouth's family may think as they like but must act as he dictates. The attitude of his grandfather is clear: "Cross my purpose, and I will crush you!"[1] This is obviously the intellectual crisis of the novel. Will Coningsby preserve his political integrity inviolate? Or will he enter the House of Commons, a slave and a tool, to move according to instructions and to labour for the low designs of petty spirits, spirits like that of Rigby, which he so despised? Coningsby's profound conviction that such conduct would violate the dictates of his conscience prevents his making the fatal error. He declines to enter Parliament except as the master of his own conduct.

Not long afterwards, Lord Monmouth dies, having disinherited Coningsby. This is the test of Coningsby's creative spirit. With his knowledge and convictions he easily surmounts this conventional calamity. He decides to try for the Bar. He realizes that true greatness no longer depends on rentals, for the world is too rich; nor on pedigrees, for the world is too knowing. This is Coningsby's intrinsic strength.

The dénouement of the novel is a large cliché from the stock of Victorian fiction. Disraeli, who as a writer

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, p. 331. London, 1891.

stood apart from the Victorian age and ethos, resorts here to the speedy resolution of Coningsby's difficulties in the literary tradition of the lesser novelists of the silver-fork school. Coningsby's prospects change rapidly. Overladen with all the goods of fortune, he is left with his friends on the threshold of public life. The reader is left pondering on their political future:

> "Will they maintain in august assemblies and high places the great truths which, in study and in solitude, they have embraced? Or will their courage exhaust itself in the struggle, their enthusiasm evaporate before hollow-hearted ridicule, their generous impulses yield with a vulgar catastrophe to the tawdry temptations of a low ambition? Will their skilled intelligence subside into being the adroit tool of a corrupt party? Will Vanity confound their fortunes, or Jealousy wither their sympathies? Or will they remain brave, single, and true; refuse to bow before shadows and worship phrases; sensible of the greatness of their position, recognise the greatness of their duties; denounce to a perplexed and disheartened world the frigid theories of a generalising age that have destroyed the individuality of man, and restore the happiness of their country by believing in their own energies, and daring to be great?"[1]

This novel was an attempt to make the realms of speculation and action ultimately blend. In painting a picture of political society, with all the insight and wit at his command, the author pierced to the roots of the contemporary political fabric. Coningsby's career of thoughtfulness about social rights and responsibilities plunges us into the inner life of the parliamentary system, thus redeeming the novel from mere entertainment. The English novel had entered a new sphere.

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby; or, The New Generation, pp. 381, 382. London, 1891.

CHAPTER III

SYBIL

The trilogy, closely connected in subject matter, forms a deliberate and complete manifesto of a political party. These novels afford the best literary and historical material for the period of social unrest and ecclesiastical upheaval opening with the reform bill and ending with the repeal of the corn laws. The social and political life is laid bare through the eye of a consummate political genius. Disraeli, as an artist who really cared about what his imagination suggested to him, was non-conformist and anti-establishment. He refused to subscribe to the Christian resignation fashionable at the time; an attitude embodied in the words of a popular Victorian hymn:

"The rich man in his castle
The poor man at his gate,
God made them high or lowly
And ordered their estate."

His special vision of life made him wholly critical of the contemporary state of the country, since he deeply and sincerely felt the poetry and pathos of the situation. In Sybil Or The Two Nations, published in 1845, he sought to illustrate the "Condition of the People."[1] In the concluding pages of Sybil, he defines the theme and purpose as: "From the state of Parties it now would draw public thought to the state of the People whom those parties for two centuries have governed."[2] The gravity of the national disease he had studied from actual observation. With the intellectuality that is a feature of his mind, he

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 2. ADVERTISEMENT to the novel, 1845. London, 1895.
2. Ibid. p. 454.

probes into the effects of the Industrial Revolution on English society. Yet his poetic temperament enables him to fuse successfully the politico-social doctrine with the imaginative portrayal of scenes and personages that produce the effect of life. So life-like, in fact, that we are compelled to admire the courage of the author in publishing a candid transcript of the age in which he lived. He attempts to open people's eyes to the evil of the time. Gradually, we see emerging the true theme of the novel: the class struggle and its solution in terms of Young England policy.

The book opens with narrative of the lightest, not to say the most frivolous kind - the chatter of young dandies in a club-house on the eve of a Derby day. Depicted here are men who had "exhausted life in their teens, and all that remained for them was to mourn, amid the ruins of their reminiscences, over the extinction of excitement."[1] In these typical Disraelian glimpses of high life we see the men whom Disraeli desires to rouse out of languor and sting into action. It is in this chapter that we are introduced to the hero of the novel, Charles Egremont, younger brother of the Earl of Marney. We learn more of his background in the third chapter where the rise of the Marney family from obscurity in the reign of Henry VII, to the wealth, honour and influence possessed by them in the reign of Victoria, is recounted. In the matter of condensation this chapter is masterly. It practically summarises the whole of Disraeli's reading, reflections and conclusions on English politics and political parties for

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, pp. 5, 6. London, 1895.

three hundred years; and apart from the intrinsic interest of its original and suggestive views, it is as picturesque, vigorous and eloquent a piece of political writing as he ever achieved. Yet there is the severity of reserve that marks the treatment of a subject on which he would have liked nothing better than to spread himself over thrice the number of pages. We see that the undeserved prosperity of the Egremont family is rooted in the spoliation of the Church and the consequent acquisition of Abbey lands. Their lowly aim and ambition was promotion in their order - they desired to be Dukes. It is here that we find the same views as those expressed in Coningsby: history seen as Whig domination through ages of political mystification during which a "people without power or education had been induced to believe themselves the freest and most enlightened nation in the world, and had submitted to lavish their blood and treasure, to see their industry crippled and their labour mortgaged, in order to maintain an oligarchy, that had neither ancient memories to soften nor present services to justify their unprecedented usurpation."[1] Disraeli could see the past without prejudice and as a whole. Because he saw through the eyes of an outsider, his steady and unbiased vision was concerned only to note broad truths. He shows the restoration of the moral existence of the Whig party through the high spirit infused into their public acts by the genius of Burke, who consolidated the party within Parliament and the country. With an untiring and unimpassioned spirit, Disraeli pursues and analyses the

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 16. London, 1895.

modifying powers and personages of history. He touches on the admirable role played by Bolingbroke; the influence of Lord Carteret and the career of that "ablest and most accomplished minister of the eighteenth century"[1] - Lord Shelburne. Although bluntly documented, we sense approbation in the wording of these facts, as shown in the following excerpt:

> "Lord Shelburne adopted from the first the Bolingbroke system; a real royalty, in lieu of the chief magistracy; a permanent alliance with France, instead of the whig scheme of viewing in that power the natural enemy of England; and, above all, a plan of commercial freedom, the germ of which may be found in the long-maligned negotiations of Utrecht, but which in the instance of Lord Shelburne were soon in time matured by all the economical science of Europe, in which he was a proficient."[2]

In the principle of selection, we feel the presence of Disraeli's acute critical faculty. The historian's objectivity is evident in the careful discrimination between cause and pretext, as demonstrated in his investigation into the Dutch invasion of 1688. Nothing journalistic clings to Disraeli's report. The tone is heavily weighted with irony: "we might have been saved from the triple blessings of Venetian politics, Dutch finance, and French wars: against which, in their happiest days, and with their happiest powers, struggled the three greatest of English statesmen, - Bolingbroke, Shelburne, and lastly the son of Chatham."[3] The pithy sayings we have come to expect of Disraeli are still present, as in: "From his death to 1825, the political history of England is a history of great events and little men."[4] The historical review leads up to the vivid present.

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 20. London, 1895.
2. Ibid. p. 20.
3. Ibid. p. 25.
4. Ibid. p. 25.

He paints a graphic picture of the period of public languor which led to the Duke of Wellington assuming the responsibilities of First Minister: "An exhausted sensualist on the throne, who only demanded from his ministers repose, a voluptuous aristocracy, and a listless people, were content, in the absence of all public conviction and national passion, to consign the government of the country to a great man, whose decision relieved the sovereign, whose prejudices pleased the nobles, and whose achievements dazzled the multitude."[1] The light satirical note is not derisive, but corrective. His ability to penetrate accurately to the core of the situation and express it in explicit terms (e.g. he maintains that the Duke of Wellington lacked any knowledge of England), invests the reflection with value. Again, we are struck by the poetic concentration and exactitude of the language, as seen in the quotation that follows:

> "Napoleon, at St. Helena, speculating in conversation on the future career of his conqueror, asked, 'What will Wellington do? After all he has done, he will not be content to be quiet. He will change the dynasty.' Had the great exile been better acquainted with the real character of our Venetian constitution, he would have known that to govern England in 1820, it was not necessary to change its dynasty. But the Emperor, though wrong in the main, was right by the bye. It was clear that the energies that had twice entered Paris as a conqueror, and had made kings and mediatised princes at Vienna, would not be content to subside into ermined insignificance."[2]

A theory of English history and modern English politics is explicitly developed in this digression. In all essen-

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 25. London, 1895.
2. Ibid. p. 27.

tials it represents Disraeli's permanent conception of what may be called the Tory Idea, and of the background in which he found that ideal. It lies at the root of all his convictions. As Sybil is not just a political document or manifesto, but a work of art, these views are deftly woven into the texture of the novel.

There is a humorous element in the social satire when, in a description reminiscent of the death of Falstaff, we are told that Lord Marney was spared the pang of knowing that the Duke's administration had ended in panic: "he died in the full faith of dukism; worshipping the duke and believing that ultimately he should himself become a duke. It was under all the circumstances an euthanasia; he expired leaning as it were on his white wand and babbling of strawberry leaves."[1] The analogy if taken too far might prove delusive, but it is hinted at here, and in point of fact Lord Marney's concept of Honour did not differ appreciably from that of the roguish Falstaff. It is from the tyranny of these ambitions that the young nobility will have to emancipate themselves.

Charles's mother, Lady Marney, is a "stateswoman" enveloped in a behind-the-scenes air and bubbling over with spicy bits of political gossip. It is here that the drawing room or the boudoir is used as a means to present the inner life of politics:

> "'My dear Charles,' said Lady Marney to Egremont the morning after the Derby, as breakfasting with her in her boudoir he detailed some of the circumstances of the race, 'we must forget your naughty horse. I sent you a little note this morning, because I wished to see you

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 28. London, 1895.

> most particularly before you went out. Affairs,' continued Lady Marney, first looking round the chamber to see whether there were any fairy listening to her state secrets, 'affairs are critical.' . . . 'There will be a dissolution,' said Lady Marney . . . . . 'The king is dying . . . He may live a month, . . . he cannot live two. It is the greatest of secrets; known at this moment only to four individuals, and I communicate it to you, my dear Charles, in that absolute confidence which I hope will always subsist between us, because it is an event that may greatly affect your career.'
>
> 'How so, my dear mother?'
>
> 'Marbury! I have settled with Mr. Tadpole that you shall stand for the old borough. With the government in our hands, as I had anticipated at the general election, success I think was certain: under the circumstances which we must encounter, the struggle will be more severe, but I think we shall do it: and it will be a happy day for me to have our own again, and to see you in Parliament, my dear child'[1]

Disraeli was one of the first to defend the right of women to rank as intellectual beings. Lady Marney, although an intelligent woman, who gives the political cue to her children, is a votary of Dukism and, as such, a butt for the ridicule of the author. Like Tadpole, she believes a young candidate with an old name is assured of election success. The world she has always moved in is a world made for a few, the very few who can do anything and have everything.

Egremont has drifted on this glittering surface, leading a life devoid of object. The turmoil created by the Reform Act does not produce any change in his mode of thought and life. His motto may easily be Carpe diem. The political speculation that is mounted on the background

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, pp. 29, 30. London, 1895.

of character portrayal produces the inimitable Disraelian political novel. In the probing of the author into the effects of the Reform Act, we obtain an insight into the minds and manners of the dramatis personae. Already we sense the anger of the writer at the prevailing standards. He rebels against the desire to acquire and to plunder, the desire to create an Utopia consisting only of wealth and toil. His Judaic idealism revolts against the negation of spiritual values. In this impassioned investigation we get a glimpse of the basic theme that is to emerge more explicitly as the action progresses, the schism between the rich and the poor. Here, he speaks of the "wail of intolerable serfage."[1] Seen in this context, Egremont's life of indolence takes on a very superficial brilliance. Yet there are certain mitigating features in his character. He is in command of an intelligence that grasps slowly but surely the consciousness of his lack of purpose in life. He realizes he wants an object, but is as yet ignorant of how to act. The prose reflects the change in tone from flippancy to seriousness. The pithy gibes in balanced eighteenth century prose give way to wisdom couched in aphoristic language. We move from a description of Egremont as the "favourite of nature and of fashion,"[2] to a generalisation such as "To be conscious that you are ignorant is a great step to knowledge."[3] This depiction of the thought processes of the hero gradually turning from the blaze of society to the musing over action, is not touched by theatricality. We feel that like Coningsby

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 35. London, 1895.
2. Ibid. p. 38.
3. Ibid. p. 39.

before he meets Sidonia, Egremont is a representative of the New Generation in whom energies begin to stir, energies of which there is a dearth in the society around him.

The dawn of a different era mirrors in a macrocosmic way the revolution in Egremont's mind. The young queen ascends her throne. As we have already made the acquaintance of the gilded youth, the luxury and riches of the youthful patricians; the accession of Queen Victoria is adroitly made the occasion for the introduction of the real theme and purpose of the novel - the poverty and suffering of the miserable toilers of her realm: "Will it be her proud destiny at length to bear relief to suffering millions, and with that soft hand which might inspire troubadours and guerdon knights, break the last links in the chain of Saxon thraldom?"[1] He is eager to depict the growing cleavage of the people into rich and poor. We thus realize that the condition of the people will be seen in contrasting political terms. For Disraeli the two nations are separated not by a sort of sensibility, as they are in Dickens, but by an unfortunate economic geography.

The pungent and bitter exposure of a large section of the aristocracy is at first concentrated in the caustic delineation of Lord Marney, a member of the old aristocracy. The picture of Marney is a generic portrait of his class:

> "The countenance of Lord Marney bespoke the character of his mind; cynical, devoid of sentiment, arrogant, literal, hard. He had no imagination, had exhausted his slight native feeling, but he was acute, disputatious, and firm even to obstinacy. Though his early education had been very imperfect, he had subsequently read a good deal,

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 47. London, 1895.

> especially in French literature. He had formed his mind by Helvetius, whose system he deemed irrefutable, and in whom alone he had faith. Armed with the principles of his great master, he believed he could pass through existence in adamantine armour, and always gave you in the business of life the idea of a man who was conscious you were trying to take him in, and rather respected you for it, but the working of whose cold, unkind eye defied you."[1]

Lord Marney, coldhearted and grasping, is made the mouthpiece of a mock aristocracy. In him and his brother Charles Egremont, there is the contrast of two types of aristocrat: the bad and the good. Egremont, unlike his brother, has a generous spirit and a tender heart. Although still ignorant of the "Condition of the People,"[2] he is predisposed to think about social rights and responsibilities.

The prevailing ignorance among the nobility is highlighted in the person of Sir Vavasour Firebrace. He is totally unaware of the true question of the day. His whole world is the ceremony and pomp with which the rich, who have never toiled for their wealth, can surround themselves. He believes that all will be well with the world the moment the government vindicates the order of the baronetcy and gives them back their ancient privileges. Excitedly, he tells Egremont:

> "'Picture us for a moment, to yourself, going down in procession to Westminster for example to hold a chapter. Five or six hundred baronets in dark green costume, - the appropriate dress of <u>equites aurati</u>; each not only with his badge, but with his collar of S.S.; belted and scarfed; his star glit-

1. Benjamin Disraeli, <u>Sybil Or The Two Nations</u>, p. 50. London, 1895.
2. Benjamin Disraeli, <u>Sybil Or The Two Nations</u>, p. 2. ADVERTISEMENT, 1845. London, 1895.

> tering; his pennon flying; his hat white with a plume of white feathers; of course the sword and the gilt spurs. In our hand, the thumb ring and signet not forgotten, we hold our coronet of two balls!'
>
> Egremont stared with irrepressible astonishment at the excited being, who unconsciously pressed his companion's arm, as he drew this rapid sketch of the glories so unconstitutionally withheld from him.
>
> 'A magnificent spectacle!' said Egremont.
>
> 'Evidently the body destined to save this country,' eagerly continued Sir Vavasour."[1]

The scenes in Marney Abbey stand out in dramatic contrast to the penury and disease of the population outside the Abbey walls, in the rural town of Marney. The description of the living conditions of the "other" nation is drawn in the unrelieved colours of truth. We feel it is based on fact, and we are assured of this at the outset of the novel where in the ADVERTISEMENT of 1845, the author states that "there is not a trait in this work for which he has not the authority of his own observation, or the authentic evidence which has been received by Royal Commissions and Parliamentary Committees."[2] He paints a grim picture of the living conditions of the working classes. In accurate detail he depicts the squalor and filth, the houses surrounded by:

> " . . . open drains full of animal and vegetable refuse, decomposing into disease, or sometimes in their imperfect course filling foul pits or spreading into stagnant pools, while a concentrated solution of every species of dissolving filth was allowed to soak through and thoroughly

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 2. ADVERTISEMENT, 1845. London, 1895.
2. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 58. London, 1895.

impregnate the walls and ground adjoining.

These wretched tenements seldom consisted of more than two rooms, in one of which the whole family, however numerous, were obliged to sleep, without distinction of age, or sex, or suffering. With the water streaming down the walls, the light distinguished through the roof, with no hearth even in winter, the virtuous mother in the sacred pangs of childbirth gives forth another victim to our thoughtless civilisation; surrounded by three generations whose inevitable presence is more painful than her sufferings in that hour of travail; while the father of her coming child, in another corner of the sordid chamber, lies stricken by that typhus which his contaminating dwelling has breathed into his veins, and for whose next prey is perhaps destined his new-born child. These swarming walls had neither windows nor doors sufficient to keep out the weather, or admit the sun or supply the means of ventilation; the humid and putrid roof of thatch exhaling malaria like all other decaying vegetable matter. The dwelling rooms were neither boarded nor paved; and whether it were that some were situate in low and damp places, occasionally flooded by the river, and usually much below the level of the road; or that the springs, as was often the case, would burst through the mud floor; the ground was at no time better than so much clay, while sometimes you might see little channels cut from the centre under the doorways to carry off the water, the door itself removed from its hinges: a resting place for infancy in its deluged home. These hovels were in many instances not provided with the commonest conveniences of the rudest police; contiguous to every door might be observed the dungheap on which every kind of filth was accumulated, for the purpose of being disposed of for manure, so that, when the poor man opened his narrow habitation in the hope of refreshing it with the breeze of summer, he was met with a mixture of gases from reeking dunghills."[1]

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, pp. 60, 61. London, 1895.

These pictures of popular life are exact and moving without being exaggerated. We are now aware of the sharp extremes of wealth and poverty that existed side by side. The exposed plight of the labourers and factory workers reveals a social problem, which is aggravated by the ineffectuality of the Church: "The eyes of this unhappy race might have been raised to the solitary spire that sprang up in the midst of them, the bearer of present consolation, the harbinger of future equality; but Holy Church at Marney had forgotten her sacred mission. We have introduced the reader to the Vicar, an orderly man who deemed he did his duty if he preached each week two sermons, and enforced humility on his congregation and gratitude for the blessings of this life."[1] It all forebodes a fearful cataclysm. We begin to feel that in the face of such sharp disconnection between the classes of a nation the rich are sitting on the rim of a volcano, while the poor are preparing a new eruption. Soon these suspicions are realized and we read that "The torch of the incendiary had for the first time been introduced into the parish of Marney; and last night the primest stacks of the Abbey farm had blazed a beacon to the agitated neighbourhood."[2] The blazing rick at the Abbey farm provokes Egremont to make inquiries among the people of Marney town:

> "'And what do you think of this fire?' said Egremont to the hind.
> 'I think 'tis hard times for the poor, sir.'"[3]

Egremont, on the path of honest investigation and inquiry, begins to wonder why England is not the same land

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, pp. 61, 62. London, 1895.
2. Ibid. p. 63.
3. Ibid. p. 64.

as in the days of his light-hearted youth. He ponders over the countryman's words, and questions why these should be hard times for the poor. Standing amid the ruins of the old Marney Abbey, he asks himself why the stacks of the Earl of Marney should be destroyed while those of the abbots of Marney were spared. While brooding over these historical enigmas, he meets two strangers. One of them is Walter Gerard who, as Egremont discovers, is an adherent of the old faith and, though a leader of the people, has some refinement of spirit and a feeling for the past. His sense of present-day wrongs does not hinder him from sympathising with the monks who were driven from the beautiful abbey they had created. The other stranger is Stephen Morley, a socialist editor, eager, high-strung and fanatical, who finds so much to lament in the world in which he lives that he can spare no pang for the past. It is Morley who, in an explicit passage, shows the extent to which society has become stratified:

> "'. . . our Queen reigns over the greatest nation that ever existed.'
> 'Which nation?' asked the younger stranger, 'for she reigns over two . . . Two nations; between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts, and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets; who are formed by a different breeding, are fed by a different food, are ordered by different manners, and are not governed by the same laws.'
> 'You speak of ——— ' said Egremont, hesitatingly.
> 'THE RICH AND THE POOR.'"[1]

Morley's speech is more than novelist's or politician's rhetoric, for it represents one of Disraeli's own motives

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 74. London, 1895.

in writing:

> "The general reader whose attention has not been specially drawn to the subject which this volume aims to illustrate, the Condition of the People, might suspect that the Writer had been tempted to some exaggeration in the scenes which he has drawn and the impressions which he has wished to convey. He thinks it therefore due to himself to state that he believes there is not a trait in this work for which he has not the authority of his own observation, or the authentic evidence which has been received by Romal Commissions and Parliamentary Committees. But while he hopes he has alleged nothing which is not true, he has found the absolute necessity of suppressing much that is genuine. For so little do we know of the state of our own country, that the air of improbability that the whole truth would inevitably throw over these pages might deter many from their perusal."[1]

With the fundamental issue clarified, the scene is set for the entry of Sybil. Egremont first hears her singing in sweet tones, and then sees her standing in a starlit arch. Sybil is the embodiment of a great idea. More than a mere individual, she is the representation of a class. She stands for the people; for the nation of the poor; for pity of their sufferings; for their hopes of redemption. The relics of monastic life among which she first makes her appearance, link her with the fair vision of medieval Catholic England. In an ordinary Chartist heroine there would have been some strident note of vulgarity or self-assertion to estrange the sensibilities of the young nobleman, but Sybil, like her father, is refined and ennobled by her devotion to the old faith, with its long historical memories, its poetry and romance. There is

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 2. ADVERTISEMENT, 1845. London, 1895.

thus an aptness in the surroundings where she makes her first appearance. The ruins of the old Abbey mirror the destruction of hopes, the erosion of a way of life. Yet, the presence of Sybil shows that a spark of vitality still prevails. The future holds hope.

The colour and feeling of this chapter are a fusion of the poetic and the political. With imaginative ardour, the author combines the romantic and the realistic. Yet there are dissonant notes that break incongruously upon this evocation of high feeling and social doctrine. We see this in:

> "'Call it what you will, Walter,' replied Stephen; 'but if I ever gain the opportunity of fully carrying the principle of association into practice, I will sing Nunc me dimittas.'
> 'Nunc me dimittas,' burst forth the Religious in a voice of thrilling melody, and she pursued for some minutes the divine canticle."[1]

From the moment that he first glimpses her, Egremont is haunted by the memory of her voice and appearance.

The swift diversity of scenes serves to highlight the contrast of different modes of life and thought. We see Charles asking the same questions he posed to Gerard, but this time he inquires of his brother and consequently evokes a very different response. When Egremont asks "I wonder why ricks are burnt now, and were not in old days," his brother replies, "because there is a surplus population in the kingdom, . . . and no rural police in the county."[2] There is also a rapid resume of the "distinguished" pedigree of the Earl of Mowbray who traces his line back to John Warren, a waiter at a celebrated club in

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 91. London, 1895.
2. Ibid. pp. 77, 78.

St. James's Street. The exposure of this background is traced with bitter satire. This satire on the rich and powerful is unsparing, and is later relieved by a commensurate sympathy with the poor and lowly. The novelist's grasp of balance is superb. We are also swiftly given a glimpse of the perversion of moral values that the Industrial Revolution has brought in its wake. Mrs. Carey, a shopkeeper, philosophises as follows:

> "'I think the world is turned upside downwards in these parts. A brat like Mick Radley to live in a two pair, with a wife and family, or as good, as he says; and this girl asks me to take a dish of tea with her and keeps house! Fathers and mothers goes for nothing,' continued Mrs. Carey, as she took a very long pinch of snuff and deeply mused.
> "'Tis the children gets the wages,' she added after a profound pause, 'and there it is.'"

The author communicates to the reader the conviction that there are currents that will sweep away the traditional English life. This rapid process of degeneracy is exemplified in the horrifying background of a young man known as "Devilsdust." The story of Devilsdust is appalling, but its force is lessened by the manner of presentation. The facts are shocking and in themselves dramatic. Perhaps the author felt they spoke for themselves, without the addition of emotional embellishment. We tend to regard the background of Devilsdust, however, as a case history. The force of impact is lessened by the story being narrated, not shown. It is a sequence of facts and ideas which is explicitly expressed, rather than growing out of the action, as seen in an excerpt such as the following:

"About a fortnight after his mother

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 101. London, 1895.

had introduced him into the world, she returned to her factory and put her infant out to nurse, that is to say, paid threepence a week to an old woman who takes charge of these new-born babes for the day, and gives them back at night to their mothers as they hurriedly return from the scene of their labour to the dungeon or the den which is still by courtesy called 'home.' The expense is not great: laudanum and treacle, administered in the shape of some popular elixir, affords these innocents a brief taste of the sweets of existence, and keeping them quiet, prepares them for the silence of their impending grave. Infanticide is practised as extensively and as legally in England as it is on the banks of the Ganges; a circumstance which apparently has not yet engaged the attention of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. But the vital principle is an impulse from an immortal artist, and sometimes baffles, even in its tenderest phasis, the machinations of society for its extinction. There are infants that will defy even starvation and poison, unnatural mothers and demon nurses. Such was the nameless one of whom we speak. We cannot say he thrived; but he would not die. So at two years of age, his mother being lost sight of, and the weekly payment having ceased, he was sent out in the street to 'play,' in order to be run over. Even this expedient failed. The youngest and the feeblest of the band of victims, Juggernaut spared him to Moloch. All his companions were disposed of. Three months' 'play' in the streets got rid of this tender company, - shoeless, half-naked, and uncombed, - whose age varied from two to five years. Some were crushed, some were lost, some caught cold and fevers, crept back to their garret or their cellars, were dosed with Godfrey's cordial, and died in peace. The nameless one would not disappear. He always got out of the way of the carts and horses, and never lost his own. They gave him no food: he foraged for himself, and shared with the dogs the garbage of the streets. But still he lived; stunted and pale, he defied even the fatal fever which was the only habitant of his cellar that

> never quitted it. And slumbering at night on a bed of mouldering straw, his only protection against the plashy surface of his den, with a dung-heap at his head and a cesspool at his feet, he still clung to the only roof which shielded him from the tempest. At length when the nameless one had completed his fifth year, the pest, which never quitted the nest of cellars of which he was a citizen, raged in the quarter with such intensity that the extinction of its swarming population was menaced. The haunt of this child was peculiarly visited. All the children gradually sickened except himself; and one night when he returned home he found the old woman herself dead, and surrounded only by corpses. The child before this had slept on the same bed of straw with a corpse, but then there were also breathing beings for his companions. A night passed only with corpses seemed to him in itself a kind of death. He stole out of the cellar, quitted the quarter of pestilence, and after much wandering lay down near the door of a factory. Fortune had guided him. Soon after break of day, he was woken by the sound of the factory bell, and found assembled a crowd of men, women, and children. The door opened, they entered, the child accompanied them. The roll was called; his unauthorised appearance noticed; he was questioned; his acuteness excited attention. A child was wanted in the Wadding Hole, a place for the manufacture of waste and damaged cotton, the refuse of the mills, which is here worked up into counterpanes and coverlids. The nameless one was preferred to the vacant post, received even a salary, more than that, a name; for as he had none, he was christened on the spot - DEVILSDUST."[1]

We take an human interest in Devilsdust, but our response is sociological. Nevertheless we feel immediately and directly that these conditions are wrong and that they should be altered by legislation, and this reaction is a valuable one, though an indication of the manifestly

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, pp. 108, 109. London, 1895.

propagandist purpose of the narration. But such outspokenness was very necessary in the novel which exposed social abuses and pleaded for the emancipation of the oppressed. The story of Devilsdust was a real slice of life, and these facts could not be handled with delicacy, even by the novelist. It is in the presentation of a case like this that we see the difference in method of two such writers as Disraeli and Dickens. Disraeli was limited in his approach by his aim of righting wrongs through the efficiency of Parliament. Therefore, in the novel which reached a wide audience, he was to all intents and purposes less interested in the souls of the poor than he was in their practical needs. Whereas Dickens the romantic realist lashed at contemporary vices, Disraeli sought to discover the imperfections of the body politic. One might even say that the strength of practical purpose compelled Disraeli to intellectualize his sympathy. He reacted to the anarchy of industrialism not with a kind heart alone, but with a sagacious mind, whereas the indignation of Dickens was purely humanitarian.

The action progresses in strictly antithetical terms. From the horrors of dank cellars and open drains we turn again to the gilded luxury of the upper nation, the rich aristocracy. In the context of deprivation and suffering that has been evoked, the description of the dinner at Mowbray Castle points up the schism in the economic structure of nineteenth century England:

> "The dinner was stately, as becomes the high nobility. There were many guests, yet the table seemed only a gorgeous spot in the capacious chamber. The side tables were laden with silver vases and golden shields arranged on

> shelves of crimson velvet. The walls were covered with Fitz-Warenes, De Mowbrays, and De Veres. The attendants glided about without noise, and with the precision of military discipline. They watched your wants, they anticipated your wishes, and they supplied all you desired with a lofty air of pompous devotion."[1]

We see that amidst this superficial glitter where expediency rules over principle, Egremont is still preoccupied with the serious considerations that were first prompted by the rick-burning at the Abbey. He listens intently to the views expressed by Mr. St. Lys, the humble vicar of Mowbray, who insinuates that Lord Marney's hard and callous attitude to the rate of wages is tantamount to a declaration of war against the "cottage", which might ultimately lead to a cry of war against the "castle". It is in the opinions of Mr. St. Lys, too, that we detect an extension of the theme broached by Sidonia in Coningsby. In extolling the Church of Rome he goes on to say that:

> "Christianity is incomprehensible without Judaism, as Judaism is incomplete without Christianity. What has Rome to do with its completion; what with its commencement? The law was not thundered forth from the Capitolian mount; the divine atonement was not fulfilled upon Mons Sacer. No; the order of our priesthood comes directly from Jehovah; and the forms and ceremonies of His church are the regulations of His supreme intelligence. Rome indeed boasts that the authenticity of the second Testament depends upon the recognition of her infallibility. The authenticity of the second Testament depends upon its congruity with the first. Did Rome preserve that? I recognise in the Church an institution thoroughly, sincerely, catholic: adapted to all climes

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 112. London, 1895.

> and to all ages. I do not bow to the necessity of a visible head in a defined locality; but were I to seek for such, it would not be at Rome. I cannot discover in its history however memorable any testimony of a mission so sublime. When Omnipotence deigned to be incarnate, the Ineffable Word did not select a Roman frame. The prophets were not Romans; the apostles were not Romans; she, who was blessed above all women, I never heard she was a Roman maiden. No, I should look to a land more distant than Italy, to a city more sacred than Rome."[1]

This enthusiasm is sincere and deep-rooted, for it was Disraeli's Judaism that told him that without vision the people would perish. It was only by making a new crusade to regain her strength from the vision on Mount Sinai that the Church would learn to guide and to protect her children.

Again we turn to the horror of industrial conditions. The pictures are vigorous and vivid. We see the violence and misery of the destitute and disinherited. The trials and tribulations of a family, representative of the general penury, are narrated by the wife of a weaver, whose craft has ceased to be remunerative since the advent of the machine age:

> "I have been in this bed a week, and may never rise from it again; the children have no clothes; they are pawned; everything is pawned; this morning we had neither fuel nor food. And we thought you had come for the rent which we cannot pay. If it had not been for a dish of tea which was charitably given me this morning by a person almost as poor as ourselves, that is to say, they live by labour, though their wages are much higher, as high as two pounds a week, though how that can be I never shall understand, when my husband is working twelve hours a day, and gaining only

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, pp. 123, 124. London, 1895.

> a penny an hour - if it had not been for this I should have been a corpse; and yet he says we were in straits, merely because Walter Gerard's daughter, who I willingly grant is an angel from heaven for all the good she has done us, has stepped in to our aid. But the poor supporting the poor, as she well says, what good can come from that?"[1]

There is a curious blend of realism and romanticism in Disraeli's description of working-class life. We sense the nostalgia for the days when the weaver loved his loom, and when it provided him with a "cottage in my native village, surrounded by a garden of whose claims on my solicitude it was not jealous. There was time for both. It gave me for a wife the maiden that I had ever loved; and it gathered my children round my hearth with plenteousness and peace. I was content: I sought no other lot."[2] The solace of the poor for dispossession is merely sympathy, whereas for the rich there is compensation. The picture of the suffering of the hand-weaver Warner and his starving family helps us to realise the price which England had to pay for her greatness as a manufacturing power. It is in the sordid environment of Warner's room that Sybil and Egremont meet each other again. Accompanying St. Lys, he arrives at the home of the weaver. Sybil poignantly contrasts the Old England and the New:

> "When I remember what this English people once was; the truest, the freest, and the bravest, the best-natured and the best-looking, the happiest and most religious race upon the surface of this globe; and think of them now, with all their crimes and all their slavish sufferings, their soured spirits

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 135. London, 1895.
2. Ibid. p. 127.

> and their stunted forms; their lives without enjoyment and their deaths without hope; I may well feel for them, even if I were not the daughter of their blood."[1]

This is in embryo the ideal of Young England. The presence of the vicar completes the symbolic trio, for it is the Church that must concentrate her powers to resolve the struggle between government and people.

The magnitude of these fundamental issues - starvation, dire poverty, ill health - contrasts strikingly with the fiddle-faddle of political schemes and moves within Mowbray Castle. Lady Firebrace, one of the great ladies of the Tory party

> ". . . had her correspondents, and her letters received or awaited. Tadpole said this; Lord Masque, on the contrary, said that: the truth lay perhaps between them; some result developed by the clear intelligence of Lady Firebrace acting on the data with which they supplied her. The duke listened with calm excitement to the transcendental revelations of his Egeria. Nothing appeared to be concealed from her; the inmost mind of the sovereign; there was not a royal prejudice that was not mapped in her secret inventory; the cabinets of the whigs and the clubs of the tories, she had the 'open sesame' to all of them. Sir Somebody did not want office, though he pretended to; and Lord Nobody did want office, though he pretended he did not. One great man thought the pear was not ripe; another that it was quite rotten; but then the first was coming on the stage, and the other was going off. In estimating the accuracy of a political opinion, one should take into consideration the standing of the opinionist. At the right moment, and when she was sure she was not overheard, Lady Firebrace played her trump card, the pack having been previously cut by Mr. Tadpole.

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 137. London, 1895.

> 'And who do you think Sir Robert would send to Ireland?' and she looked up in the face of the Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine
> . . . . . .
> 'Do you know whose name I have heard mentioned in a certain quarter as the person Sir Robert would wish to see in Ireland?' continued Lady Firebrace. His grace leant his ear.
> 'The Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine,' said Lady Firebrace."[1]

In the person of Egremont we see the convictions of Young England taking root within a circle of selfish oligarchy. Egremont is the centre of Disraeli's novel, and its true theme is his discovery of the "other nation". The horizon of his experience has expanded. His sympathies have become livelier and more extensive so that now he is inclined to view public questions in a tone very different from that in which he had surveyed them a few weeks before, when on the hustings of his borough. His encounter with Sybil and her father, with their thoughtful speech, knowledge and earnest feeling, has deeply impressed him. We see the dawning of truth:

> "And are these then THE PEOPLE? If so, thought Egremont, would that I lived more among them! Compared with their converse, the tattle of our saloons has in it something humiliating. It is not merely that it is deficient in warmth, and depth, and breadth; that it is always discussing persons instead of principles, and cloaking its want of thought in mimetic dogmas and its want of feeling in superficial raillery; it is not merely that it has neither imagination, nor fancy, nor sentiment, nor feeling, nor knowledge to recommend it; but it appears to me, even as regards manner and expression, inferior in refinement and phraseology;

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, pp. 141, 143, 144. London, 1895.

> in short, trivial, uninteresting, stupid, really vulgar."[1]

In conversation with Gerard, Egremont assumes a false name. Here in his discussions with Gerard, we see Disraeli's unusually able grasp of the problem which the hungry forties presented. Gerard enlightens and simultaneously challenges Egremont: "They have given up butcher's meat; must they give up bread? And as for raiment and shelter, the rags of the kingdom are exhausted, and your sinks and cellars already swarm like rabbit warrens."[2]

Accompanying Stephen Morley on a mission from Mowbray into some neighbouring mining districts, we are shown other phases of industrial civilisation. We see a gang issuing from a mine. The author records the horror of this phenomenon with critical and objective insight, yet with great compassion. Nothing is overlooked:

> "They come forth: the mine delivers its gang and the pit its bondsmen; the forge is silent and the engine is still. The plain is covered with the swarming multitude: bands of stalwart men, broad-chested and muscular, wet with toil, and black as the children of the tropics; troops of youth - alas! of both sexes, - though neither their raiment nor their language indicates the difference; all are clad in male attire; and oaths that men might shudder at issue from lips born to breathe words of sweetness. Yet these are to be - some are - the mothers of England! But can we wonder at the hideous coarseness of their language when we remember the savage rudeness of their lives? Naked to the waist, an iron chain fastened to a belt of leather runs between their legs clad in canvas trousers, while on hands and feet an English girl, for twelve, sometimes for sixteen

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 147. London, 1895.
2. Ibid. p. 152.

> hours a day, hauls and hurries tubs of coal up subterranean roads, dark, precipitous, and plashy: circumstances that seem to have escaped the notice of the Society for the Abolition of Negro Slavery. Those worthy gentlemen too appear to have been singularly unconscious of the sufferings of the little Trappers, which was remarkable, as many of them were in their own employ. See too these emerge from the bowels of the earth! Infants of four and five years of age, many of them girls, pretty and still soft and timid; entrusted with the fulfilment of most responsible duties, and the nature of which entails on them the necessity of being the earliest to enter the mine and the latest to leave it. Their labour indeed is not severe, for that would be impossible, but it is passed in darkness and in solitude. They endure that punishment which philosophical philanthropy has invented for the direst criminals, and which those criminals deem more terrible than the death for which it is substituted."[1]

The author rises to the elevation of a prophet mainly because, like Carlyle, he could see the present so vividly. These were not lurid pictures of imaginary characters, but descriptions founded on first hand observation and authentically documented evidence. It is an impassioned plea to bring these demoralising tendencies under the authority of reason and conscience. These topics were vitally relevant to the age in which they were written. The ardour and depth of feeling convince us that the artist was not merely introducing these poignant scenes to capitalise on the community of interest that existed between himself and his readers on these vital issues. The artistic aim is subordinate here to the political.

We learn something further of the attitudes that

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 154. London, 1895.

prevail, when Morley inquires of some miners why they do not state their grievances to the landlords and lessees. They reply that there exists no connection between the poor man and the gentleman. They pinpoint this as the nucleus of the problem: "We never want no soldiers here if the masters would speak with the men; but the sight of a pitman is pison to a gentleman, and if we go up to speak with 'em, they always run away."[1] Morley puts forward his scheme of association, which he envisages as the solution to all problems. He suggests they infuse a community of purpose into their collective life:

> "The people will never have their rights, . . . until they learn their power. Suppose instead of sticking out and playing, fifty of your families were to live under one roof, you would live better than you live now; you would feed more fully, and be lodged and clothed more comfortably, and you might save half the amount of your wages; you would become capitalists; you might yourselves hire your mines and pits from the owners, and pay them a better rent than they now obtain, and yet yourselves gain more and work less."[2]

Morley labels this as the want of the age. In the miners reply, "Sir, . . . you speak like a book,"[3] we see the author's rejection of the economist's dictum which has no reference to practical considerations. He discerns the fatal absence from it of the human element.

The scene changes rapidly, which not only diversifies the action, but enables us to see again the favoured aspect of English civilisation. Amid material abundance and plenty, we become aware of spiritual narrowness and pusill-

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 159. London, 1895.
2. Ibid. p. 159.
3. Ibid. p. 159.

animity. In a scene that further characterizes the participants, we see how little things affect little minds. Charles Egremont and his brother, Lord Marney, engage in a bitter dispute. Charles, whose social sympathies have been actively awakened, accuses his brother of fostering conditions that make the people on his estate the most miserable population in the county. Lord Marney, in an illogical series of blind repetitions, tries to convince Charles that:

> "The rate of wages is nothing: certainty is the thing; and every man at Marney may be sure of his seven shillings a week for at least nine months in the year; and for the other three they can go to the House, and a very proper place for them; it is heated with hot air, and has every comfort. Even Marney Abbey is not heated with hot air. I have often thought of it; it makes me mad sometimes to think of those lazy, pampered menials passing their lives with their backs to a great roaring fire; but I am afraid of the flues."[1]

He maintains that:

> " . . . a family can live very well on seven shillings a week, and on eight shillings very well indeed. The poor are very well off, at least the agricultural poor, very well off indeed. Their incomes are certain, that is a great point, and they have no cares, no anxieties; they always have a resource, they always have the House. People without cares do not require as much food as those whose life entails anxieties. See how long they live! Compare the rate of mortality among them with that of the manufacturing districts."[2]

The argument becomes so heated that they hurl abuse at each other, revealing their inmost convictions:

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 164. London, 1895.
2. Ibid. pp. 165, 166.

> "'I am your elder brother, sir, whose relationship to you is your only claim to the consideration of society.'
>
> 'A curse on the society that has fashioned such claims,' said Egremont in a heightened tone - 'claims founded in selfishness, cruelty, and fraud, and leading to demoralisation, misery, and crime.'"[1]

This rift is in part due to Charles's sharpened awareness of the selfish and exclusive policy of the class his brother represents. Egremont sincerely feels that the worker has degenerated into a serf, and is now committed to the task of seeking remedies. The passion is commensurate with such motivation.

We are witnesses of a scene outside a truck-shop which is so harrowing as a picture of cruelty and oppression as to be almost unbearable. The author drops all irony in this sincere and vivid picture of the exploitation of women and children:

> "'Don't make a brawling here,' said Master Joseph, 'or I'll jump over this here counter and knock you down, like nothing. What did you say, woman? Are you deaf? What did you say? How much best tea do you want?'
>
> 'I don't want any, sir.'
>
> 'You never want best tea; you must take three ounces of best tea, or you shan't have nothing. If you say another word, I'll put you down four. You tall gal, what's your name, you keep back there, or I'll fetch you such a cut as'll keep you at home till next reckoning. Cuss you, you old fool, do you think I am to be kept all day while you are mumbling here? Who's pushing on there? I see you, Mrs. Page. Won't there be a black mark against you? Oh! It's Mrs. Prance, is it? Father, put down Mrs. Prance for a peck of flour. I'll have order here. You think the last bacon a little too fat: oh! You do, ma'am, do you? I'll take care you shan't com-

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 168. London, 1895.

> plain in futur; I likes to please my customers. There's a very nice flitch hanging up in the engine-room; the men wanted some rust for the machinery; you shall have a slice of that; and we'll say tenpence a pound, high-dried, and very lean - will that satisfy you?
>
> Order there, order; you cussed women, order, or I'll be among you. And if I just do jump over this here counter, won't I let fly right and left? Speak out, you ideot! Do you think I can hear your muttering in this Babel? Cuss them; I'll keep them quiet,' and so he took up a yard measure, and leaning over the counter, hit right and left.
>
> 'Oh! You little monster!' exclaimed a woman, 'you have put out my babby's eye.'
>
> There was a murmur; almost a groan.
>
> 'Whose baby's hurt?' asked Master Joseph in a softened tone.
>
> 'Mine, sir,' said an indignant voice; 'Mary Church.'
>
> 'Oh! Mary Church, is it!' said the malicious imp; 'then I'll put Mary Church down for half a pound of best arrowroot; that's the finest thing in the world for babbies, and will cure you of bringing your cussed monkeys here, as if you all thought our shop was a hinfant school.'[1]

The impossibly truculent "tommy-shop" keeper belabouring his unwilling and miserable customers is not a romantically heightened figure possessing only a substratum of truth. He is a flesh and blood personage, whose brutality is realised within the given situation with imaginative power.

At the nadir of civilisation, we are shown the squatter's town of Wodgate. Here labour reigns supreme, the master workmen forming a powerful aristocracy. They are ruthless tyrants, but not unpopular with their vassals. The population is without names, morality or religion, or believing at the best "in our Lord and Saviour Pontius

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, pp. 173, 174. London, 1895.

Pilate who was crucified to save our sins; and in Moses, Goliath, and the rest of the Apostles."[1] For this travesty of a creed, as for nearly all that is most startling in Disraeli's pictures of industrial life, there is literal warrant in the Blue Books of the time. The people are shown as animals, unconscious, their minds a blank, and their worst actions only the impulse of a gross or savage instinct. The town is governed by a "Bishop", "as we have no church, we will have as good."[2] The "Bishop", however, is an exacting and blood-thirsty taskmaster who, in the words of an apprentice:

> " . . . hit me on the head with a hammer once. That was a blow! I fell away that time. When I came to, master had stopped the blood with some fur off his hat. I had to go on with my work immediately; master said I should do my stint if I worked till twelve o'clock at night. Many's the ash stick he has broken on my body; sometimes the weals remained on me for a week; he cut my eyelid open once with a nutstick, cut a regular hole in it; and it bled all over the files I was working at. He has pulled my ears sometimes that I thought they must come off in his hand. But all this was a mere nothin' to this here cut; that was serious; and if I hadn't got thro' that they do say there must have been a crowner's quest; though I think that gammon, for old Tugsford did for one of his prentices, and the body was never found. And now you ask me if I know Hatton? I should think I did!"[3]

In direct contrast to this elemental brutality is the refinement and purity of Sybil. She fervently believes that moral power is irresistible and hopes for the

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 182. London, 1895.
2. Ibid. p. 181.
3. Ibid. p. 180.

regeneration of the people. It is the only subject that ever engages her thoughts. She fortifies Egremont's resolutions to improve the condition of the people, and begs that he "will never employ the talents that God has given you against the People."[1] Disraeli gives life to Sybil, whom a weaker hand and a colder brain would have left as a mere puppet-mouthpiece of the doctrines which he desired to advocate. Thus he raises what would otherwise have been a mere political plaidoyer into a genuine romance as well. Egremont, pondering on all that he has learnt, is now in ardent sympathy with the cause of the people. This feeling is inextricably intertwined with his growing regard for Sybil and her father:

> "Why do these persons interest me? They feel and they think: two habits that have quite gone out of fashion, if ever they existed, among my friends. And that polish of manners, that studied and factitious refinement, which is to compensate for the heartlessness or the stupidity we are doomed to - is my host of last night deficient in that refinement? If he does want our conventional discipline, he has a native breeding which far excels it. I observe no word or action which is not prompted by that fine feeling which is the sure source of good taste. This Gerard appears to me a real genuine man; full of knowledge worked out by his own head; with large yet wholesome sympathies; and a deuced deal better educated than Lord de Mowbray or my brother - and they do occasionally turn over a book, which is not the habit of our set.
>
> And his daughter - ay, his daughter! There is something almost sublime about that young girl, yet strangely sweet withal; a tone so lofty combined with such simplicity is very rare."[2]

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 193. London, 1895.
2. Ibid. p. 190.

The ideals that Sybil and Gerard cherish are shown to be practicable and not at all ephemeral idealism. If Disraeli shows us the darkness, there is always the contrasting light. Against the mill-owners Shuffle and Screw there is set Mr. Trafford, who felt that between the employer and employed there should exist ties other than the payment and the receipt of wages. He had built a factory which was one of the showpieces of the country, and had concerned himself with the lodging of his workers, the education of their children and the religious life of the community. He had discovered that improving the condition of the working people with good tenements, efficient schools, just wages and the encouragement of civilising pursuits, had elevated their character, moral tone and the material happiness of the community. The results of his experiment contrasted happily with the decline of domestic feeling elsewhere among the working classes. In his delineation of Trafford, the author obviously had in mind the factory reforms of Robert Owen, who attempted to create an industrial Utopia in the factory town of New Lanark.

Egremont is urgently summoned to London. Before leaving Mowbray, he visits Gerard and Sybil to say goodbye. The thought of parting from Sybil, whom he realizes has come to mean so much to him, saddens Egremont. He regards the days spent with Sybil and her father as the happiest he has ever known. The misgivings he entertains set the emotional note for the taut scene that follows. With narrative skill, the author shows Egremont walking to the station, after taking leave of Sybil. The thick

mists swirl around him making it impossible for him to see ahead. The tension mounts as he becomes aware of someone following him. The writing is pithy and pruned of any verbal excess. We see this in: "'Who is there?' exclaimed Egremont. But no one answered."[1] Suddenly he is seized and hurried on to the bank of the river. It is only through the aid of Sybil's faithful dog that he is freed of his assailant. The violence that has overtaken him is a physical manifestation of the turmoil in his own heart. Although living under an assumed name, Egremont is made to feel that there is an element that resents his presence and regards his being in Mowbray as an intrusion.

The scene shifts to London in the year 1839. We move from the sincere simplicity of life in Mowbray to the slick and superficial sophistication of life in the great metropolis, the arena for the political battles of England. It is the year of the Chartist petition. With crucial issues fermenting beneath the surface, we are shown the selfish scheming of the aristocratic "stateswomen" of the respective Parliamentary parties. These are handsome, talkative and ambitious women, like Lady St. Julians, Lady Firebrace and Lady Deloraine. They are the great hostesses and social figures of their time, the queens of London, of fashion, and of the Tory and Whig parties. Their consciousness of their power to sway the loyalties of the participants in the administration game, is made the pretext for some critical evaluations of the men who hold the machinery of law-making in their grasp. An example

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 216. London, 1895.

of this criticism is found in a speech of Lady St. Julians:

> "People get into Parliament to get on; their aims are indefinite. If they have indulged in hallucinations about place before they enter the House, they are soon freed from such distempered fancies; they find they have no more talent than other people, and if they had, they learn that power, patronage, and pay are reserved for us and our friends. Well then, like practical men, they look to some result, and they get it. They are asked out to dinner more than they would be; they move rigmarole resolutions at nonsensical public meetings; and they get invited with their women to assemblies at their leader's, where they see stars and blue ribbons, and above all, us, who they little think, in appearing on such occasions, make the greatest conceivable sacrifice. Well then, of course such people are entirely in one's power, if one only had time and inclination to notice them. You can do anything with them. Ask them to a ball, and they will give you their votes; invite them to dinner, and if necessary they will rescind them; but cultivate them, remember their wives at assemblies and call their daughters, if possible, by their right names; and they will not only change their principles or desert their party for you; but subscribe their fortunes if necessary and lay down their desert lives in your service."[1]

These sentiments are a double-edged criticism, for in holding up the duplicity of the Parliamentarians to ridicule, they unintentionally reveal a limited outlook. The author's irony deepens, for he clearly shows that these women believe that "society" is the only object for which people strive. Egremont (and the reader), however, knows that there are minds and demands that cannot be governed by social influences, by the flattery of saloons, or insolent recognition by the aristocracy. Egremont has become aware of the sacred rights of labour.

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, pp. 231, 232. London, 1895.

We are shown that with the progress of time, words have led to action. From meditating on the social wrongs of the times, Walter Gerard has emerged as a leader of the people. In a dramatic and graphic sketch we are also shown the development of the Trade Unions, which are in a concealed state of war with the rich. Disraeli's revelation for the times in less than eighty years became a platitude. With the vivid description of the initiation of Dandy Mick into the trade union we obtain an insight into the aims to which they dedicated themselves, the "furtherance of our common welfare, . . . such as the chastisement of Nobs, the assassination of oppressive and tyrannical masters, or the demolition of all mills, works and shops that shall be deemed by us incorrigible."[1]

Gerard, as a leader in the Chartist Convention, comes to London. A round of visits to members of Parliament is made the occasion for the portrayal of a number of amusing types. The interview between Gerard and Lord Valentine reveals the opposition between democracy and aristocracy. We are shown on the one side a refusal to recognize the virtues of an aristocracy which had made England great, and on the other a stupid unwillingness to mark the appearance of new industrial forces, with a consequent challenge to face new responsibilities and to awaken to grave duties. In this same scene there is recognition of the tremendous power that now lay in England's new industrial class to demand improved living conditions, for "They no longer believe in any innate difference between the governing and the governed classes of this country."[2] These passages

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 241. London, 1895.
2. Ibid. p. 247.

are full of political feeling, yet the tone is sober and compassionate. The detached, cosmopolitan reasoning of a Sidonia is far less apparent here, for the sentiments bear the impress of deep and true emotion.

At this juncture, the purely narrative interest is considerably reduced in the pursuit of a scheme of political philosophy. The round of visits, however, leads to the house of the Honourable Charles Egremont. Gerard meets Egremont, and discovers that the man whom he had previously known as Franklin and believed to be a journalist is an aristocrat, the brother of Lord Marney and presumably, therefore, an enemy of the people. He is mistaken, for Egremont is now in ardent sympathy with the deeper aspirations of the people. He possesses faith in the possibility of these aspirations being gradually realized.

Egremont meets Sybil again, a Sybil imbued with enthusiasm for the great cause. Egremont is under no illusion about the crude methods of the demagogues or the imperfect remedies put forward by the people themselves. He tells Sybil: "Your convention is in its bloom, or rather its bud, . . . all is fresh and pure now; but a little while and it will find the fate of all popular assemblies. You will have factions."[1] The presence of Gerard, who is aware of Egremont's true identity, precipitates an explanation to Sybil, who is still in ignorance as to his true background. Gerard's attitude is not characterized by his usual cordiality. Egremont, in a forthright manner, tells Sybil the motives for his assuming a

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 254. London, 1895.

false name:

> "I was told . . . that an impassable gulf divided the Rich from the Poor; I was told that the Privileged and the People formed Two nations, governed by different laws, influenced by different manners, with no thoughts or sympathies in common; with an innate inability of mutual comprehension. I believed that if this were indeed the case the ruin of our common country was at hand; I would have endeavoured, feebly perchance, but not without zeal, to resist such a catastrophe; I possessed a station which entailed on me some portion of its responsibility; to obtain that knowledge which could alone qualify me for beneficial action, . . . "[1]

Egremont accepts Sybil's reaction with philosophical wisdom. He realizes that she is walled out from sympathy by prejudices and convictions more impassable than all the mere consequences of class. Sybil is an intellect very much the daughter of a Chartist delegate. She is proud to be associated with a people's parliament that declares its grievances "in language which would not disgrace the conquering race which has in vain endeavoured to degrade them."[2] Imbued with these ideas, she is naturally full of prejudice and suspicion in the presence of the newly-discovered aristocrat.

All Disraeli's lovers are provided with fitting scenery, except Sybil, but the stamp of noble blood is in every gesture. Disraeli shirks the full impact of the situation between Sybil and Egremont by relapsing into the old cliché of missing documents that, when found, will prove Sybil an aristocrat. The man mainly responsible for this scheme is Baptist Hatton, who is shown embroidering on his grand-

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 265. London, 1895.
2. Ibid. p. 271.

iose schemes in the Athenaeum Club. He dreams of building up a great Catholic house of the old blood, the old names and the old faith. This interlude serves, too, as a convenient stage for the unequalled descriptions of certain types of national character. We see the men who travel regularly a little, and gossip regularly a great deal. With Disraelian wit, we are told of men who lead a facile, slipshod existence, doing nothing, yet very interested in what others do: the "great critics of little things."[1] These characters do not differ in essence from those who frequent the glittering gatherings, such as that presided over by Lady Marney. There too we have the guest who "uttered inconceivable nothings," and is replied to "in incomprehensible somethings."[2]

The national issues promulgated in the Charter are not accorded the debating consideration that is being given to obscure Jamaican issues. It is cause for much speculation and change. The author appraises again the role the ladies play through their charm and their sympathy in the lives of men of public affairs. Lady St. Julians again enters the political field: "Lady Deloraine says they will be beat: she says the radicals will desert them; but I am not so sure. Why should the radicals desert them? And what have we done for the radicals? Had we indeed foreseen this Jamaica business, and asked some of them to dinner, or given a ball or two to their wives and daughters!"[3]

Many amusing types are portrayed. There is a fresh shimmer of wit in the vivacious dialogue. In the witty

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 273. London, 1895.
2. Ibid. p. 276.
3. Ibid. p. 277.

description of a fawning diplomat, we have an epigrammatic delineation of character:

> "'But is the pear ripe?' said the diplomatist.
> 'The pear is ripe if we have courage to pluck it,' said Lord Marney; 'but our fellows have no pluck.'
> 'But do you think that the Duke of Wellington ——— ' and here the diplomatist stopped and looked up in Lord Marney's face, as if he would convey something that he would not venture to express.
> 'Here he is,' said Lord Marney, 'he will answer the question himself.'
> Lord Deloraine and Mr. Ormsby passed by; the diplomatist addressed them:
> 'You have not been to the Chamber?'
> 'No,' said Lord Deloraine; 'but I hear there is hot work. It will be late.'
> 'Do you think ——— ' said the diplomatist, and he looked up in the face of Lord Deloraine.
> 'I think that in the long run everything will have an end,' said Lord Deloraine.
> 'Ah!' said the diplomatist.
> 'Bah!' said Lord Deloraine . . . "[1]

The inimitable Taper and Tadpole appear for a second time with their "subtle" schemes, which are the stuff of all political humbug. They delight us again by their naive and elementary plotting. It is in these scenes of social and political satire that Disraeli is found at his best. If Taper and Tadpole are the butts of satirical gibes, then Peel is the incarnation of hypocrisy as far as the party feeling of the author is concerned. Mr. Tadpole himself acknowledges that his tactics mirror in a microcosmic way the strategy of his superiors:

> "At present go about and keep our fellows in good humour. Whisper nothings that sound like something. But be discreet; do not let there be more than half a hundred fellows who be-

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 278. London, 1895.

> lieve they are going to be Under Secretaries of State. And be cautious about titles. If they push you, give a wink and press your finger to your lip . . . what we have to do to individuals Peel has to do with a nation, and therefore we ought not to complain."[1]

Nothing could excel the picture of the scramble for office after the Jamaica division of 1839, with the subsequent disappointment of the intriguers' hopes by the bedchamber crisis. The different levels of awareness are treated with ironic detachment:

> "'Lord Marney and Lord de Mowbray with the Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine,' thought Mr. Tadpole, as he was ushered into the library, and his eye, practised in machinations and prophetic in manoeuvres, surveyed the three nobles. 'This looks like business and perhaps means mischief. Very lucky I called!' With an honest smile he saluted them all."[2]

The egotistical desire for self-aggrandisement makes these aristocrats ready dupes for the machinations of a Taper or a Tadpole. With evasive tactics that are non-committal, he buoys up their hopes: "it was said to me today, 'Tadpole, if you do chance to see the Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine you may say that positively Lord Killcroppy will not go to Ireland.'"[3] To Marney, the "honest" gentleman in a confidential tone and a glance that speaks volumes of state secrecy states "that positively Lord Rambrooke will not have the Buck-hounds."[4] Mr. Tadpole keeps up his reputation for discretion easily, for the author clearly shows that Tadpole knows nothing and is himself a perplexed man.

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 282. London, 1895.
2. Ibid. pp. 283, 284.
3. Ibid. p. 284.
4. Ibid. p. 285.

Suddenly the tone and feeling is strengthened by serious and profound speculation. From the selfish sentiments of regret uttered by the disappointed aristocrats of the Tory party ——

> "'Peel ought to have taken office,' said Lord Marney. 'What are the women to us?'
>
> 'Peel ought to have taken office,' said the Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine. 'He should have remembered how much he owed to Ireland.'
>
> 'Peel ought to have taken office,' said Lord de Mowbray. 'The garter will become now a mere party badge.'"[1] ——

we turn to the impartial analysis by the author himself:

> "One may be permitted to think that, under all circumstances, he should have taken office in 1839. His withdrawal seems to have been a mistake. In the great heat of parliamentary faction which had prevailed since 1831, the royal prerogative, which, unfortunately for the rights and liberties and social welfare of the people, had since 1688 been more or less oppressed, had waned fainter and fainter. A youthful princess on the throne, whose appearance touched the imagination, and to whom her people were generally inclined to ascribe something of that decision of character which becomes those born to command, offered a favourable opportunity to restore the exercise of that regal authority, the usurpation of whose functions has entailed on the people of England so much suffering and so much degradation. . . . The leader of the tory party should have vindicated his natural position, and availed himself of the gracious occasion: he missed it; and as the occasion was inevitable, the whigs enjoyed its occurrence. And thus England witnessed for the first time the portentous anomaly of the oligarchical or Venetian party, which had in the old days destroyed the free monarchy of England, retaining power merely by the favour of the Court."[2]

In the presentation of a seemingly insoluble political

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 292. London, 1895.
2. Ibid. pp. 292, 293.

paradox, we are told that Sir Robert Peel is in fact not the leader of the Tory party. The emphatic prose style elucidates this with clarity of thought and balanced logic. It is made clear that the old Tory party had possessed definite principles and a definite tradition. It was:

> "... the party that resisted the ruinous mystification that metamorphosed direct taxation by the Crown into indirect taxation by the Commons; that denounced the system that mortgaged industry to protect property; the party that ruled Ireland by a scheme which reconciled both churches, and by a series of parliaments which counted among them lords and commons of both religions; that has maintained at all times the territorial constitution of England as the only basis and security for local government, and which nevertheless once laid on the table of the House of Commons a commercial tariff negotiated at Utrecht, which is the most rational that was ever devised by statesmen; a party that has prevented the Church from being the salaried agent of the State, and has supported through many struggles the parochial polity of the country which secures to every labourer a home."[1]

Obviously, the Tory Party had now ceased to exist, and its place had been taken by the Conservative party. The author suggests that a new political ideal is to be sought with its roots in the true Toryism of the past, which he fervently believes still lives in the thought and sentiment of the English nation. The Biblical phraseology in a sentence such as "Even now it is not dead, but sleepeth",[2] gives the whole an authentic colouring of proverbial wisdom. We now see the basic purpose of Sybil. Ostensibly written to exhibit the sufferings of the poor,

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 293. London, 1895.
2. Ibid. p. 294.

it is the social aspect of a regenerated Tory philosophy that is presented. Disraeli has embarked openly on the true theme, an attack on the English parliamentary system. In ringing tones he assumes the role of prophet, in a passage that could be part of a stirring manifesto:

> " . . . in an age of political materialism, of confused purposes and perplexed intelligence, that aspires only to wealth because it has faith in no other accomplishment, as men rifle cargoes on the verge of shipwreck, Toryism will yet rise from the tomb over which Bolingbroke shed his last tear, to bring back strength to the Crown, liberty to the Subject, and to announce that power has only one duty - to secure the social welfare of the PEOPLE."[1]

This political discourse does not impede the action of the novel. It makes more concrete the feelings of delay and agitation that are the result of the Bedchamber Plot. The breaking up and formation of Cabinets postpones the presentation of the national Petition. The Chartists cease to distinguish between the two parties that contend for power. Their attitude is endorsed by the author, who scoffs all along at the electioneering cries of the Tapers and Tadpoles. The shadowy differences do not constitute distinctive principles. The masks might be different on the hustings, but in Downing Street "the conscientious conservative seeks in the pigeon-holes of a whig bureau for the measures against which for ten years he has been sanctioning . . ."[2]

From this attack on the existing order in politics and society, we turn to the two characters who dominate the scene - the young and generous descendant of the Tudor

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 294. London, 1895.
2. Ibid. p. 294.

plunderer, and the impoverished daughter of the plundered - whose love is destined to bring the stately past and the prosaic present together. The awakening and progress of her love for him are treated with the delicacy which Disraeli has always at command in such a situation. Egremont's love for Sybil is intertwined with his devotion to the cause which she represents. It is therefore no commonplace passion that touches such an ethereal figure. Sybil is, in fact, the embodiment of such a pure and spiritual conception that it is a problem for Disraeli to make the attachment tell in human terms. Their roles become reversed and Egremont asserts his dominant influence within their relationship. She had shown to him the true condition of the people. He had also been made conscious of the tragedy that his previous unawareness of evils, for which his class had been partly responsible, could bring in its wake. It is now his turn to educate Sybil. It is allegorical that the education comes from one who was born into the ranks of those with responsibilities for the land. He tells her that she has formed her opinions upon tradition not upon experience, and reveals the profound change that is manifesting itself among the ranks of the younger aristocrats. Civilisation, with its increased knowledge of man, has taught the educated their social duties. Egremont shows that her belief that the leaders of the People are those in whom the People have trust, may be betrayed:

> "The new generation of the aristocracy of England are not tyrants, not oppressors, Sybil, as you persist in believing. Their intelligence, better than that, their hearts are open to the responsibility of their position. But the

> work that is before them is no holiday-work. It is not the fever of superficial impulse that can remove the deep-fixed barriers of centuries of ignorance and crime. Enough that their sympathies are awakened; time and thought will bring the rest. They are the natural leaders of the People, Sybil; believe me they are the only ones."[1]

It is here that we find the idea of noblesse oblige, which must not be confused with false pride or smug superiority. For Disraeli it is in many respects tinged with the colouring of Judaic concepts. For the Jew the concept of the "chosen" people means that more is expected of him than of others and that his actions will be judged by higher standards. It is a form of noblesse oblige, imposing upon him moral responsibilities, the need of stressing holiness, righteousness and other spiritual values. The prayer book usually interprets the meaning of the "chosen" people by linking it with the gift of the pentateuch, which is Israel's sacred trust and her contribution to mankind. Disraeli was acquainted with this concept, through a knowledge of biblical texts such as:

> "If ye will hearken to my voice, and keep my covenant, then shall ye be mine own treasure. Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy people."[2]

or

> "Israel shall not fail nor be crushed till he have set the right in the earth. I the Lord have called thee in righteousness for a light of the nations."[3]

The author wanted to impress upon society that there

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 297. London, 1895.
2. Exodus, Ch. XIX, v. 5-6.
3. Isaiah, Ch. XLII, v. 4-6.

was such a thing as duty. He did not do this in any spirit of conceit or arrogance, nor with the pretence that the youthful elect were better than others. Sybil, however, is not won over by words alone and cannot as yet cast aside those prejudices that have embittered her existence. She believes inflexibly that the gulf between the nobility and the people is impassable. Seen in this light, marriage with Egremont will alienate him from his order and estrange him from his family. Her faith, too, in the sacred cause of the delegates to the Chartist senate remains undiminished. In them she sees the leaders of the people, for she feels that nothing can resist the supremacy of their moral power. For her the nation is still stratified into the oppressed and the oppressors.

The turn of events shatters Sybil's illusions. The Chartist petition is taken down to Westminster. With its rejection by the house, the small minority within the Chartist ranks who advocate violence triumph. A riot breaks out at Birmingham, where trade has been bad and conditions intolerable. Sybil, dismayed at the turn of affairs, feels that such proceedings must ultimately prove fatal to the cause to which she is devoted. She realizes now that the world is a more complicated system than she had imagined. The People, she finds, are not that pure embodiment of unified feeling, interest and purpose, which she had pictured in her abstractions. She had thought that the People, calm and collected, conscious at last of their convictions, would compel an antique authority to bow before the influence of their moral power. Most important of all, she can not resist the belief "that the feeling of the rich towards the poor was not that sentiment

of unmingled hate and scorn which she associated with Norman conquerors and feudal laws. She would ascribe rather the want of sympathy that unquestionably exists between Wealth and Work in England to mutual ignorance between the classes which possess these two great elements of national prosperity; and though the source of that ignorance was to be sought in antecedent circumstances of violence and oppression, the consequences perhaps had outlived the causes, as customs survive opinions."[1] All these reflections operate in Egremont's favour, but the turning point is his speech on the Chartist petition, in that debate in the House of Commons:

> "Yes! there was one voice that had sounded in that proud Parliament, that, free from the slang of faction, had dared to express immortal truths: the voice of a noble, who, without being a demagogue, had upheld the popular cause; had pronounced his conviction that the rights of labour were as sacred as those of property; that if a difference were to be established, the interests of the living wealth ought to be preferred; who had declared that the social happiness of the millions should be the first object of a statesman; and that if that were not achieved, thrones and dominions, the pomp and power of courts and empires, were alike worthless."[2]

These generous sentiments and valuable suggestions show a sympathetic and perceptive insight. The author grasped the existing social problems and realized that to recover political ascendancy, the conservative party must take in hand the condition of the people under the leadership of a liberal aristocracy and in alliance with a re-animated Church.

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 313. London, 1895.
2. Ibid. p. 314.

Since Sybil had last spoken to Egremont, time had taught her some bitter truths. She now feels like a dreamer who has awoken from hallucinations. She meets Egremont again, and confides her anxiety about her father to him. Egremont counsels her to persuade her father to leave London immediately, as the Government is resolved to strike at the Convention. Sybil is devoid of hope, for the change in an assembly which she believed to embody moral power, to a concourse of petty intrigues and violence, has brought to an end her lofty hopes. It is now Egremont who is sketched in a positive light. Not only is he sanguine, but he believes that the new mind of England will make up by its rapid progress for its retarded action. He believes in pouring new wine into the old Tory bottles, and envisages a democratic system, the principle of which will "not be a levelling principle; not a principle adverse to privileges, but favourable to their extension. It will seek to ensure equality, not by levelling the Few but by elevating the Many."[1]

The outbreak at Birmingham brings affairs to a crisis. Sybil warns her father she is oppressed by a sense of impending danger. From her newly gained vantage point she sees that her father is deeply implicated, not in glorious revolution as he imagines, but in disorganised riots. For the first time we are shown a divided camp. Sybil is inclining more and more towards Egremont and his views. Whereas her father now believed that the season for words has passed, she still clings to the premise that had formerly dictated his conduct: "to prove to our rulers by an

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 318. London, 1895.

agitation, orderly and intellectual, that we were sensible of our degradation; and that it was neither Christianlike nor prudent, neither good nor wise, to let us remain so."[1] She is further estranged from her old serene world by the hostility of Morley. Having previously thought of him as a visionary of the people, she now sees him in his true light - a selfish and selfseeking individual. Sybil is finally disillusioned by the lack of sympathy he shows for her, one of his own class. She realizes the imminent danger of her father's situation. The author embarks on a swift and graphic narrative of the events that follow her resolution to find her father before it is too late. What follows is a series of tableaux having, nevertheless, an organic unity. We pass rapidly from one scene to another: Sybil eliciting information from a coarse and insolent master of a coffee-house; Sybil involved in a cab accident; Sybil surrounded by a leering mob of "the people"; Sybil escorted deceitfully to the doors of a brothel. All these tribulations bring her into contact with insensitive and brutal members of "the People". The author concretizes her growing estrangement from her old sympathies. Her presence amid all this crudity and unfriendliness conveys a dramatic impression of her alienation from what she deems to be her class.

She arrives almost at the same time as the police. With her father she is taken as a prisoner of state to Bow Street. In her distress she appeals to Charles Egremont to assist her. He receives the note while attending a

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 321. London, 1895.

brilliant reception for the world of power and fashion. We are thus given two dramatically contrasted worlds, the magnificent saloons of Deloraine House blazing with light, and the dangers and despondency of Sybil in Bow Street prison. Greatly agitated, he consults Lord John Russell, a powerful Whig politician. Egremont, in this Chartist crisis, is able to tender great service to Sybil. He secures for her a warrant for her release. Though gratitude is now added to Sybil's other emotions, Egremont's suit still appears to be hopeless.

Once again we turn to the industrial poor. With realistic power the author depicts the state of excitement in Mowbray when news is received of their delegate's arrest. On the moor a mass meeting is held to welcome Gerard, who is out on bail. The quiet organisation of the proceedings is mirrored in the singing of the hymn of labour. This unity contrasts harshly with the lack of harmony that will characterize later events. The move is a gradual one from sobriety and calm to dissonance and chaos. At this stage the multitude still presents an august spectacle, dominated by moral considerations. How easily they can become the tools of unscrupulous demagogues is conclusively shown in the base suggestions of Hatton. He presses Morley to spur the people to sack the Mowbray Castle, so that he may obtain the proofs that Walter Gerard is the lawful possessor of the lands. He projects these plans with a breathtaking coolness and arid accuracy, which clearly shows his unconcern at inflaming public spirit for his own selfish ends.

This type of deception is shown to exist at all levels of society. It is practised most successfully at Downing

Street. In witty and flashing dialogue, we are given an Aristophanic outburst against the solemn humbug of politics:

> "'And now for these deputations,' said the gentleman in Downing Street; 'of all things in the world I dislike a deputation. I do not care how much I labour in the Cabinet or the House; that's real work; the machine is advanced. But receiving a deputation is like sham marching: an immense dust and no progress. To listen to their views! As if I did not know what their views were before they stated them! And to put on a countenance of respectful candour while they are developing their exploded or their impracticable systems. Were it not that at a practised crisis I permit them to see conviction slowly stealing over my conscience, I believe the fellows would never stop. I cannot really receive these deputations. I must leave them to Hoaxem,' and the gentleman in Downing Street rang his bell.
>
> 'Well, Mr. Hoaxem,' resumed the gentleman in Downing Street as that faithful functionary entered, 'there are some deputations I understand, today. You must receive them, as I am going to Windsor. What are they?'
>
> 'There are only two, sir, of moment. The rest I could easily manage.'
>
> 'And these two?'
>
> 'In the first place, there is our friend Colonel Bosky, the members for the county of Calfshire, and a deputation of tenant farmers.'
>
> 'Pah!'
>
> 'These must be attended to. The members have made a strong representation to me that they really cannot any longer vote with Government unless the Treasury assists them in satisfying their constituents.'
>
> 'And what do they want?'
>
> 'Statement of grievances; high taxes and low prices; mild expostulations and gentle hints that they have been thrown over by their friends; Polish corn, Holstein cattle, and British income tax.'
>
> 'Well, you know what to say,' said the gentleman in Downing Street. 'Tell them generally that they are quite mistaken; prove to them particularly that my only object has been to

render protection more protective, by making it practical and divesting it of the surplusage of odium; that no foreign corn can come in at 55 shillings; that there are not enough cattle in all Holstein to supply the parish of Pancras daily with beefsteaks; and that, as for the income tax, they will be amply compensated for it by their diminished cost of living through the agency of that very tariff of which they are so superficially complaining.'

'Their diminished cost of living!' said Mr. Hoaxem, a little confused. 'Would not that assurance, I humbly suggest, clash a little with my previous demonstration that we had arranged that no reduction of prices should take place?'

'Not at all; your previous demonstration is of course true, but at the same time you must impress upon them the necessity of general views to form an opinion of particular instances. As for example, a gentleman of five thousand pounds per annum pays to the income tax, which by the bye always call property tax, one hundred and fifty pounds a year. Well, I have materially reduced the duties on eight hundred articles. The consumption of each of those articles by an establishment of five thousand pounds per annum cannot be less than one pound per article. The reduction of price cannot be less than a moiety; therefore a saving of four hundred per annum; which placed against the deduction of the property tax leaves a clear increase of income of two hundred and fifty pounds per annum; by which you see that a property tax in fact increases income.'

'I see,' said Mr. Hoaxem with an admiring glance. 'And what am I to say to the deputation of the manufacturers of Nowbray complaining of the great depression of trade, and the total want of remunerating profits?'

'You must say exactly the reverse,' said the gentleman in Downing Street. 'Show them how much I have done to promote the revival of trade. First of all in making provisions cheaper; cutting off at one blow half the protection on corn, as for example at this moment under the old law the duty on foreign wheat would have been 27 shillings a quarter; under the

> new law it is thirteen. To be sure no wheat could come in at either price, but that does not alter the principle. Then as to live cattle, show how I have entirely opened the trade with the Continent in live cattle. Enlarge upon this, the subject is speculative and admits of expensive estimates. If there be any dissenters on the deputation who having freed the negroes have no subject left for their foreign sympathies, hint at the tortures of the bull-fight and the immense consideration to humanity that instead of being speared at Seville, the Andalusian toro will probably be cut up at Smithfield. This cheapness of provisions will permit them to compete with the foreigner in all neutral markets, in time beat them in their own. It is a complete compensation too for the property tax, which impress upon them is a great experiment and entirely for their interests. Ring the changes on great measures and great experiments till it is time to go down and make a house. Your official duties of course must not be interfered with. They will take the hint. I have no doubt you will get through the business very well, Mr. Hoaxem, particularly if you be 'frank and explicit'; that is the right line to take when you wish to conceal your own mind and to confuse the minds of others. Good morning!'[1]

Through satire, lampoon and ridicule, the author explains England to the Englishman. Not only the people, but Parliament itself needed to be educated if England was to realize a great future. The satirical form prevents the attack on the existing temper of political society from deteriorating into invective. A great master of the human soul, Disraeli was aware that these truths would be psychologically more acceptable if embodied in a farcical situation.

The author, having played nimbly and swiftly upon a wide range of human emotions and ideas, resumes the "story".

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, pp. 376, 377, 378. London, 1895.

We learn that Charles has developed into a melancholy man, whose thoughtfulness produces occasional sensations in the House of Commons by effective speeches. We see the gap narrowing between him and Sybil. Although the author clearly shows that Egremont strongly deprecated the use of violence and force by the Chartists, we are shown that it is the interference of Egremont with the government that saved Gerard from the criminal confinement with which he was at first threatened. At the same time we see that Sybil's experience of life had impressed her with the importance of fulfilling vital duties in the world itself, and not in the cloister. We know therefore that there will be no inconclusiveness, but satisfying inevitability in a romantic ending.

The factual exposure of the conditions of the industrial working classes at their worst is shocking. It is an horrifying and accurate exposure. It still has great power to move, in the descriptions of miners and mines, but above all in that of the riots. We follow the progress of the people of Wodgate, headed by their "Bishop", who decrees that labour is to cease until the Charter is the law of the land. The cry sweeps through the oppressed ranks of the people: "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work . . . "[1] The people of Wodgate destroy and ravage, sack and burn houses, plunder cellars, destroy gas works, and generally rob, loot and riot. Power and vengeance make them discard all the trammels of civilisation. The leader and liberator of the people is the "Bishop". Stupid and arrogant, he is in reality obeying the suave dictates

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 400. London, 1895.

of a Chartist apostle. We are vividly shown the blind stupidity of the man and his complete lack of rationality. As long as his instinct for brutality is satisfied, he can remain an instrument for the designs of others, such as Hatton's scheme for the attack on the castle to obtain documents. The obtuseness of mass movements is graphically portrayed in the attack on Trafford's mill, a man who had always behaved humanely towards his workers. It is only through the intervention of Gerard, that the destruction of the mills is averted. Gerard's appeal to the people is depicted with the eye of the dramatist for effects. In a paragraph that contains in parentheses the reactions of the mob, we have almost what amounts to stage directions for the response of the "Chorus", or the mass element. A short excerpt will suffice to illustrate the method employed by the author:

> "'My friends,' said Gerard, 'for if we are not friends who should be? (loud cheers and cries of 'Very true'), if you come here to learn whether the Mowedale works are stopped, I give you my word there is not a machine or man that stirs here at this moment (great cheering). I believe you'll take my word (cheers, and cries of 'We will'). I believe I'm known at Mowbray ('Gerard for ever!'), and on Mowbray Moor too (tumultuous cheering). We have met together before this ('That we have'), and shall meet yet (great cheering). The people haven't so many friends that they should quarrel with well-wishers. The master here has done his best to soften your lots. He is not one of those who deny that Labour has rights' (loud cheers)."[1]

The mob is however ripe to be diverted to other projects. The public mind wants to be led. They break into the

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, pp. 426, 427. London, 1895.

castle. What follows is stirring and horrifying. There is utter havoc and destruction. The author skilfully contrives to distribute justice among the imaginary characters. The stoning to death of Lord Marney and the fatal burning of the "Bishop", is a symbolic tableau of the destruction of a mock aristocracy and a false democracy. The tension of the general distress is relaxed. The inter-class marriage of Sybil and Egremont that follows is an appropriate compromise between romance and sociology.

The final page of the novel is a fine peroration in the truest Parliamentary fashion and oratorical style. The conception of the multitude being emancipated from their long yoke of bondage by the energy and devotion of the youth and being converted into a privileged and prosperous people, is in the true romantic manner.

Disraeli had seen a world of men, women and customs which had never before been adequately portrayed in the novel. By means of this novel, he establishes what the principles of power are, by what method the English people may sustain their realm, by what social and political measures the nation may assure future happiness. His pictures of social and political England undergoing democratic transformation must remain a permanent and moving record of historical events. By reading this novel, one begins to understand the times, surely a sign of life and vitality in a novel that over a hundred years ago aimed to illustrate "that Loyalty is not a phrase, Faith not a delusion, and Popular Liberty something more diffusive and substantial than the profane exercise of the sacred rights

of sovereignty by political classes."[1] We feel, too, the driving power and sincerity that still emerges from the novel as a whole, the belief that "we may live to see England once more possess 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."[2]

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil Or The Two Nations, p. 455. London, 1895.
2. Ibid. p. 455.

CHAPTER IV

TANCRED

The Young England Trilogy was completed with the publication in March 1847, of Tancred: or, The New Crusade. As Coningsby dealt with the condition of Political Parties in England, and Sybil with the conditions of the People, so Tancred set out to deal with the Church, thereby fully exploring the religious motif in public life. Disraeli fervently believed that no society could be durable unless it was built upon the principles of loyalty and religious reverence. He maintained that there were few great things left in England, and that the Church was one, and he looked upon the Anglican Church as the main machinery whereby the renovation of the national spirit might be effected.

The tradition of the Anglican Church was powerful. The author entertained the profound conviction that this great ecclesiastical corporation rested on the Church of Jerusalem, modified by the school of Galilee. In an age when atheistical and materialistic currents were strong in society, the author set out in quest of the spiritual nature of man. Some great truths were necessarily involved in an undertaking of this kind. Disraeli deemed it his duty to plumb to the origin of the Church and consider the position of the descendants of the race who had been the founders of Christianity. He desired to free the House of Israel from the medieval misconceptions that nations still entertained. He wanted to show the extent of Jewish contributions to human welfare, and the result-

ing influence on human action. With great truth and sincerity, he completed the development of these views in Tancred. We see that, in the light of these considerations, Coningsby, Sybil and Tancred form a real trilogy, for they treat of the same subject. In Tancred we have an intimation of the means by which the conditions of the people might be elevated and improved. Amid the perplexity generated by the recent discoveries of science the author, believing that the word of God is eternal, appeals to spiritual truths for guidance. Man, for Disraeli, is a being made in God's image and therefore demanding direct relations with his Creator. The author thus desires the recognition of the divine truths entrusted to the Jews. These views, intimated in Coningsby, are fully developed here and, since the principal characters of both preceding novels reappear in it, Tancred is linked superficially with the previous works. But there is a breach of continuity in atmosphere and ideas.

The first part of Tancred contains perhaps the best comedy that Disraeli ever wrote. The book opens with the low comedy of the cooks: Prevost is engaged in conversation with his one-time pupil:

> "'What you learned from me came at least from a good school. It is something to have served under Napoleon,' added Prevost, with the grand air of the Imperial kitchen. 'Had it not been for Waterloo, I should have had the cross. But the Bourbons and the cooks of the empire never could understand each other. They brought over an emigrant chef, who did not comprehend the taste of the age. He wished to bring everything back to the time of the Oeil de boeuf. When Monsieur passed my soup of Austerlitz untasted, I knew the old family was doomed.'"[1]

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. I, p. 6. Copyright Edition in 2 Volumes. Leipzig, 1847.

These delightful vignettes are rich in humorous comment. There is a very amusing scene in which Lord Eskdale soothes an unappreciated chef, an artist overwhelmed by the exhaustion which follows the over-tension of the creative faculty. Tactfully Lord Eskdale explains: "Why I wished you to come down here, Leander, was not to receive the applause of my cousin and his guests, but to form their taste."[1] We are quickly escorted through galleries of portraits, much bright talk and lofty scenes. The chatter of cooks, dandies and aristocrats embeds the action in the reality of London society. This offers Disraeli material for perhaps more bitter satire of high society than is to be found in either of the other two novels.

Tancred, Lord Montacute, is the only son of the Duke and Duchess of Montacute. His father is a man of gentle but serious disposition, conscious of his duties as a great proprietor of the soil. His mother is a woman of fixed opinions and of firm and compact prejudices, Puritan in religion and precisian in morals. Both parents live entirely aloof from the world of fashion, identifying their existence with the welfare of their only child. They happily look forward to his coming of age, and envisage his entering Parliament and marrying in the same year. When pressed by his father to enter Parliament, Tancred astonishes him by the following announcement:

> "I cannot find that it is part of my duty to maintain the order of things, for I will not call it system, which at present prevails in our country. It seems to me that it cannot last, as nothing can endure, or ought to endure, that is not founded upon

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. I, p. 43. Leipzig, 1847.

> principle; and its principle I have not discovered. In nothing, whether it be religion, or government, or manners, sacred or political or social life, do I find faith; and if there be no faith, how can there be duty? Is there such a thing as religious truth? Is there such a thing as political right? Is there such a thing as social propriety? Are these facts, or are they mere phrases? And if they be facts, where are they likely to be found in England? Is truth in our Church? Why, then, do you support dissent? Who has the right to govern? The Monarch? You have robbed him of his prerogative. The Aristocracy? You confess to me that we exist by sufferance. The People? They themselves tell you that they are nullities. Every session of that Parliament in which you wish to introduce me, the method by which power is distributed is called in question, altered, patched up, and again impugned. As for our morals, tell me - is charity the supreme virtue, or the greatest of errors? Our social system ought to depend on a clear conception of this point. Our morals differ in different counties, in different towns, in different streets, even in different Acts of Parliament. What is moral in London is immoral in Montacute; what is crime among the multitude is only vice among the few."[1]

Here is an echo of the interview between Coningsby and Lord Monmouth. Both are discontented with their age, but political purpose in the narrower sense, of the kind underlying Coningsby, has disappeared. Tancred, with his grave and reserved nature, had been brooding over the eternal mysteries. He mourns the decay of faith. He is, in fact, a type of religious malcontent, as Coningsby was a political malcontent. Party platforms and interpretations of English history are now crowded out by a supreme religious motive. We are struck by the mystical and passionate intensity of Tancred's thoughts: "What is

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. I, pp. 54, 55. Leipzig, 1847.

DUTY, and what is FAITH? What ought I to DO? And what ought I to BELIEVE?"[1] He announces his desire to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre. Again here we see a significant difference between Tancred on the one hand and Coningsby and Egremont on the other. They seek to regenerate England by its own forces, whereas Tancred turns in despair to the East. It is doubt that leads the young aristocrat to resolve that he will follow in the steps of his crusading ancestor, and make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the Holy Sepulchre. In Tancred's desire to lead a modern crusade, we see the author expressing an aversion from politics and an avidity for mysticism. In addition, in Tancred's sincere wish to know what is good and great, Disraeli reveals his own instinctive affinity for some kind of mystic teaching:

> "When I remember that the Creator, since light sprang out of darkness, has deigned to reveal himself to his creature only in one land; that in that land he assumed a manly form, and met a human death; I feel persuaded that the country sanctified by such intercourse and such events, must be endowed with marvellous and peculiar qualities, which man may not in all ages be competent to penetrate, but which, nevertheless, at all times exercise an irresistible influence upon his destiny. It is these qualities that many times drew Europe to Asia during the middle centuries. Our castle has before this sent forth a De Montacute to Palestine. For three days and three nights he knelt at the tomb of his Redeemer. Six centuries and more have elapsed since that great enterprise. It is time to restore and renovate our communications with the Most High. I, too, would kneel at that tomb; I, too, surrounded by the holy hills and sacred groves of Jerusalem, would

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. I, p. 61. Leipzig, 1847.

relieve my spirit from the bale that bows it down; . . . "[1]

His mother, who prides herself on the fact that Tancred never gives her a moment's pain, is dumbfounded by the turn of events. In amusing dialogue, she envisages the perils that await the inexperienced traveller abroad: "His body and his soul will be both imperilled; Paris will destroy his constitution, and Rome, perhaps, change his faith."[2] The general consternation of the household grows at the thought of young Lord Montacute setting out for a land that every year has become "more sterile, more savage, more unwholesome, and more unearthly."[3] The Puritan Duchess thinks she can solve the mystery of a son brooding over eternal verities and the decay of faith, by appealing to her favourite Bishop. She feels he can dissuade Tancred from the idea of making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The Duchess feels that as a great statesman, as well as the first theologian of the age, he will clear Tancred's doubts and remove his scruples. This creates an opening for a brisk attack on the modern "stewards of the mysteries of Sinai and of Calvary."[4] Deficiencies are made manifest in the figure of the Bishop, whose character is so drawn that it was immediately recognised as an unfriendly portrait of Blomfield, Bishop of London. It is here that purposeful criticism is obtruded. The "successors of the apostles"[5] are caricatured as "mitred nullities," [6] who never influenced public opinion, touched

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. I, pp. 60, 61. Leipzig, 1847.
2. Ibid. Vol. I, p. 64.
3. Ibid. Vol. I, p. 71.
4. Ibid. Vol. I, p. 79.
5. Ibid. Vol. I, p. 79.
6. Ibid. Vol. I, p. 79.

the heart of nations, or guided the conscience of a perplexed people. With biting satire he writes that: "If they were ever heard of, it was that they had been pelted in a riot."[1] In a short paragraph, the character of the Bishop is revealed as one who combines a great talent for action with very limited powers of thought. The man the Duchess chooses to enlighten Tancred is one whose "quandaries terminated in the same catastrophe - a compromise,"[2] and to whom abstract principles ever ended in concrete expediency. The Bishop is unable to indicate the principle on which the present order of things in England is founded. When he tries to define in whom the power of government should repose, he is lost in a maze of phrases, not facts. Hence, he makes no impression on Tancred: Tancred does not desire to see a bishop at Manchester as proof of the vitality of the Church, he longs to see an angel at Manchester. It is here that the characterization of Tancred becomes sharply incised. We realize that Tancred is a visionary whose intellect as Disraeli conceives it is not of a kind which delights in systematic, logical inquiry which attains truth by the conflict of minds, but rather an abnormal power of piercing mysteries. There is thus an admirable consistency between the central character and the religious motive of the novel. Disraeli placed the responsibility for a man's life and fate firmly on the individual and his moral choices. Plot, in the sense of something external to Character, does not exist. These aesthetic considerations are a direct result of the author's concept of the Hero, as one who shapes his own destiny.

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. I, p. 79. Leipzig, 1847.
2. Ibid. Vol. I, p. 80.

Man cannot choose his circumstances, but he can dominate them and determine the moral quality of his life. Man has the dignity and the immeasurable responsibility of moral freedom. This important aspect of the novelist's philosophy is derived from the ethics of Judaism.

The Bishop having failed, the Duke decides to see what else can be done for his son. He presumes that the best person to deal with a visionary is a man of the world, and decides that Lord Eskdale, their cousin, is the right man. With consummate tact, and a touch of irony in his response, Eskdale asks:

> "'And so, Duchess, Tancred wants to go to Jerusalem?'
> 'George has told you, then, all our troubles?'
> 'Only that; he left the rest to you, and I came to hear it.'"[1]

He recommends a policy not of opposition but of delay; he trusts that society will woo Tancred from his ideals. We now embark on that section of the novel that displays Disraeli's skill in making the best of two worlds, for the section that ensues shows Tancred in fashionable society, whereas in the second half of the novel he is shown in flight from it. In dealing with the aristocratic hero's debut in society, the author with satirical detachment turns the full force of his insight on the hollowness and sham of high society:

> "The uninitiated world is apt to believe that there is sometimes, in the outskirts of fashion, an eagerness, scarcely consistent with self-respect, to enter the mansions of the great. Not at all: few people really want to go to their grand parties. It is not the charms of conversation, the

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. I, p. 88. Leipzig, 1847.

> flash of wit or the blaze of beauty, the influential presence of the powerful and celebrated, all the splendour and refinement, which, combined, offer in a polished saloon so much to charm the taste and satisfy the intellect, that the mass of social partisans care anything about. What they want is, not so much to be in her ladyship's house as in her ladyship's list."[1]

We are shown, too, the mimetic character of man, who repeats without thought and adopts without inquiry the opinions of others. In fact there is a certain sterility in these circles, which is seen in the political sphere as well. In amusing and witty images, fun is poked at the House of Lords, where the advent of a Division is so singular that "the peers cackle as if they had laid an egg. They are quite proud of their proof of their still procreative powers."[2] We see that Tancred enters society with regret, and finds nothing in its general tone with which his spirit harmonises. Yet soon the remarkable effect of feminine influence makes its mark. He meets a certain Lady Constance Rawleigh, who becomes a serious rival in his thoughts to Jerusalem. As the author so succinctly notes: "A mother's tear may be disregarded, but the sigh of a mistress has changed the most obdurate."[3] The influence of women on Tancred is a novel and disturbing one, on which he has never counted in those dreams and visions in which there have figured more heroes than heroines. Lady Constance admires intellect and has "guanoed her mind by reading French novels . . . "[4] She broaches the topic of evolution to Tancred, and recommends

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. I, p. 93. Leipzig, 1847.
2. Ibid. Vol. I, p. 87.
3. Ibid. Vol. I, p. 119.
4. Ibid. Vol. I, p. 122.

him to read The Revelations of Chaos, which "explains everything."[1] In Tancred's reaction we see the author's ability to perceive that much of the scientific speculation of his day was socially noxious, as well as to show the superficial level at which such speculation would be understood:

> "'To judge from the title, the subject is rather obscure,' said Tancred.
>
> 'No longer so,' said Lady Constance. 'It is treated scientifically; everything is explained by geology and astronomy, and in that way. It shows you exactly how a star is formed; nothing can be so pretty! A cluster of vapour - the cream of the milky way - a sort of celestial cheese - churned into light - you must read it, 'tis charming.'
>
> 'Nobody ever saw a star formed,' said Tancred.
>
> 'Perhaps not. You must read the Revelations; it is all explained. But what is most interesting, is the way in which man has been developed. You know, all is development. The principle is perpetually going on. First, there was nothing, then there was something; then - I forget the next - I think there were shells, then fishes; then we came - let me see - did we come next? Never mind that; we came at last. And the next change there will be something very superior to us - something with wings. Ah! that's it: we were fishes, and I believe we shall be crows. But you must read it.'
>
> 'I do not believe I ever was a fish,' said Tancred.
>
> 'Oh! but it is all proved: You must not argue on my rapid sketch; read the book. It is impossible to contradict anything in it. You understand, it is all science; it is not like those books in which one says one thing and another the contrary, and both may be wrong. Every thing is proved - by geology, you know. You see exactly how everything is made; how many worlds there have been; how long they lasted; what went before, what comes next. We

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. I, p. 123. Leipzig, 1847.

> are a link in the chain, as inferior animals were that preceded us: we in turn shall be inferior; all that will remain of us will be some relics in a new red sandstone. This is development. We had fins - we may have wings. . . .'
>
> 'I was a fish, and I shall be a crow,' said Tancred to himself, when the hall door closed on him. 'What a spiritual mistress! And yesterday for a moment, I had dreamed of kneeling with her at the Holy Sepulchre! I must get out of this city as quickly as possible - I cannot cope with its corruption.'[1]

The author, as his creation testifies, realized that the elimination of all idea of the Divine in man's origin and destiny could have very serious consequences. His hostility was not to science itself, but to its extravagant claims which dethroned the spiritual, the religious and the imaginative from the proud position which he assigned to them. Disraeli's attitude to the spirit of the age was at one with that of many other profound and prophetic figures of the Nineteenth Century, such as Coleridge, Carlyle, Arnold and Ruskin. Seventeen years after the publication of Tancred he asked at Oxford:

> "Is man an ape or an angel? My Lord, I am on the side of the angels.
>
> I repudiate with indignation and abhorrence the contrary view, which is, I believe, foreign to the conscience of humanity: . . . What does the Church teach us? What is its interpretation of this highest nature? It teaches us that man is made in the image of his Creator - a source of inspiration and solace - a source from which only can flow every right principle of morals and every Divine truth . . . It is between these two contending interpretations of the nature of man, and their consequences, that society will have

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. I, pp. 123, 124. Leipzig, 1847.

> to decide. Their rivalry is at the bottom of all human affairs."[1]

No wonder that with feeling of this intensity he pokes merciless fun at Lady Constance.

In a chapter that reveals the descriptive and narrative power of the author, we are introduced to the second distinguished beauty who is destined to weave a temporary spell around Tancred. In witty images, the writer gives free rein to his imagination. He deplores the dull, spiritless streets of London, resembling each other "like a large family of plain children, with Portland Place and Portman Square for their respectable parents."[2] His playful remedy for the situation shows that he possesses one of the greatest novelistic gifts - a sense of humour: "Suppose an architect were hanged? Terror has its inspiration as well as competition."[3] It is in one of these monotonous thoroughfares that Tancred meets Lady Bertie and Bellair, a married intriguer, who turns out to be a desperate gambler in railway shares. She is attracted to Tancred only by the rumour that he has the ear of the great financier Sidonia. The rumour is true, for at Sidonia's office in Sequin Court, at the very heart of the struggle for wealth which is debasing the age, Tancred at last finds a mind that can enter into his aspirations. With moral insight, he probes to the core of Tancred's desires "to penetrate the great Asian mystery."[4] In their theological discussion their characters are clearly revealed. In Tancred we recognise not a vain and vague being but a youth

1. George Earle Buckle, The Life of Benjamin Disraeli Earl of Beaconsfield, Vol. IV, p. 374. London, 1916.
2. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. I, p. 128. Leipzig, 1847.
3. Ibid. Vol. I, p. 128.
4. Ibid. Vol. I, p. 140.

in whom the faculties of reason and imagination are united. He possesses all the latent qualities which in future will qualify him to control society. In the apt queries and conclusions of Sidonia, we see the keen and far-reaching vision of the brilliant intellectual. Both are sketched in concrete terms, and in their dramatic confrontation we get a clear exposition of the author's religious ideas. Again we have the stress laid on the world's debt to the Semitic race:

> "The prophets were only Hebrews; the apostles were only Hebrews. The churches of Asia, which have vanished, were founded by a native Hebrew; and the church of Rome; which says it shall last for ever, and which converted this island to the faith of Moses and of Christ, vanquishing the Druids, Jupiter Olympius, and Woden, who had successively invaded it, was also founded by a native Hebrew."[1]

Disraeli now proceeds to arouse the expectations of the reader through Sidonia's statement: "It is no longer difficult to reach Jerusalem; the real difficulty is the one experienced by the crusaders - to know what to do when you have arrived there."[2] This stimulates the curiosity of the reader. Whether this stimulus is successfully followed up by commensurate activities will be seen later. In Tancred's declaration that he hopes for inspiration in the Holy Land we feel the author's depth of affection and idealization of Palestine:

> "Some celestial quality, distinguishing it from all other climes, must for ever linger about it. I would ask those mountains, that were reached by angels, why they no longer receive

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. I, p. 138. Leipzig, 1847.
2. Ibid. Vol. I, p. 137.

> heavenly visitants? I would appeal to that Comforter promised to man on the sacred spot on which the assurance of solace was made. I require a Comforter. I have appealed to the holy influence in vain in England. It has not visited me; I know none here on whom it has descended. I am induced, therefore, to believe that it is part of the divine scheme that its influence should be local; that it should be approached with reverence, not thoughtlessly and hurriedly, but with such difficulties and such an interval of time, as a pilgrimage to a spot sanctified can alone secure."[1]

In this exchange of views, one of the main themes clearly emerges, that duty cannot exist without faith. It is in this idea that we see the concepts outlined in Coningsby and Sybil come to full fruition. Coningsby and Egremont are awake to the duty inherent in their position. It is in Tancred that the salvation of a materialist society is seen to lie in the role of the divine and spiritual in this world.

Tancred attends a dinner party given by Sidonia, at which he meets the members of the Young England group. They seem strangely shrunken, for the author skilfully contrives for the glamour of romance to pass from them to Tancred; Disraeli seems to take a delight in shattering his lesser idols. Coningsby has become a rather commonplace young man engaged in a prosperous career. The references to Young England are more detached, as we realize the author is now dedicated to the "Great Asian Mystery"[2] of race and religion. In the presence of Tancred we are made to feel that the scope of Coningsby's schemes lacked an important dimension. Coningsby was satisfied with the

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. I, p. 139. Leipzig, 1847.
2. Ibid. Vol. I, p. 140.

profound political teaching of Bolingbroke. Tancred is raised to a higher plane. He too is concerned about the "state of England"[1] question, but is preoccupied with religious queries. He is determined to penetrate to the depths of the current problems. It is in this attitude of his hero that Disraeli's superlative qualities as a writer come to the fore. Dickens was a philanthropist, satisfied to rouse public attention to a great social evil, or instantly to suggest for it some crude remedy. Disraeli, as a scholar and a man of the world, learned in history and not inexperienced in human nature, was desirous of looking to the constituent principles of society for the causes and the cures of great national disorders. He therefore went deeply into every question and did not shrink from investigating how far it might be necessary to call new influences into political existence for their remedy. It is because of these profound considerations that the author is intent on despatching Tancred to Jerusalem. What matters now is religious truth and political justice. It is in this that Tancred represents an advance on the ideals of a Coningsby or an Egremont. He has a mind that can comprehend the importance and advantages of rank, wealth, youth and power, but is eager to formulate great conceptions. He is not concerned with the accomplishment of political purpose alone, with its hollowness, prejudice and narrowness; and through the proclamations of mystic ideas he marks himself out from the commonplace mediocrities around him.

Reanimated by Sidonia, Tancred resumes his purpose

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. I, p. 157. Leipzig, 1847.

and finalises his preparations for departure. Before Tancred leaves London society for the East, the author bridges the gap between the two very dissimilar worlds by means of Sidonia's letters of introduction to the Spanish Prior at the Convent of Terra Santa, Jerusalem, and to Adam Besso. In the midst of English sociability, these letters suggest, stylistically and in content, an exotic Eastern world:

> A LETTER OF INTRODUCTION.
>
> To Alonzo Lara, Spanish Prior, at the Convent of Terra Santa at Jerusalem.
>
> "Most Holy Father - The youth who will deliver to you this is a pilgrim who aspires to penetrate the great Asian mystery. Be to him what you were to me; and may the God of Sinai, in whom we all believe, guard over you, and prosper his enterprise!
>
> London, May, 1845. Sidonia. "
>
> A LETTER OF CREDIT.
>
> To Adam Besso, at Jerusalem.
>
> "London, May, 1845.
>
> My good Adam - If the youth who bears this require advances, let him have as much gold as would make the right-hand lion on the first step of the throne of Solomon the king; and if he want more, let him have as much as would form the lion that is on the left; and so on, through every stair of the royal seat. For all which will be responsible to you the child of Israel, who among the Gentiles is called
>
> Sidonia. "[1]

The action now shifts to the East, which is introduced by two noteworthy panoramas of Jerusalem. The tone changes at once to that of the highest seriousness, and the descrip-

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. I, pp. 189, 190. Leipzig, 1847.

tion of Jerusalem sounds the note of all that is to follow:

> "Jerusalem by moonlight! 'Tis a fine spectacle, apart from all its indissoluble associations of awe and beauty. The mitigating hour softens the austerity of a mountain landscape magnificent in outline, however harsh and severe in detail; and, while it retains all its sublimity, removes much of the savage sternness of the strange and unrivalled scene. A fortified city, almost surrounded by ravines, and rising in the centre of chains of far-spreading hills, occasionally offering through their rocky glens, the gleams of a distant and richer land! . . . . . .
> . . . . . .
> Who can but believe that, at the midnight hour, from the summit of the Ascension, the great departed of Israel assemble to gaze upon the battlements of their mystic city? There might be counted heroes and sages, who need shrink from no rivalry with the brightest and the wisest of other lands; but the lawgiver of the time of the Pharaohs, whose laws are still obeyed; the monarch, whose reign has ceased for three thousand years, but whose wisdom is a proverb in all nations of the earth; the teacher, whose doctrines have modelled civilised Europe; - the greatest of legislators, the greatest of administrators, and the greatest of reformers - what race, extinct or living, can produce three such men as these!"[1]

From the above, we can clearly see that the author's pride in his people and their priceless achievements for civilisation had awakened. He desired to make England proud of her Jews. He wanted to advocate the Jew's rights to all the privileges accorded to law-abiding citizens. He preaches this with great sincerity in Tancred. He made his Jewish origin a matter of pride. As much as his former novels had glorified the superior

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. I, pp. 192, 193. Leipzig, 1847.

intelligence of the Jews, in Tancred he exalts their religious superiority.

His detailed observations of Jerusalem and its people build up into an extremely picturesque scene. The descriptions of Oriental life form a substantial and real background for the action and events that take place. An example of this is the graphic sketch of the divan belonging to Besso. In this room we are introduced to:

> "Scheriff Effendi an Egyptian merchant, of Arab race, a dark face in a white turban, mild and imperturbable, and seated as erect on his crossed legs as if he were administering justice, . . . "[1]

as well as the lord of the divan who is the archetype of manly beauty:

> " . . . the tradition of those races who have wandered the least from Paradise, and who, notwithstanding many vicissitudes and much misery, are still acted upon by the same elemental agencies as influenced the Patriarchs; are warmed by the same sun, freshened by the same air, and nourished by the same earth as cheered, and invigorated and sustained the earlier generations. The costume of the East certainly does not exaggerate the fatal progress of time; if a figure becomes too portly, the flowing robe conceals the incumbrance which is aggravated by a western dress; he too who wears a turban has little dread of grey hairs; . . . the beard of the master of the divan became the rest of his appearance, and flowed to his waist in rich dark curls, lending additional dignity to a countenance of which the expression was at the same time grand and benignant."[2]

An Armenian from Stamboul, in his dark robes and black head-dress, and a host of other highly individual and colourful personalities enliven the scene. The naïve

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. I, p. 199. Leipzig, 1847.
2. Ibid. Vol. I, pp. 198, 199.

delight which the author takes in Eastern splendour is evident in the care with which he dwells on details of costume. Every triviality is recorded and stands out with clarity. It seems typical of every feature of life in Jerusalem, and the stark background accentuates the vivacity of surface movement: "Jerusalem at mid-day in midsummer is a city of stone in a land of iron with a sky of brass. The wild glare and savage lustre of the landscape are themselves awful. We have all read of the man who had lost his shadow - this is a shadowless world."[1] Outlined against such a dark, stony and severe background, one understands how the novelist saw every colourful detail with flaming clarity.

After a visit to Gethsemane, Tancred falls asleep in a garden near Bethany, and on awaking, sees a beautiful young woman, a Hebrew maiden:

> "She was young, even for the East; her stature rather above the ordinary height, and clothed in the rich dress usual among the Syrian ladies. She wore an amber vest of gold-embroidered silk, fitting closely to her shape and fastening with buttons of precious stones from the bosom to the waist, there opening like a tunic, so that her limbs were free to range in her huge Mamlouk trowsers, made of that white Cashmere, a shawl of which can be drawn through a ring. These fastened round her ancles with clasps of rubies, fell again over her small slippered feet. Over her amber vest she had an embroidered pelisse of violet silk, with long hanging sleeves, which showed occasionally an arm rarer than the costly jewels which embraced it; a many-coloured Turkish scarf enclosed her waist; and then, worn loosely over all, was an outer

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. I, p. 208. Leipzig, 1847.

> pelisse of amber Cashmere, lined with the fur of the white fox."[1]

Her face, however, represents the perfection of oriental beauty. The countenance is oval, the eyes dark and brilliant, with eyebrows of perfect form. She is Eva, daughter of Besso, to whom Tancred has been given special credentials from Sidonia. Eva stands for the genius of Judaism. From the moment she makes her appearance, we are convinced that her intellect must be as dazzling as her jewels. She and Tancred drift into a theological discussion, in which she displays a mind of rare quality. She argues with him that the Jews did not crucify Jesus, that was done by the Romans. She reflects that even if it was true that the Jews had prevailed upon the Romans to crucify Jesus, they had no other choice than doing what God wanted them to do, thus making possible the salvation of mankind. She states that if this be true, professing Christians should kneel to the Jews instead of persecuting them. She exclaims:

> "You raise statues to the hero who saves a country. We have saved the human race, and you persecute us - for doing it."[2]

In conclusion, the maiden asks:

> "We agree that half Christendom worships a Jewess and the other half a Jew. Now let me ask you one more question. Which do you think should be the superior race; the worshipped or the worshippers?"[3]

Eva is an eloquent spokesman for her people. She becomes flushed with the author's own racial fire. She suggests too the noble aspects of the Jewish character,

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. I, pp. 213, 214. Leipzig, 1847.
2. Ibid. Vol. I, p. 223.
3. Ibid. Vol. I, p. 223.

its deep religious reverence, its moral seriousness and its intensity of emotion. It is natural that a personality and character of this calibre should affect the imagination of Tancred. He is impressed by her clear and frank mind, her knowledge and deep thought, her power of exact expression and ready argument, and above all the great and all-engaging theme on which she is so content to discourse.

On leaving the garden, he sees a horseman approaching along the narrow path. In one paragraph we have a vivid cameo:

> "The horseman was the young Emir who was a guest the night before in the divan of Besso. Though habited in the Mamlouk dress, as if only the attendant of some great man, huge trowsers and jacket of crimson cloth, a white turban, a shawl round his waist holding his pistols and sabre, the horse he rode was a Kochlani of the highest breed. By him was a running footman, holding his nargilly, to which the Emir frequently applied his mouth as he rode along. He shot a keen glance at Tancred as he passed by, and then throwing his tube to his attendant, he bounded on."[1]

Fakredeen is drawn as a scheming and ambitious Syrian, clever, subtle and utterly unscrupulous. He is one of the most brilliant of all Disraeli's literary creations. If Tancred is representative of Young England, then Fakredeen represents Young Syria. Whereas Tancred cleaves to honour and principle to achieve his ends, Fakredeen knows only the rule of expediency. Intrigue is the law of his life. He is always entering into fresh "combinations", which he hopes will enable him to gain

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. I, pp. 225, 226. Leipzig, 1847.

control of the Lebanon. His lack of self-respect empowers him to say without a qualm of conscience, that "I am of that religion which gives me a sceptre. . . ."[1] He contributes an Oriental sparkle of political intrigue to the scene. The reader is not completely estranged from Fakredeen by the base qualities in his make-up, for they are offset by positive and likeable traits, one of which is the element of ingenuousness, which empowers him to make statements such as: "Any young prince ought to win the Lebanon, but a young prince in debt ought to conquer the world!"[2] In the person of Fakredeen, we see embodied the incongruities of the East.

In a chapter dealing with the young Emir's background, we have the political asides and comments that characterize the fictional works of Disraeli. The historical and political moves are dexterously bound up with the protagonists of the novel's action, so that it assumes a relevance within the thematic structure of the novel, as in the following retrospective quotation:

> "In the year '39, Fakredeen being then fifteen years of age, the country entirely tranquil, even if discontented, occupied by a disciplined army of 80,000 men, commanded by captains equal it was supposed to any conjuncture, the Egyptians openly encouraged by the greatest military nation of Europe, the Turks powerless, and only secretly sustained by the countenance of the ambassador of the weakest government that ever tottered in England - a government that had publicly acknowledged that it had forfeited the confidence of the parliament which yet it did not dissolve; every thing being thus in a state of

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. I, p. 230. Leipzig, 1847.
2. Ibid. Vol. I, p. 236.

flush and affluent prosperity, and both the house of Shehaab and the house of Besso feeling, each day more strongly, how discreet and how lucky they had been in the course which they had adopted - came the great Syrian crash! Whatever difference of opinion may exist as to the policy pursued by the foreign minister of England, with respect to the settlement of the Turkish empire in 1840-41, none can be permitted, by those at least competent to decide upon such questions, as to the ability with which that policy was accomplished. When we consider the position of the minister at home, not only deserted by parliament, but abandoned by his party and even forsaken by his colleagues; the military occupation of Syria by the Egyptians; the rabid demonstration of France; that an accident of time or space, the delay of a month or the gathering of a storm, might alone have baffled all his combinations; it is difficult to fix upon a page in the history of this country which records a superior instance of moral intrepidity. The bold conception and the brilliant performance were worthy of Chatham; but the domestic difficulties with which Lord Palmerston had to struggle place the exploit beyond the happiest achievement of the elder Pitt. Throughout the memorable conjuncture, Lord Palmerston however had one great advantage which was invisible to the millions; he was served by a most vigilant and able diplomacy. The superiority of his information concerning the state of Syria to that furnished to the French minister was the real means by which he baffled the menaced legions of our neighbours. A timid secretary of state in the position of Lord Palmerston, even with such advantages, might have faltered; but the weapon was placed in the hands of one who did not shrink from its exercise, and the expulsion of the Egyptians from Turkey remains a great historic monument alike of diplomatic skill and administrative energy. . . . Young Fakredeen, the moment he heard of the fall of Acre, rode out with his falcon, as if for the pastime of a morning, and the moment he was out of sight made for the Desert, and never rested until

> he reached the tents of the children of Rechab, where he placed himself under the protection of the grandfather of Eva. As for the worthy merchant himself, having ships at his command, he contrived to escape with his wife and his young daughter to Trieste, and he remained in the Austrian dominions between three and four years."[1]

We can see that Fakredeen takes his colour from his companions, ready to adopt any opinion and possess none. He dotes on Eva with reverence, yet plunders her without scruple and trades on her influence without remorse. His life seems to be a perpetual struggle between intense selfishness and morbid sensibility. Desiring to obtain funds to pay for muskets required for the furtherance of his plans, he reveals to Eva his scheme for kidnapping the young English nobleman and holding him for ransom. She greets this project with alarm and even horror, whereupon he attempts to divert her by presenting her with a more innocent arrangement. What ensues is a riot of incident and extraordinary adventure. It is almost reminiscent of Vivian Grey, except that the machinery is better ordered and more significant than that of the earlier novel.

Tancred has faithfully observed his vigil at the sacred tomb, and had indisputably received solace, but not inspiration. Although his spirit is filled with the sanctity of the place, no voice from heaven has yet sounded. Having spoken to Lara, the Spanish Prior, who had said: "Sinai led to Calvary: it may be wise to trace your steps from Calvary to Sinai",[2] he resolves to prepare for fresh pilgrimages. His journey through the stony wilderness

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. I, pp. 240, 241, 242. Leipzig, 1847.
2. Ibid. Vol. I, p. 255.

enables Disraeli to develop certain ideas. He marvels that all great things seem to have been done by the little nations. Once again we realize that this book encompasses Disraeli's sincere and profound convictions about the Jewish race and the religion of the Old Testament. In eloquent language he celebrates the wisdom of Moses: "a great creative spirit and organizing mind, in whom the faculties of conception and of action are equally balanced and possessed in the highest degree. . . ."[1] With a stirring depth of earnestness he records the following:

> "Jehovah recognised in Moses a human instrument too rare merely to be entrusted with the redemption of an Arabian tribe from a state of Fellaheen to Bedoueen existence. And therefore he was summoned to be the organ of an eternal revelation of the Divine Will, and his tribe were appointed to be the hereditary ministers of that mighty and mysterious dispensation."[2]

Tancred commences his journey through the mountains of the desert. Soon they are accosted by a tribe intent on taking the young Englishman dead or alive. His capture is the cause of much speculation by the divan gossips; this is sketched in amusing dialogue:

> "'What have you heard?' asked Barizy of the Tower, with an air of malicious curiosity.
>
> 'Some things that everybody knows,' replied Pasqualigo, 'and some things that nobody knows.'
>
> 'Hah, hah!' said Barizy of the Tower, pricking up his ears and preparing for one of those diplomatic encounters of mutual pumping, in which he and his rival were practised, 'I suppose you have

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. I, p. 259. Leipzig, 1847.
2. Ibid. Vol. I, pp. 259, 260.

> seen somebody, eh?'
>
> 'Somebody has been seen,' replied Pasqualigo, and then he busied himself with his pipe just arrived."[1]

The news of Tancred's capture is also a source of anxiety and shame to Besso and his daughter, Eva, for they feel it is a stain on their honour that their charge has been taken prisoner by the grandfather of Eva, Amalek, great sheik of the Rechabite Bedoueen. He is a splendid figure, whose nobility and dignity are sketched with a skilful hand. This treatment is seen in his conversation with Baroni, Tancred's intendant:

> "'Salaam brother of many queens, all that you see is yours; Salaam Sheikh Hassan, we are brothers. Salaam,' added Amalek, looking at Baroni, 'they tell me that you can speak our language, which is beautiful as the moon and many palm trees; tell the prince, brother of many queens, that he mistook the message that I sent him this morning, which was an invitation to a feast, not to a war. Tell him we are brothers.'
>
> 'Tell the Sheikh,' said Tancred, 'that I have no appetite for feasting, and desire to be informed why he has made me a prisoner.'
>
> 'Tell the prince, brother of many queens, that he is not a prisoner, but a guest.'
>
> 'Ask the Sheikh, then, whether we can depart at once.'
>
> 'Tell the prince, brother of many queens, that it would be rude in me to let him depart to-night.'
>
> 'Ask the Sheikh whether I may depart in the morning.'
>
> 'Tell the prince that, when the morning comes, he will find I am his brother.'"[2]

Here he meets Fakredeen, the young Emir of brilliant and ingenious stratagems. Tancred is attracted to him,

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. I, p. 267. Leipzig, 1847.
2. Ibid. Vol. I, p. 278.

for his appearance and manners are winning. Fakredeen, however, at the sight of the young Englishman, undergoes a change of heart. His volatile disposition is subdued by Tancred's lofty nature and serious mind. The fickle Emir boldly declares he is "A Prince of the Lebanon, devoted to the English, and one who has suffered in their cause."[1] Moreover, he states, "I am a Christian prince."[2] In animated prose and picturesque phraseology, the contact between Tancred and Fakredeen is developed. The manner in which the characters are sketched heightens the interest and effect for the reader. From their exchange of views, we gather their common grievances. The land of each of them maintains a certain order of things, but in neither is there to be found an enduring principle of conduct. In their respective countries, there is no such thing as a paramount political right, or a paramount religious truth. Politics, however, like good beer, can do with a bit of froth, and in the discussions that take place Fakredeen's office seems to be a satirical one of translating Tancred's lofty dreams into political intrigues. His fantastic character relieves the solemnity of Tancred's discourses:

> "'The world was never conquered by intrigue: it was conquered by faith. Now, I do not see that you have faith in anything.'
>
> 'Faith,' said Fakredeen, musingly, as if his ear had caught the word for the first time, 'faith! that is a grand idea. If one could only have faith in something and conquer the world!'
>
> 'See now,' said Tancred, with unusual animation, 'I find no charm in

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. I, p. 282. Leipzig, 1847.
2. Ibid. Vol. I, p. 282.

conquering the world to establish a dynasty - a dynasty like everything else wears out - indeed it does not last as long as most things, it has a precipitate tendency to decay. There are reasons; we will not now dwell on them. One should conquer the world not to enthrone a man, but an idea - for ideas exist for ever. But what idea? There is the touchstone of all philosophy! Amid the wreck of creeds, the crash of empires, French revolutions, English reforms, Catholicism in agony, and Protestantism in convulsions; discordant Europe demands the key-note, which none can sound. If Asia be in decay, Europe is in confusion. Your repose may be death, but our life is anarchy.'

'I am thinking,' said Fakredeen, thoughtfully, 'how we in Syria could possibly manage to have faith in anything; I had faith in Mehemet Ali, but he is a Turk, and that upset him. If, instead of being merely a rebellious Pacha, he had placed himself at the head of the Arabs, and revived the Caliphate, you would have seen something. Head the desert and you may do anything. But it is so difficult. If you can once get the tribes out of it, they will go anywhere. See what they did when they last came forth. It is a simoom, a kamsin, fatal, irresistible. They are as fresh too as ever. The Arabs are always young; it is the only race that never withers. I am an Arab myself, - from my ancestor who was the standard-bearer of the Prophet - the consciousness of race is the only circumstance that sometimes keeps up my spirit.'

'I am an Arab only in religion,' said Tancred, 'but the consciousness of creed sustains me. I know well, though born in a distant and northern isle, that the Creator of the world speaks with man only in this land; and that is why I am here.'

The young Emir threw an earnest glance at his companion, whose countenance, though grave, was calm.

'Then you have faith?' said Fakredeen, inquiringly.

'I have passive faith,' said Tancred. 'I know that there is a Deity who has revealed his will at intervals during different ages: but of his present purpose I feel ignorant, and therefore I have not active faith; I know not what to do;

and should be reduced to a mere spiritual slothfulness, had I not resolved to struggle with this fearful necessity, and so embarked in this great pilgrimage which has so strangely brought us together . . . . . .
If I were an Arab in race as well as in religion, . . . I would not pass my life in schemes to govern some mountain tribes.'

'I'll tell you,' said the Emir, springing from his divan, and flinging the tube of his nargilly to the other end of the tent; 'the game is in our hands, if we have energy. There is a combination which would entirely change the whole face of the world, and bring back empire to the East. . . . Go back to England and arrange this. You see - gloze it over as they may, one thing is clear - it is finished with England. There are three things which alone must destroy it. Primo, O'Connell appropriating to himself the revenues of half of her majesty's dominions. Secondo, the cottons - the world begins to get a little disgusted with those cottons; naturally everybody prefers silk; I am sure that the Lebanon in time could supply the whole world with silk, if it were properly administered. Thirdly, steam; with this steam your great ships have become a respectable Noah's ark. The game is up; Louis Philippe can take Windsor Castle whenever he pleases, as you took Acre, with the wind in his teeth. It is all over, then. Now, see a coup d'etat that saves all. You must perform the Portuguese scheme on a great scale; quit a petty and exhausted position for a vast and prolific empire. Let the Queen of the English collect a great fleet, let her stow away all her treasure, bullion, gold plate, and precious arms; be accompanied by all her court and chief people, and transfer the seat of her empire from London to Delhi. There she will find an immense empire ready made, a first-rate army, and a large revenue. In the mean time I will arrange with Mehemet Ali. He shall have Bagdad and Mesopotamia, and pour the Bedoueen cavalry into Persia. I will take care of Syria and Asia Minor. The only way to manage the Affghans is by Persia and by the Arabs. We will acknowledge the Empress of India as our suzerain, and secure for her the Levantine coast. If she like, she shall have Alexandria

> as she now has Malta: it could be arranged. Your Queen is young; she has an avenir. Aberdeen and Sir Peel will never give her this advice; their habits are formed. They are too old, too rusés. But you see! the greatest empire that ever existed; besides which she gets rid of the embarrassment of her Chambers! And quite practicable; for the only difficult part, the conquest of India, which baffled Alexander, is all done!"[1]

Thus Tancred's patient attempts to raise his friend to more exalted ambition are repaid by these extravagant proposals.

Almost within sight of Sinai, Tancred is full of faith. He feels a connection with these regions, which exercise a hold on him, for:

> " . . . words had been uttered and things done, more than thirty centuries ago, in this stony wilderness, which influenced his opinions and regulated his conduct every day of his life, in that distant and seagirt home, which, at the time of their occurrence, was not as advanced in civilisation as the Polynesian groups or the islands of New Zealand. The life and property of England are protected by the laws of Sinai. The hard-working people of England are secured in every seven days a day of rest by the laws of Sinai. And yet they persecute the Jews, and hold up to odium the race to whom they are indebted for the sublime legislation which alleviates the inevitable lot of the labouring multitude!"[2]

These convictions of Tancred serve as a pretext for a transcript of the author's most serious and contemplative mood. We see that against the boast of the antiquity of the English aristocracy, he places the antiquity of his own, and challenges comparison between the age and achieve-

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. I, pp. 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297. Leipzig, 1847.
2. Ibid. Vol. I, pp. 299, 300.

ments of the two. He asks: "when that labouring multitude cease for a while from a toil which equals almost Egyptian bondage, and demands that exponent of the mysteries of the heart, that soother of the troubled spirit, which poetry can alone afford - to whose harp do the people of England fly for sympathy and solace?"[1] And proudly he declares: "the most popular poet in England is the sweet singer of Israel."[2] He provides an eloquent answer to the false charges which 1800 years of prejudice had heaped up against his people, the people

> " . . . from whom they have adopted laws of sublime benevolence, and in the pages of whose literature they have found perpetual delight, instruction, and consolation . . . Independently of their admirable laws which have elevated our condition, and of their exquisite poetry which has charmed it, independently of their heroic history, which has animated us to the pursuit of public liberty, we are indebted to the Hebrew people for our knowledge of the true God and for the redemption from our sins."[3]

Tancred meets with understanding from his stately Arab captors, with their imperturbable courtesy and philosophic calm. Amalek still lives in the age of Moses, from whom his tribe claims descent. So deep is the writer's interest in the theme that history comes alive. In prose steeped in the colours of poetry, the past becomes the present:

> "'And yet it is not yesterday that Moses fled from Egypt into Midian?'
> 'It is not yesterday for those who live in cities, where they say at one gate that it is morning, and at another it is night. Where men tell

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. I, p. 300. Leipzig, 1847.
2. Ibid. Vol. I, p. 300.
3. Ibid. Vol. I, pp. 300, 301.

> lies, the deed of the dawn is the secret of sunset. But in the desert nothing changes; neither the acts of a man's life, nor the words of a man's lips. We drink at the same well where Moses helped Zipporah, we tend the same flocks, we live under the same tents; our words have changed as little as our waters, our habits, or our dwellings; what my father learnt from those before him, he delivered to me, and I have told it to my son. What is time and what is truth, that I should forget that a prophet of the Lord married into my house?'
>
> 'Where little is done, little is said,' observed Sheikh Hassan, 'and Silence is the mother of Truth. Since the Hegira nothing has happened in Arabia, and before that was Moses, and before him the giants.'
>
> 'Let truth always be spoken,' said Amalek; 'your words are a flowing stream, and the children of Rechab and the tribes of the Semites never joined him of Mecca, for they had the five books, and they said, 'Is not that enough?' They withdrew to the Syrian wilderness and they multiplied.'"[1]

This is Disraeli's best middle style, full, sonorous, daring and rarely swelling into bombast. Perhaps the depth of feeling enabled him to lay aside here the mood of satirical extravagance.

The words of his captors make Tancred eager to complete his pilgrimage to Mount Sinai. This wish is gracefully conceded to, and he leaves attended by "guardians", not "guards".

The arrival of Eva to plead for Tancred's release once again sees a flush of pure romance pass over the whole texture of the narrative. She is dismayed to learn that he has returned delirious and dangerously ill from his pilgrimage to Sinai. She sees at once from the unearthly fire in his eyes, that he is critically ill. Her know-

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade. Vol. I, p. 303. Leipzig, 1847.

ledge of herbal remedies enables her to administer a potion, which soon induces deep sleep. The passage of time is conveyed through images that are particularly appropriate within the situation:

> "The sun set; the same beautiful rosy tint suffused the tombs and temples of the city as on the evening of their first forced arrival: still Tancred slept. The camels returned from the river, the lights began to sparkle in the circle of black tents, still Tancred slept. He slept during the day, and he slept during the twilight, and when the night came, still Tancred slept. The silver lamp, fed by the oil of the palm tree, threw its delicate white light over the couch on which he rested."[1]

Here the local colour intensifies the reality of the situation. On awaking, it is evident that Eva has nursed Tancred back to life. While still delirious, he had said: "I am guarded by angels."[2] In the chapter that follows, we learn of the esoteric events that prompted that remark. Tancred's request to proceed to Mount Sinai had been granted, and he had spent a night there, in prayer. The anguish that had impelled him from the first to seek divine inspiration, reaches a climax:

> "O Lord God of Israel, Creator of the Universe, ineffable Jehovah! A child of Christendom, I come to thine ancient Arabian altars to pour forth the heart of tortured Europe. Why art thou silent? Why no longer do the messages of thy renovating will descend on earth? Faith fades and duty dies. A profound melancholy has fallen on the spirit of man. The priest doubts, the monarch cannot rule, the multitude moans and toils, and calls in its frenzy upon unknown gods. If this transfigured

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. II, p. 10. Leipzig, 1847.
2. Ibid. Vol. II, p. 6.

> mount may not again behold thee; if not again, upon thy sacred Syrian plains, Divinity may teach and solace man; if prophets may not rise again to herald hope; at least, of all the starry messengers that guard thy throne, let one appear, to save thy creatures from a terrible despair!"[1]

This is his ultimate challenge to the Deity to resolve the enigmas of the present chaotic order of things. It is opportune at this moment to attempt to penetrate more deeply into the author's delineation of Tancred, and to ascertain whether it is consistent with the emotional climax that is presented here. We are shown in the person of Sidonia a being with a great brain and no affections, superior to all sentiment. In Tancred, however, we see a great brain and a great heart. Coleridge held that deep thinking is only attainable by a man of deep feeling, and believed that truth, which was a species of revelation, was revealed only to the whole man, the head and heart working together. The exercise of the faculty of creative vision called the whole soul of man into activity, and this meant not the top layer of the mind, but the whole sensibility. In the light of these ideas, Tancred's present role as a seer is consistent with his characterization.

We have seen that an element of the mystical is Disraeli's idiosyncrasy, so we are prepared for any supernatural machinery that might be introduced. The writing, however, crumbles away at the critical point. Tancred has come to the cradle of creeds in search of a fresh revelation, but the dim oracular utterances of the angel of Arabia are neither startling nor revolutionary. What is

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. II, p. 14. Leipzig, 1847.

meant to be solemn becomes merely grotesque. The angel delivers a speech:

> "The equality of man can only be accomplished by the sovereignty of God. The longing for fraternity can never be satisfied but under the sway of a common father . . . In the increased distance between God and man, have grown up all those developments that have made life mournful. Cease then to seek in a vain philosophy the solution of the social problem that perplexes you. Announce the sublime and solacing doctrine of theocratic equality. Fear not, faint not, falter not. Obey the impulse of thine own spirit, and find a ready instrument in every human being."[1]

These are clearly the principles expounded in the Old and New Testaments. The author firmly believes that the equality of man can only be accomplished by the sovereignty of God. The west has surrendered to the gospel of materialism. Europe is seen as weary because of the lost belief in God. The author, desiring to initiate a new crusade of the Church against the chaotic order of things, outlines the spiritual values that must be infused into society. This need for enlightenment might have been the solution, but the author fails to prove it on his pulses. The philosophic truth and the importance of these thoughts are not realized in the imagery or the rhythm. Tancred may be a seer, but even he can only see what is visible from where he stands. Undoubtedly the author is in possession of a creative vision, but the knowledge is not fully communicated. The bold flight of imagination ends incongruously in theatrical dreams.

After this vision, Tancred returns to Amalek's en-

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. II, pp. 16, 17. Leipzig, 1847.

campment suffering from high fever, and is subsequently cured by Eva. He opens his mind without reserve to her, for he likes to test the soundness of his conclusions by her clear intelligence. Her lofty spirit harmonizes with his own soul. Her passionate love of her race, her deep faith in the destiny and genius of her Asian land, greatly interest him. She speaks to him of her deep regard for Fakredeen, and her concern for his lack of consistency and purpose. She is frightened by the Emir's allusions to his state of affairs, but Fakredeen reassures her in infectious tones of buoyant good-humour, that relieve the solemnity of the atmosphere:

> "I should be incapable of anything, if it were not for my debts. I am naturally so indolent, that if I did not remember in the morning that I was ruined, I should never be able to distinguish myself . . . What are my debts to my resources? That is the point. You cannot judge of a man by only knowing what his debts are; you must be acquainted with his resources."[1]

In altered tones, he tells Eva that his new principle of action is Faith. In this he is inspired by Tancred, who believes that institutions can be remodelled, principles of action changed and a new spirit breathed into the whole scope of existence, if divine truth and faith are the inspiration and the guide.

Before Tancred and Eva part, there is an Eastern interlude that is described with evident delight by the author. A celebrated poet recites the Iliad of the desert, the story of Antar, to an admiring audience. He sings, too, of Eva, extolling her beauty and virtues.

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. II, pp. 21, 22. Leipzig, 1847.

This eulogy, composed in her honour, brings home how little the people of the desert have changed, for the ode is couched in the language of the Song of Solomon, and has some of its lyric grace:

> "'It is in honour of one who, were she to rise to our sight, would be as the full moon when it rises over the desert. Yes, I sing of Eva, the daughter of Amalek . . . Eva, the daughter of a thousand chiefs.' . . . He had seen palm trees, but they were not as tall and graceful as Eva; he had beheld the eyes of doves and antelopes, but they were not as bright and soft as hers; he had tasted the fresh springs in the wilderness, but they were not more welcome than she, and the soft splendor of the desert moon was not equal to her brow. She was the daughter of Amalek, the daughter of a thousand chiefs. Might she live for ever in their tents, ever ride on Nejid steeds and on dromedaries with silver harness; ever show herself to the people like a free Arabian maiden."[1]

The similarity to Biblical narratives in tone, mood and imagery, lends a note of authenticity to this saga that takes place in the Holy Land. A few passages from the Song of Solomon, quoted at random, will illustrate this likeness:

> "Behold thou art fair, my love; behold thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes."[2]

> "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?"[3]

The separation of Tancred and Eva is a painful one, and it requires all the consciousness of great duties and the inspiration of a great purpose to sustain Tancred.

Tancred is now ready to place himself at the head of

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. II, pp. 39, 40. Leipzig, 1847.
2. Song of Solomon. Chap. I, v. 15.
3. Ibid. Chap. VI, v. 2.

the Asian movement, and in addition thinks of paying a visit to Fakredeen's castle of Canobia in the Lebanon. Before leaving for the Lebanon, an episode is interpolated in the history. In content it is an episode, but in feeling it underscores the basic philosophy of Tancred. This underlying philosophy is the author's concept of race and his intense pride in the achievements of the Jewish people. This chapter is an additional appeal to Christians to recognise their indebtedness to the Jews, and to honour instead of persecuting them. This chapter devoted to the history of the Baroni family is also a chapter in the life of Sidonia. Baroni forms a half-conscious contrast to Eva, for he is a denationalized Jew. In this sketch we have perceptive drawing of character. The events are unfolded with lively powers of narration. Sidonia sees ability and even genius in a passing troop or entertainers. He approves too of the perfect education they have received, for: "A sublime religious principle sustains their souls; a tender morality regulates their lives; and with the heart and the spirit thus developed, they are brought up in the pursuit and production of the beautiful."[1] Interspersed with the unfolding of this little tale is the worldly-wise commentary that adds a depth of reflection to the bare facts. Sidonia decides to give the family's ability full scope, for "Nothing was more apt to make him melancholy, than to hear of persons of talents dying without having their chance. A failure is nothing; it may be deserved or it may be remedied. In the first instance, it brings self-knowledge; in the second, it develops a

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. II, p. 74. Leipzig, 1847.

new combination usually triumphant. But incapacity, from not having a chance of being capable, is a bitter lot, which Sidonia was ever ready to alleviate."[1] He is impelled, however, not only by a feeling for genius, but for race as well, for the Baroni clan is Jewish: "Baroni - that is, the son of Aaron; the name of old clothesmen in London, and of Caliphs at Bagdad."[2]

Tancred accompanies Fakredeen to Canobia, his mountain castle in Lebanon. This prolongs the action of the book in order that we may have sumptuous scenes of hunting and feasting, mingled with politics, of course. Their friendship allows the author to speculate with humour and wit on the sincerity of relations between "friends":

> "A man may have friends, but then are they sincere ones? Do they not abuse you behind your back, and blackball you at societies where they have had the honour to propose you? It might philosophically be suggested that it is more agreeable to be abused behind one's back than to one's face; and, as for the second catastrophe, it should not be forgotten that, if the sincere friend may occasionally put a successful veto on your election, he is always ready to propose you again. Generally speaking, among sensible persons, it would seem that a rich man deems that friend a sincere one who does not want to borrow his money; while, among the less favoured with fortune's gifts, the sincere friend is generally esteemed to be the individual who is ready to lend it."[3]

In the case of Fakredeen and Tancred, it is shown how youth, sympathy and occasion have combined to create an intimacy, which the young Emir, at any rate, is convinced will be as lasting as it is fervent and profound.

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. II, p. 76. Leipzig. 1847.
2. Ibid. Vol. II, p. 79.
3. Ibid. Vol. II, p. 87.

The scenes that follow are brilliant in colour and show. Each page teems with varied scenes, new objects and new characters. In these descriptions of the exotic company and activities, the author, in an attempt to do the vivid scenes justice, is guilty of introducing a note of falsity. In assuming a lyric and even epic tone, he uses grammatical inversion which tends towards an artificial verse form. An example of this follows:

> "Came slowly, on steeds dark as night,
> up the winding steep of Canobia . . .
> Pale is the cheek of the daughters of
> Maron at the fell name of Abuneked."[1]

There is humour in every situation, for Fakredeen, attempting to increase his already considerable influence with his creditors and supporters, pays extraordinary attention, almost homage, to his guest, an English prince, perhaps even the brother of the queen of England(?). Tancred is unknowingly a valuable pawn in the game. We are given an insight into the prevailing conditions of Lebanon, and from this vantage point can acquiesce in the quiet criticism of the author: "Downing-Street (1842) decided upon the sectarian government of the Lebanon. It was simple, and probably satisfactory - to Exeter Hall; but Downing-Street was quite unaware, or had quite forgotten, that the feudal system prevailed throughout Lebanon."[2]

In narrating the sequence of fêting, hunting and feasting that takes place in this mountain fastness, we have a mosaic of brilliant extravaganzas. This entertainment, with the "succulent" descriptions of the good things of life, provides a contrast to the solemn and mystical

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. II, p. 99. Leipzig, 1847.
2. Ibid. Vol. II, p. 95.

themes in the novel. The moods shift from gay to grave, for there is the ambivalent Eastern sentiment of a desire for the good things of this world and a perception of their hollow emptiness. We pass therefore from those passages in which the author takes an obvious though naïve delight, - "Within the walls they prepared rice, which they piled on brazen and pewter dishes, boiled gallons of coffee, and stewed the liver of the wild bears and the gazelles in the golden wine of Lebanon."[1] - to discussions of Tancred's hopes to effect the regeneration of the world through the establishment of a theocratic equality.

Fakredeen's thirst for action makes him pant for a wider field than his own glittering cage. His restless, intriguing and imaginative spirit, his worldly nature and whimsical disposition, form a dramatic contrast to the soul and character of Tancred, with his sublime aspirations, sense of purpose, noble ambitions and moral worth. Together they form a composite picture, for the disciplined intelligence and lofty principles of Tancred are offset by the bright vivacity of Fakredeen.

Fakredeen needs additional support in his attempt to reconcile the Druses and the Maronites. He and Tancred endeavour to enlist in their cause a mysterious and isolated tribe, the Ansarey, settled in the north of Syria, and ruled over by Queen Astarte. In pursuit of information about this people, whom Tancred and Fakredeen intend visiting, the two friends arrive at Damascus. With freshness and power, the author moralizes over the past of this

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. II, p. 110. Leipzig, 1847.

ancient city, a city which "had municipal rights in the days when God conversed with Abraham."[1] From the general we are led to the particular, a vast and gorgeous chamber in the home of Adam Besso. Tancred and the Emir enter and see Eva, holding in one hand a palm branch and in the other a fresh citron, for it is the festival of Succoth, the Feast of Tabernacles, or Booths. It is called the "Feast of Booths", because during the festival week Jews eat their meals and spend part of their time in a succah, a little booth covered with leafy branches and twigs. They observe this ceremony to remind them of God's protection of their forefathers in the wilderness when they had only small and unsafe shelters in which to live. The succah is decorated with vegetables and fruits because Succoth is also a harvest thanksgiving festival, thanksgiving for His gift of the crops which provide man's food. Eva holds the palm branch and citron which symbolise the gifts of God. It is significant that Eva, dwelling in her own land, wearing traditional dress, should follow the ancient customs of her faith. She is the embodiment of Judaism in its every aspect. The author shows a profound interest in the solemn elements of her life. He obviously feels here what he was later to declare in the House of Commons: "I feel every fibre of my being thrill with the traditions of my people."[2] The views and speculations he enters upon are obviously of a sincerity and an intensity of conviction which will not let us take him otherwise than seriously. With great

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. II, p. 138. Leipzig, 1847.
2. Jewish Review, Vol. I, No. 4. Disraeli the Jew, by the Rev. A. Levy. Port Elizabeth, September, 1956.

eloquence and earnestness, he gives vent to the beliefs of his very soul. With prophetic certainty, he writes: "The vineyards of Israel have ceased to exist, but the eternal law enjoins the children of Israel still to celebrate the vintage. A race that persist in celebrating their vintage, although they have no fruits to gather, will regain their vineyards."[1] With admiration, he adds: "what indomitable spirit in the people!"[2] He marvels at the Jew's faith in God, in their trust in the architect of the Universe. Tancred too is shown to be interested, for he is fascinated by a people who have handed down to him immortal truths. We are constantly distracted, however, by the author's irresistible propensity for a little political satire. Tancred's concept of the divine impulses emanating from Asia, leads on to a discussion of the Eastern Question in political terms. The Emir remarks rather pettishly: "I cannot endure this eternal chatter about Palmerston, . . . Are there no other statesmen in the world besides Palmerston? And what should he know about the Eastern question, who never was in the East?"[3] In this section of the novel we see too the author's didactic tendency constantly obtruding itself.

The atmosphere, the brilliant circumstances, the novelty - all these combine to create scenes of which the reader feels the power and attraction. It is therefore quite predictable that Tancred should say to Eva: "I shall not go back to England . . . "[4] Yet the consciousness that he is ordained for higher deeds never deserts him.

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. II, p. 152. Leipzig, 1847.
2. Ibid. Vol. II, p. 152.
3. Ibid. Vol. II, p. 161.
4. Ibid. Vol. II, p. 165.

Baroni also attempts to find out about the Ansarey tribe. He seeks out a member of the Ansarey people in the Bazaar of Damascus. We are given a graphic description of the great bazaar with its crowded and bustling streets, its interminable arcades, stalls, shelves and swarms of traders. The brilliancy of the scene is fully captured as much through detailed observation as through characterization of the merchants and passengers. Baroni is granted the pass into Ansarey territory, and accompanies Tancred and Fakredeen.

The Queen of the Ansarey has a pompous and absurd Prime Minister, Keferinis, who affords much comic relief in this section of the novel. He is ignorant on all subjects. An example of this can be sighted in his answer to Fakredeen's question "And where were you settled before?" He replies: "Truly, . . . in cities which never can be forgotten, and therefore need never be mentioned."[1] They discover that these Ansarey, who continue to worship the gods of Olympus, are the last survivors of Graeco-Syrian paganism. Disraeli cannot resist this brief dalliance with forbidden fruit. In doing this, the author endeavours to counteract the purely Hebraic influences of Palestine. Disraeli paints in a graphic form the profound faith of the Greeks. He shows how the Olympian gods represented the genius and passion of man, with all the wit and heart that man could devise and create. To the Ansarey, however, they are not just the gods of poets, but the gods of the people, who loved the people and whom the people loved. In eloquent language the lovely queen

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. II, p. 186. Leipzig, 1847.

Astarte declares:

> "I told you we had beautiful and consoling thoughts, and more than thoughts. All else is lost - our wealth, our arts, our luxury, our invention - all have vanished. The niggard earth scarcely yields us a subsistence; we dress like Kurds - feed hardly as well; but if we were to quit these mountains, and wander like them on the plains with our ample flocks, we should lose our sacred images - all the traditions that we yet cherish in our souls, that in spite of our hard lives preserve us from being barbarians - a sense of the beautiful and the lofty, and the divine hope, that, when the rapidly consummating degradation of Asia has been fulfilled, mankind will return again to those gods who made the earth beautiful and happy; and that they, in their celestial mercy, may revisit that world which, without them, has become a howling wilderness."[1]

Her thoughts are thus made to harmonize to a certain extent with Tancred's aim, for she too believes that the world has lost faith in ideas and convictions that should govern the human race. She believes in the spiritual supremacy of Asia and the mission to reassert that supremacy. The great difference is that whereas Tancred speaks of the God of Mount Sinai and Mount Calvary, she thinks of the Gods of Mount Olympus. Her radical divergence from Tancred in doctrine is compensated for by the conversion of Fakredeen to her religious beliefs. Ever changeable, all ideas of Asian supremacy, cosmopolitan regeneration and theocratic equality gradually disappear. He ponders over the scheme of trying this ancient and once popular faith to cure the world. He yields his spirit to Astarte. It is here that the schism occurs between Fakredeen and Tancred. To clarify the issue, we are again given a lucid exposition of Tancred's sacred mission:

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. II, p. 203. Leipzig, 1847.

> "Arabia alone has remained free and faithful to the divine tradition. From its bosom we shall go forth and sweep away the mouldering remnants of the Tataric system; and then, when the East has resumed its indigenous intelligence, when angels and prophets again mingle with humanity, the sacred quarter of the globe will recover its primeval and divine supremacy; it will act upon the modern empires, and the fainthearted faith of Europe, which is but the shadow of a shade, will become as vigorous as befits men who are in sustained communication with the Creator."[1]

What follows is a series of many adventures and complicated intrigues on the part of Fakredeen, who turns round and betrays Tancred, for he is eager to unite Lobanon with Ansarey. His changeable nature is revealed again in these new schemes. We see that expediency is the law of his life, and he will not spare friend or foe in the pursuit of his object. When the Queen inquires whether the bishops will object to the proposed re-introduction of the Olympian dynasty, Fakredeen replies: "What did the priests and priestesses of the Syrian goddess say, when Syria became Christian? They turned into bishops and nuns. Let them turn back again."[2]

On December 26, 1846, Disraeli wrote: "My hero, whose name is 'Tancred', will make his appearance, I hope, in a month. He has turned out a much more troublesome and unmanageable personage than I anticipated."[3] Disraeli by this time was clearly beginning to find the impossibility of bringing his hero to any satisfactory resting place, and his story to a conclusion. He let his thoughts run on.

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. II, p. 207. Leipzig, 1847.
2. Ibid. Vol. II, p. 226.
3. Letters from Benjamin Disraeli to Frances Anne Marchioness of Londonderry, Part I, p. 19. Edited by the Marchioness of Londonderry. London, 1938.

Eva is taken captive by the Queen of the Ansarey, and Fakredeen, for whom Eva is the only being to whom he is really devoted, rescues her, not hesitating to desert Tancred. Eva is consistently portrayed as a power of moral truth, for even in this emergency she feels there is something base in leaving Tancred alone, for "He has eaten our salt, he is the child of our tents, his blood will be upon our heads."[1] Tancred, on learning all, feels he has been the unconscious agent of petty machinations which have sullied the purity of his mind. He yearns to return to the desert, which alone can regenerate the world. Before doing so, he fights crusader-like at the head of the Ansarey warriors against the invading Turks. He rejoins Amalek and then proceeds to Jerusalem. He returns secure in the knowledge that man must be brought nearer to Heaven, that unless government again becomes divine, the insignificance of the human scheme must paralyse all effort. His faith is firm, his convictions profound. He returns at nightfall to the garden of Bethany. There his declaration of love to Eva throbs with emotion that is sincere and deep. For him she is the angel of Arabia, his divine cause and faith. The relationship between these two representatives of different denominations is similar in its consummation of purpose to that between Sybil and Egremont. Here too, it is the meeting of two ideologies. As Tancred explicitly states: "I am a Christian in the land of Christ . . . and I kneel to a daughter of my Redeemer's race."[2] His thoughts are interrupted by the approach of a crowd shouting Tancred's

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. II, p. 247. Leipzig, 1847.
2. Ibid. Vol. II, p. 290.

name. "The Duke and Duchess of Bellamont had arrived at Jerusalem."[1] With these words the novel ends.

Disraeli rated Tancred as his best book. His vision had deepened and become prophetic. His belief in the power of the imagination to do the greatest practical things is taken further. He has here united the concrete considerations of the politician with the mystical insight of the seer. In the novel he strove, as he set out to do, to give formal recognition to the position the Church should occupy in the development of England. This was consistent with his continual striving to distinguish that which was eternal from that which was accidental. His desire to bring about an alliance between the Crown, Church and People made faith very necessary. This spiritual renaissance made a re-discovery of the Asian mystery essential, for the church had to be revivified by the traditions of Judaism. For the Church to be a remedial agency in the nineteenth century, to renovate the national spirit, a vision was necessary to show the role it had to play. But beyond this, Tancred embodied those deeper dreams of the author, which make this novel in many ways a spiritual autobiography. His protest against Western materialism was at the same time a paean to the Biblical precepts and the people of the Bible. The corollary of his high religious themes is that the Jews, as the originators of the revelations of true religion, should be a highly revered race. Five years later he interpolated a chapter on the same subject in his political biography of Lord George Bentinck. Tancred was the repository of ideas which he put into

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred: or, The New Crusade, Vol. II, p. 292. Leipzig, 1847.

practice as a statesman. When in 1847 Russell proposed to remove the barriers that prevented Jews from taking seats in Parliament, even though elected as was Rothschild for the City of London, he supported the motion with voice and vote. So did Bentinck, doggedly pursuing his old Whig principle of religious and civil equality. They were imbued with the sense of great issues and lofty purposes that fill the pages of Tancred. Throughout this chapter, which is closely reasoned and conceived, Disraeli shows a pride in his race, and exults in his ancient lineage. He applauds the courage and persistence which have survived the worst trials ever put upon a wandering race. The discussions between Eva and Tancred are reproduced here, in a factual context. With clarity he restates the premise: "The Jews represent the Semitic principle; all that is spiritual in our nature."[1] As in Tancred, Disraeli appeals to Christians to recognise their indebtedness to the Jews, and to honour instead of persecuting them. As he later declared in Parliament: "Where is your Christianity if you do not believe in their Judaism?"[2] Thus we see that the doctrines proclaimed in Tancred were adhered to with courage and disregard of self.

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Lord George Bentinck, a Political Biography, Ch. XXIV. London, 1852.
2. William Flavelle Moneypenny and George Earle Buckle, The Life of Benjamin Disraeli Earl of Beaconsfield, Vol. III, p. 68. London, 1914.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE LAST NOVELS

After the publication of Tancred in 1847, Disraeli became immersed in political activities and did not publish his next novel, Lothair, till 1870. Certain biographical details will enable us to explain new elements that appear in Lothair and help us to define qualities that seem strangely dissimilar to those noted in the earlier writings of Disraeli.

His struggle in and out of Parliament to infuse new ideas into the political philosophy of the landed aristocracy had made him the acknowledged leader of the Tory party. By 1849 he was the leader of the Conservative party in the House of Commons. In 1852 he was the Chancellor of the Exchequer in Lord Derby's first Ministry. He filled the same position in 1858-59 in Derby's second Ministry. In 1866 he occupied the position of Lord Chancellor in Derby's third Ministry. His tenure of office was marked by great parliamentary triumphs, such as his successful piloting through the House of the second Reform Bill, which was based on the principle of household suffrage. The author of Sybil had given Conservative and national policy a strong bias in the direction of social reform. This social reform, which Disraeli's preaching had made Conservative policy, was consolidated with legislation. Derby's ill-health necessitated his resignation, which was followed by Disraeli's succession, early in 1868, to the position of the Queen's First Minister. At last due recognition was accorded to his genius. As a result

of the General Election in November of the same year, Disraeli resigned in favour of Gladstone.

His increased hours of leisure enabled him to turn his attention and creative ability to the world of literature. But the intervening years, with, as we have seen, his rise to the peak of administrative glory, left an imprint on the novelist. His ambition had to a certain extent been satisfied and his ideas adopted. The author had successfully formulated a creed. His public eminence ensured the partial realization, at least, of his schemes and concepts. Thus when he wrote Lothair, it was in a different vein to the foregoing novels. It was no longer necessary to send his hero on the agonising soul-searching ventures that had characterized the Wanderjahre of his other heroes. The importance that is attached to Lothair's position in society makes him the prey of contending forces that desire dominion over his mind and soul. He remains comparatively passive throughout, while the battle is waged around him. It was no longer necessary for the hero to exert all his energies in a quest for political justice and spiritual truth. Like the author, the hero has "arrived" in the world of power. The forces at large in society now clamour for his championship. This position represents a radical divergence in character construction from that which constituted the mental and moral standpoints of a Tancred or a Coningsby. We notice too, a new reticence in the satirizing of society. Lothair still deals with the events of the day, but the immediate objects of political strife are treated with the tact and reserve becoming an ex-Premier. Another great change that we notice is a direct result of attaining recognition and

wielding political power. As we saw in the analysis of the trilogy, Disraeli had been imbued with the conviction that the aristocracy should be roused to an awareness of the great duties attendant on their privileged positions. He had dreamed that their youth would again govern the English nation. The twenty-five years that followed Tancred's adventures at Mount Sinai were spent by the author within the privileged circle. He had not represented them falsely in his novels, but he now realised the futility of his imaginings in this particular respect. He saw that they were about to lose their thrones. It is therefore with a very light satirical touch that he draws the likeness of the English aristocracy at the last hour of their unique splendour, before the new social forces destroyed their exclusive dominion. As the historian Froude so accurately points out: "the sense never leaves us that they are but flowers of the hothouse, artificially forced into splendour, with no root in outer nature, and therefore of no continuance."[1] Disraeli had outlived his illusions.

The novel opens with gentle raillery which is humorous more than satirical. The author describes the head of a ducal family as one who when he looked into the glass, and gave the last touch to his consummate toilette, offered "his grateful thanks to Providence that his family was not unworthy of him."[2] In these early pages of the novel, the minor characters are as distinctive and amusing as in the earlier novels of Disraeli. They throng the

1. J.A. Froude, The Earl of Beaconsfield, p. 219. London, 1890.
2. Benjamin Disraeli, Lothair, p. 2. Hughenden Edition. London, 1881.

scenes amid which we first glimpse the hero of the novel, an ingenuous, earnest young man, as yet inexperienced in the ways of society. Like society generally, he is without purpose. This society has no claim to endurance. Each brilliant element is meticulously sketched as if the author, with his matured experience, is aware that he is chronicling the full bloom of an exotic flower which is doomed to fade.

Soon after meeting the ducal family who are the spokesmen for Protestant nationalism, we move to the opposing camp, the establishment of the St. Jerome family whose lives are dedicated to the triumph of the Catholic cause. We are shown the beginnings of the great confederacy in which the hero will involuntarily become involved - the conversion of England. Nothing is more carefully drawn than the descriptions which deal with Roman Catholicism. Its historic tradition and ceremonial worship attracted Disraeli, but the man of the world was also aware of the stealthy and indirect methods which her propaganda had assumed in England. Both the attraction and repulsion are brought out in Lothair. The vivid picture of the celebration of the Catholic office of Tenebrae discloses the appeal it has for the author:

> "But tonight it was not the radiant altar and the splendour of stately priests, the processions and the incense, the divine choir and the celestial harmonies resounding and lingering in arched roofs, that attracted many a neighbour. The altar was desolate, the choir was dumb; and while the services proceeded in hushed tones of subdued sorrow, and sometimes even of suppressed anguish, gradually, with each psalm and canticle, a light of the altar was extinguished, till at length the Miserere was muttered, and all became darkness. A sound as of a dis-

> tant and rising wind was heard, and a crash, as it were the fall of trees in a storm. The earth is covered with darkness, and the vail of the temple is rent. But just at this moment of extreme woe, when all human voices are silent, and when it is forbidden even to breathe 'Amen'; when everything is symbolical of the confusion and despair of the Church at the loss of her expiring Lord, a priest brings forth a concealed light of silvery flame from a corner of the altar. This is the light of the world, and announces the resurrection, and then all rise up and depart in silence."[1]

The picture is balanced, however, and we see the arts employed by the Cardinals and Monsignori to entangle Lothair in the meshes of Roman influence. We read of the conferences with Father Coleman, dealing with those points of faith on which they do not differ, followed by desultory remarks on those points of faith on which they ought not to differ. Lothair gradually becomes convinced, as a result of the constant pressure brought to bear on him, that the highest duty of man is to vindicate the principles of the Roman Catholic religion, without which the world must soon become a scene of universal desolation. These conclusions are an inevitable result of the very persuasive oratory of the eloquent Cardinal. We are made to realize that Lothair is being manipulated by an expert puppeteer:

> "'What the soul is to man, the Church is to the world,' said the Cardinal. 'It is the link between us and the Divine nature. It came from heaven complete; it has never changed, and it can never alter. Its ceremonies are types of celestial truths; its services are suited to all the moods of man; they strengthen him in his wisdom and his purity, and control

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Lothair, pp. 59, 60. London, 1881.

> and save him in the hour of passion and temptation. Taken as a whole, with all its ministrations, its orders, its offices, and the divine splendour of its ritual, it secures us on earth some adumbration of that ineffable glory which awaits the faithful in heaven, where the blessed Mother of God and ten thousand saints perpetually guard us with Divine intercession
> . . . . . .
> you have no objection to join in my daily prayer for the conversion of this kingdom to - religious truth,' his Eminence added after a pause.
> 'Yes; religious truth,' said Lothair, 'we must all pray for that.'"[1]

The advantages of a religious life are not sketched without the wit and pungency that aerates the heavier texture with welcome levity. We are told that: "In a truly religious family there would always be a Father Coleman or a Monsignore Catesby to guide and to instruct. But a Protestant, if he wants aid or advice on any matter, can only go to his solicitor."[2]

So far the struggle for Lothair's soul is personified in the young daughters of the respective Protestant and Catholic establishments where Lothair spends his leisure hours. Lothair vacillates between the two opposing forces, as he is alternately swayed by the charms of their supporters. His dilemma is embodied in concrete dramatic situations. Lady Corisande, the daughter of the Anglican ducal family, confides to Lothair that when wicked men try to destroy the country, she likes her family to be in the front of the resistance movement. As the destruction of the country meditated by wicked men is some change in the status of England which we know Monsignor Catesby had previously suggested to Lothair as both just and expedient,

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Lothair, pp. 71, 72. London, 1881.
2. Ibid. pp. 74, 75.

we sense Lothair's perplexity in the face of such contending forces. Understandably, Lothair begins to feel a little harassed. His gradual estrangement is well suggested in a graphic scene depicting a Fenian meeting under the auspices of a Roman Catholic group. The meeting is obviously of a subversive nature, stimulating rebellion against the Sovereign. In this rapid sketch we see Disraeli's facility for giving cogently the formulas of the movements of his age. This ability widens the scope of the action and adds comprehensiveness to the author's canvas.

A special charm in the presentation of the theme is the fidelity of the descriptions. The vigorous pen-sketches of minor characters are cleverly drawn. They are made the vehicles for the author's mellow cynicism and wisdom gained from experience. They are, however, distinctive in their own right as characters. This is seen in the figure of Lord St. Aldegonde, who is deftly portrayed as the bored patrician with fine qualities wasted in a world where there is no employment for them. He is shown as a perfect example of an English noble who will not cant or lie. He declares: "The fun of talk is to find out what a man really thinks, and then contrast it with the enormous lies he has been telling all dinner, and, perhaps, all his life."[1]

The background does not lack variety and sparkle. The seriousness of the major issues is relieved by the flashes of wit and fancy, whose metallic glitter and exuberant vitality provide a satisfying background. These qualities

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Lothair, p. 120. London, 1881.

are incorporated in another amusing portrait of a Portuguese, Mr. Pinto, who, we are told "was not an intellectual Croesus, but his pockets were full of sixpences."[1] He praises English as an expressive language, although its range is limited to four words: "nice," "jolly," "charming," and "bore."[2] These comments are, of course, lightly barbed with satire, so lightly in fact that the critics reviewing Lothair on its appearance failed to perceive the satire at all.[3] We meet too, Mr. Phoebus, an artist who maintains that critics are "The men who have failed in literature and art."[4] The humorous comments contain corrective innuendoes too, such as we find in the description of an evening at the opera: "There were rival prima-donnas, and they indulged in competitive screams: the choruses were coarse and the orchestra much too noisy. But the audience were absorbed or enthusiastic. We may be a musical nation, but our taste would seem to require some refinement."[5] There is an abundance of scintillating phrases, aphorisms and paradoxes, into which Disraeli distils his critical wisdom. That this wisdom is in essence worldly, is seen in the cynical analysis that penetrates beneath the surface polish to lay bare the selfish reality, as in the sequence where Lothair generously tips an attendant, who in thanking him calls him "My Lord." The author's reflection on this exposes the truth: "When the British nation is at once grateful and enthusiastic,

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Lothair, p. 124. London, 1881.
2. Ibid. p. 127.
3. The Quarterly, for example, described Lothair as a "failure," "a bid for the bigoted voices of Exeter Hall." Francis Hitchman, The Public Life of The Rt. Hon. the Earl of Beaconsfield, p. 387. London, 1881.
4. Benjamin Disraeli, Lothair, p. 185. London, 1881.
5. Ibid. p. 143.

they always call you 'my Lord.'"[1]

Lothair's neutrality in the face of conflicting claims on his allegiance, is strictly maintained. His nature shrinks from contemplating a secession from the Church of his fathers. He takes refuge in thoughts of a reconciliation between Rome and England. Through compromise he avoids extremes of action. His quandary is aggravated by the rival claim of yet another contemporary force, the power exerted by the secret societies throughout Europe. Here too, a woman, Theodora, personifies the International Revolution. The struggle made by these partisans of respective ideologies to capture the devotion of Lothair is the mainspring of the action throughout the novel. The scope of this issue is explored so fully that an ever-relevant significance is to be found in Lothair. This precludes our regarding it as an out-of-date topicality, a thing mainly of antiquarian interest. The particularities are undoubtedly local, but the broad treatment of the themes opens up the action, as it were, onto wider planes. We see this in a conversation between Lothair and Theodora, in which, preoccupied with the problem of Catholicism versus Protestantism, he discusses religion with her:

> "'I am a member of the Church of England, and when I was at Oxford I thought the Anglican view might be sustained. But of late I have given my mind deeply to these matters, for after all they are the only matters a man should think of; and I confess to you the claim of Rome to orthodoxy seems to me irresistible.'
>
> 'You make no distinction, then, between religion and orthodoxy,' said Theodora.

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Lothair, p. 145. London, 1881.

> 'Certainly I make no difference.'
>
> 'And yet what is orthodox at Dover is not orthodox at Calais or Ostend. I should be sorry to think that, because there was no orthodoxy in Belgium or France, there was no religion.'
>
> 'Yes,' said Lothair, 'I think I see what you mean.'
>
> 'Then again, if we go further,' continued Theodora, 'there is the whole of the East; that certainly is not orthodox according to your views: you may not agree with all or any of their opinions, but you could scarcely maintain that, as communities, they are irreligious.'
>
> 'Well, you could not certainly,' said Lothair.
>
> 'So you see,' said Theodora, 'what is called orthodoxy has very little to do with religion; and a person may be very religious without holding the same dogmas as yourself, or, as some think, without holding any.'
>
> 'According to you, then,' said Lothair, 'the Anglican view might be maintained.'
>
> 'I do not know what the Anglican view is,' said Theodora. 'I do not belong to the Roman or to the Anglican Church.'
>
> 'And yet you are very religious,' said Lothair.
>
> 'I hope so; I try to be so; and when I fail in any duty, it is not the fault of my religion. I never deceive myself into that; I know it is my own fault.'"[1]

In the above dialogue, we can clearly see how the argument is advanced beyond the bounds of the immediate difficulty. Thus, although the primary concern is with the articles and dogmas of different faiths, it is here resolved on a higher level of universal tolerance, without detracting from the magnitude of the issue in hand. It is almost as if the author, aware of the grander principles of equality, fraternity and love, has to compromise and concern himself with the clashes of doctrine that exist on the lower level of everyday reality. Yet, he does not minimise these

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Lothair, pp. 161, 162. London, 1881.

collisions that occur on our lesser plane, but seems satisfied to relate them to a greater entity, an intimation of a higher and all-embracing absolute.

Disraeli recognised the power of the secret societies and we get a glimpse again of the political sagacity and historical insight which make these novels so original and suggestive. It is as well to remember here that the revolutionary societies had shaken half the thrones in Europe in the convulsions of 1848. Disraeli, while premier, had learnt to regard the republican tendencies as potent forces. Thus he was not conjuring up imaginary perils. Lothair's relationship to Theodora, the representative of the revolutionary spirit, is therefore drawn as a powerful and strong attachment. The author contrives with skill and delicacy to suggest the fascination, free from sensuality, that Theodora has for Lothair. It never degenerates into a vulgar intrigue. She is an elaborately conceived heroine, combining human warmth and sympathy with her allegorical role as the ideal side of the Revolutionary movement. We are made to feel in advance, through the personal inspiration she inspires in the hero, that he will become a devotee of her cause. The resolution of these problems is the great issue that dominates the glitter and extravagance of Lothair's celebration of his majority. Here, in every golden detail, the splendid pageant of the English aristocracy unfurls itself. The wealth of material detail shows the unreality of the outward splendour of the great nobles. The vivid and over-charged picture of this society is partly indulgent and partly caustic, presented all through with mockery and extravaganza. The descriptions verge on caricature,

and provide inimitable social pantomimes and political satire. All this is interspersed with the original wit that enlivens the presentation. The Disraelian talent for epigram is much in evidence, as in "'My idea of an agreeable person,' said Hugo Bohun, 'is a person who agrees with me.'"[1] Amid all the brilliant celebrations that mark Lothair's legal accession to his estate, there is the ever-present current of struggle and party passion. We see how the three conflicting forces attempt to make him the instrument of their policies. Lothair's confused mental state is indicative of the fact that he is being made the object of the search of others, instead of himself searching for political, religious or sociological faith. We are made to feel that this is a battle of moment in the social world. An unnatural consequence is attached to Lothair's conversion to one or other creed. As part of the colourful splendour, the opposing forces draw up in readiness for the spiritual combat: "the Bishop had a subtle counsellor in his chaplain, who wore as good a cassock as any Monsignore, and he brought with him also a trusty archdeacon in a purple coat, whose countenance was quite entitled to a place in the Acta Sanctorum."[2] Lothair is bombarded with injunctions: Miss Arundel, the advocate of Catholicism, says peremptorily, "I summon you to meet me at Rome."[3] Lothair's uncle admonishes him to "be firm to the Protestant faith",[4] while the cardinal impresses upon Lothair that "the soul requires a sanctuary."[5]

To the modern reader all this ethical skirmishing,

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Lothair, p. 211. London, 1881.
2. Ibid. p. 213.
3. Ibid. p. 241.
4. Ibid. p. 246.
5. Ibid. p. 258.

represented as perilous and treacherous activity, seems refined danger indeed. Our modern twentieth century has seen the brutalisation of man and the ugly eruption of the basest impulses of human nature. Disraeli's scheme of things is a pre-eminently clean one. The danger is not one of wanton cruelty or savagery. The dramatic issues are in keeping with the importance the author ascribes to the spiritual element in the hierarchy of being. Religious principle is the mainstay of the Disraelian world. It is this approach to life which characterizes the author's outlook and which the modern reader finds so refreshing. For the author's search for truth has today given way to a casual, spurious approach to life and there has been a relapse to a cult of the third rate, the deviate, the primitive and the depraved. The steady decline in spiritual and moral values makes one appreciate the values posited in Disraeli's work. In Lothair words like graciousness, honour, dignity, chivalry, courtesy, discipline, modesty and chastity are invested with meaning. Today, in literature and life, they have been wrecked by ridicule and cast aside. The literature of today seems to abound in self-expression, which so often is crudity and immorality.[1] Satiated with this, the modern reader finds much that adds a worthwhile dimension to his appreciation of the novels of Disraeli.

We see how different spiritual and intellectual agencies act upon the development of Lothair. Neither Bishop nor Cardinal attains his goal, for Theodora carries the day. She wins complete ascendancy over him by the sim-

1. The writer of this thesis is indebted here to a speech delivered by Dr. J.P. Duminy to the Institute of Citizenship.

plicity and purity of her nature. Her attitudes and ideas accord with Lothair's concepts of truth and justice, and he determines to devote his fortune and life to her service. On impulse he follows her to Italy, in the footsteps of Garibaldi. The commentary that follows does not suspend the development of the plot, as it is concerned with immediate events. A feature of Lothair is that it lacks the historical disquisitions on the origin of Whig oligarchy, or pictures of the House of Commons, that are found in the preceding novels. The story of Lothair covers almost exactly the period of Disraeli's third tenure of office, between 1866 and 1867, and any digressions are concerned with the delineation of social and political movements that formed the background to that turbulent time. The progress of events has point and relevance to the development of the plot, as seen in the following passage:

> "The continuous gathering of what, in popular language, were styled the Garibaldi Volunteers, on the southern border of the Papal territory in the autumn of 1867, was not the only or perhaps the greatest danger which then threatened the Holy See, though the one which most attracted it's alarmed attention. The considerable numbers in which this assemblage was suddenly occurring; the fact that the son of the Liberator had already taken its command, and only as the precursor of his formidable sire; the accredited rumour that Chirelli at the head of a purely Roman legion was daily expected to join the frontier force; that Nicotera was stirring in the old Neapolitan kingdom, while the Liberator himself at Florence and in other parts of Tuscany was even ostentatiously, certainly with impunity, preaching the new crusade and using all his irresistible influence with the populace to excite

> their sympathies and to stimulate their energy, might well justify the extreme apprehension of the court of Rome."[1]

In commanding prose and rapid dialogue, the author captures the novelty of foreign travel, the risk and responsibility, the perilous enterprises of the secret societies, the strangeness, excitement and quick movement of events. In the battle scenes, the author demonstrates that the secret societies are militant organizations. In this way, the prophet in English political life warns the world against the secret societies which could successfully subvert both church and state, and seize power. Theodora really has no further message to deliver, and is soon despatched on the battle-field, having at the last extracted from the grief-stricken Lothair an oath that he will guard against the schemes of the wily Catholic priesthood. Lothair himself is wounded while engaged in combat against the Papal troops, and is brought to Rome. A kindly Italian woman brings news of his plight to Clare Arundel, who is in Rome for the winter. She nurses him back to life. After his sorrows and great trials, Lothair welcomes the religious sentiments which he finds so solacing. Once more surrounded by office bearers of the Catholic Church, we realize that another powerful attempt is to be made to gain him for the Church of Rome. We are now presented with one of the central episodes of the book. A legend is evolved signifying that Lothair had been preserved through the personal intervention of the Virgin Mother. The Roman hierarchy is shown to be unscrupulous, yet all is revealed in delicate and ambiguous prose. The Roman

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Lothair, p. 276. London, 1881.

prelates and priests are drawn with astonishing exactness. The fidelity to convincing detail makes the execution of this dangerous theme remarkable. The fundamental conflict in the author's nature, which arose from his longing to be an artist as well as a statesman, resulted in a permanent and necessary disjunction of thought and feeling. He fails to attain the equipoise that in great literature results in the complete harmony of feelings and thoughts.

Lothair's perplexity gives way to indignation and despair. In an inimitable description of a conversation between Lothair and Cardinal Grandison, we see the English gentleman and man of honour contending with the adept reasoning of the skilled churchman. With seemingly irrefutable logic, he tells Lothair that a man who finds himself of one opinion in the case of a public event or a matter of fact and all orders of society of another, should not be encouraged to dwell on a perverted view, but should be gradually weaned from it. His speech is characterized by the abundance of witty anecdotes that are vessels in which the author distils his worldly wisdom. This is seen in the sequence in which the Cardinal attempts to persuade Lothair that he is suffering from fanciful delusions and puerile extravagance. He tells him that "King George IV. believed that he was at the battle of Waterloo, and indeed commanded there; and his friends were at one time a little alarmed; but Knighton, who was a sensible man, said, 'His majesty has only to leave off Curacoa, and rest assured he will gain no more victories'."[1]

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Lothair, p. 363. London, 1881.

Having unwittingly taken a prominent part in a dramatic service during which he has again unknowingly pledged himself to enter the Church, Lothair feels downcast and distraught. It is seemingly the darkest hour in his life. In Lothair we often find slipshod verbiage, yet we find too a precision and sharpness of effect that makes the prose full of point and life. In mellow tones we hear that: "The death of Theodora had shaken him to the centre. It was that first great grief which makes a man acquainted with his deepest feelings, which detracts something from the buoyancy of the youngest life, and dims, to a certain degree, the lustre of existence."[1] He effects his escape from a world where he has sadly learnt that theological deceptions are not reality and that the fathers of the Church are inevitably influenced in this life by its interests and passions.

Lothair encounters Mr. Phoebus, who re-introduces a vigorous sense of life. The party leave for Jerusalem. All Disraeli's heroes who want spiritual comfort are sent to Jerusalem, for it is a land of religious illumination. Again we are given an enthusiastic description of the view of Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives:

> "The fresh and golden light falls on a walled city with turrets and towers and frequent gates: the houses of freestone with terraced or oval roofs sparkle in the sun, while the cupolaed pile of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the vast monasteries, and the broad steep of Sion crowned with the Tower of David, vary the monotony of the general masses of building. But the glory of the scene is the Mosque of Omar as it rises on its broad platform of marble from the deep ravine of

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Lothair, p. 365. London, 1881.

> Hedron, with its magnificent dome high in the air, its arches and gardened courts, and its crescents glittering amid the cedar, the cypress, and the palm."[1]

He meets a rather shadowy Syrian Christian, whose religion is a simple following of Christ. Once again we hear the familiar lessons that lose nothing in the repetition. The spiritual is elevated above material considerations. He tells Lothair that science may prove the insignificance of the earth, but in the scale of creation it can never prove the insignificance of man, for man possesses an immortal soul. Disraeli believed that the salvation of youth resided in maintaining these ideals in the face of modern queries and defiance. Nosse omnia haec salus est adolescentulis is the quotation from Terence prefixed to the novel. We find here a continuing fidelity to the ideas characteristic of the author's youth.

The complex plot has almost been completely unravelled. The story has indeed ended before the last page, for there remains only one force left to control and conquer Lothair - the Anglican Church. Lothair returns to England to marry Corisande, the champion of British tradition.

Lothair is suffused with a spirit of freshness and buoyancy. It contains some of Disraeli's liveliest and most satirical writing. It is, too, a profound study of the spiritual and political forces at work in the history of nineteenth century Europe. It is a perfect observation, too, of patrician society in England in the era which was then passing. Though not a work of genius, it is the work of a genius.

The independent nature of this genius was seen in the

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Lothair, p. 407. London, 1881.

diplomatic triumphs that marked the years after the publication of Lothair. Disraeli scaled the heights of popularity and political success. In 1874, his second ministry began, which lasted till 1880. Only now, after a lifetime of consistent principles and effort did he have the opportunity to initiate a policy knowing that he had a strong party majority. His ministry was characterized by "Peace with Honour."[1] With the same reverence for traditional institutions which had so eloquently pervaded the political trilogy, he drew the constitutional monarchy, the peers, and the representative Parliament together. His legislative programme was devoted to the fulfillment of the election promises of forty years earlier - the improvement of the condition of the people. In 1847 he had declared he would support all those measures the object of which was to elevate the moral and social condition of the working classes, by lessening their hours of toil, by improving their means of health, and by cultivating their intelligence. He himself spoke wittily of his sanitas, sanitatum, omnia sanitas[2] programme. His breadth of vision enabled him to view the world not with a national patriotism, but with a cosmopolitan spirit. In 1876 the atrocities of the Turks in suppressing the Bulgarian insurrection, brought Gladstone out of political retirement to attack the Pro-Turkish Tories. Disraeli persisted in maintaining the territorial integrity of Turkey and preventing the advance of Russia to Constantinople. He authorised vigorous preparations for war and through his firm action preserved the peace of Europe.

1. George Earle Buckle, Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield, Vol. VI, p. 346. London, 1920.
2. Ibid. Vol. IV, p. 170. London, 1916.

Despite ill health Disraeli attended the Congress of Berlin, where he scored a glorious diplomatic success due to his firm and unwavering proposals. In 1880 the Liberals were returned to power. It was in this year, the year of his retirement from the political arena, that Disraeli turned again to his great love, the writing of fiction. In this year he finished Endymion, which was published in three volumes by Longmans, Green, And Co. in 1880.

It was Disraeli's farewell to the world he had loved and laughed at. It is an old man's book, a book of memories. To regard it, however, as the memoirs of his own public life, with the hero a composite "Bendymion," is to stray from the truth of the presentation. Many of the reminiscences were undoubtedly personal ones disguised sufficiently, but the central figure is as colourless and insipid as Disraeli himself was imaginative and brilliant. He is, in fact, no hero. To the reader it seems as if Disraeli, in his old age, was moving away from a concern with the hero to a concern with the heroic. If any dictum emerges from this novel, it is that heroic possibilities open to those prepared to aspire to great things, opportunities mainly effected through the decisive influence of women. This is really the dominating idea in Endymion. Although the main argument is unconvincing, the novel is full of interest, with an abundance of well conceived and ably presented characters, witty aphorisms, humour, and an intellectual vivacity that shows no abatement.

The book opens with the mixture of political history and romantic fiction with which the reader of Disraeli's

novels is so well acquainted. The retrospective glance at the past is tinged with regret but not remorse. We can detect a sadness in the political musings - perhaps at the futility of so many dreams and ideals - yet there is a compensating tranquillity which betokens a man who has no object but to tell the truth as he sees it.

The rapid succession of scenes is enlivened by an equally rapid pageant of characters that are either unfinished sketches, composite caricatures, or worthwhile portraits. In these personalities, facts and fancy are inextricably blended together, as in the delineation of Nigel Penruddock, the Anglican clergyman, who enters the Church of Rome and becomes a Cardinal. This is obviously drawn from the career of Manning, and in the generous treatment which Disraeli accords to this attractive character in Endymion, he restores a balance, since he had previously sketched Manning as the scheming Cardinal Grandison in Lothair. Nigel, in these early chapters of Endymion, is an attractive character with an appealing muscular brand of Christianity. His person is manly, his manner assured and his dress modish. His influence on Endymion is slight, however, for in this novel it is the enormous importance of women in directing and moulding the life of the political man that is stressed. This aspect of the theme can almost be described as the author's tribute to women, for Endymion's success as a young politician is brought about by female friendships. Myra, the sister of Endymion, is shown as the force who battles from the first against the adverse circumstances that threaten her brother's future. She consciously chooses to devote her life to moulding events and circumstances in his favour.

Having known the pride of public life, her ambitions on Endymion's behalf are boundless. With no advantages to boost their progress in life, it is her determination alone that assists her brother to work his way from small beginnings to the heights of political achievement. We see this complete dedication in her words to him after the death of their only remaining parent: "I shall always be content; for I shall always be thinking of you. However humble even my lot, if my will is concentrated on one purpose, it must ultimately effect it."[1] This is her religion. Her proud spirit and clear intelligence give rise to the belief that she is truly to be a source of inspiration and the mainstay of Endymion's career. Again we feel that the strength of her characterization detracts from the power of Endymion as a personality. With the determination of others fixing upon him as their protégé, he emerges as a nobody, who is fed with a spoon by devoted ladies from beginning to end. Although blessed with steadiness and a good pedigree, Endymion is a rather spiritless hero without any strong convictions.

The minor characters that flock through the first volume of the novel provide sparkle and glitter. Through their combined entrances and exits, they pad out the rather slight story with short sketches, essays and disquisitions. We meet Mr. Vigo, the tailor, who, though not a classical scholar, modestly admits that "there are two things which I think I understand - men and horses. I like to back them both when I think they ought to win."[2] Another satirical sketch that is vivid and diverting is that of St.

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Endymion, Vol. I, p. 270. London, 1880.
2. Ibid. Vol. I, p. 212.

Barbe. In reality this is a mordant satire of Thackeray, who had previously burlesqued Disraeli's style.[1] St. Barbe is shown as a witty and crotchety individual. Any concession he makes to acknowledge the common feelings of man is tipped with sarcasm: "I declare when I was eating that truffle, I felt a glow about my heart that, if it were not indigestion, I think must have been gratitude."[2]

The theme is made more congenial by the touches of worldly wisdom that embroider the text. In typical Disraelian fashion we read that the art of conversation is "to be prompt without being stubborn, to refute without argument, and to clothe grave matters in a motley garb."[3] In a more serious vein, the author, with the touching zest of an old man for youth and life, tells the reader: "One should never think of death. One should think of life. That is real piety."[4] This wisdom adds dignity and sincerity to the novel and contrasts happily with the cynical tone in the description of the sycophants of society, such as St. Barbe. Again we find a note of honest detachment and serious thought in the evaluation of the aspirations of the principal characters. Is public life so rewarding? Baron Sergius, a mysterious diplomat and man of influence, tells Endymion that "The most powerful men are not public men . . . A public man is responsible, and a responsible man is a slave. It is private life that governs the world . . . the more you are talked about the less powerful you are . . . do not at present be discontented that you are

1. Novels by Eminent Hands, "Codlingsby by D. Shrewsberry, Esq." - a skit originally published in Punch.
2. Benjamin Disraeli, Endymion, Vol. I, p. 308. London, 1880.
3. Ibid. Vol. I, p. 219.
4. Ibid. Vol. I, p. 248.

unknown. It is the first condition of real power . . . you will, some day, sigh for real power, and denounce the time when you became a public man, and belonged to anyone but yourself"[1]

The development of ideas is played off against a very real background that is sketched with power and attention to convincing detail. The element of simplicity in these descriptions of the natural world contrasts with the artificiality of man's world of scheming, division and strife. This devotion to the beauty around us roots the story in the earth, as it were, and yet the romantic imagination is ever at work even within the framework of these simple but effective descriptions:

> "The leaf had changed but had not fallen, and the vast spiral masses of the dark green juniper effectively contrasted with the rich brown foliage of the beech, varied occasionally by the scarlet leaves of the wild cherry tree, that always mingles with these woods. Around the house were some lime trees of large size, and at this period of the year, their foliage, still perfect, was literally quite golden. They seemed like trees in some fairy tale of imprisoned princesses or wandering cavaliers, and such they would remain, until the fatal night that brings the first frost."[2]

Volume two depicts Endymion successfully progressing towards his destiny. He speaks with the thoughtful fluency which knowledge alone can sustain. His essential practicality contrasts with the character of Mr. Bertie Tremaine, "who piqued himself on recognising the spirit of the age, adopted Liberal opinions with that youthful fervour which

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Endymion, Vol. I, p. 331. London, 1880.
2. Ibid. Vol. I, p. 122.

is sometimes called enthusiasm, but which is a heat of imagination subsequently discovered to be inconsistent with the experience of actual life."[1] The author has no intentions of allowing the hero to labour under similar delusions. He remains essentially predictable in his opinions, which makes him rather stolid, thus failing to pique the attention or curiosity of the reader. The element of surprise and spontaneity is captured in the characterization of Myra and Berengaria, who emerge as two finished portraits of the types of goddess on Mayfair Olympus. In ambitions and worldliness the two women are skilfully differentiated. Berengaria is depicted as the Queen of Society, the genius of Whiggism, refined in mind and manner. Myra is shown to be gifted with great character and intelligence. Their purpose in the novel is to prevent Endymion making mistakes, and to raise him from his present humiliating position to that prominent one destined for him. If destiny for its fulfilment ordains action, it is not Endymion who exerts himself to pluck the plum of office. He is a singularly passive hero who, however, obviously possesses the power of exciting others to action on his behalf. It must be admitted in his favour that he emerges as a character possessing a mind informed on the great questions of the day, yet free from prejudice. When party passion is at its highest, Endymion is shown to be capable of marshalling his facts with simplicity, and presenting for consideration inferences that prove irresistible in their logic.

He comes into contact with people representative of

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Endymion, Vol. II, p. 5. London, 1880.

all strata in society and all shades of political opinion and feeling. This Whig hero listens acutely to the views of Waldershare, who rather flamboyantly gives expression to the views of Young England, though it must be admitted, in a tone unlikely to provoke sympathy: "All diplomacy since the Treaty of Utrecht seems to me to be fiddle-faddle, and the country rewarded the great man who made that treaty by an attainder."[1] Aside from the broadening of Endymion's outlook that contrary views such as these promote, we become conscious of a development in Disraeli's art. The comprehensive picture of English political society from the Whig standpoint shows a detachment that was lacking in the novels written to vindicate certain viewpoints. The earlier novels, too, although highly imaginative, were subject in the political themes to the dictates of reason. Now we find an access of sentiment, and very often tender sentiment. We see this in the dignified person of the premier, Lord Roehampton, who muses over the painful dilemma of one who knows what it is "To have the feelings of youth and the frame of age."[2] Myra's marriage to such a man is a powerful instrument in her hands for Endymion's advancement.

With the reconstruction that follows the Bed-Chamber plot, Endymion becomes private secretary to the Secretary of State, Sidney Wilton. This position enables the author to enter fully into the domestic and commercial state of the country. From the point of view of construction these disquisitions, such as that on the Anti-Corn-Law League, are highly relevant to the narrative. In his observations,

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Endymion, Vol. II, p. 104. London, 1880.
2. Ibid. Vol. II, p. 88.

Endymion is shown to possess those abilities that earmark him for his future position. His encounter with Thornberry, a figure deriving from a study of Bright and Cobden, gives the author an opportunity of revealing the currents that threatened to sweep away much of the established financial order. Strident notes are heard in the uncompromising demand of Thornberry: "We must have free exchange."[1] It is here, too, that the author shows us the open mind of Endymion. A Whig in politics, we see that he is not prepared to conform without testing popular conclusions on the touchstone of his own intelligence. He counters the assertions of Thornberry with "To fight hostile tariffs with free imports, . . . is not that fighting against odds?"[2]

There is, too, the usual pageant of banquets and balls, made interesting by the pithy characterizations that people the scene. The author introduces a diverting group, the Neuchatels, who are quite recognizable as the Rothschild family. Here we see financial genius allied to culture and taste. It is not the characters alone who enliven these pages, but the witty dialogue that has lost none of the sparkle one associates with Disraelian repartee. This is clearly illustrated in the following passage, where a guest suggests to Lady Montfort that she should have invited Lady Bicester to her affair. Lady Montfort counters:

> "'She is too ugly.'
> 'Why, she came to my fancy ball, and it is not five years ago, as Mary, Queen of Scots!'

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Endymion, Vol. II, p. 270. London, 1880.
2. Ibid. Vol. II, p. 272.

'That must have been after the Queen's decapitation,' said Berengaria."[1]

Through all the flippancy of social glitter, the political realities form the background: "The royal marriage was very popular; but, unfortunately, it reflected no splendour on the ministry. The world blessed the queen and cheered the prince, but shook its head at the government."[2] Through these vicissitudes, Endymion, with his calm, wise judgement, feels a growing sense of responsible existence. Even at this stage, however, the course of his life is shown to be dependent less on his will than on women.

The third volume is concerned with his parliamentary career. He tries his luck on the hustings and gets into parliament. It is here that the numerous descriptions are reminiscent of much in the author's own life that had given it savour. He deals with canvassing in his old vein of sophisticated wit. It is in scenes and descriptions of this nature that we sense the memoirs of his public life:

> "The principal and most laborious incidents of the day were festivals which they styled luncheons, when the candidate and the ambulatory committee were quartered on some principal citizen with an elaborate banquet of several courses, and in which Mr. Ferrars' health was always pledged in sparkling bumpers. After the luncheon came two or three more hours of what was called canvassing; then, in a state of horrible repletion, the fortunate candidate, who had no contest, had to dine with another principal citizen, with real turtle soup, and gigantic turbots, entrées in the shape of volcanic curries, and rigid venison, sent as a compliment by a neighbouring peer."[3]

Endymion takes his seat in the House of Commons. In

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1. Benjamin Disraeli, Endymion, Vol. II, p. 231. London, 1880.
2. Ibid. Vol. II, p. 283.
3. Ibid. Vol. III, pp. 29, 30.

dealing with matters appertaining to the House, we sense the loving attention that is lavished on every detail. The author is unmistakably a parliamentarian by vocation and dedication. His knowledge of procedure gives authenticity to the many discussions in and out of the House. He even lingers over the many changes:

> "It is very different from what it was when I was your age. Up to Easter we rarely had a regular debate, never a party division; very few people came up indeed. But there was a good deal of speaking on all subjects before dinner. We had the privilege then of speaking on the presentation of petitions at any length, and we seldom spoke on any other occasion. After Easter there was always at least one great party fight. This was a mighty affair, talked of for weeks before it came off, and then rarely an adjourned debate. We were gentlemen, used to sit up late, and should have been sitting up somewhere else had we not been in the House of Commons. After this party fight, the House for the rest of the session was a mere club . . . I have heard Greek quoted here, but that was long ago, and a great mistake. The House was quite alarmed. Charles Fox used to say as to Quotation - 'No Greek; as much Latin as you like; and never French under any circumstances. No English poet unless he had completed his century.' These were like some other good rules, the unwritten orders of the House of Commons."[1]

Endymion gives his mind to foreign affairs, which is the powerful realm of politics. The formation of his character for his purpose in life is assisted by his intimacy with the great men of the age. We see how these friendships are of the first importance in public life, as we are shown how so much depends on the character of an individual, his habits of thought, his prejudices, super-

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Endymion, Vol. III, pp. 79, 80, 81. London, 1880.

stitions and health. The author successfully makes government an affair of human beings, not pen and paper. Endymion progresses. His statements are clear, his arguments appear difficult to counter and his manner remains modest. Evidently born for high position, power is not his absorbing object. He is a plastic hero, who is the willing object of the aspirations of others, though it must be admitted that his prudence and ability to always say and do the right thing seems to justify the vicarious ambitions of those around him.

The many currents of opinion and feeling in society come in for critical comment, thereby adding to the comprehensiveness of the study. There is, however, less insistence on the immediate actuality of the state of the country than a generalised expression of the author's views on the social, religious and political questions of the day. We meet again the Catholic Archbishop, Nigel Penruddock, whose constant purpose is clearly demonstrated to be the conversion of England. Through the agency of a striking literary creation, Count Ferroll, we are introduced to modes of thought prevalent on the continent. Here we see that the novel is in many ways a <u>bal masque</u> of the world, for Count Ferroll is a veiled version of Bismarck. The author's profound understanding of his temperament is seen in the following extract from a conversation that takes place between the Count and Endymion:

> "'My worthy master wants me to return home and be minister: I am to fashion for him a new constitution. I will never have anything to do with new constitutions; their inventors are always the first victims. Instead of making a constitution, he should make a country, and convert his heterogeneous domains into a

patriotic dominion.'
'But how is that to be done?'
'There is only one way; by blood and iron.'
'My dear count, you shock me!'
'I shall have to shock you a great deal more before the inevitable is brought about.'"[1]

The seriousness of such revelations might be the dominant tone of the novel, but there are always the sparkling innuendoes, gay witticisms and clever epigrams to relieve the solemnity. The profundity of the Archbishop's dicta on religion are offset by the quips of Waldershare:

"' . . . sensible men are all of the same religion.'
'And pray what is that?' inquired the prince.
'Sensible men never tell.'"[2]

Descriptions of solemn assemblies are balanced by airy speculation such as: "A dinner of wits is proverbially a palace of silence; and the envy and hatred which all literary men really feel for each other, especially when they are exchanging dedications of mutual affection, always ensure, in such assemblies, the agreeable presence of a general feeling of painful constraint."[3]

The story itself is brought to the expected conclusion. Myra, the sister of Endymion, shares the heart and throne of a reigning monarch (a transcript of Napoleon III). Endymion marries Lady Montfort, and rises from the position of Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to the pre-eminent position of Prime Minister.

The experience of a statesman who had played a great part in the direction of his country's affairs, pervades the book. It is this that makes Endymion full of interest.

1. Benjamin Disraeli, Endymion, Vol. III, p. 164. London, 1880.
2. Ibid. Vol. III, p. 135.
3. Ibid. Vol. III, p. 225.

It is an eloquent testimony to an undefeated spirit.

This spirit, even in its 77th year, was far from vanquished. Disraeli started a new novel of which he completed nine short chapters before his death.[1] This fragment shows vitality, an intellectual vivacity and an irrepressible sense of humour. All the qualities that mark the Disraelian novel are to be found here. The chapters revolve round a figure obviously based on a study of Gladstone. He is depicted as completely deficient in appreciation of the humorous in life. We are told that even as a boy he scarcely ever smiled. He differs, as might be expected, from Disraeli's imaginative heroes who could see the future, and make the future because they saw it. Joseph Toplady Falconet possesses no imagination. He is shown to aspire to devote his powers, which are exceptional, to the accomplishment of those objects which he believes to be the greatest. He desires to vindicate the cause of religious truth. As we have seen, his lack of imagination implies that his concept of religious truth is a singularly narrow one, lacking in a fuller and larger degree of Christian forbearance.

As short as the unfinished novel is, there is an abundance of humour, open and cleverly sly. We see this in the dialogue between Joseph and a noble lord:

> "They discussed his new life in the House of Commons, and Joseph took the opportunity of remarking that he had received some new information respecting the slave trade in the Red Sea and thought of bringing the matter forward. 'I think I would leave the Red Sea alone,' said the Earl. 'It was a miracle that saved

1. An Unfinished Novel, published in three instalments in The Times of January 20, 21 and 23, 1905.

us from being drowned in it before."[1]

There is a dramatic contrast too in the few characters who flit across the pages. Devoted as Joseph is to the exalted idea of vindicating religious truth, we are made to realize from the author's tone that he regards Joseph, despite his abilities and acquirements, as essentially a prig. In complete contrast is the Buddhist missionary, who enunciates grave and profound mysteries: "Death is only happiness, if understood."[2]

We see an awareness of current trends that are personified in certain allegorical figures, though of course the extent of this is difficult to ascertain in a fragment. This acute penetration into the significance of contemporary movements was seen in the study made of the secret societies in Lothair. Here, we see the author occupied with the then current notions of Nihilism.[3] With what must have seemed fantastic remoteness from actuality to the readers of this unfinished novel when first published, we hear one character speak of the aim to secure "the total destruction of the human species."[4] Today, with a world that has survived the genocidal policy of a Hitler, one wonders at the prophetic insight of the author.

As abbreviated as the few chapters are, they represent a fascinating literary creation for anyone who has

1. George Earle Buckle, The Life of Benjamin Disraeli Earl of Beaconsfield, Vol. V, Appendix p. 538. London, 1920.
2. Ibid. p. 540.
3. An extreme form of Socialism, the prelude to Bolshevism, which took form in Russia in the 50's of the last century, and was specially active in the 70's, and later, under Bakounin. It aimed at the complete overthrow of law, order and all existing institutions, with the idea of re-forming the world de novo.
4. George Earle Buckle, The Life of Benjamin Disraeli Earl of Beaconsfield, Vol. V, Appendix p. 556. London, 1920.

studied the development of the author through his novels. The fragment obviously does not hark back to the past, as does Endymion. It is set in the present, and gives promise of a novel of superlative interest and prophecy. This is, unfortunately, a matter for speculation. Did the author in that year of grace 1881, in some mystical way, register on the sensitive seismograph of his artist's soul the birth of the forces of despair, destruction and darkness that were to be unleashed in our century? One wonders.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Disraeli's novels were more than the conventional roman a these. In the sphere of English fiction his work marks a new and exciting development - that of the political novel. Novels with a purpose were common enough in the 19th century and one can trace the link between such works and the political novel as Disraeli established it in Coningsby, Sybil and Tancred. Political novels, however, propounding first principles for the foundation of a New Faith - this was an original contribution to the world of letters and herein lies Disraeli's literary significance. As a politician he had distinct aims which he attempted to clarify in his writing. Thus the ideas that constitute the core of the novels impose a political emphasis on his characters, which makes the novels intellectually stimulating. Disraeli concerns himself with party issues, so that the events chronicled are not merely the outer aspects of the political milieu. The developing philosophy which gives a unifying sweep to the novels established Disraeli's authority on political questions. He desired to re-establish social equilibrium in an England of Utilitarian principles. In the political trilogy he portrays an aristocracy which has betrayed its trust. He conceived of a radical group, Young England, which would strive to create an alliance between the Crown, Aristocracy and the People, cemented in the Established Church. He desired a rejuvenated aristocracy, one fully conscious of its national duties to the common people and

its responsibilities to the throne. These hierarchical terms he tempers with the medieval concept of reciprocal duties. The practical message of his political novels was this call to return to national feelings and national principles.

It is perfectly true that the Toryism presented to the world through the medium of these brilliant novels was an ideal Toryism, and could hardly have been reproduced in modern England any more than Plato's republic could have been reproduced in ancient Greece. In the conception of this creed, however, he reveals the intellectual power not only of the statesman, but of the creator. He was a realist whose immediate concern was with national issues, whose great desire was to be practical, and to this end he maintained that the Tory party as a national party should not practise on the sectarian prejudices of any portion of the people. The novels are given to the consideration of national requirements and rights. He declared that a political party could only hope to retain power by securing for all the people greater social felicity. He tried to do this by means of a programme which took into account the traditional habits of the people.

Disraeli was also, however, a dreamer and an idealist, who possessed a cosmopolitan outlook. With distinctness he could outline methods to elevate the condition of the people, yet he was able to envisage schemes for the preservation of an Empire. It is here that we see the flexibility of the form he established. From a study of foreign affairs, a detailed consideration of the Crown, Peerage, House of Commons, the condition of the People,

the importance of the Church and issues such as education and sanitation, we see how he turns to those moral and spiritual values which he perceived encompassing all our endeavours. These were the values he arrived at by thought, and as a statesman he sought to adjust them to the conditions of life around him. In this ultimate resolution of problems he only acknowledged moral progress. It is in the discussion of moral issues that he impresses the full force of his eloquence on his novels. It can be said of Disraeli: Le style est l'homme. His thoughts are couched in words that give the precise shade of poetic suggestion. The decision of thought is underscored by the certainty of the language. His clear vision seems to adapt the words to the desired effects, relying on precision more than atmosphere. The exuberant depiction of scenes and characters seldom deteriorates into unshackled wordiness. The effect of his writing is strengthened by this control of artistic sensibility and awareness of the limitations of the realms within which he was master. Within this framework he dramatised the ideas of liberty, truth and justice with dazzling brilliancy. Thus the novels embody insights of more than political interest, being concrete explorations of political themes which are always related to views of general and permanent interest. On the one hand we see a careful depiction of manners, customs, laws and traditions, on the other we have "those moral and political considerations which make nations great and by the influence of which alone men are distinguished from animals."[1] This is the larger and deeper view of

1. Selected Speeches of the Late Rt. Hon. the Earl of Beaconsfield. Arranged and edited by T.E. Kebbel. Vol. II, Pt. VI. London, 1882.

human affairs which makes the author's outlook such a comprehensive one. His nationalism is expanded to envelop broader issues. His aim was not merely to propound principles based on man's physical needs but on the necessities of human nature in its totality, spiritual, mental and material. He desired to satisfy what he believed to be the true and inherent aspirations of man. His heroes are primarily men imbued with courage and audacity that make them convincing as political heroes, yet these characterizations permitted the author to investigate too the exciting possibilities that exist in all fields of human endeavour. He progresses beyond a mere consideration of political heroes and penetrates to a deeper study of contemplative men engaged in action and the force for good which they embody.

Disraeli gave the novel a new intellectual standing as a vehicle which now offered great latitude for the presentation of countless ideas and creeds. His novels palpitated with an awareness of world problems and caused opinions to be re-orientated to meet the needs of an age of expanding horizons and universal change. They emerge not as dramatised ideas alone, but as sources of political wisdom because of the great understanding he brought to the consideration of political theories. This exploration of practicalities stands alongside the celebration of great mysteries. It is in this aspect of his work that we have testimony to the diversified mind of the author for whom the impassioned and intuitive were elements necessary for the comprehension of the mystery of life. Yet this mystical element is less of an enigma if one realizes that his heart was always with his own people,

for "he was a Hebrew to the heart of him. He was nominally a member of the Church of England, but his Christianity would scarcely find acceptance in any Christian community."[1]

Disraeli died in April, 1881. The whole civilised world mourned his loss. Princes, Dukes and Lords attended his funeral. At Westminster Abbey Canon Farrar chose for his funeral text: "Know ye not that a prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel?"

To the world of the arts he had given a new medium through which political convictions might be disseminated. Perhaps the great political novel has still to be written, but the foundation was laid by one who united in his novels the worlds of the statesman, dreamer and creator.

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1. J.A. Froude, The Earl of Beaconsfield, p. 108. London, 1890.

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