

## CHAPTER LXI

### BREAD FOR POTATOES

AS PRIME MINISTER, Sir Robert Peel was now not in office merely but in power:

*July 6, 1850:* . . . He considered himself the Minister of the Nation, whose mission it was to redress the balance which mistaken maxims or partial legislation had deranged, and to confine the interest of all classes in one homogeneous system, by which the prosperity and happiness of the whole commonwealth would be promoted. . . . If his party were disgusted with him, he was no less disgusted with them, and it is easy to conceive that he must have been sickened by their ignorance and presumption, their obstinacy and ingratitude. He turned to the nation for that justice which his old associates denied him.

According to Wharnccliffe, "no man was ever more easy to act with, more candid and conciliatory, and less assuming than Peel in the Cabinet."

*November 2, 1842:* At Windsor yesterday for a Council; almost all the Cabinet went together in a special train. A Whig engineer might have produced an instantaneous and complete change of Government. The Royal consent was given to the marriage of the Princess Augusta with the Prince of Mecklenburg-Strelitz. The Chancellor [Lyndhurst] was there, looking very ill and broken, but evidently wishing to be thought strong and capable. He not only affected to be very merry, but very active, and actually began a sort of dancing movement in the drawing room, which reminded me of Queen Elizabeth and the Scotch ambassador; seventy years of age, ten years of idleness, and a young wife will not do for the labour of the Great Seal.

Peel had now "a grand career open to him and the means of rendering himself truly great."

*September 1, 1841:* . . . Those liberal views, which terrified or

exasperated High Tories, High Churchmen, and bigots of various persuasions, those expressed or supposed opinions and intentions which elicited the invectives of the "British Critic", or the impertinences of "Catholicus," were to me a satisfactory earnest that, whenever he might arrive at the height of power, he was resolved to stretch his wings out and fly in the right direction. . . . It is not worth his while, with his immense fortune, high position, and great reputation, to be a mere commonplace Minister, struggling with the embarrassments and the prejudices of his own party.

*May 18, 1838:* . . . Peel said to him [Morpeth], when they were going out to divide, "I can appreciate a good speech when made against me as well as when it is for me, and I must tell you that yours was the best speech of the debate." This was becoming and judicious, and such courtesies soften the asperities of Parliamentary warfare.

Peel was a stickler for political etiquette. When Lord John Russell sent him a letter (January 29, 1840) beginning "My dear Sir" and asking about the Speakership:

*January 29, 1840:* . . . He replied in the coldest and driest terms. "Sir Robert Peel presents his compliments to Lord John Russell," expressing his surprise at his letter, saying he had no right to call upon him for any explanation of his intentions.

*July 22, 1847:* . . . It seems that after some of his [Croker's] former attacks he tried to put himself on his former footing of intimacy with Peel, and wrote to him "My dear Peel." Peel would not hear of it, wrote to him a dry, formal answer, and told him in so many words that their intimacy was at an end. Croker was furious, and has been overflowing with gall and bitterness ever since.

*February 22, 1834:* . . . Peel is the first, and, except Stanley, almost the only real orator in it. He speaks with great energy, great dexterity—his language is powerful and easy; he reasons well, hits hard, and replies with remarkable promptitude and effect; but he is at an immense distance below the great models of eloquence, Pitt, Fox, and Canning; his voice is not melodious, and it is a little monotonous; his action is very ungraceful, his person and manner are vulgar, and he has certain tricks in

his motions which exhibit that vulgarity in a manner almost offensive, and which is only redeemed by the real power of his speeches. His great merit consists in his judgment, tact and discretion, his facility, promptitude, thorough knowledge of the assembly he addresses, familiarity with the details of every sort of Parliamentary business, and the great command he has over himself.

Peel, too, would stand no nonsense from minorities who "obstruct" business in the House of Commons:

*April 6, 1848:* . . . If they find themselves thwarted by a minority moving successive adjournments, to sit there for any number of hours; to divide twenty or thirty times; and at last, when they had sufficiently proved to the country that their efforts were vain, and that they had exhausted all legitimate means, to give up the contest, instantly hold a Cabinet, and then a Council, by which they should do by Order in Council what they wished to do by Act of Parliament, and trust to public opinion and Parliament to support and sanction their proceedings.

Peel (August 10, 1831) was thus expected "to act upon liberal and popular principles, and upon them to govern or not at all." The Whigs suggested that the parties coöperate over the Poor Law:

*August 28, 1841:* . . . Lord John also sent to Peel and offered to bring in the Poor Law Bill for a year, if he liked it. Peel sent him word he was much obliged to him for the offer, but that he must exercise his own discretion in the matter. They thought this very *Peelish* and overcautious, but I don't know that he could do otherwise. It is creditable and satisfactory to observe the good tone and liberal feeling mutually evinced between the leaders.

There was (September 22d) "skirmishing in the House of Commons where a Whig or a Radical every now and then fires a little shot at the new Government."

*August 28, 1841:* . . . Peel seems to have spoken out, and to have announced to friend and foe that he will resolutely follow

his own course. If he adheres to this and takes a bold flight, he may be a great man.

*August 10, 1841:* . . . Peel's mind is not made of noble material, but he has an enlarged capacity and has had a vast experience of things, though from his peculiar disposition a much more limited one of men. If he takes a correct and a lofty view of his own situation—and to be correct it must be lofty—he will succeed.

*September 4, 1841:* . . . I thought to myself, "You are a very clever man; you are not a bad man; but you are not great." He may become as great a Minister as abilities can make any man; but to achieve real greatness, elevation of mind must be intermingled with intellectual capacity, and this I doubt his having. There is a something which will confine his genius to the earth instead of letting it soar on high.

What Peel had to face was the transformation of England from agriculture to industry:

*May 10, 1845:* . . . It certainly is a very astonishing creation, and most interesting to see the growing and youthful state of a town [Birkenhead], which in a few years will probably be a vast city. The present managers of this thriving concern are projecting establishments and expending vast sums of money on various works, with an undoubting confidence that the town will go on in an increase corresponding to the magnitude of their plans. Not many years ago the ground was an unprofitable marsh. They showed us a small white house, which was the first that was built, and which stood alone for some time. The property belonged to a Mr. Price, and when first the notion of speculating in building there occurred to the late Mr. Laird (I think it was), and a negotiation took place for the purchase of land, £50,000 was the sum offered Mr. Price for his property. Not long after he was offered £100,000, and this time a bargain was nearly completed, and the only difference between the parties was whether it should be pounds or guineas. Luckily for Mr. Price it went off upon this, and such was the rapid increase in the value of the land, that he has since sold it for considerably above a million. We went to see the pier and the place where the docks are to be; then to Mr. Laird's ship-building establishment, and saw the iron steam frigate they are

building; then to the park, and then to the new market-place. Everything is well done, and no expense spared. The present population is 16,000, but they are building in every direction.

*Worsley, November 22, 1845:* I came here, for the first time, on Monday last, to see the fine new house Francis Egerton has built. . . . The house stands on an eminence, and commands a very extensive prospect of a rich flat country, the canal running beneath, not a quarter of a mile off, while a little further off the railroad crosses Chat Moss, and all day long the barges are visible on the one, and continual trains snort and smoke along the other, presenting a lively exhibition of activity and progress. But it is a miserable country to live in; so wet and deep that the roads all about are paved, and the air is eternally murky with the fire and smoke vomited forth from hundreds of chimneys and furnaces in every direction; no resources, such as hunting and shooting, and no society but the rare visitants from distant parts. In such a place as this they have expended £100,000 in a fine house, with all the appendages of gardens, etc., and they have done this and much more from a sense of duty, from fully recognizing the authority of the maxim that "property has its duties as well as its rights." The Duke of Bridgewater created this vast property, and his enterprise and perseverance were crowned with a prodigious success. He called into activity and gave employment to an immense population, and he occasionally resided at Worsley, to have the satisfaction of witnessing the astonishing results which he had obtained; but with this he was contented. He bequeathed the canal and the collieries to his agent Bradshaw, with unlimited power of management, in trust for the late Duke of Sutherland, and after him to Francis Egerton. During the long reign of Bradshaw and the Duke the property continued to increase in value. Bradshaw was a profligate old dog, who feathered his own nest and lived a dissolute life. The Duke touched the proceeds, and never troubled himself about the source from which he derived them. . . .

. . . I have passed these few days in seeing this place and some of the manufacturing wonders at Manchester. On Tuesday I went over the house and place; and then to Francis' yard, a sort of small dockyard and manufactory; then on the canal in the Trust boat—a luxurious barge fitted up with every convenience



and comfort, with a fireplace, and where one may write, read, and live just as in the house; a kitchen behind. The boat is drawn by two horses with postillions in livery, and they trot along at a merry pace, all the craft (except, by compact, "the Swift boats," as they are called) giving way to the Trust boat. On Wednesday I went through the subterraneous canal, about a mile and a half long, into the coalpit, saw the working in the mine and came up by the shaft; a black and dirty expedition, scarcely worth the trouble, but which I am glad to have made. The colliers seem a very coarse set, but they are not hard worked, and, in fact, do no more than they choose. There are many miles of this underground canal. On Thursday I went to Manchester, and saw one of the great cotton and one of the great silk manufactories; very curious even to me, who am ignorant of mechanics, and could only stare and wonder without being able to understand the niceties of the beautiful and complicated machinery by which all the operations of these trades are performed. The heat of the rooms in the former of them was intense, but the man who showed them to us told us it was caused by the prodigious friction, and the room might be much cooler, but the people liked the heat. Yesterday I went to the infant school, admirably managed; then to the recreation ground of the colliers and working hands—a recent establishment. It is a large piece of ground, planted and levelled round about what is called the paying-house, where the men are paid their wages once a fortnight. The object is to encourage sports and occupations in the open air, and induce them not to go to the alehouse. There are cricket, quoits, and football, and ginger-beer and coffee are sold to the people, but no beer or spirits. This has only a partial success. Afterward to Patricroft, to see Messrs. Nasmyth's great establishment for making locomotive engines every part of which I went over. I asked at all the places about the wages and habits of the workpeople. In Birley's cotton factory 1,200 are employed, the majority girls, who earn from ten to fourteen shillings a week. At Nasmyth's the men make from twenty to thirty-two shillings a week. They love to change about, and seldom stay very long at one place; some will go away in a week, and some after a day. In the hot factory room, the women look very wan, very dirty, and one should guess very miserable. They work eleven

hours generally, but though it might be thought that domestic service must be preferable, there is the greatest difficulty in procuring women servants here. All the girls go to the factory in spite of the confinement, labour, close atmosphere, dirt, and moral danger which await them. The parents make them go, because they earn money which they bring home, and they like the independence and the hours every evening, and the days from Saturday to Monday, of which they can dispose.

*Worsley, November 24, 1845:* . . . then to Messrs. Hoyle's calico-printing establishment; extremely well worth seeing, interesting, and the more so because intelligible. People know very little how many processes the calico they wear so cheaply goes through, and what a mighty business its preparation is. They told us 800 men were employed here, the highest wages two guineas a week. The room containing the copper cylinders has in it a capital of £100,000, the cost of these cylinders. I was surprised to hear that the price of labour (the wages) is not affected by the more or less irksome nature of the employment. The workman at the calico printing, which is much more agreeable than the cotton-weaving business, is as highly paid as the latter, perhaps more highly; indeed the lowest rate of wages seems to be at the mill.

Lord Ashley (afterward Earl of Shaftesbury) struck straight at hours of labour:

*March 31, 1844:* I never remember so much excitement as has been caused by Ashley's Ten Hours Bill, nor a more curious political state of things, such intermingling of parties, such a confusion of opposition; a question so much more open than any question ever was before, and yet not made so or acknowledged to be so with the Government; so much zeal, asperity, and animosity, so many reproaches hurled backwards and forwards. . . . John Russell voting for "ten hours," against all he professed last year, has filled the world with amazement, and many of his own friends with indignation. It has, I think, not redounded to his credit, but, on the contrary, done him considerable harm. . . . Melbourne is all against Ashley; all the political economists of course; Lord Spencer strong against him. Then Graham gave the greatest offence by taking up a word of the *Examiner's* last Sunday, and calling it a *Jack Cade*

*legislation*, this stirring them to fury, and they flew upon him like tigers. Ashley made a speech as violent and factious as any of O'Connell's, and old Inglis was overflowing with wrath. . . . Lyndhurst rubbed his hands with great glee, and said, "Well; we shall hear no more of 'aliens' now, people will only talk of Jack Cade for the future," too happy to shift the odium, if he could, from his own to his colleague's back. . . . Ashley . . . will go on agitating session after session; and a philanthropic agitator is more dangerous than a repealer, either of the Union or the Corn Laws. We are just now overrun with philanthropy, and God knows where it will stop, or whither it will lead us.

With the great cities clamouring for food, the ports were closed to imports by high tariffs. Cobden and Bright declared, therefore, for Free Trade:

*July 11, 1841:* . . . The Whigs complain bitterly of the apathy and indifference that have prevailed, and cannot recover from their surprise that their promises of cheap bread and cheap sugar have not proved more attractive.

Over the Corn Laws, the Whigs themselves were divided. Lord Spencer (December 15, 1841) "had always been persuaded, and was still, that the present Corn Laws could not be maintained." On the other hand (January 1, 1846), the "opinions" of Palmerston and Melbourne were "strong and decided" against Repeal.

Yet there had been a Commission (November 28, 1841) sent to Paris "to treat with the French Government about a Commercial treaty on the principles of Free Trade."

For years, the issue had been developing in urgency:

*July 6, 1850:* . . . He [Peel] had been the vigorous and ingenious advocate of the protective system, not, however, without some qualifications and reservations, which, though they were enough to excite the jealousy and mistrust of the most suspicious, were still insufficient to neutralize the effect of his general professions. It is almost impossible to discover what the process was by which he was gradually led to embrace the whole doctrine of Free Trade. We cannot distinguish what effect was made upon his mind by the reasoning, and what



by the organization and agitation, of the Anti-Corn Law League.

Charles Villiers, as an Anti-Corn Law Leaguer, impressed Greville into a prophecy:

*August 25, 1837:* . . . He predicts, however, with greater appearance of reason, that the question of the Corn Laws will, before long, become of paramount interest and importance, and I am induced to think that, the next great struggle that takes place will be for their repeal.

After five more years of short rations:

*November 2, 1842:* . . . The Ministers are all come to hold Cabinets and lay their heads together with, God knows, plenty to occupy them. Lord Wharncliffe and Kay Shuttleworth, who are both come from the north, have given me an account of the state of the country and of the people which is perfectly appalling. There is an immense and continually increasing population, deep distress and privation, no adequate demand for labour, no demand for anything, no confidence, but a universal alarm, disquietude, and discontent. Nobody can sell anything. Somebody said, speaking of some part of Yorkshire, "This is certainly the happiest country in the world, for *nobody wants anything.*" . . . Certainly I have never seen, in the course of my life, so serious a state of things as that which now stares us in the face; and this, after thirty years of uninterrupted peace, and the most ample scope afforded for the development of all our resources; . . . those who clamour for the repeal of the Corn Laws, at least those who know anything of the matter, do not really believe that repeal would supply a cure for our distempers.

*January 16, 1843:* . . . It is curious to look at the sort of subjects which now nearly monopolize general interest and attention. First and foremost there is the Corn Law and the League; the Corn Law, which Charles Villiers (I must do him the justice to say) long ago predicted to me would supersede every other topic of interest, and so it undoubtedly has. Then the condition of the people, moral and physical, is uppermost in everybody's mind, the state and management of workhouses and prisons, and the great question of education. The news-

papers are full of letters and complaints on these subjects, and people think, talk, and care about them very much.

The real question, however, was whether Peel could carry, not the Whigs, but a party so Protectionist as the Tories. The Duke of Buckingham, representing the "landed interest" (February 1, 1842), quietly resigned. And a day or two later, the reason was obvious:

*February 5, 1842:* . . . The Queen's speech was much like all others, but derived an interest from the notice about Corn. The secret of the measure has been so well kept that up to this time nobody knows what they are going to propose. The Opposition people affect to consider it a great triumph for them, and that the Government are disgraced by the adoption of measures so similar to those by which their predecessors fell. . . . It must be owned, however, that what is now going to happen is another exemplification of what I have long seen to be an established fact in politics—viz., that the Tories only can carry Liberal measures. The Whigs work, prepare, but cannot accomplish them; the Tories directly or indirectly thwart, discourage, and oppose them till public opinion compels them to submit, and then they are obliged to take them up.

The Duke of Buckingham had gone bankrupt even under Protection:

*August 16, 1848:* Went on Saturday with Lord Lansdowne and Granville to Stowe: it was worth seeing, but a sorry sight; a dull, undesirable place, not without magnificence. The garden front is very stately and palatial; the house full of trash mixed with some fine things; altogether a painful monument of human vanity, folly, and, it may be added, wickedness, for wickedness it is thus recklessly to ruin a great house and wife and children.

Peel's first proposal (February 11th) was "a sliding scale of corn duties descending from 20s. to 1s. as the price rose":

*February 11, 1842:* On Wednesday night Peel produced his modification of the Corn Law in an elaborate speech (which bored everybody very much) of nearly three hours long. . . . His plan was received with coldness and indifference by his

own people, and derision by the Opposition, and they all cried out that it was altogether useless, and would in reality effect no change at all. . . . Wharnccliffe owned to me that it was a mountain producing a mouse. . . . Charles Villiers said it was worthless and not so good as Canning's in 1827. Brougham said it was worth something as an instalment.

"The question," wrote Greville on February 19, 1842, "is now considered by everybody to be settled for a few years." Peel introduced an income tax:

*March 13, 1842:* On Friday night, in the midst of the most intense and general interest and curiosity, heightened by the closeness and fidelity with which the Government measures had been kept secret, Peel brought forward his financial plans in a speech of three hours and forty minutes, acknowledged by everybody to have been a masterpiece of financial statement. The success was complete; he took the House by storm; and his opponents, though of course differing and objecting on particular points, did him ample justice. A few people expected an income tax, but the majority did not. . . . His own party, *nolentes aut volentes*, have surrendered at discretion, and he has got them as well disciplined and as obedient as the crew of a man-of-war. . . . Only a few weeks ago I heard from my Whig friends of nothing but his weakness and embarrassments, and of all the difficulties his own supporters would cause him, what a poor figure he cut, etc.; but now they have not a word to say, and one of them who had been loudest in that strain brought to the Travellers', where I was dining, an account of Peel's speech, and said, "One felt, all the time he was speaking, 'Thank God, Peel is Minister!'" There can be no doubt that he is now a very great man.

*March 20, 1842:* . . . Various objections are raised in different quarters with more or less reason, the principal one with regard to the income tax being the unfairness of taxing incomes derived from temporary to the same extent as those which are derived from permanent sources.

*March 23, 1842:* . . . Melbourne, to do him justice, is destitute of humbug, does not see things through the medium of his wishes or prejudices, but thinks impartially, and says what he thinks. He said Peel would carry all his points, and that there

would be no serious opposition in the country, for if any public meetings were called, the Chartists would be sure to outvote any resolution against the income tax. Then he thought the regular war which the Opposition had declared was very useful to him, as it was the very thing which would keep his own party together, silence their objections, and make them come down and vote steadily with him.

Yet there was trouble:

*September 1, 1842:* . . . Parliament was no sooner up than the riots broke out, sufficiently alarming but for the railroads, which enabled the Government to pour troops into the disturbed districts, and extinguish the conflagration at once. . . . It is remarkable that whilst England and Scotland have been thus disturbed, Ireland has been in the profoundest tranquillity, and when everybody, themselves included, feared that Ireland would be hardly governable under Tory rule, they have not had the slightest difficulty in that quarter.

The placidity of Ireland depended on the potato. And the hunger of the 'Forties, still a tradition in the British Isles, rose to "a gigantic height" owing to—

*London, November 16, 1845:* . . . the evil of the potato failure, affecting in its expected consequences the speculations, and filling with fear and doubt every interest. That the mischief in Ireland is great and increasing is beyond a doubt, and the Government are full of alarm, while every man is watching with intense anxiety the progress of events, and enquiring whether the Corn Laws will break down under this pressure or not.

Wellington had been difficult:

*November 30, 1841:* . . . A correspondence has just appeared in the papers between the Duke of Wellington and the Paisley deputation, which is exceedingly painful to read, calculated to be very injurious to the Government, whom their enemies are always accusing of indifference to the public distress, and which, in my opinion, exhibits a state of mind in the Duke closely bordering on insanity. This deputation is come up to represent the distress prevailing at Paisley, and they ask for

an interview to lay the case before the Duke. He refuses to see them, and writes a letter much in the style of his printed circulars, alleging that he has no time, and that he holds no office, and has no influence. They remonstrate temperately and respectfully, still press for the interview, and then he makes no reply whatever. All this is lamentable; it is a complete delusion he is under; he has nothing to do, and he has boundless influence.

But even the Duke had later to take the situation seriously:

*January 13, 1846:* . . . Perrepoint considers this to be the cause of the unapproachable state of irritation in which he has been during the autumn. The Duke says, "rotten potatoes have done it all; they put Peel in his d—d fright"; and both for the cause and the effect he seems to feel equal contempt. When he found that Peel was determined to meddle with the Corn Laws, he wrote a long paper against it, but said that he should defer to Peel, and certainly not leave the Government, if the majority of the Cabinet were in favour of the measure.

As late as February 8, 1844, Peel took up "a decided attitude" and "declared that he did not mean to make any alteration at all in the present Corn Law, either as to duty or scale." And this was "an agreeable announcement to his friends." After all, as Lord Bessborough put it (January 4, 1846), "none of the potatoes are entirely spoilt." Like the curate's egg, they were good in parts. Also we have this:

*March 23, 1847:* . . . There is no doubt whatever that, while English charity and commiseration have been so loudly invoked, and we have been harrowed with stories of Irish starvation, in many parts of Ireland the people have been suffered to die for want of food, when there was all the time plenty of food to give them, but which was hoarded on speculation. But what is still more extraordinary, people have died of starvation with money enough to buy food in their pockets. I was told the night before last that Lord de Vesci had written to his son that, since the Government had positively declared they would not furnish seed, abundance of seed had come forth, and, what was more extraordinary, plenty of potatoes; and Labouchere told me there had been three coroner's inquests, with verdicts "star-



vation," and in each case the sufferers had been found to have considerable sums of money in their possession, and in one (if not more) still more considerable sums in the savings bank: yet they died rather than spend their money in the purchase of food.

But it became more evident daily that the sliding scale on corn had failed. Ireland "was in a flame." And (June 15, 1843) the "Corn Law quarrels" continued. Indeed, "the cauldron is surely bubbling and fizzing as merrily as need be." Peel, "having shown himself unequal to a great emergency," had "become very unpopular." Indeed, "the political world is out of joint."

What Peel himself realized was (December 13, 1846) "that the state of Ireland is so awful, with famine and complete disorganization, and a social war probable, that money and coercive laws must have been called for." Yet, as he thought, "these they could not demand of Parliament and leave the Corn Laws as they are."

But while Peel was "panic-struck" over "the supposed deficiency of food" and therefore "resolved to repeal the Corn Laws," he had decided "only to attempt it provided he could do so with a unanimous Cabinet." His colleagues "begged him not to be in a hurry" and "he said he would not and would take twenty-four hours to consider it."

Suddenly, Lord John Russell, "without concert with or the knowledge of anybody," wrote a letter which "fell like a spark on a barrel of gunpowder." It pledged the Whig party to "total repeal" (February 18, 1846) and "struck despair into the hearts of the Protectionists." And "though it appeared to put him [Peel] in fresh difficulty," as events were to show, "it really was of service." It forced a willing hand.

Peel's chief supporter in the new policy was Lord Aberdeen. He it was who went to see Delane, editor of the *Times*:

*London, December 5, 1845:* I came to town yesterday, and find political affairs in a state of the greatest interest and excitement. The whole town had been electrified in the morning by an article in the *Times*, announcing, with an air of certainty and authority, that the discussions and disputes in the Cabinet had terminated by a resolution to call Parliament together early in January, and propose a total repeal of the Corn Laws,

and that the Duke had not only consented, but was to bring forward the measure in the House of Lords.

*December 9, 1845, Tuesday:* . . . The agitation, excitement, and curiosity are universal and intense. The rising wrath of the Tories and landlords is already muttering at the bare suspicion of the intended act, and it will be awful when all the truth breaks upon them.

The *Standard* appeared "with a contradiction of the *Times* in large letters."

*December 6, 1845:* . . . Wharncliffe came into my room from the Cabinet much excited, but apparently rather hilarious. I asked him if he had seen the *Standard*. He said no, he wanted to see it. He read it, and then said, "What do you say to that?" I said, I laughed at it, and had not a doubt that the *Times* was right. "Very well," he replied, "it will soon be seen who is right; but I tell you the *Times* has been mystified, and neither you nor Reeve know anything of what is going on."

*December 9, 1845, Tuesday:* On Saturday afternoon Wharncliffe came to the office and sent for me. I found him walking about the room, when he immediately broke out, "Well, I must say the impudence of the *Times* exceeds all I ever knew." "What's the matter?" I asked, "what have they done?" "Why, notwithstanding the contradiction in the *Standard* last night, they have not only neither qualified nor withdrawn their assertion, but have repeated the statement more positively than before. I must say this beats every other impudence." "Well," I said, "don't you see the reason? Namely, that the *Times* does not care for the denial of the *Standard*, and thinks its own authority for the statement better than any the *Standard* can have for denying it." . . . He said, "Well, I do mean to say that all this is untrue, it is not the fact; I positively tell you so, and I mean it without any quibbling whatever." "Very well, of course you know and I cannot, and I am bound to believe you. May I then contradict it on your authority?" "No, I will not have my name used. I tell you not to believe it, and you may say what you please as from yourself, but I will not have my authority mentioned, and events will contradict it soon enough." We had a great deal more talk. He complained of the mischief that the report had done, and the speculation

it had set afloat. After this contradiction, so positive, specific, and peremptory, I knew not what to believe.

Here then were Lords Wharncliffe and Aberdeen, both in the Cabinet and each contradicting—so it seemed—the other.

Yet what each man said was a part of the truth:

*Thursday, December 11, 1845:* On Tuesday afternoon Lord Wharncliffe sent for me, and told me Parliament was to be prorogued, but not called for despatch of business. This was enough: it satisfied me that the Ministers were out; there was no other solution of so strange a fact. Yesterday morning we went down to the Council at Osborne; the Duke joined us at Basingstoke. Nothing was said. I never saw the Cabinet in such a state of hilarity. Peel was full of jokes and stories, and they all were as merry (apparently and probably really) as men could be. Peel and Aberdeen alone had long audiences of the Queen; nothing transpired there. . . . Not one of them hinted to me what was going on, and the only thing said about it was a joke of Stanley's, who said to a Bishop, who was of the party, that the right reverend prelate had probably often seen as much patience, but never could have seen so much resignation.

The Cabinet had split.