

## CHAPTER LXIX

### BLESSING THE BANNERS

THE marriage of the Spanish Princesses was followed by a honeymoon, diplomatic and almost military. With the fatuity of a philosopher, De Tocqueville regarded the affair in asinine fashion as an amusing tit for tat:

*January 24, 1847:* . . . This morning I called on Tocqueville and sat some time with him and his wife, an Englishwoman. He looks as clever as he is, and is full of vivacity, and at the same time of simplicity, in his conversation. . . . Said the marriage question was most decidedly popular in France, because considered as having given us a check which had paid off old scores, and that the being now *quits* had rendered a future good understanding more easy.

Like grit on a boot, here was an irritation, however, the sparks from which were calculated to ignite those dumps of munitions that cannot explode without wrecking a continent.

The fear that France would annex Spain was hardly serious:

*January 21, 1847:* . . . The Infanta's marriage was unpopular, French influence on the wane, and . . . if the country is only left alone, the feeling of Spanish independence will be enough to provide an opposition to French influence.

*September 24, 1846:* . . . While the wily King [Louis Philippe] thinks to make the brutal Spaniard his tool, the Spaniard, not less wily, quite as unscrupulous, more passionate and vindictive, and swelling with an ambition of his own, is gone back with a resolution to play a very different part from what is expected of him—to throw over Louis Philippe and Christina, rouse the sentiment of national independence and hatred of France, and deliver his country from the yoke of French domination or influence. . . . The Government is sold to Christina; the Cabinet is nothing but a knot of her satellites; Munoz, Isturitz, Mon,

and Pidal are all leagued together with Bresson, the French Ambassador; the Cortes is packed, the Press is gagged; the people cannot make themselves heard. The elements of disorder are, however, scattered about.

What became really serious was the "war of notes" between England and France. Guizot was "amazed at the sharpness of their contents."

*January 12, 1847:* . . . If Spain, which had once been a military *champ de bataille*, was henteforward to be a political *champ de bataille* between the two countries, I did not see how any entente was possible. Must this last forever?

Bad faith was the air that men breathed. If a Salic law for Spain was proposed, it was not merely that (December 30, 1846) the idea was "utterly chimerical." It was not considered on merits. As Prime Minister, Lord John Russell thought that "nothing would come of it but some fresh falsehood and deceit."

The British Ambassador in Paris was Lord Normanby. Mme. de Lieven (January 6, 1847) talked much of "his greenness . . . and the follies he committed." Jarnac, the French Ambassador in London, complained that:

*December 25, 1846:* . . . Normanby had openly said that the two countries could never be on good terms again till Guizot was turned out and we had obtained a renunciation from the Duchess de Montpensier; . . . [Greville replied to Jarnac that] lies of this sort were always rife on such occasions, and I had just heard a story of Louis Philippe's abusing our Queen at the tea table at Neuilly, which I had no doubt was just as false as the one he had told me, and they might be set against one another.

The charge of treachery against Louis Philippe was direct. "It was the first time," said Palmerston "[that] a King of France had broken his word."

*Paris, January 6, 1847:* . . . She [Mme. de Lieven] said that the King was very angry with our Queen for having said that he had broken his word, and never would be reconciled to her till she had withdrawn that accusation, I said that between

his word and hers I could not for a moment doubt, and that I suspected he would have a long time to wait if he did so till she withdrew the charge she had made.

That Britain had been "jockeyed by France in a very shabby, uncartdid, underhand way" was obvious:

*Saturday, January, 1847:* . . . At the clubs I learnt the confirmation of what I had been led to believe the day before, the extraordinary impression made here [in Paris] by the publication of our blue book.

Even Mme. de Lieven was at last convinced:

*January 26, 1847:* . . . When I did return I found the perusal of the papers had made a great impression on her. She said there were many curious things she did not know before. I said, "Certainly, so I told you."

*Wednesday, January, 1847:* . . . They now acknowledge that "*sans contestation vous n'avez jamais voulu ni rien fait pour le Coburg.*" I asked her whether this was Guizot's opinion, and she said, "*Parfaitement.*" This is incomparably cool. After having had the most reiterated assurances *before the fact*, which they utterly disregarded, and did not choose to believe, now that the fact is accomplished, and it suits their purpose to make it up, they acknowledge that they were in error, and acted on a mistaken notion.

Nor was Palmerston inclined to take it lying down:

*February 25, 1847:* . . . His fixed idea is to humble France, and to wage a diplomatic war with her on the Spanish marriages, and to this object to sacrifice every other. He is moving heaven and earth to conciliate the Northern Courts. Ponsonby is doing everything he can at Vienna, and holding the most *despotic* language.

In January, 1846, Palmerston was expecting a return to office. He paid a visit, therefore, to Paris "where his name has been held in terror and execration for some years":

*April 23, 1846:* . . . Nevertheless, his visit has been triumphantly successful. The Court, the Ministers, the Opposition, the political leaders of all shades, have vied with each other in

civilities and attentions. He has dined with the King, with Guizot, with Thiers, with Broglie, with Molé; he met with nothing but smiles, *prévenance* and *empressement*.

"The most curious incident" was "the flirtation struck up between Thiers and Palmerston." It was "a matter of notoriety and amusement." These old combatants, at that date "both out of office," would make common cause.

Paris was sensitive to opinion in London. On February 4, 1845, Greville tells us how Mme. de Lieven sent him a message begging that nothing be "said in the Queen's Speech or in Parliament to injure Guizot, whose fate depends materially on this."

Palmerston, therefore, "shocked" Greville by his intention "to supply Thiers with information to use against Guizot." As Greville said, "if it is done and Thiers exhibits good information, the French Government will know well enough how he came by it."

*January 10, 1847, at night:* . . . Normanby has shown Thiers several papers, and Molé *many more*, he tells me. I have begged him to be cautious.

*January 12, 1847:* I called on Guizot yesterday by appointment; found him more stiff and reserved than the first time, and not apparently in good sorts.

*January 24, 1847:* . . . With great imprudence and impropriety, in my opinion, Normanby, with Palmerston's concurrence, has been in confidential communication with Thiers for the purpose of enabling the latter to attack the Government in the Chamber, it being of course expected and understood that we were to make a strong case against Guizot at home. All the world here knows of this connection and blames it. Guizot is of course indignant at it, and it renders all communication between him and Normanby as cold and distant as possible. Thiers is as sulky as a bear; he knows that his alliance with the Embassy has done him no good, and now it seems unlikely to enable him to do anybody else any harm.

*January 26, 1847:* . . . "How," she [Mme. de Lieven] asked, "could M. Guizot open his mind to Normanby, or talk confidentially to him, when he knows he is intimately connected with the Opposition, and that what he says may be repeated the next

moment to Thiers and appear in the *Constitutionnel* on the following morning?"

Guizot did "not see how he can go on with Normanby in his notorious relations *avec tous ses ennemis*." Indeed, St. Aulaire "asked Palmerston to get Normanby away and whether they could not *send him out to India!*!"

"Matters get blacker and blacker in Paris" (February 20, 1847), where "Normanby has got himself into a deplorable fix from which at present there seems to be no exit. . . . Craven writes to me and anticipates nothing but Normanby's return and eventually war."

There was this "foolish incident":

*February 22, 1847:* . . . Normanby gave a great assembly on the 19th, and amongst the invitations, one was sent *by mistake* to Guizot. Nothing ought to have been done but to let it alone; but very foolishly they made a great noise about it, and in a manner which was considered personally insulting to Guizot; they proclaimed all over Paris that they never intended to invite him. It had been settled in the first instance that the Ministers and others belonging to the Government should go to this party, and Guizot wished them to go; but after this incident M. de Cazes said it was thought impossible to go, and he believed none would. So much for *gaucherie* and *maladresse*.

*February 23, 1847:* . . . This cauldron is now boiling furiously: the bitterest resentment, immense excitement, continual mischiefmaking, passion, incapacity, falsehood, treachery, all mingling in the mass, and making a toil and trouble which everybody looks at with dismay and disgust, except probably Palmerston himself.

"The King meanwhile is evidently full of humbug." He had "an interview with Normanby but does not seem to have attempted a reconciliation." And the climax (February 24, 1847) was Guizot's "atrocious" behaviour when he "let it be said all over Paris that he had given the lie to Normanby and never made any explanation." St. Aulaire agreed that it was "*malhabile*."

*February 10, 1847:* G. d'Harcourt called on me yesterday morning, when I told him, *sans ménagement*, what I thought of

Guizot's speech, and of the disastrous effect it would create here; that instead of any explanation of the charge against him contained in Normanby's despatch, he had with unblushing effrontery proclaimed in the Chamber that he had wilfully deceived him, for to keep him in an error he had himself caused, was wilful deceit, and a falsehood of the worst kind; that he had declared he had done so, because it was his interest and he regarded him as an enemy; I added that if any man were to make such a speech in either House of Parliament here, he would be scouted by all the world and never dare to show his face again. . . . He said it was all Guizot's *pride* and that he never would own he was in the wrong. Strange sort of pride, that makes a man proclaim himself a rogue!

The two countries were now well within the zone of possible war. Greville himself did not realize on what a chance the issues of peace had been staked.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer was Sir Charles Wood, founder of the peerage of Halifax, which (1926) has given a Viceroy to India. When Greville saw him:

*February 25, 1847*: . . . He hinted that Palmerston was already dissatisfied, "thinking he was not sufficiently supported by his colleagues."

I said: "What would he have? He has had his own way entirely."

He gave me to understand this was not so, but was not more communicative and after some conversation about the affair (not material) we parted.

Evidently Greville was nonplussed:

*February 25, 1847*: . . . I then called on Lady Palmerston and much to my surprise found her exceedingly reasonable, blaming Normanby for his imprudence and mismanagement, and saying that she now hoped it would be settled as Palmerston thought it ought not to go on thus, and had written to Normanby desiring him to settle it in any way he possibly could and suggesting that he should go to the King and ask him to manage it. I had never found her so temperate and sensible and of course I concurred in all she said. . . . From her I went to my office, where

Clarendon very soon came to me. I told him about Lady Palmerston, when he said:

"Do you know what is the reason you found her in this disposition? Have you heard what has passed?"

I said I had heard nothing. He then said that he had called on me once or twice and would now tell me what had taken place. On Saturday last there was as usual a dinner at Palmerston's, where John Russell dined. At night, Clarendon had some talk with Beauvale, who asked him how long this state of things was to go on, and if he was not aware of the danger of it; that it was no use to speak to Palmerston, but he thought *he* [Clarendon] might do something, and that he had been just talking to St. Aulaire on the subject.

Clarendon said he was well aware of the danger, but that Beauvale must know how difficult it was for him to interfere, how jealous and suspicious Palmerston was, and how he resented any interference whatever. Beauvale said he knew all this, but still the case was grave, and Melbourne had said (what turned out true) that John might fancy he should restrain and influence Palmerston but he would find himself mistaken, and that no man alive ever had done so, or ever would. There they parted; but on Sunday morning he received a note from Beauvale saying that he found matters were much more serious than he had been aware of, and by a communication he had had from St. Aulaire that morning he learnt that Palmerston had formally announced to him that, *unless Normanby received an immediate and satisfactory reparation, the intercourse between the two countries should cease.* This was done by Palmerston without any concert with, and without the knowledge of, his colleagues; and though John Russell, *the Prime Minister*, dined with him the same day, he did not think proper to impart to him what he had done. Clarendon then resolved to act without loss of time, but he first went to call on Charles Wood, where he found John Russell. He opened on the subject of the state of the French quarrel and its possible consequences, and said, "What should you say if Palmerston was to make a communication to St. Aulaire that, unless reparation was offered to Normanby, all intercourse between France and England should cease?" "Oh, no," said John, "he won't do that. I don't think there is any danger of such a thing." "But he has done it," said Clarendon;

“the communication has been made, and the only question is whether St. Aulaire has or has not forwarded it to the French Government.” This at once roused Lord John, and he instantly wrote to St. Aulaire requesting him, if he had not sent this communication to his government, to suspend doing so. Fortunately it was not gone.

What had passed between John and Palmerston I do not know, but the result has been an instruction to Normanby from both of them in conformity with what Lady Palmerston said to me. When I saw the Duke of Bedford I did not know all this. He wrote me a line just as he was leaving town to say he had had a full conversation with John and also with Clarendon and Beauvale and was better satisfied with the prospect than when he left me.

From the edge of the precipice, both countries drew back:

*February 28, 1847:* Clarendon and I settled that it would be a good thing to try and muzzle the Press on both sides when the affair is made up and I accordingly went to St. Aulaire, and begged him to write to Guizot and entreat him to manage this at Paris, and that we would do the like here. I would answer for the *Times*, and I thought there was no doubt about the *Morning Chronicle*. I told him that he had saved us from a great danger.

*March 2, 1847:* . . . Normanby was like the month of March—coming in like a lion and going out like a lamb. He got the worst terms he possibly could, very different from his first pretensions. Apponyi managed it, and they met at his house. Guizot gave Apponyi a verbal assurance that he never intended to impugn Normanby's veracity, and he received one that Normanby had not intended any incivility in the matter of the card, nothing more, and this after Normanby had proclaimed that he would accept nothing but an apology in the Tribune of the Chamber of Deputies, and Palmerston had informed St. Aulaire that if such an apology was not made, the diplomatic relations should cease, and that it was for Guizot to consider whether he should establish between England and France the same state of things as existed between France and Russia—the business of the two Governments being transacted by *chargés d'affaires*. A most lame and impotent conclusion indeed.



Some men would have been upset by rebuke, but not Palmerston:

*February 25, 1847:* . . . To have a communication of his countermanded, without his knowledge, by the Prime Minister, is a sort of affront which any high-spirited man would naturally resent; but he is too much in the wrong to resent it; so he submits.

*February 28, 1847:* . . . Palmerston was at the Council yesterday with his usual gay and dégagé air. The day before for the first time the matter was mentioned in the Cabinet, but in Palmerston's most offhand and dashing style.

The reconciliation was imperfect:

*March 13, 1857:* . . . Normanby writes from Paris out of humour: he has lost his senses and his temper; he harps querulously upon the details of his miserable quarrel, and thinks the Government have used him ill by not supporting him. He is writing under the consciousness of cutting a poor figure, and of the triumph Guizot has gained over him, but there is no end of his *gaucheries*. When the quarrel was made up, and he invited Guizot to dinner, he selected the day on which Guizot himself always receives his friends. Guizot accepted, and announced that he should not receive that day, but of course the invitation was attributed either to stupidity or to impertinence. St. Aulaire asked me, "*Est-ce que c'était une étourderie, ou l'a-t-il fait exprès ?*" I assured him it must have been an *étourderie*, but an unpardonable one. What was graver, however, was that the first night of Guizot's reception after the reconciliation, when he ought to have taken care to go there, he went to Môle instead, and never went to Guizot at all.

The question was thus whether Guizot would be able to stand against Palmerston's hostility. And here, Greville gives us the opinion of Thiers himself. "*Je ne serai pas Ministre,*" said he, adding however that—

*January 10, 1847:* . . . he could afford to wait; he was forty-eight years old, and his health excellent. As long as the King was in no danger he would never send for him; as soon as he was he would send for him. The King could endure nobody who would not consent to be his tool; he would never take office

without being his master, *et j'en viendrai à bout*; he would rather continue in his independence than take office on any other terms.

January, 1847, Saturday: . . . Last night there was a party at the Embassy, at which Thiers and Duvergier were present. Thiers had been with Normanby in the morning. He made an attack on me for believing all Madame de Lieven told me; said I was "*une éponge trempée dans le liquide de Madame de Lieven*," and tried his best to persuade me that Guizot was weak, his majority not worth a rush, and that the King could and would get rid of him whenever he found himself in any sort of danger. "Tell Lord Palmerston," he said, "when he speaks, to say '*beaucoup de bien de la France, et beaucoup de mal de Monsieur Guizot*.'" I said I should give him one half the advice and not the other.

January 10, 1847: . . . He then said he would tell me what would happen: the King *se faisait illusion* that the Whig Government could not stand; but when he found out that this was an error *il aurait peur*; and if we continued to refuse to be reconciled, he would get rid of Guizot. The present Chamber would not overthrow him but the King would. "*Savez-vous ce que c'est que le Roi? Le mot est grossier, mais vous le comprendrez. Eh bien, c'est un poltron*." I said I was surprised to hear this, for we thought he was *un homme de cœur*, and had given proofs of his courage very often. "*Non, non, je vous dis qu'il est poltron*."

January 10, 1847: . . . Yesterday morning at two o'clock I called on Thiers by appointment, found him in a very pretty apartment full of beautiful drawings, copies of Italian frescoes, pictures, bronzes, books and *cahiers* of MS., the sheets (much corrected and interlined I could see) of his work. These he told me were his "*seul délassement*," and that politics never interrupted his literary labour. We then talked about the present state of affairs, and very amusing he was, sparing nobody and talking with his usual abundance and openness. . . . If Guizot had the worst of this encounter he would fall, not however by the desertion of the majority, not by this Chamber, but through the King, "You must not," he said, "believe what you hear of the strength of the Government and of its security; don't believe all Madame de Lieven tells you; *c'est une bavarde, une menteuse, et une sotté*."

*November 28, 1846:* . . . He [Clarendon] saw yesterday a M. Grimblot, a violent partisan of Thiers, who hates the King and Guizot, and who told him . . . that if Guizot lost his place in the scramble that is likely to take place, and Thiers and Co. come in, there was nothing they would not do and no sacrifice they would not make to renew the English alliance, that all France wished for it, and that the estrangement had frightened them: "*nous avons peur*," he said. This Clarendon swallowed down, though it seems to me so base and despicable an avowal that it must be false. It is an attempt at cajolery, coarse and overdone, to ingratiate the Thiers party with our government.

Greville looked upon Thiers (January 26, 1847) as a politician, rival to Guizot who "thinks of nothing but mischief, of gratifying his own personal passions and resentments."

Greville realized that there was a "new vigour infused into the Opposition [in France] which will bring on an acrimonious debate." It would "cover Guizot with mud." But "the cool people" in Paris assured him that it would not "shake him [Guizot] from his seat."

*January, 1847, Saturday:* . . . I could not believe that the King would part with Guizot if he could possibly help it, for he would look in vain for so supple an instrument, and one so well able to defend him and his measures in the Chambers.

The King did keep Guizot. But did Paris keep the King?