CHAPTER LXXIV

MIGHTIER THAN THE STATE

As GREVILLE advanced in years, he was conscious that his Journal had to face a rival in the field called Journalism:

London, January 12, 1845: More than four months have elapsed since I wrote anything in this book, and I have not much hope either of finding materials or having sufficient application to make it interesting or amusing. When people kept diaries in former times, there were no such newspapers as the *Times* with its volume of letterpress, and dozens of Sunday papers all collecting and retailing the public events and the private anecdotes of the day.

Greville's literary executor, Reeve, was on the *Times*, and Greville contemplated him—"what Reeve is, his humble position, his obscurity, his apparent nothingness"—as an aristocrat has a right to contemplate the footstool under his feet. Yet:

August 23, 1846: . . . See what effects he can create by being the hidden but moving agent of a mighty piece of machinery, I do think it most surprising and curious, and when hereafter revealed, must and will appear so. Reeve—Delane—these two men can at any moment set all Europe in a state of excitement, and fill the greatest Cabinets and Kings and Ministers with terror or rage.

Aberdeen, the Prime Minister, wrote Delane (November 28, 1846) "that the importance of the *Times* was immense and that the question of peace or war might in great measure depend on the paper."

The governing classes feared the new force:

London, July 21, 1848: . . . The best part of the press (the *Times*, for instance) seldom finds its way to the cottages and reading rooms of the lower classes, who are fed by the cheap Radicalism of the *Weekly Dispatch*, and other journals, un-

known almost to the higher classes of society, which are darkly working to undermine the productions of our social and political system.

November 2, 1853: . . . King Leopold is here, still uneasy (though less than he was) upon the subject of his *démêlés* with the Emperor of the French. The cause of them is the libellous publications of the French refugees in Belgium. They compose the most outrageous attacks of a personal nature on him and the Empress, which they have printed in Belgium, and get these papers smuggled into France, and disseminated amongst the lower classes, and particularly the troops. This naturally gives the Emperor great offence, and Leopold would afford him redress if he could; but the Constitution was made by journalists, and the unrestrained liberty of the press is so interwoven with the Constitution that the Legislature itself has no power to deal with the case, nor any power short of a Constituent Assembly:.

Hillingdon, December 12, 1858: . . . The Emperor [Napoleon] told him [Clarendon] that his motive for prosecuting Montalembert was that he was aware that there was a conspiracy of literary men, enemies of his Government, to write it down in a very insidious manner, not by any direct attacks, but, under the pretense of discussing subjects either not political or not French, to introduce matter most hostile and most mischievous to him, and that it was necessary to put down such a conspiracy, and he thought the best course was to proceed at once against a man so conspicuous as Montalembert, and to make an example of him, by which others would be deterred.

At a curiously early date, the press influenced India:

February 9, 1843: . . . When he [the Duke] talked of the necessity of Ellenborough's caution in his public documents and private talk, he inveighed very bitterly against the free press of India, and said, with an exaggeration to which he has been latterly rather prone, that this press had produced a tyranny more insupportable than the Spanish Inquisition in its worst times. It was, on the whole, a remarkable letter, though not quite so good as he would have written, in his best days.

November 2, 1857: . . . Amongst other things Clarendon told me at the Grove, he said, in reference to [the Viceroy] Canning's

war against the press, that the licence of the Indian press was intolerable, not of the native press only, but the English in Bengal. Certain papers are conducted there by low, disaffected people, who publish the most gross, false, and malignant attacks on the Government, which are translated into the native languages, and read extensively in the native regiments, and amongst the natives generally, and that to put down this pest was an absolute necessity.

The jealousy of the press was shown in various ways. When the Palace of Westminster was burned down, temporary buildings were erected:

February 15, 1835: . . . I went yesterday to see the two Houses of Parliament; the old House of Lords (now House of Commons) is very spacious and convenient; but the present House of Lords is a wretched dog-hole. The Lords will be very sulky in such a place, and in a great hurry to get back to their own House, or to have another. For the first time there is a gallery in the House of Commons reserved for reporters, which is quite inconsistent with their standing orders, and the prohibition which still in form exists against publishing the debates. It is a sort of public and avowed homage to opinion, and a recognition of the right of the people to know through the medium of the press all that passes within those walls.

Yet, when "Hansard" was sued for libel because of a report of proceedings in Parliament, a question of Privilege arose [January 24, 1840] which was fiercely debated, and the best minds of all parties, including Peel, supported the press. But not Wellington!

February 21, 1840: . . . The Duke, in fact, goes as far as any of the opponents of the Privilege, for he not only thinks that the dicta of the Judges are not to be questioned, but that the House of Commons ought not to have the Privilege at all—that is, that their papers ought not to be sold, and that they ought not to be circulated without anything being previously weeded out of them which the law would consider libellous.

When Gladstone proposed to abolish the Paper duties, an economic restriction on the freedom of the press, the peers ob-

jected and Greville saw Gladstone "half dead, broken down, tempest-tossed." Palmerston, as Prime Minister, was rather pleased than otherwise:

May 28, 1860: . . . Palmerston said to Gladstone, "Of course you are mortified and disappointed, but your disappointment is nothing to mine, who had a horse with whom I hoped to win the Derby, and he went amiss at the last moment."

May 17, 1860: . . . A queer state of things indeed when the Prime Minister himself secretly desires to see the defeat of a measure so precious to his own Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Should Gladstone resign? Charles Villiers thought that "a man so variable and impulsive" might be "very mischievous out of office." And Gladstone did not accept defeat:

Buxton, August 11, 1860: . . . When after the division he rose to propose the second Resolution, he was cheered by the Freetraders as he had not been cheered since the Budget Speech. Colonel Taylor tells me that they had been led to expect success by promises from two quarters. First the paper-makers and the *Times* engaged to bring fifty men to the post, and only brought five.

Against prying pressmen, the Court was constantly on guard:

June 27, 1859: . . . The Queen talked to Clarendon of the publication in the *Times* with much indignation and said, "Who am I to trust? These were my very own words." . . . Clarendon, however, endeavoured to pacify her and moreover to convince her that the article had in fact (however indecorous it might appear) been eminently serviceable to her.

London, January 24, 1853: . . . I began by asking him [the Duke of Bedford] how he had left them all at Windsor, to which he replied:

"Bad, very bad, there has been the devil to pay, but it is a long story, and I cannot attempt to enter upon it, as I don't like to tell you only half of it."

In reply, however, to my pressing him to give me some idea of what he alluded to, I got from him what follows.

The *Globe* had stated that "John Russell should only hold the Seals of the Foreign Office till the meeting of Parliament, when Clarendon was to take them":

London, January 24, 1853: . . . The Queen never was apprised of this arrangement, and they learnt it at Windsor through this article in the *Globe*. She was very indignant, for she is extremely tenacious of her authority in these matters and cannot endure that anything should be settled about her government without her knowledge and consent. This was one of the points on which Melbourne advised Peel (through me) in 1841. The Prince came into the Duke of Bedford's room with the paper in his hand, and made bitter complaints. A great shindy was the consequence. The Queen was angry with Aberdeen, so angry that she had actually written him a very disagreeable letter, which luckily Clarendon was in time to stop and prevent its being sent.

Into the further details of "the shindy" we need not enter beyond saying that it endangered a government.

One secret was jealously guarded, though not always with success:

February 2, 1854: . . . There is always great anxiety on the part of the Press to get the Queen's Speech, so as to give a sketch of it the morning of the day when it is made, and those who do not get it are very jealous of those who do. . . . The other day Aberdeen refused to give it even to the *Times*, and of course to any other paper, and he begged Palmerston not to send it to the *Morning Post*, which is notoriously his paper. Nevertheless, the Speech appeared in the *Times*, and what seemed more extraordinary, in the *Morning Advertiser*, the paper which has been the fiercest opponent of the Government and the most persevering and virulent of the assailants of the Prince. How these papers got the Speech nobody knows, but as there were four dinners, at which at least a hundred men must have been present, it is easy to imagine that some one of these may have communicated it. Delane has friends in all parties, and he told me that he had no less than three offers of it, and therefore he had no difficulty.

The mechanical transmission of news aroused interest:

December 20, 1834: Peel's letter to his constituents has appeared as his manifesto to the country; a very well written and ingenious document, and well calculated to answer the purpose,

if it can be answered at all. The letter was submitted to the Cabinet at a dinner at Lyndhurst's on Wednesday last, and they sat till twelve o'clock upon it, after which it was copied out, a messenger dispatched to the three great newspapers (*Times*, *Herald*, and *Post*) to announce its arrival, and at three in the morning it was inserted.

February 2, 1837: . . . Our King's speech was here [in Paris] before seven o'clock yesterday evening, about twenty-nine hours after it was delivered; a rapidity of transmission almost incredible.

January 31, 1859: . . . Derby told me a curious thing. An experiment was made of the possible speed by which a telegraphic message could be sent and an answer got. They fixed on Corfu, made every preparation, and sent *one word*. The message and return were effected in six seconds. I would not have believed this on any other authority.

Hatchford, November 8, 1857: . . . The most interesting event during the last few days is the failure of the attempted launch of the big ship (now called "Leviathan"), and it is not a little remarkable that all the *great* experiments recently made have proved failures. Besides this one of the ship, there was a few weeks ago the cracking of the bell [Big Ben] for the Houses of Parliament, and not long before that the failure of the submarine telegraph in the attempt to lay it down in the sea. The bell will probably be replaced without much difficulty, but it is at present doubtful whether it will be found possible to launch the ship at all, and whether the telegraphic cable [in that case to America] can ever be completed.

From India, the news—"so chequered with good and evil that it produced great despondency"—was brief:

August 12, 1857: . . . To feed our curiosity during the interval between the Indian mails, the newspapers, the *Times* especially, collect all the letters they can obtain, and publish them day by day.

Eminent men soon found that it was well to be reported verbatim:

September 5, 1848: . . . Dizzy's speech was very sparkling and clever, but it was, after all, nothing but a theatrical display,

without object or meaning but to show off his own powers. It was prefaced by a sort of advertisement that the great actor would take his benefit that morning on the stage of St. Stephen's; an audience was collected, and he sent word to Delane that he was going to speak in order that he might have one of his best reporters there.

. .

"There is no use entering into details of speeches," wrote Greville, "which are now reported with such perfect fidelity."

Publicity was to statesmen what armed retainers were to the mediæval barons. Palmerston (January 30, 1839) thought it worth while to have his agent Urquhart as Secretary of Embassy at Constantinople who "got hold of the papers through bribery"—whatever the documents may have been—in order to publish them in an obscure sheet called the *Portfolio*. It was part of the day's work.

Greville himself had an idea that he would like a newspaper:

December 26, 1830: . . . They say it will cost £3,000 a year, and as we have not a guinea to begin with we are thinking of proposing to some of the rich aristocrats like the Duke of Northumberland, Dudley, Lord Hertford (only he is not here) to contribute to the expense. I imparted it to Luttrell, who is ready to join us. We can't find a name. I proposed "Anti-Radical," but they think this too broad and demonstrative, so it is rejected.

Greville pointed out to the Duke and the Tories the importance of securing the favour of the *Times:*

November 17, 1834, five o'clock: . . . I asked the Duke if he had seen the *Times* this morning. He said, "No," and I told him there appeared in it a considerable disposition to support the new Government, and I thought it would be very advisable to obtain that support if it could be done. He said he was aware that he had formerly too much neglected the press, but he did not think the *Times* could be influenced. I urged him to avail himself of any opportunity to try, and he seemed very well disposed to do so.

Greville next buttonholed Lyndhurst, the Tory Lord Chancellor. and—

November 17, 1834, five o'clock: . . . told him he would do well to endeavour to obtain its support. He said he desired nothing so much, but in his situation he did not like personally to interfere, nor to place himself in their power. I told him I had some acquaintance with Barnes, the editor of the paper, and would find out what he was disposed to do, and would let him know, which he entreated I would.

On November 23, Greville notes that Barnes, as editor, was "evidently much nettled" at the Duke's failure to reply to his "terms." Greville hunted up Lyndhurst, therefore, who—

November 23, 1834: . . . took me away with him, and stopped at the Home Office to see the Duke and talk to him on the subject, for he was evidently a little alarmed, so great and dangerous a potentate is the wielder of the thunders of the press.

November 26, 1834: Barnes is to dine with Lord Lyndhurst, and a gastronomic ratification will wind up the treaty between these high contracting parties.

December 6, 1834: . . . He [Lyndhurst] is doing all he can to draw closer the connection between the *Times* and the Government, and communicates constantly with Barnes.

January 8, 1835: . . . He said the *Times* had behaved admirably to them, and the Government were under great obligations to me for what I had done in that matter. I told him I was glad to hear they were on such good terms, as having been instrumental to the connection, which I had no doubt had entailed an immediate loss on the proprietors of the paper.

That the *Times* should only be able to support the Conservative party at a financial sacrifice is certainly amazing to us, one hundred years later.

February 5, 1838: . . . The Conservatives besides have the inestimable advantage of an alliance with the *Times*, which with all its audacity of falsehood and unblushing effrontery of tergiversation is the most vigorous and powerful agent which the Press every produced.

As Lyndhurst exclaimed, "Why, Barnes is the most powerful man in the country."

The organ of the Whigs was the *Morning Chronicle:*

March 28, 1839: . . . Just before Peel's hundred days it was for sale, and had then fallen to about a thousand a day. Easthope was persuaded by Ellice to buy it, which he did for £15,000 or £20,000. The Whigs set to work, and Hobhouse, Normanby, Poulett Thomson, Le Marchant, and several others, wrote day after day a succession of good articles which soon renovated the paper and set it on its legs. The circulation increased daily till it got up to three thousand, and now it has reached six thousand. Easthope makes a clear £10,000 a year by the speculation; but now, seeing (or thinking he sees) greater advantages to be got by floating down the Radical stream than by assisting in the defence of this government, he forgets past favours and connection, and is ready to abandon them to their fate. It is rather an ominous sign and marks strongly their falling estimation. They think it is Durham who has got hold of Easthope and persuades him to take this course. He declares he is so beset with applications, advice, and threats, that he has no alternative, and must take the line he does or ruin the sale of his paper.

When it was suggested to Palmerston that he had "interfered" (October 7, 1840) with Easthope, he was "very angry" and said, "While I belong to the Government, I cannot consent to be quite a cypher."

And parties would purchase papers. The Peelites thus acquired the *Morning Chronicle* from the Whigs, but though it was "conducted with ability," the daily "sank altogether."

Greville's association with the *Times* was sometimes suspected:

February 1, 1842: . . . I met him [Palmerston] and Lady Palmerston last night, and they both received me so coldly that I am persuaded their suspicions rest upon me as the fancied author or instigator of the recent articles in the *Times.*

Challenged by Jarnac [August 23, 1846], Greville did not hesitate to say that he had "no connection with and no influence over" the *Times*—words simply to be described as untrue.

Of the power of the press, there could be no doubt. Whether that power was wisely exercised was another question. There

were "aggravating articles about Spain." The *Morning Chronicle* (December 20, 1846) would be inspired to an article and there was "a phrase at the end of it about Guizot quite Palmerstonian."

When the *Times* took "a very cool and semi-hostile tone in respect to Guizot," Lord Aberdeen was "vexed and terrified." The explanation was amusing:

January 18, 1845: . . . The cause of this coolness, which amounted to hostility on the part of Mr. Delane, had nothing political in it. It was simply that the French Post Office refused to allow the *Times* to run an Indian Express, in anticipation of the mail, from Marseilles to Calais. There was a passionate rivalry and competition between the English newspapers on the subject of this express. The *Times* ran its own courier at an expense of £500 a month. The other papers coalesced. The *Times* wanted to obtain from the French Government full licence and facility for this peculiar service. The French Government defended the rights of the Post Office to the exclusive carrying of despatches. Hence arose the quarrel, which I repeatedly endeavoured to patch up; but for my own part I never would ask that any exclusive privileges should be given to any newspaper.

January 20, 1845: . . . On the other side of the water Guizot sent for O'Reilly, the correspondent of the *Times*, and asked him why the *Times* treated him in that manner, that he knew it was because he had given some earlier information to the *Morning Herald*. The representative of the mighty Broadsheet replied, that they certainly had nothing to thank him for but they were not aware he had anything to complain of, as they had been extremely moderate and had said nothing but the truth.

"Well," said Guizot, "what do you want, what can I do for you?"

O'Reilly replied that he could do very little, and in truth the paper was of greater importance to him than he could be to the paper, inasmuch as it was not above once or twice in the year that any occasion of serving the *Times* could occur, while they wrote every day in the week."

"Well," said Guizot, "take those papers" (pointing to some on the table), "and no other English paper shall have them for twenty-four hours."

They were the Tahiti and Morocco correspondence. O'Reilly took them, but having to get them translated, not much time was gained, if any.

It all worked out thus for the "glorification" of the *Times* newspaper.

November 29, 1854: . . . In the evening I met Clarendon at the Travellers' and had a long talk with him about all sorts of things. He has been much disturbed at the *Times*, especially as to two things—its violent abuse of Austria and its insertion of a letter from the Crimea, reflecting severely on Prince Napoleon. With regard to Austria it is peculiarly annoying because we are now on the point of concluding a tripartite treaty which is actually on its way to Vienna, and in a day or two it will be decided whether she signs it or not; and nothing is more calculated to make her hang back than such articles in the *Times*. Then as to Prince Napoleon, it has annoyed the Emperor and all his family beyond expression, and to such a degree that Drouyn de Lhuys has written an official letter to Walewski about it.

But, alas, the *Times* (January 2, 1855) "only gets more rampant and insolent, for, as long as its circulation is undiminished, it does not care what anybody thinks or says of it."

Even the *Times* had its ups and downs:

January 2, 1847: . . . There has been a scompiglio in the *Times* office, which threatens a revolution there. Reeve writes to me: "Delane has been here, a good deal agitated and alarmed about the affairs of the paper." . . . It seems that Walter and his party are always up to some knavery or other (being much pressed for money) and that Delane *père* has resisted some of their tricks, which has ended in a quarrel, and he, to save his son, has resigned his functions which were those of manager of the money concerns. Hereupon our friend, the son, feels his position horribly insecure, and the more so as Walter is quite capable of requiring things of him which he *must* resist. So much for the present; for the future it is certain that old Walter is dying of a cancer, and on his death Walter the Second will succeed, and may change his Ministers, etc.

That the *Times* made and unmade governments was the saying, but it was hardly true:

March 12, 1848: . . . The Government have been sadly vexed at an article in the *Times* on Friday, speaking of them, and Lord John especially, very contemptuously. The truth is, the *Times* thinks it has sniffed out that they cannot go on, and wants, according to its custom, to give them a shove; but matters are not ripe for a change yet, nor anything like it.

March 4, 1851: . . . The *Times* has been attacking or sneering at the Government and John Russell particularly in a very brutal and odious manner, and yet Lady Palmerston has taken this moment to try and get Delane, the editor, to her house. She begged Granville to invite him last Saturday. Granville sent her word he had some doubt whether he would like to be invited, and he told her afterward that he thought, considering how they had lately written, it was not quite prudent to ask him just now. She replied,

"Perhaps not, *but he has certainly hit the right nail on the head.*"

She is very silly and imprudent, but it is impossible not to regard her as in some degree indicating her husband's animus. Certainly his colleagues have not derived much benefit from his Radical connection.

When the *Times* attacked Lord John Russell:

December 28, 1852: . . . Clarendon spoke to Aberdeen, said it was shameful, and expressed the greatest indignation against Delane.

"I have not seen *that fellow*," he said, "for several days, but if it will be any satisfaction to John Russell I will engage never to let him into my house again."

Such a reparation, however, Clarendon did not by any means think it would be advisable to exact.

March 2, 1851: . . . Having been instrumental to bringing Delane into social intercourse with the Whigs, I am shocked at the paper taking a course which everybody without distinction of party thinks odious and discreditable.

As an opponent of the Crimean War, Greville (February 17, 1853) accused the *Times* of perpetrating an "enormous mischief":

February 17, 1855: . . . I have for many years had intimate personal relations with its editor, which I do not well know how to let drop, and I am at the same time not satisfied that their unbroken maintenance is consistent with the feelings I entertain and which ought to be entertained toward the paper.

February 19, 1855: . . . The intolerable nonsense and the abominable falsehoods it flings out day after day are none the less dangerous because they are nonsense and falsehoods, and, backed up as they are by all the regular Radical press, they diffuse through the country a mass of inflammatory matter, the effect of which may be more serious and arrive more quickly than anybody imagines.

February 3, 1856: . . . The newspapers, perceiving that they can no longer blow the war trumpet with any chance of rousing the country to resist peace, have in great measure given up the attempt; the *Times* has become completely changed, is full of moderation and puts forth the most reasonable and judicious articles in place of the trash and lies it has been used to dispense.

March 20, 1858: . . . The other day I got a note from Lord Derby [the Prime Minister] about a council, at the end of which he earnestly begged me if I had any influence with the *Times* to get them to abstain from writing any more irritating articles about France, for that these articles provoked the French to madness, and, as matters are, that nothing but the utmost care and moderation on both sides enabled the two governments to go on in harmony. I accordingly sent his note to Delane, who promised to attend to it, though it was hard to leave the French press without replies.