CHAPTER LXXVIII

THE QUEEN'S MOVE

As THE Hungry 'Forties drew to an unregretted close, the position was, then, that in Parliament, the one man was Palmerston, while in the Palace, the one man was Prince Albert. A collision between these potentates was inevitable. And the only question was which would defeat the other. In their "sentiments" toward Palmerston, "the Prince and the Queen . . . are one."

In the House of Commons, deprived of Stanley (January 19, 1849), there had been, of course, "nobody to attack Palmerston." The House consisted of "those who won't grapple with him and those who can't." And yet, though "unscathed," he was "uneasy." He had, after all, "his Royal Mistress." Every few days, there were "fresh difficulties. . . . For he keeps the Queen, his colleagues, his friends, and the party in continual hot water."

Greville told the Duke of Bedford bluntly that the "pledge" of his brother, John Russell, to control his Foreign Secretary was "forfeit." Surely "this was degrading" and Russell "ought not to consent to be Prime Minister on such terms. In humble reply to Greville, "the Duke could not deny it and he evidently feels it very much." It seemed (March 16, 1849) that "when John objects to anything Palmerston writes or proposes by letter, it is usual with Palmerston to take no notice and not to send him any answer at all."

March 16, 1849: . . . The Duke of Bedford told me some other stories of Palmerston and his behaviour, which sufficiently account for the Queen's abhorrence of him, and which justify it, for he degrades the Crown itself. But this makes John's conduct the more inexplicable as well as unpardonable, for he suffers both the dignity of the Crown and the proper authority of his own part as Prime Minister to be degraded and insulted too.

The Duke of Bedford offered a typical instance of Palmerston's turpitude:

March 16, 1849: . . . Such a case as the following is hardly credible. Palmerston on some occasion proposed to do something (he did not tell me what) which both the Queen and John disapproved of. Her Majesty and her Prime Minister talked the matter over and agreed in their disapprobation of what Palmerston proposed. Accordingly John Russell wrote him word that both the Queen and himself objected, and wished the thing (whatever it was) should not be done. Palmerston replied that he was of a different opinion, but of course, if both the Queen and he thought otherwise, it should not be done, and having written this, he immediately did the thing. John submitted, and the Queen was obliged to submit too.

The Queen (May 19, 1850) was "boiling with indignation." Indeed (July 16, 1850), "The Court are just as much disgusted with him as ever and provoked at his success in the House of Commons." As the Duke of Bedford confessed, "The Queen had been again flaming up about Palmerston more strongly than ever."

February 22, 1850: . . . The moment he [Clarendon] came into the drawing room after dinner the Queen exploded, and went with the utmost vehemence and bitterness into the whole of Palmerston's conduct, all the effects produced all over the world, and all her own feelings and sentiments about it. He could only listen and profess his own almost entire ignorance of the details. After she had done Prince Albert began, but not finding time and opportunity to say all he wished, he asked him to call on him the next day. He went and had a conversation of two hours and a half, in the course of which he went into every detail, and poured forth without stint or reserve all the pent-up indignation, resentment, and bitterness with which the Queen and himself have been boiling for a long time past. He commented on Palmerston's policy and conduct much in the same terms in which the *Times* does, and as I and others do. But what he enlarged upon with the strongest feeling was the humiliating position in which the Queen was placed in the eyes of the whole world. The remonstrances and complaints, the sentiments and resentments of other sovereigns—of the King

of Naples, and of the Emperor of Russia, for instance—directly affected her dignity as the Sovereign and Representative of this nation; and the consciousness that these sovereigns and all the world knew that she utterly disapproved of all that was done in her name, but that she was powerless to prevent it, was inconceivably mortifying and degrading. Prince Albert said he knew well enough the Constitutional position of the Sovereign of this country, and that it was the policy and measures which the nation desired and approved which the Government must carry out; but that the nation disapproves of Palmerston's proceedings, and so did his own colleagues, Lord Lansdowne particularly; yet by their weak connivance he was allowed to set at defiance the Sovereign, the Government, and public opinion, while the Queen could get neither redress nor support from John Russell, and was forced to submit to such degradation. He then mentioned various instances in which the Queen's remonstrances and suggestions had been disregarded. Minutes submitted to her in one form and changed by Palmerston into other forms; the refusal of Austria to send any Ambassador here, because he could not transact business with her Secretary of State. Clarendon asked him if he had ever endeavoured to influence Palmerston himself, and remonstrated with him on those matters which had justly excited the strong feelings of the Queen and himself. He said that he had done so repeatedly, and for a long time; that he always found him easy, good-humoured, very pleasant to talk to, but that it was utterly impossible to turn him from his purposes, or to place the least reliance on anything he said or engaged to do, and that at length the conviction which had been forced upon him of the uselessness of speaking to him had caused him entirely to leave it off, and for above a year past neither the Queen nor he had ever said one word to him; that it was in vain they had appealed to John Russell. He supposed it was the etiquette for Cabinet Ministers never to admit there was anything censurable in the conduct of each other, for though he was certain many things were done of which John Russell could not approve, and for which he was unable to make any defence, he never would admit that what had been done had been wrong; that the consequence of this had been to impair considerably

the relations of confidence and openness which ought to exist between the Queen and her Prime Minister, and to place her in an unsatisfactory position *vis-à-vis* of him. After dilating at great length on this topic, he said something from which Clarendon inferred that his object was to make *him* a channel of communication with John Russell, and thus to make their sentiments known to him more clearly and unreservedly than they could do themselves, and he means to tell Lord John all that passed. He said the Prince talked very sensibly and very calmly, very strong, but without excitement of manner.

August 6, 1850: . . . The Prince said it was impossible to have any direct communication with Palmerston because truth was not in him, and they could not believe a word he said and he bitterly complained that Palmerston made no scruple of making misrepresentations injurious to the Queen herself, when it suited his purpose, of which he gave an instance. In one of the Greek discussions in the House of Lords, Lord Lansdowne in attempting to excuse some delay of Palmerston's in sending out instructions, said that one cause of the delay was the time spent in sending the despatch in question to the Queen and its being returned by her. This was false, and the Prince reproached Lord Lansdowne with having said it, when he was obliged to own that the excuse had been put into his mouth by Palmerston only a minute before, and just as he was going to speak.

The Prince in his conversation with Clarendon (who had expressed an opinion that Palmerston might be induced to turn over a new leaf) asked him if he really believed that anything could make him adopt a different line of conduct, or bring him under the control of his colleagues? Clarendon said he did think so. The Prince replied:

"No more, you may depend upon it, than you could stop the tide which is now flowing."

And he then told him an anecdote which is amusing. Lord Lansdowne had said to him a little while ago that he thought his Royal Highness might henceforward rely on there being no more of the unpleasant occurrences which had been so annoying and embarrassing on many occasions, for that it had been settled that nothing whatever should be said or done

by Palmerston without the full knowledge and consent of himself and John Russell, and he thought they had provided a sufficient guarantee for the maintenance of this understanding.

"Indeed," said the Prince, "it is, I suppose, some little time that this arrangement has been in force."

Lord Lansdowne replied in the affirmative.

"Oh, will you then have the goodness to tell me what your opinion is, touching certain communications of Lord Palmerston's?" (Mentioning to Lord Lansdowne some matters which he did not specify to Clarendon.)

Lord Lansdowne was obliged to confess he had never heard of them. The Prince laughed and said:

"He coloured very much when he made the acknowledgment, and I quite pitied the poor man."

The Queen "poured her feelings into the more sympathetic ears of her late Minister":

June 3, 1849: . . . The Duke [of Bedford] told me that he knew that the Queen told Peel everything, all her own feelings, and wishes, and all that passes on the subject. This John does not know, and the Duke said he should not let him know it, as it would only annoy him extremely, but he should tell Lord Lansdowne. So much for the Queen.

Peel, when he met Greville in the Park or elsewhere, "did not spare Palmerston":

February 25, 1847: . . . I met Sir Robert Peel yesterday and walked with him some time. I have not had so much conversation with him for years. He praised the Budget, lamented the state of foreign affairs, and talked of Palmerston as everybody else does. I said we were always in danger from him, and he must know how difficult it was to control him. He said, "I am only afraid that Lord John does not exert all the authority and determination which, as Prime Minister, he ought to do." I said, he did it by flashes, but not constantly and efficiently.

What the Queen hoped was that Palmerston would come to grief over Don Pacifico and have to resign:

July 28, 1850: . . . Last night I met Clarendon at dinner,

after which he took me into the next room and told me that there is a fresh *to-do* about Palmerston, rather more embarrassing than anything that has yet occurred. He heard it all from the Duke of Bedford, who has come up to town from Endsleigh (where he has been vegetating these two months) in a state of great excitement and alarm. It seems that the Court are more exasperated and annoyed than ever since Palmerston's House of Commons success. The Queen had flattered herself that when this affair was over, by hook or by crook, she should obtain her deliverance from Palmerston, but she now finds herself farther than ever from such a consummation though without any disposition to submit to the necessity. Accordingly she has given vent to her feelings to John Russell and required him to fulfil his promise, or if promise is too strong a word, the sort of engagement he made to her when the Greek business was settled, to take measures to get Palmerston out of the Foreign Office. John Russell acknowledged that in a moment of great dissatisfaction and annoyance, he had given her some such engagement, but he pleaded his inability, as circumstances are, to fulfil it in any way but by resigning himself. This would be of course the dissolution of his government. The Prince said that would not do at all, inasmuch as the Queen could not tell her story, and he afterward told John that the vexation she endured, and the sense of degradation from all she was obliged to submit to from Palmerston began to have a very serious effect upon her health, and he urged this consideration upon him with great seriousness. . . . It seems John talked to them of going to the House of Lords, but then that Palmerston was to leave the Government in the House of Commons. This the Queen said nothing should induce her to consent to, no consideration whatever. In this difficulty it is settled that the Duke of Bedford shall go to Osborne (after Goodwood) and talk matters over with the Queen and Prince and see if he can by any means pacify them.

How to eliminate Palmerston from the scene was the problem:

February 20, 1850: . . . Brunnow [the Russian Ambassador] always defends Palmerston, and affects to make light of all the *accidents* that arise, but he speaks his real sentiments to Peel and Aberdeen.

Those "real sentiments," revealed to Greville on June 25, 1850, were that the Czar "cannot comprehend our political condition and is at a loss to know why the Queen does not dismiss Palmerston." The Queen had the same notion:

June 3, 1849: . . . She then sent for John Russell, and told him she could not stand it any longer, and he must make some arrangement to get rid of Palmerston. This communication was just as fruitless as all her preceding ones. I don't know what Lord John said, he certainly did not pacify her, but as usual there it ended.

John Russell was "much occupied with this matter and very anxious to get rid of his uncomfortable position vis-à-vis the Queen." Clarendon recognized "the impossibility of removing Palmerston and the inexpediency of attempting it."

Greville suggested to Clarendon that the Prime Minister and Lansdowne together might "put a bit in his [Palmerston's] mouth." But Lord John Russell, using Lansdowne's name, had already written to Palmerston and "had never received any answer." And Palmerston remained "master of the situation."

Faced by the hostility of Queen and Prince, Palmerston (November 26, 1850) was nonchalance itself. "He treats their opinions and interference with great contempt and says, 'What can they do.'"

To make a frontal attack on Palmerston was dangerous. He must be secretly assassinated. There was the Queen conspiring with Peel. There was "a curious conversation" between Delane of the *Times* and Charles Wood in the Cabinet "on the possibility of getting Palmerston out." And even Greville was amazed by these underhand intrigues:

June 3, 1849: . . . I know not where to look for a parallel to such a mass of anomalies, the Queen turning from her own Prime Minister to confide in the one who was supplanted by him, the Chancellor of the Exchequer talking over quietly and confidentially with the editor of the *Times* newspaper by what circumstances and what agency his colleague, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, might be extruded from the Government.

The stiletto was entrusted to the Duke of Bedford:

May 25, 1850: . . . What he looks to is this, that the Queen

should take the initiative and urge Palmerston's removal from the Foreign Office. She is quite ready to do this as soon as she is assured of her wishes being attended to.

August 11, 1850: . . . The Duke of Bedford went to Osborne and had a great deal of conversation with the Queen and Prince. They insisted on the fulfilment of John's engagement to them, and upon his trying to get Palmerston to take some other office. The Duke (speaking from the brief Clarendon had put into his hands) argued the matter with them, and endeavoured to convince them that any such change was impossible; but they stuck to their point, and still insisted the attempt should be made. The Duke came to town, and went to Clarendon before he saw John, and told him what had passed. Clarendon advised him to tell John everything and to recommend him, since they insisted on it, to make the attempt and speak to Palmerston. It would not succeed, but it would satisfy the Queen and Prince that everything had been done that was possible, and Clarendon thought (as no doubt was the case) that they themselves did not expect any different result, though they wished the experiment to be made. The Duke saw John, and he agreed to speak to Palmerston, and accordingly he did so. He made a clean breast of it, told him all that had passed, set forth all the Queen's feelings, and the many subjects of complaint she had against him, and asked him if he would comply with her wishes and take another office. He received the communication with perfect good-humour, and made just such a reply as might have been expected. He said John must be aware that what he proposed was impossible, that everything that had occurred, particularly the division in the House of Commons, and the certainty that any such move would be considered (as in fact it would be) a degradation, made it impossible he should consent to exchange the Foreign Office for any other; that with regard to the Queen's complaints, he must certainly be much to blame if he had given occasion for them, but if he had, it was inadvertently, and he would be careful nothing of the kind should happen again; in short, the communication ended exactly as everybody concerned foresaw that it would. But the question is set at rest, and to a certain degree all parties, Queen, John, and Palmerston, are in a better position. This will be taken as somewhat in the shape of

a reconciliation, and there is some chance of its producing an effect on Palmerston's future conduct. The Queen told the Duke of Bedford that what provoked her more than anything was the necessity she was under of defending Palmerston against the reproaches and complaints which were addressed to herself [by foreign powers], for she was compelled to defend all the things she disapproved of, to avoid the mortification of acknowledging that though done in her name, it was in spite of her wishes and opinions.

So ended that particular "transaction with the Queen." The hope was that it would—

August 11, 1850: . . . to a certain degree mitigate her resentment, or if it does not do that, will at least induce her to desist from the sort of war which she and Albert have been raging against their obnoxious Minister, for they appear to be fully conscious that they cannot get rid of him. His position is now so good and if he pleases so safe, that he has no need to court the Radicals and make unworthy concessions to secure their support.

But there was no reconciliation, and the "disgraceful yoke continued":

May 17, 1850: . . . Instead of forcing him to show some regard of the truth, he has broken them in to back his falsehoods, and one of the worst consequences that has been produced by his unfortunate administration is that the confidence and implicit reliance which ought to be placed on all that a Minister says in Parliament can no longer be felt.

In vain did Clarendon beg Lansdowne "not to allow this chapter to be closed and the Cabinet to separate without imparting his sentiments to Palmerston." Lansdowne only "replied with a groan."

The cup of wrath against the disturber was now full to overflowing.

London, December 19, 1851: . . . Something, but I know not what, has happened about Palmerston. . . . The Duke of Bedford, who is by turns confidential and mysterious, and who delights in raising my curiosity and then not satisfying it, has

written to me thus. After a good deal about Lord John's defending Palmerston and his not approving his conduct, in one strain one day and another the next, the Duke said there had been a correspondence between them on the subject, which he was to see. He never said more about it, and to a question I put to him thereon he sent no answer. In another letter I alluded to this, but added that it did not now much signify, on which he writes: "You attach no importance to the correspondence I told you of, and do not now care to know about it, but if I am not mistaken you will ere long change your opinion."

December 23, 1851: Palmerston is out!—actually, really, and irretrievably out. I nearly dropped off my chair yesterday afternoon, when at five o'clock, a few moments after the Cabinet had broken up, Granville rushed into my room and said, "It is none of the things we talked over; Pam is out, the offer of the Foreign Office goes to Clarendon to-night, and if he refuses, which of course he will not, it is to be offered to me!!" Well might the Duke of Bedford say I should "change my opinion," and soon think this correspondence did signify, for it was on the matter which led to the fall of Palmerston. Granville came to town on Saturday, not knowing (as none of the Ministers did) what the Cabinet was about. On Sunday he received a note from John Russell, begging him not to come to it, and telling him he would afterward inform him why.

The "pretext" for Palmerston's dismissal—

December 23, 1851: . . . is his having committed the Government to a full and unqualified approval of Louis Napoleon's *coup d'état*, which he did in conversation with Walewski, but so formally and officially that Walewski wrote word to his own government that ours approved entirely of all that Louis Napoleon had done. Upon this piece of indiscretion, to which it is probable that Palmerston attached no importance, being so used to act off his own bat, and never dreaming of any danger from it, Lord John determined to act.

January 28, 1852: . . . He accordingly wrote at once to Palmerston, recapitulated his subjects of complaint, and asked him to authorize him to lay his resignation before the Queen. His first step, therefore, was with Palmerston himself, and not with the Queen. Having received the authority (which

Palmerston could not refuse), he proceeded to communicate with the Queen, and the reply expressed the great astonishment of both her Majesty and the Prince, as they had taken it for granted that this difference, like all preceding ones, would be patched up. I told the Duke that I had reason to believe the Queen was displeased at the offer of Ireland being made to Palmerston *à son insu;* but this was a mistake.

The argument was that Palmerston had here "taken a part against the feelings of the Radicals, and if the cause of the quarrel is made public, their approval will *ad hoc* be rather with John Russell than with him."

Brocket, Christmas Day, 1851: . . . None of the Ministers had the least idea why they were summoned. Lord Grey and Lord Lansdowne and Sir Francis Baring all came up together from the Grange, asking each other what it was about; nor was it till they were all assembled in the Cabinet room in Downing Street that they were apprised of the astounding fact that Palmerston had ceased to be their colleague. The secret was as well kept as Louis Napoleon's, and the *coup d'état* nearly as important and extraordinary.

The one Minister who stood by Palmerston was Lord Lansdowne.

Lady Palmerston wrote her brother, Lord Beauvale:

Brocket, Christmas Day, 1851: . . . Beauvale has had a long letter from Lady Palmerston with her version of the whole affair, which is true in the main, but as favourably coloured toward Pam as the case will admit of. She is in a high state of indignation and resentment, and bitter against Lord John and the colleagues who did not support Palmerston. They evidently expected, when the Cabinet met the other day, that the colleagues would have pronounced Lord John's ground of quarrel insufficient, and protested against his dismissal, and they are extremely mortified that nothing of the kind was done. She complained that Palmerston's best friends were absent. Not one person at the Cabinet said a word for him or made an effort to keep him, but this she does not know.

Lord John Russell "must have gone to the Queen, and settled with her what was to be done." In fact, "When the Queen

learned what had passed she was furious and resolved to insist upon Lord John's taking this occasion to get rid of him." At Palmerston's mishap, Mme. de Lieven writes in "transports of joy":

London, December 27, 1851: A council at Windsor. Palmerston did not come, but desired Lord Eddisbury to send the seals to Lord John. Nevertheless, he was expected, and the Queen would wait for him above an hour. . . . Brooks's and the ultra Whigs and Radicals are sulky, but don't quite know what to make of it. It seems Lord John struck the blow at last with great reluctance; but having made up his mind, he did it boldly. . . .

M. de Flahault arrived last night, and came here this morning to talk to Granville. He said that Palmerston's dismissal and the cause of it, as hinted at in the newspapers, had produced a disagreeable impression at the Élysée, especially after all the violence of the press. He said he had told the President that what he had done could not fail to shock English feelings and prejudices, and the press was sure to hold such language. . . .

Yesterday Granville was with Palmerston for three hours. He received him with the greatest cordiality and good humour. "Ah, how are you, Granville? Well, you have got a very interesting office, but you will find it very laborious; seven or eight hours' work every day will be necessary for the current business, besides the extraordinary and Parliamentary, and with less than that you will fall into arrears." He then entered into a complete history of our diplomacy, gave him every sort of information and even advice; spoke of the Court without bitterness, and in strong terms of the Queen's "sagacity"; ended by desiring Granville would apply to him when he pleased for any information or assistance he could give him. This is very creditable, and, whatever may come after it, very wise, gentlemanlike, becoming, and dignified.

London, December 27, 1851: . . . Meanwhile his [Palmerston's] family are furious and open-mouthed. Lady Palmerston says she can neither eat nor sleep, and they raise already the cry of "Foreign influence." Nobody can yet make out what the real cause of it is.