

## CHAPTER LXXIX

### INKING THE ANGEL

ABOUT Palmerston there was one inevitable emotion. He liked to hit back.

Queen Victoria had manœuvred his dismissal. Was he to take it lying down?

In other cases, the press had been his weapon. Why not in this case?

*January 15, 1854:* I have never yet noticed the extraordinary run there has been for some weeks past against the Court, more particularly the Prince, which is now exciting general attention, and has undoubtedly produced a considerable effect throughout the country. It began a few weeks ago in the press, particularly in the *Daily News* and the *Morning Advertiser*, but chiefly in the latter, and was immediately taken up by the Tory papers, the *Morning Herald* and the *Standard*, and for some time past they have poured forth article after article, and letter after letter, full of the bitterest abuse and all sorts of lies. The *Morning Advertiser* has sometimes had five or six articles on the same day attacking and maligning Prince Albert. Many of these are very vague, but the charges against him are principally to this effect, that he has been in the habit of meddling improperly in public affairs, and has used his influence to promote objects of his own, and the interests of his own family at the expense of the interests of this country; that he is German and not English in his sentiments and principles; that he corresponds with foreign princes and with British Ministers abroad without the knowledge of the Government, and that he thwarts the foreign policy of the Ministers when it does not coincide with his own ideas and purposes. He is particularly accused of having exerted his influence over this government to prevent their taking the course which they ought to have done with regard to Turkey, and of having a strong bias toward Austria and Russia and against France. Then it is said

that he is always present when the Queen receives her Ministers, which is unconstitutional, and that all the papers pass through his hands or under his eyes. He is accused of interfering with all the departments of Government, more particularly with the Horse Guards, and specifically with the recent transactions and disagreements in that office, which led to the retirement of General Brown, the Adjutant General. Then he and the Queen are accused of having got up an intrigue with foreign powers, Austria particularly, for getting Palmerston out of office last year; that she first hampered him in the Foreign Office by insisting on seeing his despatches before he sent them off, and then that she compelled John Russell to dismiss him on the ground of disrespectful conduct to herself, when the real reason was condescension to the wishes of Austria, with which power the Prince had intimately connected himself. Charges of this sort, mixed up with smaller collateral ones, have been repeated day after day with the utmost virulence and insolence by both the Radical and the Tory journals. For some time they made very little impression, and the Queen and Prince were not at all disturbed by them; but the long continuance of these savage libels, and the effect which their continual refutation has evidently produced throughout the country, have turned their indifference into extreme annoyance. I must say, I never remember anything more atrocious or unjust. Delane went to Aberdeen and told him that immense mischief had been done, and that he ought to know that the effect produced was very great and general, and offered (if it was thought desirable) to take up the cudgels in defence of the Court. Aberdeen consulted the Prince, and they were of opinion that it was better not to put forth any defence or rebut such charges in the press, but to wait till Parliament meets, and take an opportunity to repel the charges there. One of the papers announced that a Liberal member of Parliament intended to bring the matter forward when Parliament meets, but I do not expect he will make his appearance. At present nobody talks of anything else, and those who come up from distant parts of the country say that the subject is the universal topic of discussion in country towns and on railways. It was currently reported in the Midland and Northern counties, and actually stated in a Scotch paper, that Prince Albert had

been committed to the Tower, and there were people found credulous and foolish enough to believe it. It only shows how much malignity there is amongst the masses, which a profligate and impudent mendacity can stir up, when a plausible occasion is found for doing so, and how "the mean are gratified by insults on the high." It was only the other day that the Prince was extraordinarily popular, and received wherever he went with the strongest demonstration of public favour, and now it would not be safe for him to present himself anywhere in public, and very serious apprehensions are felt lest the Queen and he should be insulted as they go to open Parliament a fortnight hence. In my long experience I never remember anything like the virulence and profligacy of the press for the last six months, and I rejoice that Parliament is going to meet and fair discussion begin, for nothing else can in the slightest degree check it, and this, it may be hoped, will.

*January 16, 1854:* The attacks on the Prince go on with redoubled violence, and the most absurd lies are put forth and readily believed. It is very difficult to know what to do, but the best thing will be a discussion in the House of Commons, if possible in both Houses.

*January 21, 1854:* For some days past the Tory papers have relaxed their violence against the Court, while the Radical ones, especially the *Morning Advertiser*, have redoubled their attacks, and not a day passes without some furious article, and very often five or six articles and letters, all in the same strain. It is not to be denied or concealed that these abominable libels have been greedily swallowed all over the country and a strong impression produced. The press has been infamous, and I have little doubt that there is plenty of libellous matter to be found in some of the articles, if it should be deemed advisable for the Attorney General to take it up. There can be little doubt that the Tory leaders got alarmed and annoyed at the lengths to which their papers were proceeding, and have taken measures to stop them. The Radical papers nothing can stop, because they find their account in the libels; the sale of the *Advertiser* is enormously increased since it has begun this course, and, finding perfect immunity, it increases every day in audacity and virulence. One of the grounds of attack (in the *Morn-*

ing *Herald* and *Standard* principally) has been the illegality of the Prince being a Privy Councillor. In reply to this I wrote a letter (in my own name) showing what the law and practice are.

*February 1, 1854:* . . . Derby was put into a great rage by Aberdeen's speech, and could not resist attacking *me* (whom he saw behind the throne). He attacked my letter (signed C.), in which I had pitched into the Tories for their attacks on the Prince. I saw his people turn round and look toward me, but I did not care a fig, and was rather pleased to see how what I wrote had galled them, and struck home. . . . John Russell made a very good speech, and took the bull by the horns about the Prince, entered at once on the subject, and delivered an energetic vindication of and eulogium on him in his best style. It was excellent, and between his speech and Aberdeen's and all those who chimed in, that abomination may be considered to be destroyed altogether, and we shall probably hear no more of it.

Granville, who "passed two hours of every morning in reading the leading articles of all the principal papers which he thought it necessary to do," was "very curious to know whence they (that is the attacks on the Prince Consort) proceeded." Suspicion fell on Palmerston, and apparently not without reason:

*January 21, 1854:* . . . Yesterday there was a letter signed by a Mr. Cunningham (who stood for Westminster) in the *Morning Advertiser*, giving an account of a pamphlet which he said had been composed when Palmerston was turned out in '52, by his directions, and which contained documentary evidence against the Court, very strong, but which had been suppressed by their paying a sum of money, etc., etc., and the paper added still more details to this statement. I fancied it was all moonshine, but on speaking to Delane about it he told me it was not, and that he knew all about it. The story was this: When Palmerston was turned out, he was excessively exasperated and resolved to attack the Court through the press, and he got hold of a man of the name of Phillips who was a writer in newspapers, and proposed to him to write a pamphlet

for him. Phillips agreed, and was to have £100 for the job. He went down to Broadlands, where he was instructed by Palmerston (who Delane said gave him heaps of papers to read, though there is no proof of this) and he composed the pamphlet and had it printed. Before it was published Palmerston thought better of it. He told Phillips he had consulted Lord Lansdowne (which is very improbable) who had advised him to suppress it, and he accordingly had resolved to do so. The copies were all bought up and destroyed, but a few remained behind, and one of these Phillips gave to Delane. He showed it at the time to Lord Aberdeen, and, he says, *to me*, but if he did I had quite forgotten it. Last night he sent the pamphlet here for Granville and me to read, and we found it a very harmless production. It would not damage the Prince if it should appear, but the story would be immensely damaging to Palmerston if it came out, and if they are aware at Windsor of it, it is no wonder they suspect Palmerston of being concerned in the present abominations.

*January 25, 1854:* . . . If (as is probable) the Court got wind of the pamphlet and its history it is no wonder they suspect Palmerston of being at the bottom of the fiercest attacks on the Prince, not that the Prince should have expressed (when the Government was formed) a strong opinion of the imprudence of bringing Palmerston into it.

*February 2, 1854:* . . . I cannot help partaking in the opinion which Granville entertains very strongly, and which at Windsor they are quite persuaded of, that the whole thing has been got up, managed, and paid for by Louis Napoleon, Wałewski, and Palmerston. In the first place, I believe Palmerston to be capable of anything, and to be excessively reckless, daring, and vindictive. Indeed, it is difficult to see what *interest* he can have in taking such a course, and if he really has done it, it must be to gratify his hatred of the Court, and this is a sentiment in which he and the Emperor entirely agree, and in hatred of the Orleans as well. There are many little circumstances which separately do not prove much, but which taken all together look very suspicious. There is the undoubted and intimate alliance between Palmerston and the French Embassy, Palmerston's constant relations with the Press, and the reckless

and unscrupulous way in which he has written and caused to be written whatever suited him, against his own government and colleagues, the recently disclosed history of the pamphlet, the continual laudation of him by both the *Morning Herald* and the *Morning Advertiser*, and the fact that the attacks on the Prince either began or became more violent and sustained exactly at the period of his resignation. . . . I do not say that all these circumstances amount to proof, or that I am satisfied that Palmerston is at the bottom of these atrocious proceedings, but I must confess, that looking at the various characters and antecedents, I am still less satisfied of his innocence.

October 7, 1855: . . . Reeve has withdrawn from the *Times* newspaper, which is a not unimportant event. The *Times* has for a long time excited a great indignation by its insolence, arrogance, injustice, and its outrageous attacks upon everybody and everything, but still it has been restrained within certain bounds, in great measure through Reeve's influence. A short time ago Delane went abroad for his holiday when he entreated Reeve to look after the paper, the management of which was left in the hands of Dasent, Delane's brother-in-law, a pert, pragmatical little quiz, who has a parcel of vulgar Radical associates, whom he allowed to write in the paper, and who have filled it with articles on various matters, revolting to all good taste and proper feeling and moreover often interfering in Reeve's special department. Reeve has frequently remonstrated against such writing, but met with great impertinence from Mr. Dasent. At length, the other day, there appeared an article on the supposed plan of a marriage between the young Prince of Prussia and the Princess Royal which exceeded all that has been written in vulgar impertinence and insolence, which so disgusted Reeve that he resolved at once to dissolve his connection with the paper, and he accordingly wrote letters to Dasent and to Walter announcing his determination. He wrote a very good letter to Walter, in which he implored him, for the character of the *Times*, for his own interest, and on public and patriotic grounds, to put an end to such management as the paper is now under and to a style of writing so mischievous and offensive. He writes so well, has such a knack of composing articles, and has so many channels of information, that his retirement will be a severe loss to the *Times*, and there

seems every probability of the foreign department of the paper falling into coarse and vulgar hands, which will for some time to come probably do much mischief but ultimately assist in bringing the paper into disrepute, and, I sincerely hope, may diminish its efficacy and its much abused power.