CHAPTER XCV

THE PRINCE THAT LIVED

For the later years of his career as diarist, Charles Greville was like an inveterate first-nighter who lingers in the stalls while his favourite actors, whether heroes or villains, take their repeated curtains.

March 1, 1855: . . . I am busy on the task of editing a volume of Moore's correspondence left to me by John Russell, and finishing the second article upon King Joseph's Memoirs. These small literary occupations interest and amuse me, being quite out of the way of politics, and seeing nobody, except Clarendon at rare intervals.

Deaf and troubled with gout, he writes gloomily (November 10, 1853) of "the signs of the times which are very grave and alarming—nothing but strikes and deep-rooted discontent on the part of the working classes." Why need Lord John Russell "propose a lower franchise" so accelerating "the further progress of democratic power?"

Palmerston was still to be twice Prime Minister, but he protested that "he was not prepared *at his time of life* to encounter endless debates in the House of Commons on such a measure." And Clarendon said it was the first time he had ever heard Palmerston "acknowledge that he had *a time of life.*"

It began to be "an age of political Methuselahs." And even Greville surrendered at last to the most active of them all:

Hillingdon, August 17, 1856: . . . This country is profoundly tranquil and generally prosperous; everybody seems satisfied with Palmerston and his administration. I myself, who for so many years regarded him politically with the greatest aversion and distrust, have come to think him the best Minister we can have, and to wish him well.

The Queen also accepted the inevitable:

London, November 10, 1856: . . . When Clarendon went to the

Queen and explained his own conduct to her, and she expressed to him the embarrassment which she felt, and asked him what she could do, he at once said, "Send for Lord Palmerston, who is the only man, in the present temper of the people and state of affairs, who can form a government that has a chance of standing. Send for him at once, place yourself entirely in his hands, give him your entire confidence, and I will answer for his conduct being all that you can desire." The Queen took the advice, and has had no reason to repent of it.

June 20, 1857: . . . Clarendon said he was always very earnest with her to bestow her whole confidence on Palmerston, and not even to talk to others on any subjects which properly belonged to him, and he had more than once (when, according to her custom, she began to talk to him on certain things) said to her, "Madam, that concerns Lord Palmerston, and I think Your Majesty had better reserve it for your communications with him."

So "rising seventy-three" and "beginning to show some symptoms of physical weakness"—especially "a bad leg with a sore that it had been difficult to heal"—Palmerston was "loaded with the weight of public affairs"—sustaining the load into his eighties.

February 3, 1858: . . . He is always asleep both in the Cabinet and in the House of Commons, where he endeavours to conceal it by wearing his hat over his eyes. Clarendon made me laugh heartily the other day at his account of the Cabinet, where one half of them seem to be almost always asleep, the first to be off being Lansdowne, closely followed by Palmerston and Charles Wood. I remember his giving me a very droll account of Melbourne's Cabinet, and of the drowsiness which used to reign there, more particularly with Melbourne himself.

"Lady Palmerston tells the Duke of Bedford that Palmerston 'has a great affection for John.'" But, said Greville acidly, though, as it turned out, untruly, "the two Kings of Brentford will not long continue to smell the same nosegay."

As the man on the sidelines, Greville let fall a remark of which we can now discern the profound sagacity: "In the more comprehensive view of the balance of power," wrote he on January

9, 1856, "it would be far wiser to leave the power of Russia undiminished." Russia had no "designs of conquest." On the contrary, she was the "pacificator" that in 1848 had "prevented a great war between Austria and Prussia which would have made all Germany a scene of havoc and bloodshed."

September 15, 1856: . . . The coronation at Moscow appears to have gone off with great *éclat*, and to have been a spectacle of extraordinary magnificence, the prodigious cost of which betrays no sign of exhaustion or impoverishment by the late war. We were probably mistaken, as we were in so many other things, in fancying that the power and resources of Russia were very greatly impaired, but during the war, whatever we wished we were ready to believe.

September 21, 1856: The old Crimean correspondent of the *Times* has despatched a very interesting and graphic account of the coronation at Moscow, and Granville writes word that whereas he had estimated the cost of it at a million sterling, he was now led to believe it would be not much less than three. The coronation of George IV cost £240,000, which was considered an enormous sum and a monstrous extravagance. Our two last coronations cost from £30,000 to £50,000.

The Prussia that Greville knew was the Prussia that antedated Bismarck and Moltke. In 1848, the Prince of Prussia, afterward Emperor William I, had fled to England for refuge from his future subjects, then in revolt:

November 15, 1848: . . . The King inspires no confidence. The Prussian affair points a great moral, and reads an important lesson. It shows at once the danger of resistance to just demands and reasonable desires, and the dangers and evils of full democratic sway, sweeping everything before it. If the King of Prussia had long ago fulfilled his promises, and given a constitution to his country while he could have done so gracefully and safely, the new institutions would have had time to develop and consolidate themselves, and would in all probability have proved the security of the Crown when the flood of revolution broke over Europe. He refused, and fought it off so long that at last his people grew discontented and angry, and when the French Revolution set all Germany on fire the work was so far

from being perfected that the Crown was left to battle with the democratic fury that broke forth, and its own weakness and vacillation rendered the power irresistible which might have been coerced and restrained. Whether it is still time to retrace his steps remains to be seen.

London, January 2, 1849: . . . In Prussia better things might have been expected, for there at least the people are better educated, and they have enjoyed municipal institutions, and do know something of the practice of civil administration; nevertheless, Prussia has not shown until lately much more moderation and wisdom than Rome. This, however, now appears to have been entirely the King's fault. If he had displayed more firmness and decision he would have rallied round him the Conservative feelings and interests of the country; but when these interests found themselves abandoned by a sovereign who commanded 200,000 faithful troops, and they saw him bowing his head to the dictation of the rabble of Berlin, they lost all heart, and democracy became rampant and unrestrained.

While the future Emperor of Germany was a fugitive in England, he learned (May 22, 1848) that Russia was restraining one Prussian ambition—"the Emperor of Russia had determined to make common cause with the King of Denmark." When the Prussian Prince "went to pay a visit to the Queen" and alluded to this important communication, the Queen was excessively embarrassed, for she had never heard a word of it, Palmerston having omitted to tell her":

November 27, 1850: . . . The Queen wrote a letter to Palmerston, which was of course Albert's production, in which she talked of Denmark wresting Schleswig from Germany, and that the triumph of Austria would be fatal to the constitutional cause. . . He replied that he had never heard that Schleswig belonged to Germany, and as to the constitutional cause, it was more in danger from the King of Prussia, whose conduct was putting all thrones in jeopardy. It was to this effect, as Beauvale told me, not exactly.

November 21, 1850: . . . I find their aversion to Palmerston is rather greater than ever, for to his former misdeeds is now added the part he takes about German affairs on which Albert

is insane, so that they hated him before for all he did that was wrong, and they hate him now for doing what is right. However, their love or their hate makes no difference to him.

It was a Prussia still conscious of Napoleon's victories. Actually, the King looked to England for his generalissimo:

September 1, 1841: . . . He [the Duke] said that a war was not improbable in the unsettled state of European politics, and in the event of its breaking out he should most likely have to take command of an allied army in Germany, thus exhibiting his own reliance on his moral and physical powers. I did not know (what I heard yesterday) that last year the King of Prussia sent to the Duke, through Lord William Russell, to know if he would take the command of the forces of the German Confederation in the event of a war with France. He replied that he was the Queen of England's subject, and could take no command without her permission; but if that was obtained, he felt as able as ever, and as willing to command the King's army against France.

The King of Prussia was the Czar's brother-in-law. And during the Crimean War, the Czar had employed him as a spy. Greville mentions:

September 4, 1854: . . . A very good letter written by Prince Albert to the King of Prussia, who had written to him a hypocritical letter, asking where the English and French fleets were going to winter, and whether he might depend on them in case he was attacked by Russia in the Baltic, which Clarendon said was a mere artifice to obtain knowledge of our plans, that he might impart them to the Emperor Nicholas, as he well knew he was in no danger of being attacked by Russia. The Prince wrote an excellent answer, giving him no information, and entering into the whole question of Prussian policy without reserve.

January 4, 1855: . . . Clarendon says the King in his heart hates Russia and winces under the influence he submits to, that he is indignant at the insults which have been heaped on him by his Imperial brother-in-law, and the contumely with which he has been treated, but, being physically and politically a coward, he has not energy to shake off the yoke he has suffered to be imposed on him.

The attitude of Prussia affected Austria:

July 19, 1854: Within a few days everything is changed. In respect to Austria, the intrigues of Russia with Prussia, and the determination of the King to do everything that he can or that he dares to assist his Imperial brother-in-law, have had the effect of paralysing the Austrian movements, and suspending the operation of her treaty with Turkey. She cannot venture to declare war against Russia and to march her army into the Principalities while there is a large Russian force on the borders of Galicia, and the Prussians are in such an ambiguous attitude and disposition, that she can not only not depend upon Prussia to execute their defensive treaty by protecting her dominions in the event of their being attacked by Russia, but she cannot depend upon not being taken in flank by Prussia as the ally of Russia.

It was "found that the commerce of Russia has not been materially diminished." The question, here as in other wars, was whether a blockade should be attempted:

October 20, 1854: . . . A blockade of the Prussian ports in the Baltic has been suggested—a measure, as it seems to me, very questionable in point of right and political morality, and certain to be attended by the most momentous consequences. Such a measure may not be without precedent; but no power with anything like self-respect or pride could tamely submit to such an outrage and such an insult, and as it would certainly afford a *casus belli* Prussia could hardly, without abandoning all claims to be considered a great power, abstain from declaring war *instanter;* and, whatever may be the sentiments of the Prussian nation and of the Germans generally with regard to Russia, it is by no means unlikely that such an arbitrary and imperious proceeding would enlist the sympathies and the passions of all Germans without exception in opposition to us, and to France if she became a party to it.

The Queen visited the Fatherland:

September 16, 1845: . . . We hear of nothing but the dissatisfaction which the Queen gave in Germany, of her want of civility and graciousness and a great many stories are told, which are probably exaggerated or untrue. It is clear, however, that the general impression was not favourable.

January 13, 1842: A ridiculous thing happened the other day. Reeve, who corresponds with the editor of the *State Gazette* at Berlin, sent him a very bitter philippic against Palmerston, and a severe critical examination on his *modus operandi* in the Foreign Office. The article hinted at a project of his, under certain contingencies, to stay in office with a Tory Government and a Whig Household, and talked of doing this with the aid of "a woman not less able and ambitious than himself," evidently alluding to Lady Palmerston. When the article was translated in German and appeared, it produced a great sensation, but Burghersh, who does not understand German, and to whom it was translated, very stupidly fancied that the woman meant the Queen, and he hurried off to make his complaints of the audacity and insolence of the article. A great hubbub ensued, and to satisfy the English Minister, the order for the dismissal of the editor was signed; but in the meantime the matter was brought before the King, who had the good sense to see at once what the real meaning was, put a stop to the proceedings and exonerated the editor. Burghersh had, however, written home on the subject, and told the story to the Foreign Office. The next day (at Berlin) a softener appeared in the *State Gazette* with some civilities to Palmerston, and the article has fortunately never found its way into our newspapers.

Even against Denmark and Austria, the Court was thus pro-Prussian. Nor was the Queen really favourable to a Prussian constitution. The architect of reaction visited England:

November 1, 1850: . . . Meanwhile Radowitz arrived, and had hardly set foot in England before he was invited to Windsor, the pretext being that he brought over a letter from the King. It was considered by everybody a very indecent and unbecoming proceeding to have him at Windsor, considering the part he has been, and is still, acting, which our government considers as mischievous and profligate. Palmerston too was not there, and John Russell left the Castle the day he arrived. The consequence of this ill-timed invitation was a rattling article in the *Times* on Friday which will have fallen like a shell on the breakfast table at the Castle, and have put them in a great rage. This article gave great satisfaction at Brocket, made a great sensation here, and was very generally approved of. It is a very

good thing that there should be some channel through which truth is forced upon these great ones, and such articles as this, in such a paper as the *Times*, do not fail to produce an effect.

London, September 15, 1849: . . . Aberdeen spoke much of the Queen and Prince, of course with great praise. He said the Prince's views were generally sound and wise, with one exception, which was his violent and incorrigible German unionism. He goes all lengths with Prussia; will not hear of the moderate plan of a species of federalism based on the Treaty of Vienna and the old relations of Germany; and insists upon a new German Empire, with the King of Prussia for its head. I saw by his conversation at dinner that his opinions were just what Aberdeen represented them to be.

So much for what Lord Beauvale (November 26, 1850) called "the violent and inveterate prejudices of the Court."

December 13, 1850: . . . I then asked him [Palmerston] what Prince Albert said to the turn affairs had taken. He said Prince Albert was reasonable enough; that he condemned the King of Prussia, [over the Papal Quarrel] as much as anybody could; that he had been in favour of strengthening Prussia, and against the old federation, because he thought the influence of Austria in it was too great, and that it was mischievously exercised; that the condition that no organic change in the Diet could take place there without a unanimous vote could not be endured; and that he thought, while the influence of Austria remained paramount, the liberal cause, and all advances in civilization and general improvement, must be paralysed; and this was to a certain degree true. I said no doubt it was desirable to see changes and improvements, and for various reasons that Prussia should be powerful, if her power was only acquired by fair means, and without trampling on the rights of others, and on all obligations human and divine. He said, "Exactly, that is the real case; but her conduct has been so wanting in prudence, in consistency, and in good faith, that she had arrayed against her those who wish best to her."

At the christening of the Prince of Wales, afterward King Edward VII:

January 24, 1842: The King of Prussia landed on Saturday at

Greenwich, and was met by the Duke of Wellington in Prussian field marshal uniform, with the Black Eagle. The King instantly seized both his hands and said, "My dear Duke, I am rejoiced to see you. This is indeed a great day."

February 1, 1842: For the last week the King of Prussia and his activity have occupied the world. He has made a very favourable impression here. In person he is common-looking, not remarkable in any way; his manners are particularly frank, cordial, and good-humoured; he is very curious and takes a lively interest in all he sees, and has, by all accounts, been struck with great admiration at the conduct and bearing of the people, as well as the grandeur and magnificence he has found both at Court and elsewhere. Whether the order, and more especially the loyalty, he has witnessed, will induce him to entertain with more complacency the idea of a free constitution for his own kingdom, remains to be seen, not that what he finds here ought necessarily to imply that results equally happy would follow the concession of liberal constitutions in Prussia. He has been in London almost every day from Windsor, one day breakfasting with Peel, who collected the men of letters and science and the most distinguished artists to meet him. On Sunday he went to church at St. Paul's and then lunched with the Lord Mayor. Another day he went to Westminster Abbey, when he evinced great curiosity to learn all the local details of the Queen's coronation. Yesterday he went in the morning and paid a visit to Mrs. Fry, with whom he went to Coldbath Fields prison; in the evening to Drury Lane. He wanted to see one of Shakespeare's plays, and he had no other opportunity, so he got the play acted at six instead of seven, and made the Duke of Sutherland, with whom he was to dine, have his dinner at nine. He asked for *Macbeth*, but they told him it would take a month to get it up. They gave him the choice of the *Merchant of Venice* or the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and he took the latter. Nothing could exceed the magnificence of the fête the Duke of Sutherland gave him, dinner and party after it.

February 5, 1842: Parliament met on Thursday: a great crowd, and the Queen well enough received. The King of Prussia went down in state, and sat in the House of Lords on a chair near the Woolsack. On Friday he went away, having made a short but uncommonly active visit, mightily pleased with his

reception by Queen and all classes of people, from highest to lowest; splendid entertainments from the rich, and hearty acclamations from the poor. All the world has been struck with his intelligence, activity, affability, and *appetite*, for since Louis XIV, I have never heard of a monarch who eats so copiously and frequently. The oddest thing he did was to go and lunch with Mrs. Fry, and the way of going not less odd, but that was the vagary of his rude, unmannered attendant, Lord Hardwicke. After visiting some prison, Mrs. Fry asked him to lunch at her house, some four or five miles off, through the city, and he agreed. The coachman represented that the horses could not accomplish this jaunt, when it was proposed to send for post horses; but Hardwicke would not have four, and insisted on a pair being attached as outriggers to the Queen's coach horses, to the unspeakable disgust of the coachman, who, if the spirit of Vatel had been in him, would have cast himself from his box rather than submit to such an indignity. They say that nothing has struck the King so much as the behaviour of the people, their loyalty, orderly, peaceable demeanour, and he is naturally gratified at the heartiness and cordiality of his own reception. Some think that what he has witnessed will incline him to grant a free constitution to his own subjects; but as he can't create the foundations on which our constitutional system rests, and the various and complicated safeguards which are intertwined with it, he will hardly be induced to jump to any such conclusion. He made magnificent presents at parting to all the officers of the Royal Household: snuffboxes of 500 guineas apiece to the Lord Chamberlain, Master of Horse, and Lord Steward; boxes and watches to others, and he left £1,500 with Charles Murray to be distributed among the three classes of servants at the Palace.

Greville was having his last glimpses:

Gordon Castle, September 27, 1857: . . . The outside of the new house of Balmoral, in the Scotch and French style, is pretty enough, but the inside has but few rooms, and those very small, not uncomfortable, and very simply decorated; the place and environs are pretty.

October 19, 1859: . . . But to return to the Queen and Clarendon. He was unfortunately attacked by gout and confined to his

room. He was sitting there with Lady Clarendon, when Lady Gainsborough came in and told him that she was desired by the Queen to beg he would if possible move into the next room (the lady in waiting's room) and establish himself there; that the Queen would come in, when all the ladies present were to go away and leave her tête-à-tête with him. All this was done, and she remained there an hour and a half, talking over everything, pouring all her confidences into his ears, and asking for his advice about everything. He said he had endeavoured to do as much good as he could by smoothing down her irritation about things she did not like. As an example, he mentioned that while the Prince was with him a box was brought in with a despatch from Lord John, which the Prince was to read. He did so with strong marks of displeasure, and then read it to Clarendon, saying they could not approve it, and must return it to Lord John. Clarendon begged him not to do this, that it was not the way to deal with him, and it would be better to see what it contained that really was good and proper, and to suggest emendations as to the rest. He persuaded the Prince to do this, advised him what to say, and in the end Lord John adopted all the suggestions they had made to him. On another occasion the Queen had received a very touching letter from the Duchess of Parma imploring her protection and good offices, which she sent to Lord John desiring he would write an answer for her to make to it. He sent a very short, cold answer, with which the Queen was disgusted and would not send. She asked Clarendon to write a suitable one for her, which he did, but insisted that she should send it to Lord John as her own. She did so, Lord John approved, and so this matter was settled.

Ominous to think that, during all this routine, the fates were weaving the web of war. It happened that the Crown Prince of Prussia was introduced to the Princess Royal of England:

December 12, 1859: . . . Royal marriages are in almost all cases affairs of diplomatic arrangement, in which the parties have seldom seen each other before they are contracted, but in no private station was there ever a more complete love match than that of the Princess Royal. No negotiation had ever taken place, no communication between the respective parents. The young Prince went to Balmoral resolved to see what the Princess was

like, and if he did not find her attractive to retire without making any sign, and never more to return to England. But after a week passed in her society, he fell over head and ears in love with her, and one day, walking on the hills, he asked her whether she could like him enough to leave her country and family and become his wife. The sentiment was mutual, and she at once replied in the affirmative; she was only fourteen and a mere child. When she got home she was terrified at what she had done, and went in great agitation and in floods of tears to confess to her parents what she had done, which she seemed to think would be considered a great crime. She found herself forgiven, and from that time the engagement was concluded, but the Queen and Prince regretted that they had suffered her to be exposed to such temptation, and to become contracted in marriage before she was out of the nursery. The Prince told Clarendon they never would again permit any nursery courtships, and they now are putting a veto on a similar project with regard to Princess Alice. The Queen of the Netherlands is dying to have her for her son, and entreated Clarendon the other day at Stuttgart to help to bring it about, but the Queen will not allow any steps to be taken for that purpose, though as the young man is about the best Protestant *parti* to be had, it will probably come to pass sooner or later.

July 15, 1857: . . . We are overrun with Royalties present and prospective. Besides our Princess Royal's bridegroom, there are here the King of the Belgians' son and daughter, Prince Napoleon, the Queen of the Netherlands, and the Montpensiers *as Spanish Princes*, in which capacity Persigny has had to pay his court to them, and they have had to receive the Ambassador of Louis Napoleon. The Emperor and Empress come next week to pass a week at Osborne.

January 26, 1858: The Princess Royal's wedding went off yesterday with amazing *éclat*, and it is rather ludicrous to contrast the vehement articles with which the Press teemed (the *Times* in particular) against the alliance two years ago with the popularity of it and the enthusiasm displayed now. The whole thing seems to have been very successful. At the breakfast after the wedding to which none but the Royalties were invited, the French Princes were present, which was amiable and becoming on the part of the Queen.

Students of Queen Victoria's letters know that, on occasion, she could differ from her daughter, the future Empress Frederick of Germany:

December 12, 1859: . . . When Clarendon was at Berlin, Stockmar came to him and said:

"I want to talk to you on a very important matter, and to invoke your aid. It relates to 'this poor child' here. Her mother is behaving abominably to her, and unless a stop can be put to her conduct I know not what may be the consequences, for she is not in good health, and she is worried and frightened to death. The Queen wishes to exercise the same authority and control over her that she did before her marriage and she writes her constant letters full of anger and reproaches, desiring all sorts of things to be done that it is neither right nor desirable that she should do and complaining of her remissness in writing to her sisters or to Miss Hillyard, and of her forgetting what is due to her own family and country, till the poor child (as Stockmar called her) is made seriously ill, and put in a state dangerous to her in her actual condition."

Stockmar entered into various details as to the Queen's exigencies and said he was going to write to her Majesty and tell her the whole truth in a style to which she was little accustomed and such a letter as she probably had never had in her life before, but that a *viva voce* communication would do more than any letter, and he wanted Clarendon to go to the Prince as soon as he got home and speak to him on the subject and if he consented to this Stockmar would tell the Queen that he had imparted everything to Clarendon, who would be ready to communicate with her Majesty upon it. Clarendon said he might make any use he pleased of him, but asked what the Prince had been doing all this time and why he had allowed such a state of things to go on. Stockmar replied that the Prince could do nothing, that he was completely cowed and the Queen is so excitable that the Prince lived in perpetual terror of bringing on the hereditary malady and dreaded saying or doing anything which might have a tendency to produce this effect.

Clarendon did not arrive in England till some weeks after this conversation, but in the meantime Stockmar's letter had been received, and immediately after Clarendon's arrival he was sent for to Windsor. The Prince saw him first, told him the

Queen would not allude to the subject but that he wished to go into it thoroughly with Clarendon and to speak with perfect openness upon it. . . .

In the suppressed passages of Greville's Diary, there is an allusion (January 21, 1859) to the accouchement of the Princess Royal which "was near turning out fatally, though nobody knows it." Lord Derby, then Prime Minister, told Greville that "he believes the Queen herself has never been apprised of the danger her daughter was in." The child began life with a physique that was "twisted."