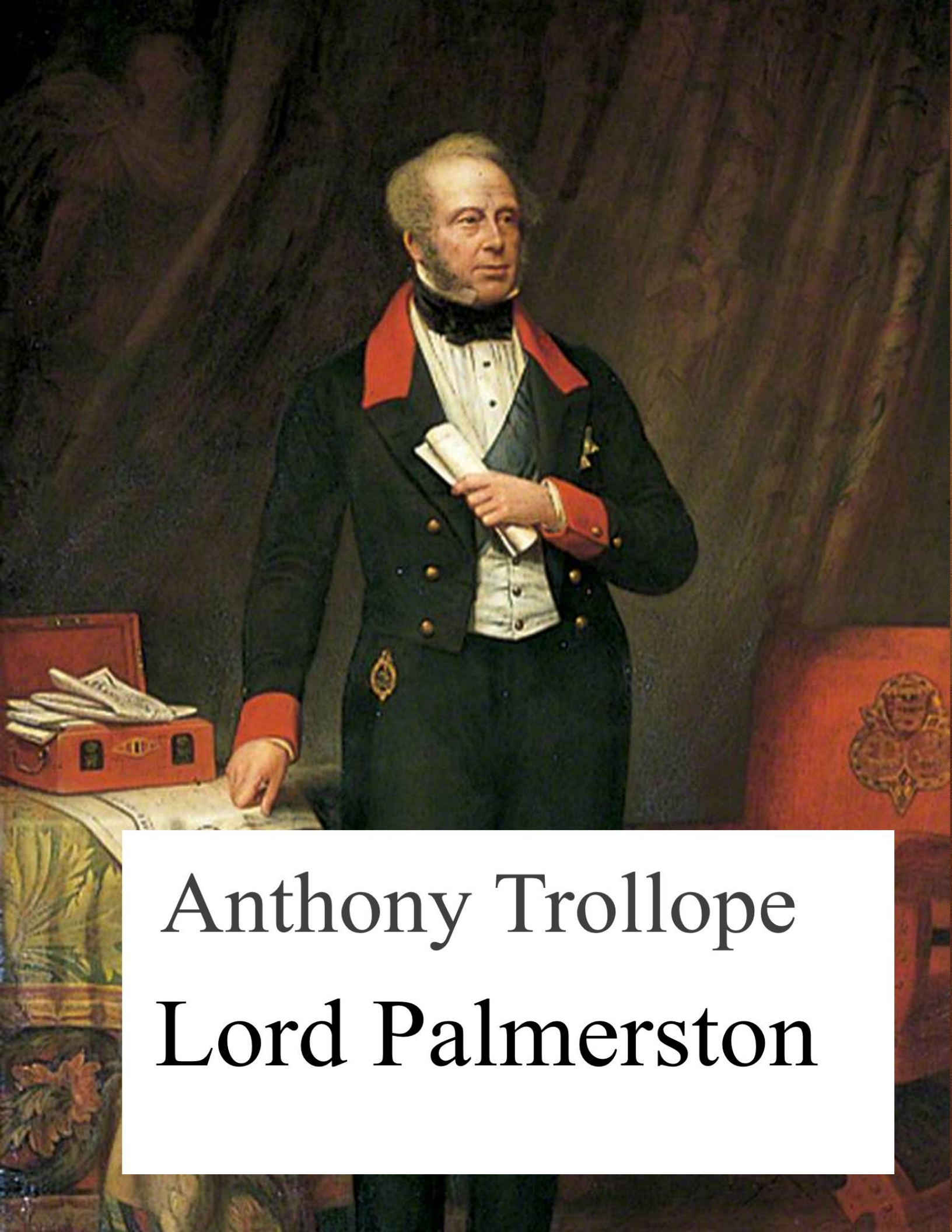

Anthony Trollope

Lord Palmerston

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION

IN looking for material on which to base this short memoir of Lord Palmerston I have of course taken, as my guide to his general life, the biography of Mr. Evelyn Ashley. I have also referred to the unfinished volumes by Lord Dalling, which Mr. Ashley adopted as far as they went, and by his later edition has rendered unnecessary to the general reader. Beyond this I have had recourse to the *Edinburgh*, the *Quarterly*, the *Times* newspaper, and various periodicals of the period; and I have read many of his speeches and others. In dealing with the Crimean War I have had recourse to Mr. Kinglake's work; and in various portions of my little book I have referred to other authors, whom it may perhaps be unnecessary that I should name here. Having lived through a great portion of Lord Palmerston's career, I have trusted in some things to my recollection, when I have been able to confirm my memory. But I must add to this short list "The Life of the Prince Consort," by Sir Theodore Martin, in which the name of Lord Palmerston has been brought under much discussion.

Sir Theodore Martin, in that work, has performed a most difficult task with a devotion and loyalty beyond praise. There was a special merit in selecting a man who has united so true a spirit with a patience so exemplary and literary merit of such high character. And the subject of his eulogy was certainly beyond all praise. To have found genius and conscience and industry, with assured moral convictions and a tender loving heart, to fill such a place as that occupied by the Prince Consort, has

been the good fortune of England. Let men consider what might have been the condition of the country with a Consort less gifted in any of these details than was the Prince. But with the verdict of the Prince, declared in regard to Lord Palmerston as Foreign Minister, I am compelled to differ. It is nothing that I and another do not agree with it, but I think that I shall be able to show that England has disagreed with his Royal Highness, and that England has been right.

It is better perhaps to say what must be said on this subject here, in the first pages. It has to be said, or such a memoir as this would lack every element of completeness. No man could thoughtfully undertake such a task without feeling that he would have to express an opinion that the Prince was right or wrong. The Prince has been so plain-spoken, and Sir Theodore Martin has been bound to publish what the Prince has said in language so resonant, that no one now dealing with Lord Palmerston's life can pass it over in silence.

That the Prince was conscientious, high-minded, modest in listening to the advice of others, bold in declaring his opinion when he had formed it, and patriotic in declaring it when formed, no thinking man can doubt. Fault was found with him at first, by men who did not think; but that has passed by. It did not now need his "Life" to make his memory sweet to all Englishmen. He came among us and gave us his best, and lived as though we were his own. In pursuance of a theory of government which it was natural that he should adopt, he found fault with the Minister who, at that time, had especially dealt between us and other nations for a period of nearly twenty years. In this he followed the political teaching which he had received from Baron Stockmar, a German possessed of great abilities and gifted with a clear, conscientious mind. He had been left to the Prince as a legacy by his uncle, King Leopold. It can hardly be necessary to speak more in detail of Baron Stockmar after the life of the Prince Consort by Sir

Theodore Martin. Lord Palmerston had gone to the Foreign Office in November, 1830, and was dismissed in December, 1851. He had been out of office during six years of that time, and, as we all understand in regard to politicians in opposition, had then watched as closely as he had worked in office. He knew the ways of the Foreign Office. He knew the ways of the Crown. He knew the ways of the people on whose behalf he was employed, and doubtless had a tendency to lessen the power of the Crown rather than to increase it, and to think more of the House of Commons year by year as years ran on. It was only natural that with the Prince the tendencies should be on the other side.

Writing on 19th of December, 1851, Lord John Russell, who was then Prime Minister, said to Lord Palmerston:—"No other course is open to me than to submit the correspondence to the Queen, and to ask her Majesty to appoint a successor to you in the Foreign Office." Thus did Lord John Russell dismiss Lord Palmerston. The Prince, in writing to Lord John, declared that the influence of England in calming down the dangerous feelings on the Continent had been destroyed by Lord Palmerston: "This influence has been rendered null by Lord Palmerston's personal manner of conducting the foreign affairs, and by the universal hatred which he has excited on the Continent. That you could hope to control him has long been doubted by us, and its impossibility is clearly proved by the last proceedings."

No doubt Lord Palmerston had been rough. A man who will not be bullied will sometimes bully. The passage is only quoted here to show the disapproval of Lord Palmerston which existed in the mind of the Prince, and to show also how impossible it will be, in dealing with the life of Palmerston, altogether to ignore the disapproval of the Prince Consort.

The two charges brought against Lord Palmerston were, that by his personal manner of conducting foreign affairs he had "rendered null the influence" of England abroad, and that he had disobeyed the orders received by him from the Court, through the Prime Minister. These orders required that time should be allowed for the reading of despatches prepared by him to be sent to Foreign Courts, and for the making of such alterations as might seem good to the Prime Minister or to the Court. That Lord Palmerston had "rendered null" the influence of England abroad will hardly now be conceived. It will be for me to assert, as Mr. Ashley has well shown, that no Minister has ever more thoroughly supported English interests and English influence abroad. As to a certain amount of disobedience, the disobedience of which complaint is made—I think that it must be admitted. "There," said the head of a Government office one day, when he had just completed the writing of a set of minute instructions to his subordinates—"if they can do all that, I'll eat them." The subordinates by no means intended to be eaten; nor did Lord Palmerston. In all ranks of life there are instructions which a man must not say that he will not obey, but will know that he cannot. So it was with Lord Palmerston. He did not, we suppose, intend to obey those instructions to the letter. He had instructions also from his other master, which made it impossible. He did intend to act as Foreign Minister to the best of his loyalty, and to the best of his patriotism.

For the truth of what is here said, I must refer the reader to the records of the man's life, as about to be given;—as, indeed, they have been given to the same effect, but at much greater length, by Mr. Ashley. Lord Palmerston proved the unassailable strength of his position by the rapidity with which he vanquished his old friend, Lord John, who had dismissed him. How far this dismissal had been carried out by Lord John himself, and how far he had been urged on by the Prince and the Prince's foreign adviser, it is not necessary that I should say. The blow had come from the

hands of Lord John, and Lord Palmerston at once hit back at him. On the 19th of December, 1851, he was told to go. On the 24th of February, 1852, he thus wrote to his brother: "I have had my tit for tat with John Russell, and I turned him out on Friday last."

Two months had done it. And how had it been done? Lord Palmerston had found himself called upon to fight the Prime Minister,—and the Ministers who remained in the Cabinet from which he had been dismissed,—backed by all the powers of the Crown. And certainly he could depend in no degree on the House of Lords. It was by the House of Commons,—by his own influence there as opposed to that of Lord John Russell so supported,—that he won his victory. Having won it, he (Lord John) was at once deposed. This, at any rate, showed what was the opinion of those to whom England had confided the political power of the country. The mode of the battle and the cause which created it, must be told further on. It soon became evident that Lord Palmerston had not been "smashed," as had been declared during those months. "There was a Palmerston," had been said by a witty statesman of the opposite party. But it came to pass very soon that Lord Palmerston stood higher than ever in the councils of his country. The war, of which many men said that it would annihilate us, had come upon us; and in four years' time the various Prime Ministers of the day,—Lord Aberdeen and Lord John and Lord Derby,—were calling for help to the "Palmerston that was." Indeed, he had been one of the Cabinet again since December, 1852; and then in February, 1855, himself became Prime Minister, as being the only man in England to whom England could trust the awful responsibility of that period. That was the man on whose dismissal from his councils the Prince had congratulated the then Prime Minister, telling him that England's influence was rendered null by the hatred abroad which the dismissed one had created. This, I think, is strong proof that England did not agree with him. Nor was the Sovereign slow to express her approval of the man who had been so lately dismissed. "It

would give her particular satisfaction if Lord Palmerston would join in this formation,"—the formation of a new Cabinet. Then he was called on himself to form a Cabinet, and we are told, in a page or two further on, that "Lord Palmerston had good reason to appreciate the generosity with which his old chief had interposed to remove this formidable impediment to his success. Nor was her Majesty less grateful." So was he welcomed back to the highest seat. Nor was the Prince slow to show himself alive to the fact that the country was best served by him whom the country had selected for its servant. But he must surely then have acknowledged to himself that the dismissal of a Minister of whom England thoroughly approves, though it may be effected for a few months, can hardly be maintained.

This, I think,—his dismissal from the Foreign Office which he loved so well,—was the hardest trial to which Lord Palmerston was subjected during his long official life. In the previous year an attack had been made upon him in regard to Don Pacifico. It had been commenced in the House of Lords, and was carried on through a memorable debate in the House of Commons. During that period the Prince Consort had then written to Lord John: "Both the Queen and myself are *exceedingly sorry* at the news your letter contained. We are not surprised, however, that Lord Palmerston's mode of doing business should not be borne by the susceptible French Government with the same good-humour and forbearance as by his colleagues." But in that affair Lord Palmerston had so managed that he had come out of it, not dismissed, but triumphant. In that, as will be seen, there was no grief to him, though much trouble. But it had all been a part of the same conscientious but, to the feeling of many, unconstitutional operation. It was written on Lord Palmerston's mind that he was England's Minister for Foreign Affairs, acting, no doubt, in conjunction with his colleagues, but subject to no immediate control. But it was not so written on the mind of the Prince Consort. Which idea was written on the minds

of the people; and which theory was it possible that either should carry out in accordance with the practice of the country? Subsequently, when Lord Clarendon was Foreign Minister with his entire approval, if not by his nomination, Palmerston must surely have felt more interested in the Foreign Office than any other Englishman. He was greatly successful afterwards as Premier, but his years spent at the Foreign Office were those of his best activity. It is as Foreign Minister that his memory will chiefly live.

He was in office altogether forty-nine years and some odd months;—all but fifty years! No other Englishman has, I believe, ever served so long. How should an Englishman serve so long, seeing that a young man has to show some fitness before he is taken into office, and that then, as parties are divided in England, he has to remain out during that portion of his life in which his opponents are in? But this man did so. He lived in all eighty-one years. Of these, twenty-two were those of his boyhood and education; he enjoyed nine of enforced rest, though during those nine he was, with the exception of a month or two, an active member of Parliament; the remaining fifty saw him always in Parliament, always in office, always at the oar. They offered to make him Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, as they had also offered to make him Governor-General of India. But he laughed at the proposal. Not to be in the centre of everything,—at St. Stephen's, in Downing Street, in London where the Mayor and the Fishmongers held their banquets, ready for Greenwich dinners, ready for all attacks, for all explanations, for all discussions—was to him not to live. But he did live always, till at eighty-one he was taken to his rest, being at the moment Prime Minister of England.

And yet he was by no means a man of genius, possessed of not more than ordinary gifts of talent, with no startling oratory, and, above all, with no specially strong liberal opinions. He had all that could be done for him,

both for good and evil, by a thoroughly English education of the first class. He could fight and would fight as long as he could stand; but as conqueror he could be thoroughly generous. He could work, requiring no rest, but only some change of employment. He shot, he hunted, he raced, he danced. But he seems to have cared for the niceties of erudition neither in classics nor in philosophy. He was a man who from the first was determined to do the best he could with himself; and he did it with a healthy energy, never despairing, never expecting too much, never being in a hurry, but always ready to seize the good thing when it came. Through his active life he was fortunate in all things. He avoided those scrapes to which such men are subject,—men who come early into their fortunes and their titles, who profess to live, if not lives of pleasure, lives to which pleasure lends all her attractions. He shot, he hunted, he raced, and he danced; but he did not drink; he did not gamble. The world has heard of no trouble into which he got about women. He became so popular with the world generally that the world was afraid to be censorious or to inquire into him with prying eyes. The world called him "Cupid" when he was young, and the world said nothing of him more severe than that. He had, too, the great gift of uninterrupted physical health, without which no statesman can now do great things in England. Even a Pitt, were a Pitt to come now, would hardly succeed under the weight of responsibility and labour which he would have to bear.

Lord Palmerston began life as a Tory, and only drifted gradually into those Whig tendencies which held him to the end of his life, rather than were held by him. Of the Honourable Henry John Temple, the eldest son of the Viscount Palmerston of that day, the earliest news we have is that he was measured for his first pair of breeches on the 4th of March, 1789, and that later in life complaints were made that Harry Temple was too sedate and wanted animal spirits; and we know that he passed through Harrow School with fair credit and much popularity as a young nobleman. From

thence he was sent to Edinburgh to listen to the teaching of Professor Dugald Stewart. The Professor thus writes about him to his old Harrow master in April, 1801. He was then sixteen. “In point of temper and conduct he is everything his friends could wish. Indeed, I cannot say that I have ever seen a more faultless character at his time of life, or one possessed of a more amiable disposition.” It is somewhat exaggerated praise, and would hardly have been believed by Baron Stockmar when, fifty years later on, he had to judge of the Foreign Minister. From Edinburgh he went to St John’s, Cambridge. His father had previously died; and here, though we only know it from himself, he was so “commended for the general regularity of his conduct” that he was advised to stand for the University. In January, 1806, Mr. Pitt died, and the University had to elect a new member. Palmerston was twenty-one years old, and was put forward as representing the Tory Government party; but he was beaten by Lord Henry Petty and Lord Althorp, afterwards Lord Lansdowne and Lord Spencer, with both of whom he for many years sat in the same Cabinet. He then stood for Horsham in November, 1806, and was returned; but he was unseated on petition. He stood again for the University, in May, 1807, and was again unsuccessful. He came in afterwards for a rotten borough, Newtown, in the Isle of Wight. “One condition required” by the patron “was that he would never, even for the election, set a foot in the place.”

But he had become the officer of the Government before he was a member of Parliament, having, in anticipation of his lot in life, been appointed one of the junior Lords of the Admiralty. He was nominated to that office by the influence of Lord Malmesbury, who had been one of his guardians. His duties as such were, as he tells us, confined to the signing of his name. The Duke of Portland was the Prime Minister, but Mr. Canning was Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and gave the Ministry what power it had. Soon afterwards, still in 1807, application was made to Canning to appoint young Palmerston Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, but the

place had already been given away. A quarter of a century was thus left to run by, as Mr. Ashley remarks, before he took his place in that department.

It was Under the Duke of Portland, as a special friend and follower of Canning, that Lord Palmerston took his place as a Government servant, in April, 1807. As such he remained, with six intervals, amounting in all to about nine years, till on 16th October, 1865, he died at Brocket Hall, in Hertfordshire, in the same house in which Lord Melbourne, whose brother-in-law he became, had previously died in 1848. For four or five months of his life,—in the winter of 1834-35,—he was without a seat in Parliament, till in the April of that year he found himself landed in a safe refuge in Tiverton. At the time at which he entered the Admiralty he was not yet twenty-three years old. He possessed a fair patrimony, but was by no means a rich nobleman. He had an Irish property in County Sligo, partly in the town, but chiefly on the sea-coast. To this he paid great attention. I remember having been told on the spot nearly forty years ago that that wonderful "Irishman," Lord Palmerston, had for the last ten years spent all his income upon the estate. He had just then been over, and the beauty of his presence had probably enhanced the virtue of his operations. The family house was at Broadlands, near Romsey, in Hampshire. Here he went into the country, sometimes for a week or two at a time, whereas other country gentlemen go for months. Nothing astonishes us more than the smallness of the periods allowed to himself by Lord Palmerston for the amusements of life. But he makes his statements in that respect without any feeling either of surprise or self-praise. He does in one place break out into anger against a keeper who spends his nights in the alehouse in order that the poachers may spend theirs in the coverts. "Five guns killing sixteen pheasants in Yew Tree!" Yew Tree we presume to have been a wood, and certainly must have been unsatisfactory even in 1834, when the catastrophe took place. The Foreign Secretary going down to his own preserves with four friends, and for a very short holiday, and finding only

three birds apiece among them, cannot but have been exasperating! But Mr. Thresher, the keeper in fault, probably thought that a man so greatly occupied with foreign affairs as his master, could not want many pheasants.

CHAPTER II.

PALMERSTON AS JUNIOR LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY AND SECRETARY OF WAR, APRIL, 1807 TO MAY, 1827

THE early years of Lord Palmerston, though he was in office, in Parliament, even when he had become a Cabinet Minister, were not those by which he will be known. Pitt died about the age at which Palmerston went to the Foreign Office, having served his country as Prime Minister for nearly twenty years. But during that period of his comparative youth, Lord Palmerston was always at work, gaining slowly that consideration in the eyes of men on which his fame and strength was built up. It was not in him to take Parliament by surprise, and to captivate the ears of all hearers by some precocious speech. Nevertheless he slowly learned the art of speaking with great efficiency, and could at last carry on a debate with energy and success,—as was found by the Don Pacifico speech, to which we shall come in his sixty-sixth year, when he spoke for five consecutive hours. In the way of speech-making, that was the greatest effort of his life; but other orators have reached their zenith before they have become sexagenarians. Through his whole life I think that he had never spoken for the mere sake of the effect which oratory is supposed to have. In the mode of life to which he had fashioned himself, there constantly arose matters which required speeches. When the occasion fell upon him he could express himself. When, as Secretary of War, he had to advocate a Military College, he declared that, “for his part, he wished to see the British soldier with a

British character, with British habits, with a British education, and with as little as possible of anything foreign." The argument was *ad captandum*, but it was of a nature fitted for its purpose. Such generally were his arguments. And he could tell a story with expressive force, as he did tell the story of Don Pacifico in his own defence. He failed lamentably in defending himself after his dismissal from the Foreign Office,—when the witty statesman said, prematurely, that there "had been a Palmerston." Defence by words would at that moment have been very difficult,—to have been efficacious and hot to have been disloyal! But he could answer a rowdy at the hustings with rough, easy fun, in a manner that, with such an audience, was found to be successful. He seems to have prepared his speeches carefully when he was young, having among his papers left the notes behind him when he died, but to have abandoned the practice as he became accustomed to the work. It was just what we should have expected. He looked forward as a young man to speaking as a necessity from which there could be no escape; but he never seems to have regarded the art as the source of his power, or the bulwark of his fame.

His first speech was in 1808, on the taking of Copenhagen. We have all read our history sufficiently to know that Nelson raised his telescope to his blind eye, or in other words, took upon himself to disobey his superior officer. The Danish expedition was debated, and Nelson, as we know, got great honour for what would have ruined him had he been unsuccessful. The Ministry were attacked as to the expedition to Copenhagen, and on this occasion Lord Palmerston, as a Lord of the Admiralty, made his first speech. "My dear Elizabeth," he says, writing to his sister, "you will see by this day's paper that I was tempted by some evil spirit to make a fool of myself for the entertainment of the House last night; however I thought it was a good opportunity of breaking the ice, although one should flounder a little in doing so; as it was impossible to talk any egregious nonsense in so good a cause." In time, as he came to have more experience, he must have

found that in this he was in error. Let the case be ever so good, the oratory may be bad. But he had numbers on his side. There were 253 votes for Government and 108 against it;—and yet Palmerston complained to his sister that the division was not so good as he had expected. He tells us he was half an hour on his legs, and did "not feel so much alarmed as I expected to be."

He had opened his lips but once in the House of Commons, when, in October 1809, there came a break up of the Cabinet, on the duel between Canning and Castlereagh. Mr. Percival undertook the office of Prime Minister, and offered to Palmerston the place of Chancellor of the Exchequer, from the duties of which he was desirous of saving himself. The fact that he did so will chiefly be of use to us as showing the idea which was then held of Lord Palmerston by his elders, and the idea which he held himself. He writes to Lord Malmesbury for advice, but he himself gives the advice on which he means to act "I have always thought it unfortunate for any one, and particularly a young man, to be put above his proper level, as he only rises to fall the lower. Now, I am quite without knowledge of finance, and never but once spoke in the House." "A good deal of debating must of course devolve upon the person holding the Chancellorship of the Exchequer. All persons, not born with the talents of Pitt or Fox, must make many bad speeches at first, if they speak a great deal on many subjects, as they cannot be masters of all; and a bad speech, though tolerated in any person not in a responsible situation, would make a Chancellor of the Exchequer exceedingly ridiculous." And so that matter of the Chancellorship of the Exchequer was decided. He had not possessed the gifts which would have enabled him to be a second Pitt, but he had the gift of knowing that he could not be so. He settled down at last as Secretary at War, and, by his own judgment, decided on taking the office without a seat in the Cabinet. Writing again to Lord Malmesbury, he says: "Percival having very handsomely given me the option of the Cabinet with the War

Office (if I go to it), I thought it best on the whole to decline it; and I trust that, although you seemed to be of a different opinion at first, you will not, on the whole, think I was wrong." He tells us that he entered on his new functions on the 27th of October, 1809. He was then twenty-five years old.

Having thus made his choice against the Cabinet, he did not enter those sacred doors till May, 1827. An apprenticeship of eighteen years was more, probably, than he had anticipated when he made his choice. But it was no doubt well for his future fame and his stability as a Government servant, that it should have been so. During these eighteen years he was thoroughly learning his duty as a Minister of the Crown;—learning, as some will say, how to exaggerate those duties, and to absorb into his own hands more of power and potentiality than had been intended by those who had appointed him. But by himself, though he thought probably but little about it while he was learning it, the lesson had to be learned; and the lesson taught seems to have been this, that he would interfere with the duties of no other office than his own, but with those duties he would put up with no interference. There may have been danger in this; but such was his theory of official life. And it can hardly be denied that as a Minister of State no Englishman has been more successful.

Than Mr. Percival, who thus offered to Lord Palmerston a seat in his Cabinet, no Englishman who has become Prime Minister, was ever a more prejudiced, more antiquated Tory. He was, especially, a determined Protestant, regarding any Catholic claims to the privileges of citizenship with all the bigotry of religious conviction. At this time the Regency began, King George III. having given place to his son, who became Prince Regent, and ten years afterwards George IV. But in Lord Palmerston's early speeches, or in his parliamentary conduct, there is no allusion to any peculiar political bias, and apparently no thought of it. He had joined the Government, as other young men in lower ranks of life join this or the