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THE BRITISH PARTY SYSTEM BETWEEN THE
REFORM ACTS OF 1832 AND 1867

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THE IDEA of this symposium was to consider a particular historical phenomenon — the growth of modern political parties — as it developed a century ago in three English-speaking countries, Great Britain, the United States, and Canada. There is not much time to discuss the meaning of the term political party, but I would suggest that we might define it as a body of men bound together by some common political principles and accepting some modicum of discipline and organization for the purpose of gaining control of the elected legislature and of the executive government. [1]

Today I would like to attempt an examination of the state of British political parties in the period betwen the first and second Reform Acts and more particularly in the fifteen years following the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846. Because of the limits of time it will be convenient to look backward from 1846 and forward from 1859, with some brief consideration of a few of the more notable developments of the intervening years. Every period in party history has a significance of its own, but these middle years, I believe, are of peculiar importance in the evolution of the modern Liberal and Conservative parties.

Having learnt our lesson carefully in the Namier school [2] it comes as something of a shock to turn to the year 1846 and to find the party picture still so confused that contemporaries were ready to regard the concept of party as meaningless and out of date. The *Spectator*, for instance, constantly alludes with satisfaction to the decline of party and on the eve of the Corn Law debate observes that no real issues divided the two main parties *as in the days before 1832!* [3] A few years later the *Economist* finds that "parties are dissolved" and looks forward to the millenium when all statesmen "without regard to personal or to party views act only on the broad principles established by political science." [4] They were wrong in their predictions, of course, but considering the political confusion of the times their mistake is not surprising. Today we can look back at the political scene of those days from a better perspective, but it is still difficult to give a clear picture of the state of parties in 1846.

Let us start with the Tories, or Conservatives as Peel now called them, since their case is the less complicated of the two. In the decade following 1832 Peel had brought together the shattered fragments of the "second Tory party" and had laid the foundations of a modern

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[1] Cf. W. C. Abbott, "The Origin of English Political Parties," *A.H.R. XXIV;* Edmund Burke, "Thoughts on the Cause of Present Discontents, 1770", *Works,* (World Classics ed., London, 1930), II, 82.

[2] An introductory section of this paper discussing Sir Lewis Namier's ideas about political parties in the reign of George III has been left out for lack of space. Several other passages have been deleted, for the same reason, later in the paper.

[3] *Spectator,* 28 February, 1846.

[4] *Economist,* 9 January, 1847.

Conservative party, which on his insistence accepted the implications of the Reform Act.   The rudiments of a central office came into being with the foundation of the Carlton Club in 1832 as a social and political headquarters for the party. [5]   The supervision of parliamentary elections had hitherto been part of the work of the Chief Whip (a term with fox-hunting connotations), whose principal task since early in the eighteenth century had been the "whipping in" of the maximum number of votes in the House of Commons. [6]   With the increasing importance of elections after 1832 this extra-parliamentary work was largely taken over by a new officer, the general agent.   Peel's success in the field of party management was largely the work of Francis Robert Bonham, M.P., who filled this post from 1832 to 1846. [7]

Another element in Peel's electoral success was the importance which he and his lieutenants attached to registering the new voters. This was the work of various local associations, including numerous Conservative Operative Societies created for the purpose of organizing the poorer members of the new electorate. [8]   Elections, however, remained primarily a local affair and the central headquarters of the Party had as yet relatively little influence over the constituencies. Indeed, dislike of central control was a well known Tory characteristic.

Thus in the decade after 1832 Peel's Conservatives seemed to show most of the outward characteristics of a modern political party, and they seemed to derive further strength from their relative social homogeneity.   Out of 458 Conservatives elected to the House of Commons between 1841 and 1847, according to Professor Aydelotte, [9] some 364 were members of the peerage, the baronetcy, or the landed gentry, or were directly related to one of those categories; and according to another source, of the approximately 370 Conservatives who won seats in the General Election of 1841, 301 were landlords. [10]   Nevertheless there were distinct divisions within the Conservative Party during this period.   On the one hand there were the Ultra-Tories, strong in the House of Lords (e.g. Cumberland, Buckingham. Londonderry), who had never forgiven Peel for Catholic Emancipation and who fought any surrender of aristocratic and ecclesiastical privileges, while on the other there were the so-called Tory Radicals, more vociferous outside of Parliament (e.g. Sadler, Oastler and Stephens) and in a class by himself Lord Ashley, all anxious to repair the social wrongs of the Industrial Revolution and to repeal the new Poor Law which Peel had supported.   In the forties the Young England movement under Disraeli's inspiration seemed to combine characteristics of both these groups.

What then of those common principles that are supposed to be the basis of party and of the policies that stem from them?   Here was

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[5] Norman Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel* (London, 1929), pp. 397-400.

[6] M. Ostrogorski, *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties*, 2 vols. (London, 1902), I, 137-40.

[7] Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, p. 414.

[8] R. L. Hill, *Toryism and the People* 1832-1846 (London, 1929), pp. 53-4.

[9] Table III of a mimeographed appendix to a paper read by Professor W. V. Aydelotte at the Anglo-American Conference of Historians in London, 1953, subsequently printed in *History*, XXXIX (Oct., 1954).

[10] J. A. Thomas, *The House of Commons*, 1832-1901 (Cardiff, 1939), p. 5.

Peel's weakness as a Conservative leader. His famous Tamworth
Manifesto of 1834, although a bold innovation that was calculated to
win many of the new voters, as a Tory proclamation was lacking
certain essentials. Even Mr. Kitson Clark, whose approach to the
subject is highly pragmatic admits that in it "There was no appeal to
any life-giving, party-inspiring and specifically Tory principles." [11]
Peel did not reject the Tory cry of 'Church and King', but his political
realism was often incomprehensible to the Ultras, and in the eyes of
many Tories the policies enunciated in the famous manifesto simply
had too much of a Whig ring about them.

In fact Peel and most of the intelligentzia of the party whom he
had gathered around him in his great administration of 1841-46
were disciples of the *laissez-faire* creed of the classical economists and
it was only Peel's strength of character that kept the large and restive
elements to whom this philosophy was naturally distasteful from
rebellion long before 1846. This was well illustrated by the way in
which he forced many of the Tory supporters of Lord Ashley's Ten
Hour amendment to the Government's Factory Bill of 1844 to reverse
their vote. [12] In repealing the Corn Laws, however, he was desecrating
the Ark of the Covenant; the long pent up emotions of landowning,
Protectionist backbenchers in the Party exploded, and Peel's great
Ministry came to an end.

With the head sundered from the body — Lord Stanley was the
only avowed Protectionist of Cabinet rank — the Party seemed to be
in an even worse position than after the disaster of 1832. The loss of
experienced leaders was a grievous blow but one that time could and
did remedy. Moreover there was one genius in the party whom Peel
had overlooked, and Disraeli, with little help from Stanley (Lord
Derby after 1851), managed to repeat Peel's feat of putting Humpty-
Dumpty together again. It is a paradox of history that the two men
who did the most in different ways to build up the modern Conser-
vative Party, together almost brought about its ruin in 1846, the one
by the relentlessness of his attack on the party leader, the other by his
refusal to put the interests of party before those of the nation.

Disraeli had a hard task because of the indolence of his turf-
loving leader in the House of Lords [13] and the lingering suspicion of
his own followers in the House of Commons. The Carlton Club
survived, but Bonham remained loyal to Peel and so his framework of
party agents disappeared [14] and was not replaced until Disraeli's friend

[11] G. Kitson Clark, *Peel and the Conservative Party* (London, 1929), p. 213.
On the next page he adds: "It may be that Peel could not have suggested any
principle that could give continued life and unity to his party, because principles
except in their vaguest forms have little to do with the history of Parties. Perhaps
parties are only the chance creations of past accidents and present need, helped out
by continuous organization and invested with an unreal unity, an imaginary con-
sistency with the past and an illusory belief that they inherit its ideals."

[12] J. L. and Barbara Hammond, *Lord Shaftesbury* (4th ed., London, 1936),
p. 100.

[13] See L. Strachey and R. Fulford (eds.), *The Greville Memoirs* 1814-1860,
8 vols., (London, 1938), VI 290-91, for a remarkable description of Lord Derby at
Newmarket.

[14] H. J. Hanham, "The General Election of 1868 — a Study in the basis of
Mid-Victorian Politics" (Cambridge University doctoral thesis, 1954), chap. v.

Philip Rose was appointed party electoral agent in 1853 to assist the new and energetic Chief Whip, Sir William Jolliffe (later Lord Hylton). [15]   In the 1860's the Conservatives followed the Liberal example in setting up a Central Association, which, according to Ostrogorski, devoted itself "particularly to the cultivation of social relations which were the electoral mainspring of the Conservative party." [16]

Disraeli also sought to build up newspaper support and for that purpose started a weekly called the *Press* to which he contributed frequently for several years. His greatest success, however, was in the education of the rank and file of the Party, and in this he surpassed Peel, because, no matter how inferior it may have been, he worked out a political philosophy that was more congenial to them than was Peel's brand of liberalism and that was capable of producing Conservative policies with wide popular appeal. Thus despite many rebuffs, especially in the earlier years, he coaxed the party along a road that was eventually to lead to lasting political success. The greatest asset of the Party during these years, however, was its greater homogeneity once the Peelites had departed. For the time being it was the party of the landed interest and the Church, although circumstances often forced it to be on the defensive when these two interests were involved.

The Whig-Liberal Party during these years is less easily described. An old parliamentarian of the period is reported to have defined a Liberal as: "A gentleman who, if Lord Derby were to issue a circular requesting all those members who were disposed to accord to him any confidence would do him the favour to meet him in St. James Square to hear his programme, would not respond to the invitation. Other test, I know none." [17]

The administrations of Lord Grey, Lord Melbourne, and Lord John Russell looked for support from a queer ramshackle coalition of Whigs, Canningites, Liberals, Radicals, and Irish Repealers. A great gulf separated the Conservative Whig from the Ultra-Radical and yet the dividing line between these various groups was so nebulous that it is difficult even to set figures against them. The Canningites may be lumped with the Whigs, being of the same social caste and on the right wing of the coalition; the Liberals merge with the left wing of the Whigs on the one side and with the moderate Radicals on the other; O'Connell's Repealers, although a distinct and compact group, are generally lumped with the Radicals. In the long run the number calling themselves Liberals increased at the expense of those called Whigs or Radicals. During the 1830's the coalition as a whole were known as the Reformers. [18]   But let us take a closer look at the various groups that made it up.

[15] W. F. Monypenny & G. E. Buckle, *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli* (rev. 2 vol. ed., London, 1929), I, 1298.
[16] Ostrogorski, *Democracy and Political Parties*, I, 149; cf. Monypenny & Buckle, *Disraeli*, II, 524.
[17] Ostrogorski, *Democracy and Political Parties*, p. 56, n. 4.
[18] Cf. E. Halévy, *History of the English People*, III, *The Triumph of Reform, 1830-1841* (rev. ed., London, 1950), pp. 61-70, 179-82.

One contemporary authority classifies only 152 out of 332 supporters of Melbourne in 1835 as Whigs. [19]   They were a highly select group; indeed in the narrow sense of the word Whigs were born, not made, although the family occasionally adopted outsiders of talent such as a Burke or a Macaulay. 'I am not a Whig," said Thackery, "But oh, how I would like to be one!" [20]   Radical opinion was less flattering.   As a working definition we might say that a Whig was the member of a noble family or a connection thereof who paid at least lip service to the principles of 1688 and who was less frightened of proposals for liberal reform of one sort or another than were the rest of the British aristocracy.   For the most part they would be at least nominal members of the Church of England, but traditionally they showed some sympathy with the grievances of non-Anglicans.

The continued power of the Whig magnates may be explained by a number of factors — the prestige of their names, the natural talents which many of them possessed, their wealth and territorial influence, and one might add their longevity.   Three of the most important Whig houses, Bedford, Lansdowne, and Devonshire, between them owned almost 428,000 acres in the three kingdoms with gross annual revenues amounting to some £385,000. [21]   Members of such families obviously had advantages when they chose a political career.

At the other end of the line there were the Radicals, a species of politician who first appeared in public life in the days of Wilkes, and whose numbers in the House of Commons were greatly increased by Parliamentary reform.   In the first reformed Parliament they ranged from demagogues such as Cobbett, cranks such as the banker Attwood, and political curiosities such as the prizefighter Gulley, to men of rank in society such as Sir William Molesworth, and they even had a spokesman in the House of Lords in the person of Lord Durham. Excluding the Irish Repealers they are supposed to have numbered about 120 in 1835 and about 100 in 1847, [22] but the division lists rarely showed this strength.   They were all critics of the *status quo* yet apart from this they had little in common.   Some such as Fielden were humanitarians interested in factory reform and similar measures, but the most important element among them in the 1830's were the so-called Philosophical Radicals, spokesmen for the utilitarian philosophy of Jeremy Bentham, men such as Hume, Roebuck, Molesworth, and Grote.   The Philosophical Radicals were often men of means and some rank in society, even though their ideas might seem alien to their more conservative colleagues.   Their influence is to be seen in most of the major legislation of the thirties, but they were destitute of political common sense and despite their opportunity proved themselves incapable of forming a separate party.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 180, n. 1.
[20] O. F. Christie, *Transition from Aristocracy* 1832-1867 (*New York, London,* 1928), p. 162.
[21] G. E. Cokayne *et al. The Complete Peerage of England etc.*, new ed. rev. by V. Gibbs (London, 1910-53), 13v.
[22] Halévy, *History*, III, 180; IV, 181, 184.

In the 1840's a new element began to appear in the Radical ranks, the so-called Manchester School led by Cobden and Bright, representing predominantly the views of north of England manufacturers. The Manchester men and the older Radicals were close allies who fought the battle for free trade together, but the former took a very limited view of the role of government which restricted their political programme. The Philosophical Radicals had never solved the Benthamite dilemma as to how to reconcile their ideas of government intervention in the interests of efficiency with the classical economist's concept of *laissez-faire*. Benthamites such as Chadwick were inclined to take the path that led to collectivism, but others such as Hume were stout defenders of *laissez-faire* principles. All Radicals, however, were united in their efforts to root out special privileges wherever they existed in church or state, and that is why they were looked upon askance by most members of the upper classes. The Whig might be ready to make the odd concession to the Radical here or there, but had little real sympathy with him. As political optimists the Whigs feared the Radicals less than did other members of their class and were confident in their own ability to keep the Radicals in place. Thus in 1846 Lord John Russell arrogantly presumed to form one of the most aristocratic Cabinets of the century, with no Radical representation, although he was dependent upon them to stay in office.

In the first decade after the Reform Act the Irish Repealers, a group ranging from forty to sixty elected from the more popular Irish constituencies, were also a force to be reckoned with, as the Melbourne Whigs recognized when they concluded the so-called Lichfield House pact with O'Connell in 1835. By 1846, however, O'Connell's bolt was spent and in the following year he died. In the quarter century that followed the famine the Irish Brigade in the Commons was a leaderless and ineffective group except for one burst of activity when the newly formed Tenant League intervened in the election of 1852 and sent some fifty Irish members to Westminster pledged to their programme. Under pressure of Irish Tory landlords Derby was forced to repudiate Disraeli's promises to the Irish Brigade whose members consequently switched their vote and helped to turn the Conservative Government out of office in December of that year. Thereafter the Irish ceased to act as a separate parliamentary force until Isaac Butt took up the cause of Home Rule in the 1870's. [23]

Liberal Party organization was much looser than that of the Conservatives during these years, partly because of the aloof attitude of the Whig magnates, partly because of the heterogeneous nature of the coalition that supported Whig Governments or opposed Conservative ones. It is true that the Whig-Liberals followed the example of the Conservatives by founding the Reform Club four years after the formation of the Carlton, but the initiative here came from the Radicals and the Whig magnates took the idea up with reluctance. Yet ironically, such was the social prestige of the Whigs, that control of this new party institution rapidly slipped out of the hands of its

[23] See Barry O'Brien, *Two Centuries of Irish History* 1691-1870 (London, 1907), pp. 442-8; W. O. Morris, *Ireland* 1798-1898 (London, 1898), pp. 174-8.

Radical promoters. [24] In any event the Reform Club became the political headquarters of the Whig-Liberal Party with a political committee similar to that in operation at the Carlton.

The Chief Liberal Whip was also assisted in extra-parliamentary work by one or two general agents, during the quarter century following the Reform Act by two able solicitors, Joseph Parkes, a Benthamite Radical on good terms with a number of Whig leaders, and James Coppock who played a more obscure role doing much of the electoral donkey-work behind the scenes until his retirement in 1857. [25] Two years later Sir Henry Brand became Chief Liberal Whip and took the organization of the Party outside Parliament more into his own hands, setting up a "Liberal Registration Association," which looked after such matters as the registration and transportation of outvoters and the recommendation of parliamentary candidates. The Liberals also followed Conservative example at this time by setting up Liberal Registration Societies in the constituencies. [26]

It may be said then that the party machinery of the Liberals in the years between the first and second Reform Acts was a loose and sketchy affair and that our knowledge of it is inadequate. It is even more difficult to suggest any common policy or set of principles for the Party during these years, although some general tendencies may be noted. While many of the Whigs were unwilling converts to the repeal of the Corn Laws they did accept the policy and its implications from 1846 onward. The position of the Liberal Party was much less equivocal than that of the Conservatives in this matter but after 1852 the revival of Protection was not a serious issue for the rest of the century. Moreover the juncture of the Peelites with the Liberals led to the completion of the Liberal fiscal programme under Gladstone's able guidance. In a very much more limited way the Liberals were the party of reform. The reforming elements in Parliament had more hopes of attaining some of their aims when Liberal Governments were in office, but admittedly they made little headway with Lord Palmerston.

Sometimes foreign policy was a rallying point for the Liberal Party. It is true that many Radicals (and all the Peelites) were critical of Palmerston's high handed methods and aggressive nationalism as seen in the Chinese wars and the famous Don Pacifico episode, but there was more general backing for the support which he and Russell gave to Italian unification and on this issue we can detect a divergence between the two parties based on principle. It was this divergence that finally brought the few remaining Peelites into the Liberal fold in 1859.

I have reserved consideration of the Peelites until the end because it seems to me that in a sense they provide a clue to the understanding of the course of party evolution in these years. Initially the Peelites were those 112 Conservatives who remained loyal to Peel in 1846. Their real significance lay not in their numbers but in the high proportion of brains and talent which they possessed and which was lost

[24] Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, pp. 408-11.
[25] *Ibid.*, pp. 418-28; Ostrogorski, *Democracy and Political Parties*, I, 145.
[26] Hanham thesis.

to the Protectionist Conservatives.   The nucleus of the group consisted of those members of Peel's last Cabinet who remained active in politics, Peel himself until his death in 1850, Aberdeen, Goulburn, Graham, Gladstone, Herbert and Lincoln (who became Duke of Newcastle). The rank and file consisted of those Conservatives who felt a personal sense of loyalty to Peel and to a certain extent shared his views.   These as we have noticed were based on an acceptance of the main principles of the classical economists.   Once they had fought the battle for the repeal of the Corn Laws there were no stouter defenders of Free Trade than the Peelite leaders, witness the part played by Sir James Graham in abolishing the Navigation Acts.   Conversely they tended to oppose collectivist legislation such as the Ten Hours Bill, on the same grounds of observing the principle of *laissez-faire*.

As Conservatives the Peelites instinctively opposed any under-mining of the constitution of church or state, but as political realists they saw the case for moderate reform in each sphere.   In foreign policy they were more pacific than Palmerston, but they were more inclined to be sympathetic with liberal and constitutional movements on the continent than the Derby Conservatives.   Their strongest bond, however, was loyalty to Peel and after his death to his memory, and conversely distaste for those who had betrayed him, especially Disraeli, whose name is uttered with loathing in all their correspondence.   It was this more than anything that kept the Peelite leaders from return-ing to the Conservative Party, but with the rank and file it was a different matter.   The heat of the repeal battle carried them over to the election of 1847 when they actually succeeded in increasing their numbers slightly, a remarkable achievement when it is realized that there was no party organization behind it.   In this regard, however, we find Gladstone complaining to his father in 1849: "We have no party, no organization, no whippers-in and under these circumstances we cannot exercise any considerable degree of permanent influence as a body." [27]

A few of Peel's colleagues (Graham, Cardwell and Dalhousie) were inclined towards a juncture with the Liberals; others such as Goulburn and many of the rank and file looked towards eventual reunion with the rest of the Conservatives; the Duke of Newcastle was anxious to form a permanent third party; Gladstone, Herbert and Aberdeen hovered somewhere between Goulburn and Newcastle. [28] As long as he lived Peel himself refused to give a lead, although he kept Russell's Government in office.   After his death the ranks of the Peelites began to dwindle, although Gladstone and Herbert took steps to keep together the remnant of some forty members who remained loyal and who sat in a body below the gangway on the Opposition side of the House. [29]   The election of 1852 revealed their weakness for less than forty were returned.   Some had joined the Liberals, but

[27] John Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, 3v., (London, 1903), I, 351.   My general remarks about the Peelites are based on this and other biographies as well as on an examination of the papers of Sir James Graham (Newberry Library microfilm).
[28] *Ibid.*, 419.
[29] *Ibid.*, 423.

the majority had apparently returned to the Conservative fold, reassured by Disraeli's burying of the Protectionist issue.

The uncertain balance between the two major parties and the prestige of the Peelite leaders combined to give this group an influence quite disproportionate to their numbers. Indeed they were in a position to turn out of office practically any government that was formed between 1846 and 1859. Consequently their leaders were favoured with many attractive offers of office from both Liberal and Conservative Governments.

Although agreed on general principles the Peelites themselves were not always unanimous on details of policy. A group under Gladstone joined Derby in opposing Russell's Sugar Bill in 1848 and in denouncing the Canadian Rebellion Losses Bill in 1849. The leaders all spoke and voted against Palmerston in the Don Pacifico debate, but according to Gladstone the Government was saved on this occasion by the votes of twenty Peelites. [30] On the whole, however, once their original bonds with the Conservative Party were broken the Peelite leaders tended to broaden their outlook and to move generally in a more liberal direction, as they showed in the stand that they took against Protestant bigotry in the so called "Papal aggression" scare. The Aberdeen Coalition of Peelites and Liberals in 1852 was not an unnatural one and had been under consideration for many months before it was accomplished. Despite a certain amount of asperity in the preceding negotiations regarding the division of spoils, once formed the Cabinet worked better together than is generally supposed.

It is unfortunate that the accident of the Crimean War led to the break-up of the Coalition, but differences on foreign policy did not follow party lines. Public opinion forced the retirement of the Prime Minister and the Secretary for War (Newcastle) and it was only a too rarified sense of loyalty to Aberdeen that led Graham, Gladstone and Herbert to resign from the succeeding Palmerston Cabinet shortly after its formation in 1855. Palmerston's high handed foreign policy, particularly the *Arrow* affair of 1857, further widened the gap, and when the Peelites joined the Radicals to bring about the fall of the Government on the Conspiracy to Murder Bill, Derby and Disraeli began to renew their overtures. The Peelite leaders again refused, but helped to keep Derby in office for the next sixteen months. Yet in 1859 they joined the Whigs, Liberals and Radicals in the famous meeting at Willis' Rooms, so notably saterized by Disraeli, and accepted office in Palmerston's second Government. But by this time there was no such thing as a Peelite Party left, merely a few distinguished followers of Sir Robert who for fifteen years had resolutely eschewed fusion with either party. When Gladstone, Newcastle, Herbert and Cardwell joined Palmerston in 1859 the Peelite story was closed.

Yet the party picture seemed as clouded and unsatisfactory in 1859 as in 1846. The distrust and suspicion with which Palmerston's new Peelite and Manchester allies had recently shown towards him could not be easily forgotten, and its grounds were not fully removed.

[30] Halévy, *History*, IV, 335.

On the other hand in his old age Palmerston had become popular among many Conservatives, some of whom had let it be known that they would give their support to any ministry of which he was the head. [31]   Palmerston's majority was very slight, but to Disraeli's annoyance Derby was content to let him remain in office for the next six years because his Government seemed such a safe one from a Conservative point of view.   To contemporaries the meeting at Willis' Rooms can no more have seemed to have settled the apparently unending game of musical chairs which the parliamentarians of the 1850's were playing than did the battle of Bosworth seem to mark the end of the War of the Roses to Englishmen in 1485.   Yet in the long run the alliance of 1859 produced a genuine fusion of all the components of the Gladstonian Liberal Party which was now slowly beginning to take shape.   The Peelites and the Radicals realized that they had more in common with the Whigs than with the Tories and the days of Queen Victoria's "two horrible old men" must surely be numbered.   Palmerston himself foresaw the inevitable when he said, "Gladstone will soon have it all his own way, and when he gets my place, we shall have strange doings." [32]   For fifteen years inhibitions and sentimental ties had held Gladstone back, but after 1859 his liberalism developed rapidly.   As the friend of Italian unity, the champion of the Commons against the Lords, and a convert to the principle of manhood suffrage he became overnight the hero of the advanced Liberals and their spokesman in the Cabinet.   The younger Whigs such as Granville, Argyle, Hartington, Spencer, and even the older Clarendon were prepared to bow to the times and accept the leadership of an outsider.   Some of them would eventually leave the party of their forefathers over Irish Home Rule, but in the new world of household suffrage and the caucus they no longer had any significant role to play in the Party of the left.   Indeed in accepting the son of a merchant and a former Tory as a leader they had already renounced much that was the essence of Whiggism and as Liberal Unionists they soon merged into the common background of the Tory aristocracy.

The year 1867 marks the end of the era which we have been surveying.   With the passing of the Second Reform Act and the retirement of the old leaders, Derby and Russell (Palmerston having died in 1865) a new Liberal and a new Conservative Party faced each other at Westminster, the Parties of Gladstone and Disraeli.   The day of the independent member was almost over.   A new day brought new problems in the ceaseless drama of party evolution, but their study must await another symposium. *

[31] *Dod's Parliamentary Companion* 1859 lists several Conservatives with this notation.

[32] P. Guedalla, *Palmerston* (London, 1927), p. 493. .

* A brief report of the discussion which followed the reading of this paper and the two following papers is found on page 95.— *Editor.*