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# **England and the English**

**Lytton Edward Bulwer**

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# ENGLAND

AND

## THE ENGLISH,

BY EDWARD LYTTON BULWER, ESQ., M.P.

AUTHOR OF

“PELHAM,” “EUGENE ARAM,” “PAUL CLIFFORD,” “PILGRIMS  
OF THE RHINE,” &c.

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FROM THE LONDON FIFTH EDITION.

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“Ordine gentis  
Moros, et studia, et populos, et prelia dicam.”

VIRGIL.

“Every now and then we should examine ourselves; self-amendment is the offspring of self-knowledge. But foreigners do not examine our condition; they only glance at its surface. Why should we print volumes upon other countries and be silent upon our own? Why traverse the world and neglect the phenomena around us? Why should the spirit of our researches be a lynx in Africa and a mole in England? Why, in one word, should a nation be never criticised by a native?”

MONTAGU.



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1836.

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## PREFACE TO FOURTH EDITION.

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*November 25th, 1835.*

THE great and undiminished demand for these volumes has not been the most flattering part of their success. I have been yet more gratified by tracing, through a hundred channels of imitation and plagiarism, the practical influence they have exercised upon the time. Advocating no particular party, and often differing from popular views, my opinions have had to fight their own way into notice, with little, I own to recommend them, but the evidence that they were not formed in haste, nor squared to marketable purposes. In the present edition, I have abridged or omitted a few of such passages as, being of little or no permanent interest, were adapted only to the circumstances of a particular time. Had I to re-write the work, I should not, indeed, devote any of its pages to those parts of political speculation which relate merely to the day: but what is writ, is writ; and though it is true that in every work of this description much must obtain a place which the lapse of a little time suffices to divest of temporary and adventitious interest, yet a picture of England in a period so important as that succeeding the Reform Bill will have its value and importance, not less to those who come after us, than to the living generation. Doubtless, in such a picture the faults of the artist will be visible; but the main questions for posterity to decide will be, first, what opportunities had the artist to copy faithfully? what motives had he to flatter or to distort? To both of these questions I am willing to abide the answer.





## PREFACE TO THIRD EDITION,

WRITTEN ON THE RESIGNATION OF LORD GREY.

July 21st, 1834.

It is now, my friends, nearly a year since this Work first appeared. —The wheel has not stood still!—twice it has brought the Ministry to the ground,—tearing away first the limbs—then the head—and now presenting it to us once more aloft and triumphant—whole and high-crested as before. Talk of a Hydra being a fable—no such thing—the story of the Hydra was merely a type, a symbol, a prophecy of the Cabinet of 1834!

The Cabinet has been dissolved—it is remodelled—we have lost Lord Grey—we see Lord Melbourne in his seat. Lord Althorp has lain Pirithous-like in that gloomy realm—ex-official life;—the Hades of statesmen. We, the House of Commons, have been the Hercules that restored him to the sunlight of the Treasury benches. It has not been the most difficult of our labours—may it be among our most profitable! But, before we examine the new, let us glance back at the old Administration. For my own part, on looking at their past life, I cannot tell on what individual to fix the blame that attaches to all. I see men of splendid intellect, of long experience, of stainless character; men, who if inclined by station to preserve authority, have yet tasted the sweets of acquiring the people's love. Yet the result of all these combinations was the reverse of what any prophet would have foretold: some fatal drug seems to have been poured into the alembic, and the reward of the alchemy was not gold, but cinders! Ben Jonson has somewhat well described the mysteries of their crucible:—

SCUTLE.—Name the vexations and the martyrizations of metals in the work \* \* \*  
What's cobobation?

FACE.—'Tis the pouring on your AQUA REGIS—and then drawing him off.

SCUTLE.—Your magisterium, now—What's that?

FACE.—Shifting, sir, your elements—dry into cold, cold into moist, moist into hot, hot into dry!

We did indeed believe that Mr. Stanley and his political partisans in the Cabinet were the cause of the weakness and division that we

\* Alchemist, Act ii. Sc. 4.

lamented. They left the Cabinet ; but was the Cabinet more united than before ? Did their resignation give us a single assurance that the Government would have been more liberal, or more energetic ! The Ministers threw away their trumps to strengthen their hands, but their cards were not more of a suit ; unsorted and confused—knave—king—and deuce—all of a different colour—such cards would have puzzled the best players—and these only continued to rely, not on skill—but chance ; their hope was not in their own game, but in that of their adversaries. Is it not that these Ministers lived in a coterie—that they saw no more of the world than a hermit does—that their public opinion was that of a clique and a club ?\*

While I write, still rings in the ears of England the parting valediction of a man whose monument is the new charter of her liberties ; one whom while we opposed in power we may yet honour in retirement, for his failings were precisely those which an honest politician would expose frankly, while it was time to amend them, and forget in a general reverence for a high nature and noble qualities, the moment he exchanges public life for the dignified retirement of an illustrious old age. In the same pilot whom we advised, we urged, we admonished, we rebuked, amidst the shoals and quicksands which he appeared to disregard—we remember only the great storm through which he steered us, when his rest is won, and he hangs his last chaplet in the temple whence his name will not readily be effaced. And if I have spoken plainly and openly of the errors of the late Cabinet—if I still pursue the theme, it is not without a certain reluctance ; nor from any less urgent motive than the wish that those errors should be a warning to them who come after a great man, and from whom less will be forgiven. It is easier to avoid his faults than to emulate his fame.

The great error of Lord Grey was in this—he saw not the necessary consequences of his own measure : in the loftiness of a haughty but not discerning mind, he imagined that the people owed him the gratitude of an unhesitating confidence—that they should rely implicitly

\* Take one instance : they saw not how far, by preserving the stamp-duty on political intelligence, they divided one part of the community from the other—how far they created two publics appealed to by two different classes of writers ; the rich and the middle class appealed to by the safe lawful papers—the poor and the ignorant class appealed to by the contraband inflammatory journals. Fierce and wild are the discussions which hourly agitate the working classes ; no nice questions of the day, but questions searching the core of all civilised society—questions which go to sanction robbery, and legalise bloodshed. The worst doctrines of the worst schools are dinned into the ears of the vast mass, and receive no reply—how often must we repeat this truth—and in vain ! Unconscious of all that was at work below them, Ministers floated on the surface, toying with the straws. A certain quack, in the time of an earthquake, advertised pills to cure earthquakes :—the quack would have been a notable acquisition to the last Cabinet !

on his wisdom—and take at his own time whatever instalments of reform it might be convenient to afford them. And this confidence the people would have cheerfully reposed in him, but for some fatal errors at the very commencement of the Reformed Parliament. The mere selection of a Tory Speaker, trifling as the circumstance may seem, and justified as it might be by the talents, the experience, and the popularity of Sir Charles Manners Sutton, damped to a degree scarcely conceivable by many the ardour of the people. It was the first act of the Reformed Parliament. “Here,” said the electors, “have we been sacrificing a thousand private interests, to return to Parliament liberal men, and their first act is to call to the highest office in their gift one of exactly opposite opinions. True, he is able and experienced, and estimable, and so forth; but so were the Tory candidates who presented themselves to us. We have lost many a good pound a-year—displeased landlord and customer, in order to reject men, merely from their opinions—and now—what can we think? our representatives lavish in the Parliament their highest honours on the very opinions they stigmatized as atrocious on the hustings.” This was the view the people took of that election:—turn the question which way they would, they could take no other. Then came, not an act of grace—not a corollary from reform, but a Coercive Bill, that annihilated in one blow the right of petitioning—of meeting—of juries—all constitutional liberty for Ireland! The people of England, perhaps, were sufficiently revolted by the excesses of Ireland, and startled by the cry of Repeal—not to care much for the wrong to Ireland, but they cared deeply for the wrong to Liberty. Then this question took up half a session. “Where is the good of our reforming Ministers?” cried the people every week—and every week they read nothing in the papers but debates about instituting a Court-martial for a Jury-box. I need not go through the rest of the causes of discontent—the discontent was begun, and that was enough to take grace from many a remedial measure. What cared the people for the India Bill and the Bank Question? vast and important as those measures were, they might equally have been settled without a Reformed Parliament. And it must not be forgotten, when we speak of the gratitude of the people, that public opinion is ever a suspicious and jealous judge. The Reform Bill was a boon to the people, but it was also the destruction of the Tories. It depended upon the consequences of the Reform Bill to show, whether that measure were intended for the benefit of the people, or for the monopoly of power; for the extermination of political abuses, or the extermination of party enemies. It was therefore a necessary policy (if you desired to obtain and preserve the gratitude of the people) to give no excuse for them to question the justice of your claims to it. But what was the result?—they felt their