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THE ENGLISH MONARCHY

AND

AMERICAN REPUBLICANISM.

Reply to the Speech of the Right Hon. Benjamin Disraeli by

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ON April 3rd, 1872, the Right Hon. Benjamin Disraeli delivered a political manifesto in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester. His statements on the occasion were endorsed generally by the Tory press throughout the country, and accepted by them as indicating the programme of that "enlightened" party. Whatever is publicly uttered by the hon. gentleman is deemed of more than ordinary importance in consequence of the prominent position he occupies as chief of English Conservatism. The principal topic chosen by Mr. Disraeli for his speech was English Monarchy and the American Republic; his object being to show that the form of Government in this country has certain advantages that the American Republic does not possess. The reason for the selection of this subject may be given in the speaker's own words:— "The fundamental principles of the [English] Constitution have been recently impugned and assailed. The flag of the Republic has been raised, and therefore, gentlemen, I think it is not inappropriate to the present hour and situation if I make to you one or two brief remarks on the character of those institutions."

It is evident that Mr. Disraeli had not only become conscious of the rapid growth of Republican principles in England, but that he had made up his mind to do his best to prevent their further extension. Now there can be no objection to a person stating why he differs from the Republican programme, supposing he considers that programme wrong; but no man has a right to misrepresent facts, and utter statements before a public audience which have no authority, and that are unsupported by statistics or records of history. To show that Mr. Disraeli did this in his Manchester speech is the object of the present reply.

Before noticing the hon. gentleman's fallacies, it may conduce to the better understanding of the question under consideration to inquire briefly into the nature of Monarchy. Generally speaking, there are four kinds—absolute, constitutional, hereditary, and elective. In addition to these, we have in England an imported Monarchy, that is, when the throne, being vacant, and no one of native growth was found to occupy it, we sent to Holland and Germany, and imported an occupant. True, these importations have proved expensive, but then that is an “advantage” shared principally by the “people,” and therefore it has commanded official silence. The present Monarchy in England is supposed to be a limited, constitutional, and hereditary one. Strictly speaking, however, it is not hereditary, because on several occasions that principle has been set aside in the history of England, and some of the best writers upon constitutional government agree that, whenever the people pronounce in favour of an elective Monarchy, they can have one in strict accordance with the law under which they live. The hereditary principle is unwise, inasmuch as it presupposes that good and intelligent parents must necessarily have good and intelligent children. This, however, is not so. The late Prince Albert possessed some excellent qualities that the Prince of Wales shows no inclination to emulate. Thus, as Dr. Vaughan observes : “In a hereditary Monarchy the worst men may come into the place of the best.” To guard against such an evil is the duty of every Republican. Moreover, the principle is unjust. We are not justified in urging that because one generation prefers a King or Queen, therefore succeeding generations should do likewise. Each age should be at liberty to elect that kind of Government which it finds most in accordance with the genius of the time, and the aspirations of the people who have to be ruled. There is some truth in designating the English Monarchy limited. In one particular its limitation is very perceptible. This, of course, is no reproach to the Queen, who, from the best of motives, has for some years lived a life of seclusion. Her Majesty is a far-seeing woman, and can discern that in the future of England a Republican form of Government will obtain ; and as a thoughtful sovereign, she absents herself, so that her subjects may get initiated into the art of self-government, that when they come to fulfil the duties thereof, they shall not be taken unawares, but shall be able to perform such duties with credit to themselves and with a benefit to the commonwealth. Whilst opposed to all Monarchies, that form certainly may be pronounced the best which recognises the right of election. Kings and Queens should win their position by their ability, and not rule because they have descended from royal parents, whose only claim to Royalty was that of birth.

To prove the superiority of the English Monarchy over the American Republic, Mr. Disraeli said that for two centuries Monarchical governments had prevented a revolution in this country, and had established order, public liberty, and political rights. Now, accepting the term revolution in the limited sense

used by Macaulay, it is true that in this country for nearly two hundred years it has been unknown. But taking revolution, in its comprehensive signification, as embodying the elements of public discontent at, and rebellion against, official artifices and governmental opposition to the people's rights, England has experienced many such outbreaks since 1688. What was the American rebellion but a revolt against the wicked and unjust obstinacy and oppression of the English Monarchy? If it had not been attempted to enforce taxation without representation upon the inhabitants of America, they might still have been bound to us by national ties, and then England would have been saved the disgrace of an expensive and unnecessary war. The numerous uprisings and manifestations against injustice in India, in Jamaica, and in Ireland were so many revolutionary protests against the cruel and tyrannical acts of Monarchical misrule. And if in England during the last two centuries revolution has not broken out in its worst forms, it has not been in consequence of an enlightened and amicable policy adopted by our Governments, but rather the result of the forbearance of the people, who desired to advance their cause by peaceable means. The Monarchical policy has too often provoked anarchy and public discord, by withholding reforms from the nation until it was driven to despair, by insults and procrastination. Where is the proof that Monarchical Governments have established order and promoted public liberty, as stated by Mr. Disraeli? Not in the history of the Derbyshire outbreak and Snow Hill riots of 1816 and 1817; not at the Peterloo massacre of 1819; not at the riots of Bristol, Nottingham, and other towns in 1832; not during the struggles for Free Trade, Catholic Emancipation, the admission of Jews into the Legislature, and for Parliamentary Reform. In connection with these movements, the conduct of the Governments was such as to produce the very opposite of order. They refused to grant what the people required until there was "no alternative but concession, or the horrors of civil war." At the close of the last, and in the early part of the present, century, great efforts were made to obtain Parliamentary Reform and an improvement of the land laws. And how were these efforts met by the "powers that be?" Public petitions were unheeded, supplications were disregarded, and traps were laid by the Government to catch within the clutches of the law the leading agitators of the time. Dr. Vaughan says the Government "instituted a spy system, which was made to spread itself everywhere; and miscreants, who could not detect treason to satisfy their employers, were careful to stimulate and sometimes to invent it. Hence came a long series of State prosecutions, in which law was so perverted, or so openly violated, that each one of them, in place of removing disaffection, multiplied it manifold..... Men of the most worthless character were accepted as witnesses; and juries who wanted evidence managed to pronounce the verdict of 'guilty' in the absence of it." Even Sir Samuel Romilly declared that "he believed in his conscience

the whole of the Derbyshire insurrection was the work of persons sent by Government."

The State prosecutions that took place a little more than half a century since will prove how reliable Mr. Disraeli's statement is, that Monarchical rule has favoured political rights and public liberty. The trials of Muir and Palmer in Scotland, and Hardy, Tooke, Thelwall, Cobbett, and Leigh Hunt in England, reveal to us the fact that when Monarchical influence was paramount, the solitude of a prison and heavy fines were the rewards of those who sought to advance the social and political condition of society. When and where has the throne of England ever pleaded for the liberty of the people? When has it attempted to vindicate the rights of man? or to extend that national freedom which is the birth-right of every citizen? Upon what page of history is it recorded that modern progress has sprung from Monarchy? The liberties we now have were dearly bought by the energies and self-sacrifice of those brave men whose aspirations and labours were sought to be crushed by royalist intrigues and aristocratic exclusiveness. The lever that impelled forward political and social freedom was found among the masses, apart altogether from the occupants of the throne. For, as recorded by Cassell, in his "History of England," "whilst Royalty sat in emblematic darkness, the people were breaking into light and power by the efforts of genius born amongst them."

The right hon. gentleman, in order to prove that Monarchy is a national benefit, referred to the reign of George III. Now, it is only reasonable to suppose that in Mr. Disraeli's opinion this sovereign was the best that could be cited as illustrative of the alleged advantages of Royalty. A glance, therefore, at the condition of society under George III. will enable us fully to appreciate the value of Monarchical "influence" on the progress and well-being of the country. The following facts are taken from pages 570, 571, and 572, vol. vi., of Cassell's "History of England :"—"George III. could not comprehend the right of America to resist arbitrary taxation; he could as little comprehend the right of his subjects to have full freedom of conscience, but opposed doggedly the emancipation of the Catholics on account of their creed. To all other reforms he was equally hostile, and his Government and his son had, to the hour of his death, rigidly maintained the same principles of rule. They had, as we have seen, done their best to destroy the freedom of the press, the freedom of speech, and the right to assemble and petition for the redress of grievances. They had turned loose the soldiery on the people exercising this right, and had armed the magistracy with full powers to seize any person whom they pleased to suspect of free ideas; and having shut them up in prison had suspended the Habeas Corpus Act, to keep them there without a hearing during their pleasure. Never in the history of England, since the days of the Stuarts, had there been so determined an attempt to crush the national liberties as toward the end of this reign..... The same reluctance had always marked the mind of George

III. to reform the penal code as to reform political abuses. During his period of sanity he continued to behold unmoved the frightful ferocity of the criminal code, and to sign, unshudderingly, death-warrants for men and women, some of the latter with children in their arms, for the theft of a sheep, or of a few yards of calico.....The same darkness and apathy existed on the subject of education. The great bulk of the people during the Georgian period were almost wholly unable to read." This monarch's "influence," no doubt, was great on the religion of the time, for the same historian records that "the Christianity of the reign of George III. was a bloody farce, and an abomination." If this is the state of society to result from the influence of Royalty, England will do well to get rid of it as speedily as possible. For a full and correct account of what George III. did for this nation, the reader is referred to Mr. C. Bradlaugh's "Impeachment of the House of Brunswick," where the deeds of that worthy monarch are faithfully recorded.

Mr. Disraeli's next statement in favour of Monarchy was that this country "is properly represented by a Royal Family." This sentence is the very opposite of truth. When has Royalty represented the intelligence, the industry, or the poverty of the people? What great literary or scientific production has ever emanated from the wearer of the English Crown? Indolence and luxurious wealth have too often surrounded the throne, while those who have been compelled to support it have had to "toil night and day" amidst penury and squalid wretchedness. As a nation we boast, among our characteristics, virtue, honour, domestic purity, and benevolence. But in what Royal Family, within the two hundred years mentioned by Mr. Disraeli, have these characteristics found their representative? Was virtue represented by Charles II., who kept so many mistresses, and had such a host of illegitimate children that no historian has committed himself by naming the number of either? "No man," says Cassell, "ever saddled the country with such a troop of bastards" as did Charles II. Among the numerous progeny resulting from his licentiousness may be mentioned the Dukes of Monmouth, Southampton, Grafton, Northumberland, St. Albans, and Richmond. Truly, these aristocratic families had a noble origin! Writing of this king, Buckle says: "With the exception of the needy profligates who thronged his Court, all classes of men soon learned to despise a king who was a drunkard, a libertine, and a hypocrite; who had neither shame nor sensibility; and who in point of honour was unworthy to enter the presence of the meanest of his subjects." Did James II. represent the honour of the country when he made secret arrangements with Louis of France, whereby he sacrificed England's prestige and integrity for so many bribes, one alone amounting to 500,000 crowns, which was followed by a second remittance of two million livres? His dishonour was only equalled by his hypocrisy, for when he wanted sums of money voted him by Parliament, he declared that he had "a true

English heart;" and when soliciting bribes from the French monarch, he proclaimed that his "heart was French." James II. represented nothing that was noble and true. "He hoped to turn a free Government into an absolute Monarchy," but in this he failed; and having disregarded the rights of the people, and defied their wishes, he was driven from the throne. His fate should be a warning to future would-be monarchs. Were the wishes of the country represented by William III., in whose reign commenced an extensive warfare, a reckless expenditure, and the official inauguration of our National Debt? In the twelve years Queen Anne occupied the throne, she not only sided with the Tories in their frequent quarrels with the Whigs, but she raised the funded debt in that period from £12,600,000 to £36,000,000. Was this the Royal mode of illustrating the progress and economy of the country? Of domestic purity, as exhibited within the domain of Royalty, but one instance shall be given, and that from Mr. Disraeli's king *par excellence*, George III., of whom Washington Wilkes, on pages 130—1 of his history of the first half of the present century, writes:—"It is generally supposed that he was a model of domestic morality; whereas he was either a seducer or a bigamist.....It is not common for virtuous parents to bring up a whole family of licentious profligates; and yet what family ever exhibited such a troop of the most shameless and sensual ones as that of George III.? He saw his sons seduce and abandon one woman after another, and he could not reprimand them; for he knew his own story better than they who now act the historian seem to do." No doubt, by some, Queen Victoria is supposed to be a true representative of benevolence. Well, if to give away portions of the money that has been annually voted by Parliament for that purpose, constitutes benevolence, then Her Majesty may be entitled to that honour. But the record of sums given from the Queen's private purse for benevolent purposes is difficult to find. Viewing, apart from class interest, the characteristics of the country, and the conduct of Monarchy, it will require a Conservative genius to discover how the former have been represented by the latter.

Mr. Disraeli's attempt to prove that the English Monarchy was less expensive than the American Republic was a perversion of facts, and a misrepresentation of figures. He said that her Majesty had a considerable estate in the country which she had given up, and the revenues from them had gone into the public exchequer. The hon. gentleman did not inform us what estates he alluded to. At the present moment the Queen is in possession of large estates at Balmoral, at Osborne, and in the West of London, the revenues of which the country does *not* receive. Did Mr. Disraeli refer to the Crown lands? If so, they never belonged to the Queen, and, therefore, she could not have given them up. Is it, however, correct to allege that the revenues derived from the Crown lands are equal to the annual sum we pay to the Royal Family? That sum, according to the Blue Book and other

official documents, amounts to £692,373. This does not, it should be observed, include the entire cost of Monarchy, but simply represents the net cash paid in one year to and for the Royal Family. Now, towards this £692,373, what is obtained from the Crown lands? There was paid into the Exchequer in 1847, £68,000; in 1854, £272,000; in 1855—6, £260,000; in 1870—1, £385,000; and for the present financial year the amount named is £375,000. Thus it will be seen that until the last few years, the Crown land receipts were exceedingly low, and even now they do not equal half the cost of the Queen and her family.

Mr. Disraeli said: "I will deal with the cost of sovereignty in the United States of America. Gentlemen, there is no analogy between the position of Queen Victoria and the President of the United States." There is much truth in this remark; there *is* no analogy between the two. The President of the United States has to work; and the Queen as the right hon. gentleman remarked on a former occasion, had become "physically and morally incapacitated from performing her duties." A man who aspires to the Presidential chair must possess political ability, while a knowledge of politics has not been deemed a necessary qualification in the occupant of the English throne. Besides, the Queen's salary is £385,000 a year, and the President's is but £3,750.

In dealing with the relative costs of the two forms of Government, Mr. Disraeli did not put the case fairly. He was careful to speak of the cost of the American Cabinet, but he never mentioned the cost of our English Cabinet. The English Cabinet is composed of sixteen members, who receive annually between them in salaries £66,000. The American Administrative Department is composed of seven members, who receive among them £8,400. In England some members get £5,000, others £7,500, and one as much as £10,000 per year. In America no member gets more than £1,200. Then we have the entire administration, for which we pay, in salaries alone, £176,718, which, with the £45,023 for expenses of the House of Lords, and £49,806 for the House of Commons, together with £692,373 paid to the Royal Family, make the cost of the English Government to be £963,920, while, as admitted by Mr. Disraeli himself, the Republic in America costs only between £700,000 and £800,000. And out of this sum the Americans pay their representatives, an advantage we should do well to emulate; for if men are sent to Parliament to do our work, they ought to be paid for it. If that were done, we should not find so many empty benches as we do when the money of the country is being voted away. In America, moreover, the sovereignty is the people. There the people pay to rule themselves, while here we pay Royalty to rule us. In America the sovereignty supports itself; in this country it is supported by something outside of itself. Surely then that which is self-supporting is more economical than that which depends on something extraneous for its existence. In America its £700,000 or £800,000 are distributed among nearly five hundred persons, but in England the £963,920 are given to

less than one hundred individuals. So that in this country about one hundred Government officials cost over £163,000 more than five times that number in America.

There is a striking contrast also in the expenditure for diplomacy in the two countries. As shown by Mr. Bradlaugh, in his recent letter to Mr. Disraeli, America pays her Ambassador in London a yearly salary of £3,215, and the total cost of the American Embassy here is £4,336. Our Ambassador at New York receives the sum of £5,000 per year, and an annual allowance of £1,000 for house rent, and the total cost of our Embassy in America is £8,150, or nearly double. The Americans pay their Ambassador at Paris £3,670, and the total cost of the Embassy is £4,146. We give our Parisian Ambassador £10,000, and the total cost of our Embassy is £13,595. Thus diplomacy in France costs America less than one-third of our expenditure. In England the Lord Chief-Justice receives an annual salary of £8,000, while the same functionary in America is paid £1,700 a year.

Many other instances could be given to show that Mr. Disraeli was decidedly inaccurate in his comparisons of the expenses of the two countries. But, leaving particular departments, what is the total cost of each nation? The general cost of the Government of America for 1871 was £58,012,584, while the general cost of England was £69,698,539 12s. 2d. The advantage to America will appear the greater when we remember that last year her population was 38,555,983 persons; Great Britain and Ireland 31,817,108. Territory of Great Britain and Ireland is about 119,924 square miles; United States, 2,933,588 square miles. Notwithstanding the much larger population, and the greater extent of territory, the Republic has a much less expenditure than the Monarchy.

Too much importance is not here attached to what has been termed the "cheap argument." Because an article is cheap, it does not therefore follow that it is preferable to that which is more expensive. And the present examination of the relative costs of the American and English forms of Government has been to show, that in his speech the Right Hon. Benjamin Disraeli stated the very opposite of facts. True economy consists in the usefulness of that which is purchased. Monarchy is dear at any price, because it lacks the elements of good government. The basis of all sound legislation is the public will, made known through a fair and comprehensive system of representation; and as this advantage is recognised and enforced by Republicanism, its claims are established as superior to Royalty, even if it were not less expensive.

PRICE ONE PENNY.