The Novels of Benjamin Disraeli in Relation to Contemporary Life

English

A. M.

1915
THE NOVELS OF BENJAMIN DISRAELI IN RELATION TO CONTEMPORARY LIFE

BY

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A. B. University of Illinois, 1913.

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS
IN ENGLISH
IN
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
1915
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY

Julia Nimetta Barke

ENTITLED
The Works of Benjamin Disraeli in Relation to Contemporary Life

BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF
Masters of Arts

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Daniel Kilham Dodge

Committee
on
Final Examination
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION
DISRAELI AND HIS NOVELS

Benjamin Disraeli, statesman and novelist, was born at No. 6, King's Road, Bedford Row, London, on the morning of December 21, 1804. He was of pure Jewish extraction, a fact of which he never ceased to be proud, being the child of Isaac Disraeli and Maria Basevi, both of whom were of the House of Israel. Benjamin, at the time of his birth, was received into the Jewish Church according to the custom of his race, but later his father quarreled with the Elders of the Synagogue, and subsequently had his children baptized into the Church of England. Thus the way was opened for the son's entry into Parliament; for in those days none but Christians were able to take the oath of office in the National Assembly. Isaac Disraeli, father of the future Prime Minister, was a quiet scholarly gentleman who spent all his life in literary pursuits, and who, unlike his more brilliant son, never paid much attention to the outside world. He published several works, only one of which, his Curiosities of Literature, is considered worthy of note today. From the father the younger Disraeli undoubtedly inherited his inclination toward the field of letters, but the older man did not possess the keen critical insight, exalted ambition, or determined perseverance which helped to forward the younger man in the realm of politics. Nor does Mrs. Disraeli's character help us at all in solving
that of her son. She seems to have been a sweet, gentle, unassuming woman, an excellent wife and mother, but a person who exerted no particular influence over her children.

Excepting for the fact that he was received into the Established Church when he was twelve years of age, the childhood and youth of Benjamin Disraeli seems to have been rather uneventful. He was educated in various private schools until he reached his seventeenth year, when he was articled to a law firm in London. He never displayed a great deal of interest in the profession, although he continued his legal studies for three years. At the end of that time, in 1824, his health was so poor that his father decided to take him on a journey to Europe. (1) During this tour he made up his mind that he would never again go back to the law, so when he returned to England he began to look for other means of employing his time.

He first indulged in some speculations on the Stock Exchange, where he lost very heavily and involved himself in debts to the amount of several thousand pounds. He next engaged in writing pamphlets in defense of certain American Mining Companies which had presumed too far upon the gullibility of the public and were in danger of having their affairs investigated by the Government. From this employment he turned to a new field and with the help of John Murray and others founded a new periodical called The Representative. This undertaking was as much a failure as his

adventures in the world of finance had been; but Disraeli was never easily discouraged and he soon embarked on a new project, this time a successful one. In 1826 he published the first of his many novels, Vivian Grey. The book created a great sensation. Froude tells us that "it was the book of the season," and that "everybody read it." (1)

Two lines from The Merry Wives of Windsor

'Why, then the world's mine oyster,
Which I with sword will open,'
appear on the title page as a motto. This verse sets the keynote of the story. Vivian Grey is a young man who possesses neither fame nor fortune, but he did have an immense amount of audacity and ambition. So he sets out to carve a place for himself by means of his wits, which take the place of a sword. He succeeds in making a tool of a vain old nobleman, and for a time it seems as if he were going to rise to fame through his political intrigues. But he is undone by a clever, malicious woman, who is jealous of him, and his career in politics comes to an ignominious end. The disappointed hero, deeply chagrined, rushes off to Germany to forget his disgrace. Here ends the original novel of Vivian Grey.

Two years later Disraeli wrote a sequel which deals with the hero's adventures at several German baths and petty courts. He wanders aimlessly about from one place to another for a couple of years, and then meets an accidental death. From an artistic point of view the novel is not entirely satisfactory, although

(1) J. A. Froude Lord Beaconsfield NY 1890. p.23.
when one remembers that it was written by a boy of twenty years it is sufficiently remarkable. Most of the value of the work is contained in the first of the five volumes. The author started out with a great deal of vitality and energy, but seems to have lost much of his power before proceeding very far. Most of the book is poorly constructed, and at times rather incoherent. The characterization is not as convincing as it should be, for it too often approaches caricature. However, the novel is full of vivid descriptions, clever epigrams, and humorous satires on society and politics, which make it very readable.

Much time and energy was spent at the time of the publication of Vivian Grey by people who tried to identify the hero with the author, and various characters in the story with people in the outside world. Regarding the first of these points, one of his biographers says: "If we remember that Vivian Grey is only a work of fiction, and a work of fiction with a large element of caricature and exaggeration, and if we make allowance also for that subtle Disraelian irony which pervades all the novels, we may fairly say that in the first volume the hero is Disraeli himself." (1) This seems to me to be the correct view of the matter. In regard to the second question, Disraeli answers for himself. He says: "Let it be taken for granted that the characters are purely ideal and the whole affair is settled." (2) His biographer adds the following testimony: "As a matter of fact

(2) Monypenny's Biography Vol I p. 92
Disraeli's knowledge of the world of politics and society when he wrote the first part of *Vivian Grey* was far too slight for genuine portraiture beyond a very limited circle."

A few months after the publication of the sequel of *Vivian Grey*, the new novelist came forward with one of those stories which Saintsbury classes as "satiric-fantastic tales". (2) The first of these was *The Voyage of Captain Popanilla*, which appeared in 1828. Two others followed, *Ixion in Heaven* in 1833, and *The Infernal Marriage* in 1834. These three works are regarded by the critic just mentioned as the best of all Disraeli's writings; he says, "In the satiric-fantastic tale—a kind of following of Voltaire—such as *Ixion*, he has hardly a superior, unless it be Anthony Hamilton, who is the superior of Voltaire himself and master of everybody." (3) Nearly all the critics agree in their praise of these fantasies. Flumer Ward, to whom *Popanilla* was dedicated, said, "Since the days of Swift and Voltaire, I have not read anything so witty." (4) A writer in the *Fortnightly Review* says of *Ixion*, "It would be impossible except by quoting the whole of it, to do justice to *Ixion*, and the scorn it breathes in every line of the fashionable world." (5) Kebbel tells us that "the three prose burlesques deserve to be better known than they are." (6) "Prose burlesques" is a very apt descriptive term as

(1) Monypenny *Life of Benjamin Disraeli* Vol I p.92
(4) Monypenny *Life of Benjamin Disraeli* Vol I p. 119
(5) *Fortnightly Review* August 1, 1868, Article by Bernard Cracroft
(6) Kebbel *Life of Beaconsfield* Philadelphia, 1888 p. 197
applied to these light, airy, imaginative, take-offs on contemporary life of the times. Popanilla is aimed at the Utilitarians and English political life of the times. The scene is laid in an unknown island which is an earthly paradise until one of the inhabitants tries to introduce the principles of the Philosophic Radicals. This tale is particularly interesting to the student of Disraeli because it shows his reactionary tendencies. Ixion in Heaven was based on the myth of the King of Thessaly, and its purpose was to ridicule 'high life' in English society. The Infernal Marriage was founded on Greek story of Pluto and Proserpine; it particularly satirized the custom of English women of birth and breeding to marry for an establishment. None of the three is at all malicious or abusive, but merely clever, witty, and humorous.

In Popanilla, Disraeli had made fun of the novel of fashionable life, but the public wanted this kind, so in 1829 Disraeli set about writing one. In 1830 he presented the reading public with The Young Duke. (1) It is what James Russell Lowell has called it, a conventional novel. (2) The hero is a fabulously wealthy young Duke, who is the pet and darling of society. He becomes weary of so much gaiety, and endeavors to relieve the monotony of life by dissipations of one sort and another. He succeeds in living a very riotous life, and loses most of his patrimony. Eventually he sees the folly of his ways; enters Parliament, in behalf of Catholic Emancipation; marries a

marvelously beautiful Catholic girl; and settles down to "live happy ever afterward." It may be said right here that Disraeli's heroes are nearly always very rich, very handsome, and gifted with great talents; his heroines are "lovely beyond compare", are scintillatingly brilliant, and possessed of magnificent dowers. In every one of his novels at least part of the scenes are laid in gorgeous palaces amidst furnishings of untold splendor. Moreover, the rewards are usually satisfactorily apportioned, so perhaps Lowell is justified in his sweeping statement that all of Disraeli's novels are of the conventional type. At least, The Young Duke belongs to this class. It was very favorably received, however, by the critics, with the exception of a writer in the Westminster Review. (1) This periodical was Utilitarian in its sympathies, and Disraeli in The Young Duke had referred to it as "The Screw and Lever Review." But, though he has nothing for the Benthamites but ridicule, it is interesting to note that he is very tolerant toward the Roman Catholics.

After writing this novel of society life, Disraeli went on a tour through the East where he collected material for two of his subsequent narratives, Contarini Fleming, published in 1832, and The Wondrous Tale of Alroy, published in 1833. The plot of the first named of these is laid partly in Southern Europe, and partly in the Orient, while the plot of the second is laid entirely in the East. The full title of the former of these two is: Contarini Fleming: A Psychological Romance. Such it was. The author portrays the feelings of a young man who is torn by con-

(1) Westminster Review Vol. 15 p. 399
flicting desires, on the one hand of being a great statesman, and on the other of being a great poet. There seems to be no doubt that the author was picturing his own emotions. Indeed he tells us in his diary: "In Vivian Grey I have portrayed my active and real ambition; in Alroy my ideal ambition; The Psychological Romance is a development of my poetic character. This trilogy is the secret history of my feelings--I shall write no more about myself." (1) Contarini’s temperament was very similar to that of his creator, Disraeli in many ways; he possessed the same fervid imaginative power, the same restless energy, the same love of grandeur and display. Contarini was also more or less of an aesthete. Here for the first time one is deeply impressed with the fact that the aestheticism of the age was not without its influence upon Benjamin Disraeli. Leslie Stephen (2) comments upon the fact that the hero of this book "falls prostrate before the splendid shrines of a Catholic Chapel, all his senses intoxicated by solemn music and sweet incense and perfect pictures." (3)

The Wondrous Tale of Alroy, which the author tells us represents his "ideal ambition" was indeed a wonder tale. The writer so far loses himself in his dreams that he does not hesitate to introduce magic and other supernatural effects into a story to be read by the practical, reasonable men and women of the age of Utilitarians. David Alroy, a scion of the House of David, receives the sceptre of Solomon (a symbol of success) through a miraculous agency. (4) He then sets out to restore the power of the kingdom

(1) Monypenny Life of Benjamin Disraeli Vol I p. 182
(2) Fortnightly Review October 1, 1874 Mr. Disraeli’s Novels by Leslie Stephens
(3) Contarini Fleming by Benjamin Disraeli p. 212-213
of Israel. For a time he carries all before him, but he is ensnared by the wiles of a daughter of a Caliph, and his career ends in catastrophe. Not only was the matter of Alroy out of the ordinary, the manner was also very unusual. Disraeli wrote this story in a sort of poetic prose. A writer in the Edinburgh Review (1) said of it, "The Wondrous Tale of Alroy is a most imaginative attempt to naturalise in our language that rhymed and assonant prose which has so great a charm for Eastern ears, but which with us will scarcely win more admirers than have been gained by the attempts at English hexameters."

However, both Contarini and Alroy have received their due measure of praise. Although Disraeli tells us that the former was "almost stillborn" (2), Kebbel, writing after all the novels had been published and had been tested by time, says that it was decidedly the best of the earlier works. (3) Froude records that Beckford, who was a well-known critic at the time these works were published, found Alroy "wildly original, full of intense thought, awakening, delightful." (4)

As a companion to Alroy, Disraeli published a short story called The Rise of Iskander. The plot was somewhat similar to that of the Wondrous Tale. Iskander, an Albanian Prince, raises a revolt against the Turks much like the one which the Hebrew Prince had raised against the oppressors of Israel. Iskander, however, finishes his campaign in triumph, whereas Alroy's ended in disaster.

(1) Edinburgh Review July 1847. Article on Mr. Disraeli's Tancred
(2) Preface to the Novels, Edition of 1870
(3) Kebbel Life of Lord Beaconsfield p. 189
(4) Froude The Earl of Beaconsfield p. 49
Disraeli's next literary production was in the realm of poetry. In 1834 he presented *The Revolutionary Epic*. This is a long narrative poem dealing with the career of Napoleon. It was intended to imitate the style of Homer, Virgil, Dante, and Milton, and Disraeli hoped that it would make him famous as a poet. He was doomed to disappointment, however; the work was an absolute failure. Its author realized this fact, so he turned back to his novel writing.

In 1836, *Henrietta Temple* made its appearance. A few months later this novel was followed by another called *Venetia*. Disraeli says of them, "They are not political works, but they would commemorate feelings more enduring than public passions, and they are written with care and some delight." (1) The full title of the first mentioned of these two books is *Henrietta Temple: A Love Story*. It may be said that the descriptive term is no misnomer, that the narrative is above all else a love story. It depicts a mad, passionate, melodramatic sort of emotion, which fairly burns the life out of the persons concerned, especially when they are denied each other. Ferdinand Armine, the hero, is about to marry his wealthy cousin, Katharine, whose money is to restore his estates, when he meets the heroine, Henrietta, the daughter of a poor country gentleman. He falls very violently in love with her, and she with him. Forgetting all about his cousin, he asks Henrietta to marry him. She promises, but later learns of his engagement to Katharine. Thereupon a misunderstanding arises which separates them. The consequences are disastrous, both to

(1) General Preface to the Novels Edition of 1870
the hero and the heroine; she goes into a decline, and he has brain fever; both are extremely unhappy. Eventually, however, the course for their love is made smooth, and they are reunited.

Venetia is much the same type of story as Henrietta Temple, but it is not pure fiction, since two of the leading characters in the novel are drawn from life. Lord Herbert and Lord Caduras represent Shelley and Byron. In many of his novels, Disraeli sketched likenesses of people well known to his readers, but in none of them are the originals so faithfully drawn as in this work. The main theme of the plot deals primarily with Venetia Herbert's worship for father, and secondarily with her love for Lord Caduras. She goes through all sorts of trials, but finally all seems to be going well when her father and lover are drowned. Since the story was founded on the lives of the two poets, it could not well end happily. The Edinburgh Review was very severe in its criticism of Disraeli for "intruding into the domestic life of a poet and his relations and extracting the materials of fiction out of events so recent and melancholy." (1) Later critics have taken a milder view of the matter, and have frequently regarded Venetia as one of the best of his novels. Both this story and Henrietta Temple are written without a political end in view, and are therefore very much more artistic from a literary point of view than the majority of his works in which the aim is didactic. The style of these two is exaggerated, the emotion is overwrought, and the characterization is not sufficiently convincing, but these are faults more or less characteristic

(1) Edinburgh Review October 1837. Article on D'Israeli's Works.
of Disraeli, and they are no worse in these tales than in any of the others. His power lies in his depth of imagination, in his marvelous descriptive ability, in his vitality and force, and in his subtle irony. Venetia and Henrietta Temple have their full share of these merits.

These two narratives are the last of the novels of Disraeli's youth. When he had finished them he withdrew from the lists of literature for seven years, excepting when he re-entered for a brief period in 1839 to write his tragedy, Count Alarcoes, which was as great a failure as the Revolutionary Epic had been. When he again took up his pen it was to write the famous trilogy, Coningsby, Sybil, and Tancred; novels written not for pleasure, nor yet for money, but to express his views on the political, social, and religious conditions of his time.

Meantime the years which had intervened between the publication of Vivian Grey and Venetia had not been given over entirely to the writing of fiction. In 1832, Disraeli entered the field of politics with the publication of his England and France; or A Cure for Ministerial Gallovania. This was a violent condemnation of the foreign policies of Lord Palmerston. In this same year he first ran for Parliament under the auspices of the Radicals. He was defeated, but not at all daunted he stood in 1833 for Marlebone, this time being backed by the Tories. He was severely criticised then, and has been frequently upbraided since for what seemed to be a rapid change of front in regard to political parties. As a matter of fact, he was always more or less of a free lance in politics, and never pretended to adhere very strict-
ly to party lines. He always, in later life, threw his fortunes with the Conservatives, but was so unconventional in his political beliefs that he often had to educate his followers to them. However, Disraeli was no more successful in his campaign of 1833 than in 1832, but he continued to stand for office until he was finally elected in 1837 and his Parliamentary career began. It was to last until the day of his death, more than forty years later.

During the time when the new member of the House of Commons had been striving for a place, he endeavored to aid his fortunes by use of his pen. In 1833 he directed an attack against Whiggism in the columns of the Morning Herald under the title of What is He? In 1835 he wrote his Vindication of the English Constitution, which in the main was an eulogy of Toryism as Disraeli conceived that it ought to be. He was one of those Tories who thought that the solution of the political situation in England was to be found in regenerating the Tory principles and practices, which had prevailed in earlier times. In 1836 he further set forth his views in the Letters of Runnymede, which appeared in The Times. They were a scathing denunciation of the Government and of what he termed "the selfish Whig Oligarchy."

When Disraeli took his seat in the House of Commons, he left off writing his views for a time, as he now had opportunity of expressing his convictions in a place where he hoped to wield power. He did not enter Parliament to be a silent member, so throughout the years that followed his election we find him continually advancing his principles, and making vigorous speeches
on every important issue. He favored Catholic Emancipation; he urged fair treatment of the Jews; he defended the Corn Laws; he supported Factory Acts; he denounced the New Poor Law; and he maintained that the Chartists should at least have a hearing. For the most part he worked for the "Conservative Cause", which he defines for us as follows: "By the Conservative Cause, I mean the splendor of the Crown, the lustre of the peerage, the privileges of the Commons, and the rights of the poor. I mean that harmonious union, that magnificent concord of all interests of all classes on which all national greatness and prosperity depends." (1)

This quotation expresses in brief the regenerated Toryism which Disraeli preached all through the pages of Coningsby, Sybil, and Tancred. He tells us what his purpose was in these novels as follows: "The derivation and character of political parties; the condition of the people which had been the consequence of them; the duties of the Church as a main remedial agency in our present state; were the three principal topics which I intended to treat, but I found they were too vast for the space I had allotted myself." (2)

"These were all launched in Coningsby, but the origin and condition of political parties, the first portion of the theme, was the only one completely handled in that work."

"Next year (1845) in Sybil, or The Two Nations, I considered the condition of the people, and the whole work, generally

(1) Monypenny: Life of Benjamin Disraeli Vol II p. 16. Quotation from one of Disraeli's speeches.
(2) Preface to the Novels Edition of 1870.
speaking, was devoted to that portion of my scheme"........

In Tancred, or the New Crusade, he says that he intended to set forth his religious ideas. His words are: "In recognizing the Church as a powerful agent in the previous development of England, and possibly the most efficient means of that renovation of the national spirit which was desired, it seemed to me that the time had arrived when it became my duty to ascend to the origin of that great ecclesiastical corporation, and consider the position of that race who had been the founders of Christianity."

Such was the ambitious program of Disraeli's three great didactic novels.

At the time when Coningsby was written the political views of its author were closely associated with those of a certain branch of the Tory party known as Young England. For this reason it is generally assumed that Coningsby was a manifesto of the Young England party. This assumption is very nearly correct, but it must be stated in fairness to Disraeli that most of the opinions in Coningsby were voiced by him long before and long after Young Englandism existed. This movement in politics was analogous to the Oxford movement in religion. Coningsby, the hero of the novel, a member of the old aristocracy, is educated at Eton and Cambridge, where he imbibes the ideas and convictions of Young England, that party whose principles cried out against the infidelity of the age, and endeavored to awaken the aristocracy to do its duty by enlisting its young men in political regeneration. As a foil to Coningsby, Disraeli introduces Millbank,
a wealthy manufacturer, who thinks that the manufacturing class has just as good a claim to rule the country as the aristocracy has. The plot is complicated by the fact that the manufacturer and Coningsby's grandfather are bitter enemies, and by the fact that the grandson loves Millbank's daughter. Old Lord Monmouth, the grandfather, wishes the young man to enter Parliament from one of his boroughs, but the latter refuses, ostensibly because of the instability and lack of principle in the Tory party, but really because Millbank would be his rival. Disraeli uses the incident, however, to set forth his views on the Conservative Cause, and the state of politics. (1) The plot is throughout very simple and is made entirely subservient to the political purpose in view. It is very dexterously handled, however, and the work is considered as a whole is a very admirable piece of work. Leslie Stephen says, "Coningsby wants little but a greater absence of purpose to be a first rate novel. If Mr. Disraeli had confined himself to the merely artistic point of view he might have drawn a picture of political society worthy of comparison with Vanity Fair." (2) The book was received with enthusiasm at the time of its publication. Disraeli tells us, "Three considerable editions were sold in this country in three months; it was largely circulated throughout the Continent of Europe, and within a brief period more than fifty thousand copies were required in the United States of America." (3)

Sybil, which appeared in 1845, was quite as popular as

(1) Coningsby p. 404-411
(2) Fortnightly Review (22-430) October 1, 1874
(3) Monypenny Vol. II p. 199
Coningsby. Monypenny writes: "Sybil received from the critics more praise than even Coningsby, and ran through its three editions in the course of the summer. With the critics and with the elect it has remained a favourite ever since." (1) Lord Morley calls it "the sincerest" of Disraeli's novels. (2) H. D. Traill praises it in high terms. (3) As a matter of fact it is one of the most interesting, most human, most thoughtful, and most sympathetic of all Disraeli's narratives. It contains less pomp and display, and more genuine feeling and heartfelt purpose than any other of his stories. In it he has also succeeded in drawing a heroine, Sybil, who, although almost too perfect to be human, is still a beautiful ideal.

Sybil is the daughter of a poor, though fairly well educated, and intelligent factory employee. Her lover, the hero of the tale is Charles Egremont, a member of the idle rich class. The book is an attempt to contrast the conditions existing between the lives of the rich and the poor in England at the time of Chartism. Through love of Sybil, Egremont, a member of an old titled family becomes interested in the "lower classes" and investigates the conditions of their lives. As a result, we are given very vivid and startling pictures of the horrible and distressing circumstances of the lives of the laboring people. The hero's sympathies are enlisted and he takes up the cause of the Chartists in Parliament. Disraeli's remedy, however, is not Chartism, but a sort of feudalism in which the manufacturing

(1) Monypenny Vol II p. 252  
(2) " " " " "  
(3) " " " " "
class, the aristocracy, and the Church, merely by doing their duty toward the poor make a new Utopia. His theory was that of a dreamer, but his practice was quite the reverse. During the thirty-five years that intervened between the writing of Sybil and the date of his death, he introduced and passed in Parliament a great many bills with the purpose of ameliorating the conditions of the poverty stricken classes.

The third novel of the three is the least valuable of them all. Tancred, or The New Crusade, as it is called, expounds a new theory of Christianity which wholly eclipses the Tractarian Movement in its scope and ambition. It is an attempt to connect Christianity with Judaism, and to point out what the former owes to the latter. The real purpose of the book is to vindicate the Jews. The whole scheme of the novel is visionary, and the manner of execution is likewise in the same strain. In this story Disraeli reverts to the wild flights of imagination so frequent in his earlier novels, and we are presented with a hero who goes to Palestine to solve "the great Asian mystery," which is never explained, and who falls into a trance on Mount Sinai, in which he is visited by an angel. The hero, Tancred, is an English youth of aristocratic birth, who is disgusted with the faithlessness in politics, the emptiness of religion, and the hypocrisy of society life in England, so he sets out to seek inspiration at the fountain head of all true religion, namely, Palestine. He has many wonderful adventures among all kinds of peculiar and fascinating people, but ends by falling in love with a Jewess whom he addresses as follows: "The angel of Arabia, and
of my life and spirit! Talk not to me of faltering faith; mine is intense! Talk not to me of leaving a divine cause; why thou art my cause, and thou art most divine!"(1) Thus the search for "the great Asian mystery" ends in a love affair. This ending is quite out of keeping with the general tenor of the book and ruins it as an artistic whole. One feels as if one had been deluded, played with, deceived. Yet it is very much in keeping with Disraeli's tendency to oscillate from one extreme to another; he loves to keep one guessing and to surprise one unawares. The Edinburgh Review finds fault with him for this inconsistency shown in this work. (2) Lowell classes it among conventional novels, but in the main it does not belong to this class; the unconventional features far outweigh the conventional ones. (3) Leslie Stephen calls the book "a strange phantasmagoria", and says one can only explain it "by accepting the theory of double consciousness, and resolving to pray with the mystic, and sneer with the politician as the fit takes us." (4) Disraeli himself was entirely satisfied with the production, and said long years afterward that it was his favorite of all his novels.

When he had finished Tancred he did not again take up his pen to write a novel until he produced Lothair in 1870. But in 1851 he published Lord George Bentinck, A Political Biography in commemoration of the statesman who was his colleague in the fight for Protection. This work is mainly a Parliamentary history of the years 1846-1848, with Bentinck as the central figure.

(1) Tancred p. 485
(2) Edinburgh Review (86:138) July 1847
(3) North American Review (65:201) July 1874
(4) Fortnightly Review (22:430) October 1, 1874
Meanwhile, during the period in which these novels were written, the young statesman was steadily forging his way toward a prominent place in the ranks of his party. Sir Robert Peel was the leader of the Tories, or Conservatives, as they were now more generally called, at the time when Disraeli entered the lists, but in 1843 he turned his back on Protection and caused a split in the party. From that time Disraeli's star was in the ascendancy, and by 1852 he was the acknowledged leader of the Conservatives in the House of Commons. In this year, the first Derby-Disraeli ministry was formed, and the latter of the two ministers became Chancellor of the Exchequer. From the time of this ministry until his death, he never gave up the Conservative leadership. Either in the House of Commons or in the House of Lords, he maintained his sway.

The first Derby-Disraeli ministry was short-lived, but in or out of office Disraeli continued to be a power, and succeeded in exerting a vast influence in Parliament. He was three times Chancellor of the Exchequer in the three ministries called after him and Lord Derby, in 1853, 1858, and 1867. In 1867, Lord Derby resigned from the Cabinet, and Disraeli became the Prime Minister for a short time. In 1874 he again assumed the leadership of the Cabinet and was Prime Minister until 1880.

When Disraeli became a power in the Government of England he did not forget to put into practice, as far as possible, the policies for which he stood. He passed a Reform Bill, which, according to Froude, "in its inevitable developments must give the
franchise to every householder in the United Kingdom;" (1) he succeeded in removing Jewish disabilities; he procured an amendment to the Poor Law; he passed a Public Worship and Regulations Act; and he put through several Factory Bills aimed to improve the conditions of the working classes. On the whole he did as much toward putting his theories into practice as was possible for him to do.

In the later days of his life he took enough time in the midst of his activities as a statesman to write two more novels. These were Lothair, published in 1870, and Endymion, published in 1880. These novels were hailed with great acclaim. It is said that he was paid £10000 for Lothair (2); and that seven thousand copies of Endymion were sold before it ever appeared. (3) Probably a considerable part of the popularity of these works was due to the fact that they were written by a man who was famous yet Froude pronounces Lothair "a work of enduring value", (4) and a writer in the Edinburgh Review regards it as "the best and most thoughtful of his works." (5) Kebbel finds Endymion bears unmistakable marks of its author's genius." (6) Lothair seems to me to be the most finished, and the most completely rounded out of all the novels. At the same time it is the most entirely representative of his characteristics; if one wished to read only one of the novels and still wished to find out what were all of

(1) Froude: The Earl of Beaconsfield N. Y. 1890 p. 195
(4) Froude: The Earl of Beaconsfield p. 256.
(5) Edinburgh Review, Jan 1881. (153:53)
(6) Kebbel Life of Beaconsfield p. 197
Disraeli's ideas, mannerisms, peculiarities, etc., I should advise him to read *Lothair*. *Endymion*, however, fails to reach the standard of Disraeli's best productions, the hero is a mere figure head, the action is slow, and the events improbable, the story as a whole drags.

*Lothair* is a picture of English society life at the time at which it was written. The hero is a rich young nobleman who becomes the prey of the Catholic partisans who wish to appropriate his fortune to the Church of Rome, and of the Revolutionary Secret Societies, who wish to use his money for an Italian revolt. The agents of Catholicism are his guardian, Cardinal Grandison; a certain Monsignori Catesby; and a beautiful girl Miss Arundel. Another paragon of womanhood, the matchless Theodora, is the charmer who works for the Revolutionary faction. She is successful for a time. Later the Catholics very nearly entrap him into Romanism. But he finally escapes all intriguers and returns to England to marry a girl of beauty and high birth.

*Endymion*, the novel of his last days, lacks the serious thought and purpose of *Lothair*, though at times the style shows touches of a master hand. *Endymion*, the hero, is the son of an English Whig politician, and his ambition is to follow in his father's footsteps. The time of the story is from 1830 to 1840. The young political aspirant achieves his purpose, and succeeds in arriving in a high place, but he does not do so through his own efforts. He is a pawn who is moved about mainly through the power of his sister, who is married to a Prime Minister, and through the influence of a friend, Berengeria, the wife of a
wealthy nobleman. Thus the character of the hero does not bear out his career. Scherer says: "We are told what happened to him, but he is not made to live before us, nor is he shown to us acting upon others, counting for something in the direction of events." (1) The criticism is entirely just. It is interesting to compare Endymion with Vivian Grey, Disraeli's first hero, in this respect. The former is passive, the latter active. Vivian believed himself to be master of his own destiny, while Endymion trusts to others to carve his fortunes. Disraeli's attitude toward life had changed since he wrote his first novel. When he wrote Vivian Grey he was full of youth and buoyancy; he was an old man, enfeebled by age, and a little weary of strife, when he wrote Endymion.

Disraeli did not live long after completing Endymion. He finished it in 1880; on April 19, 1881, he died. The career of the statesman and novelist was ended. As a statesman he had reached the highest pinnacle; as a novelist he failed to attain the first rank, but no man can do two great things equally well. Perhaps if he had devoted all of his energies to his literary work, he might have reached the greatest heights.

CHAPTER II

DISRAELI'S IDEAS CONCERNING POLITICS,
AS EXPRESSED IN HIS NOVELS,
IN RELATION TO HIS TIMES

Benjamin Disraeli is known in the history of English literature as the creator of the political novel. He was the first to use fiction as a vehicle for the dissemination of ideas which belonged primarily to the realm of statecraft. In his youth the two subjects which he liked best were literature and politics, so it is not strange that when he came to manhood he combined his two interests in this new form of literary production. His first narrative, Vivian Grey, deals with a young man who aspired to attain a position of power in the Tory party. In the Young Duke, another of his early stories, the hero wins the heroine by entering Parliament in the cause of Catholic Emancipation. The three prose burlesques, the Infernal Marriage, the Voyage of Captain Popanilla, and Ixion in Heaven, all satirize to some extent various political ideas which were prevalent in the period in which they were written. Contarini Fleming is the tale of a youth who could not make up his mind whether to devote his life to a career in the field of letters, or to one in the sphere of statesmanship. In fact, nearly all of Disraeli's early novels—that is, those written previous to his entrance into Parliament in 1837, are at least pseudo-political in character. But the narratives which he published before this date were produced before he had any personal ex-
periences in the affairs which relate to government, and moreover, they were not penned with the definite purpose of influencing public opinion in regard to the "state of parties", so they are not usually placed in the class of political novels.

Between the year 1837, when Disraeli was elected to the House of Commons, and the year 1881, when he died, he produced five works of fiction, *Coningsby*, *Sybil*, *Tancred*, *Lothair*, and *Endymion*. Of these five, the first two and the last deal primarily with politics. *Tancred* was originally intended to explain its author's ideas regarding the relation of the Church of England to the State. But, although Disraeli started out with this end in view, he was carried away by his enthusiasm for the Jewish people, so that the book became a vindication of the Hebrew race rather than an exposition of the writer's High Church proclivities. *Lothair*, like its creator's early stories, introduces political ideas only incidentally. *Endymion*, the tale of Beaconsfield's old age, is a retrospect of the state of the various parties in the period 1830-1840. It contains many of Disraeli's ideas regarding national affairs, but these are not nearly as fully or as forcefully developed as in *Coningsby* and *Sybil*. These two works are the most wholly representative of his political convictions. *Sybil*, today, would be regarded as a social novel, since its primary concern is the condition of the people, but in 1845 the problem relating to the state of the working class was a vital matter in politics, so *Sybil* is classed as political. Both *Sybil* and *Coningsby* were written with the express purpose of setting forth the author's beliefs
in matters of statecraft.

These two works were published in 1844-1845. They are generally regarded as manifestos of the Young England party of which Disraeli was the leader. Young Englandism was a reaction against the tide of Liberalism which had its beginning in England late in the eighteenth century, and which had gradually gained strength year by year until in Disraeli's time it had become a powerful force in the nation. Although Liberal tendencies had begun to make themselves felt in the British Isles before the French Revolution, they had not been considered worthy of very much attention by the ruling class until after the close of the Napoleonic wars in 1815. Immediately following peace popular discontent made itself felt in mass meetings, riots, rick-burnings, etc. By 1817 the situation had become so bad that something had to be done. The Tories, who were in power, became frightened, and decided upon severe repression. Accordingly the Government suspended the Habeas Corpus Act. Two years later in 1819 a series of measures, known as the Six Acts, were passed, by which the right of holding public meetings was greatly restricted. But the action taken by Parliament and the Ministry only succeeded in fanning the flame. Liberalism swept onward, and by the end of the next decade it began to make itself felt as a power in the legislative body of England. In 1827, the Liberals accomplished the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts; in 1829 they gained Catholic Emancipation, and in 1832 they forced through the first Reform Bill, which initiated the ascendancy of the middle classes to power.
Previous to 1832, the Tories, the representatives of the landed aristocracy, had held the balance of power in England for fifty years. From 1832 until the latter part of the nineteenth century, the Liberals, the party of the middle classes, held almost unbroken sway. The time during which this faction dominated England coincides almost exactly with the period of Disraeli's political career,—half a century in which he fought unceasingly against the doctrines of this new power. Liberalism stood for individual liberty above all things. The followers of this new creed accepted the Utilitarian doctrine of freedom for every man to do as he pleased as long as he was not a positive menace to society. They believed in laissez faire, and wanted just as little government restriction as possible. They based their reforms on abstract reasoning, and were very careful to exclude all measures which were based merely upon humanitarianism. They passed a New Poor Law, which aimed to abolish pauperism, but which did not give any consideration whatever to the claims of the laborer. (1) They proposed Free Trade to cure the evils which caused Chartism. Harriet Martineau (2) writes concerning the Repeal of the Corn Laws: "The one essential thing that it is now necessary for the working classes to understand is, that food and labour being released from legal restriction, their condition is in their own hands." Harriet Martineau's opinions may be taken as representative of the type of Liberal-


ism which existed in England between 1840 and 1850. For similar reasons, the middle class leaders opposed the Factory Acts; they held the individual doctrine that in such matters the working man should look out for himself. (1)

All these principles were particularly distasteful to a man of Disraeli's type. Disraeli was what one might call a Tory-Democrat. His Toryism was of the old school which held that government should be paternal; his Democracy was of a new order which wanted the State to insure an equal opportunity to the working people as well as to the middle class. So he founded the Young England party, and wrote Coningsby and Sybil to set forth its creed. In these books he condemned both the Liberal and Conservative parties, charging that neither of them was doing its duty toward the nation. He pleaded for a new national party which should unite all interests. This new party was to be a regenerated Tory organization, led by the younger generation of the nobility, which should accomplish its purpose by establishing a new sort of feudalism. In this new order of things the supremacy of the Crown, the glory of the Aristocracy, the power of the Church, and rights of the Poor should be restored. He himself explains (2) to us just what was his purpose in those books which were written as a manifesto of Young England. He says: "The origin and character of our political parties, their influence on the condition of the people in this country, some picture of the moral and physical condition of that people, and

some intimation of the means by which it might be elevated and improved, were themes which had long engaged my meditation."

"Born in a library, and trained from early childhood by learned men who did not share the passions and prejudices of our political life, I had imbibed on some subjects conclusions different from those which generally prevail, and especially with reference to the history of our own country. How an oligarchy had been substituted for a kingdom, and a narrow-minded and bigoted fanaticism flourished in the name of religious liberty, were problems long to me insoluble, but which early interested me. But what most attracted my musing, even as a boy, was the elements of our political parties and the strange mystification by which that which was national in its constitution had become odious, and that which was exclusive was presented as popular."

The feudal system may have worn out, but its main principle, that the tenure of property should be the fulfilment of duty, is the essence of good government. The divine right of kings may have been a plea for feeble tyrants, but the divine right of government is the keystone of human progress, and without it governments sink into police, and a nation is degraded into a mob."

"National institutions were the ramparts of the multitude against large estates exercising political power derived from a limited class. The Church was in theory, and once it had been in practice, the spiritual and intellectual trainer of the
people. The privileges of the multitude and the prerogatives of
the Sovereign had grown up together, and together they had waned.
Under the plea of Liberalism all the institutions which were the
bulwarks of the multitude had been sapped and weakened, and noth-
ing had been substituted for them. The people were without
education, and, relatively to the advance of science and the com-
fort of the superior classes, their condition had deteriorated,
and their physical quality as a race was threatened. Those who
in theory were the national party, and who sheltered themselves
under the institutions of the country against the oligarchy, had
both by the misconception and neglect of their duties, become,
and justly become, odious; while the oligarchy, who had mainly
founded themselves on the plunder of the popular estate, either
in the shape of the possessions of the Church or the domains of
the Crown, had by patronage of certain general principles which
they only meagerly applied, assumed, and to a certain degree,
acquired, the character of a popular party. But no party was
national; one was exclusive and odious, the other liberal and
cosmopolitan."

"To change back the oligarchy into a generous aristocracy
round a real throne; to infuse life and vigour into the Church
as the trainer of the nation, by the revival of Convocation, then
dumb, on a wide basis, and not, as has been since done, in the
shape of a priestly section; to establish a commercial code on
the principles successfully negotiated by Lord Bolingbroke at
Utrecht, and which, though baffled at the time by a Whig Parlia-
ment, were subsequently and triumphantly vindicated by his political pupil and heir, Mr Pitt; to govern Ireland according to the policy of Charles I, and not of Oliver Cromwell; to emancipate the political constituency of 1832 from its sectarian bondage and contracted sympathies; to elevate the physical as well as the moral condition of the people, by establishing that labour required regulation as much as property; and all this rather by the use of ancient forms and the restoration of the past than by political revolutions founded on abstract ideas, appeared to be the course which the circumstances of this country required, and which, practically speaking, could only, with all their faults and backslidings, be undertaken and accomplished by a reconstructed Tory Party."

Thus we have outlined in three or four paragraphs the aims and principles which were the foundation of the novels of the Young England party. Coningsby deals for the most part with the purely political aspects of Young Englandism; Sybil sets forth the social ideals of that same group. Tancred was originally intended to take up the religious problems in England at that time, but as I have said, its author wandered far afield, so in the study of Disraeli's ideas of religion in relation to those of his day one must for the most part, consult his other novels. In this chapter I shall not attempt to discuss the social and religious phases of Disraeli's beliefs, but will devote a separate chapter to each of these subjects later on. In this division I shall confine myself to his political views, mainly as set forth in Coningsby.
This work is truly a political novel. The plot is very slight; it serves merely as a background for the politics. The story deals for the most part with the relations of the hero, who is a Tory of the New Generation, to his grandfather, Lord Monmouth, a vain, selfish, dissolute, Conservative nobleman; to his friends, Sydney, Buckhurst, Vere, and Millbank, the first three of whom are of his political creed, the fourth a Liberal; to the elder Millbank - the hated enemy of his grandfather, the father of his friend, and of the girl whom he loves. The main action which is political, except when Edith Millbank occupies the stage, centers about these characters. Most of them were drawn from life. Coningsby stands for Hon. George Smythe, who was an active Young Englander; Sydney and Buckhurst represent Manners and Cochrane, respectively. These two men were associates of Disraeli in his new movement. Oswald Millbank, who was a member of the middle class, but who sympathized somewhat with Coningsby, was supposed to be "the heir apparent of the ruling dynasty of The Times." (1) The Marquis of Monmouth was intended to reproduce the voluptuous Marquis of Hertford, the original of Thackeray's Marquis of Steyne. (2) The fact that Disraeli drew his leading personages from life, and gave to Young England its correct historical setting, Eton and Cambridge, but added interest for his readers.

Coningsby was educated at Eton and Cambridge where he imbibed his ideas concerning "reconstructed Toryism." In a conversation

(1) Monypenny, Vol II p. 202
which took place between the hero and his friends at the former's rooms at the University we are given many of the ideas which were at the bottom of this new political organization. Buckhurst begins the discussion by saying:

"If any fellow were to ask me what the Conservative Cause is, I am sure I should not know what to say."

"Why it is the cause of our glorious institutions," said Coningsby. "A Crown robbed of its prerogatives; a Church controlled by a commission; and an aristocracy that does not lead."

"Under whose genial influence the order of the Peasantry, "a country's pride," has vanished from the face of the land," said Henry Sydney, "and is succeeded by a race of serfs who are called labourers, and who burn ricks." (1)

The friends conclude their discussion by agreeing that all of the existing political parties are faithless and entirely selfish, and agree to keep out of them. (2)

In a survey (3) of the situation in England which takes place between Coningsby and Millbank, we are given a contrast between Conservatism and Liberalism.

Millbank says: "Now tell me Coningsby, exactly what you conceive to be the state of parties in this country."

"The principle of the exclusive constitution of England having been conceded by the Acts of 1827-8-33," said Coningsby, "a party has arisen in the State who demand that the principle

(1) Coningsby p. 263.
(2) Coningsby p. 266.
(3) Coningsby p. 351-
of political liberalism shall consequently be carried to its extent, which it appears to them is impossible without getting rid of the fragments of the old constitution that remain. This is the destructive party."

They are resisted by another party, who, having given up exclusion, would only embrace as much liberalism as is necessary for the moment; who without any embarrassing promulgation of principles, wish to keep things as they find them as long as they can......... This is the Conservative party."

"The man who enters public life at this epoch," Coningsby concludes, "has to choose between Political Infidelity and a Destructive Creed."

But the speeches just recorded in the dialogues between Coningsby and his friends do not show the constructive side of Young Englandism. The first step in "Regenerated Toryism" was to be a conversion of the aristocracy to do its duty as the true patrons of the laboring classes. This was to be accomplished by the "New Generation." (1) The second move was to be a restoration of power to the Sovereign. Coningsby says (2) "The proper leader of the people is the individual who sits upon the throne." The third action was to be the elevation of the power of the Church, so that the House of Commons could no longer interfere with it. Disraeli, (3) speaking through Millbank, says, "The only consequences of the present union of Church and State are, that on the side of the State there is perpetual interference

(1) Coningsby p. 125.
(2) Coningsby p. 354
(3) Coningsby p. 357
in ecclesiastical government, and on the side of the Church a
sedulous avoidance of all those principles on which alone Church
government can be established, and by the influence of which alone
can the Church of England again become universal." The fourth
recommendation was the revival of feudal philanthropy in favor
of the poor. The author says: (1) "The parochial system, though
(2) shaken by the fatal poor law, is still the most ancient, the most
comprehensive, and the most popular institution of the country."
These were the means by which Disraeli hoped to combat the in-
fidelity of the Conservative party and the laissez faire prin-
ciples of the Liberals.

Young England as a party was shortlived. It was looked upon
in its own day, and is still regarded as the creed of the
visionary. Harriet Martineau (3) says that it was "amiable and
well intended; but it did not avail in the face of the stern
truth that the great natural laws of society have dissolved the
old relations between the endowed and the working classes, and
brought up a wholly new order of affairs." Lord Morley (4)
speaks of the "Childish bathos of Young England which Disraeli
portrayed in his books." Even Monypenny says: "But Young England
was less a party than a spirit in the air, or at most a revival
of Disraeli's early dream, the dream that haunts the youth of
every generation, of a party truly national rising above all

(1) Coningsby p. 359
(2) Refers to the New Poor Law of 1834.
(3) Pictorial History of England 1816-1846 Harriet Martineau
(3) London 1848.
factious aims and limitations." (1) Perhaps Disraeli was a dreamer, but he was not the only man in his age who turned to the past for inspiration. Carlyle in his "Past and Present" preached the glory of an age that was gone. Newman looked with longing toward the Church of the Middle Ages. All three set their faces against Liberalism in every form.

Coningsby considered as a work of art has met with more favor from the critics. Leslie Stephen (2) praises it in high terms as an artistic creation, although he depreciates Young Englandism. He says one has only to disregard the political purpose in order to find the book thoroughly enjoyable. The Westminster Review (3) has the following to offer: "A clever novel; - clever in the higher acceptation of the term. A novel, that whether as work of amusement or a vehicle for political opinions (the latter perhaps of ephemeral interest), has been in the highest degree successful, and ranks, deservedly, with the highest of its class."

This is very unusual praise, coming from the Westminster Review as that magazine is almost universally hostile to Disraeli. Monypenny tells us: "The popularity of Coningsby has proved to be lasting, and it is still more read than any of Disraeli's works, with the possible exception of Lothair.......
The main reason both for the immediate success and the enduring fame of the novel is to be sought in its own genuine merits as a first and happiest effort in the new form of art which its author had invented." (4)

(1) Monypenny Vol II. P. 220.
(2) Fortnightly Review October 1874 Article by Stephen on Disraeli's Novels.
(4) Monypenny Vol II p. 200
Disraeli showed a rare gift of genius when he wrote *Coningsby*. The book is full of sparkling pictures of fashionable life, full of clever epigrams, full of wit and satire, although the purpose is political. Disraeli has managed to combine a great many varying elements into a unified whole. Perhaps this is partly due to the fact that Young Englandism represented an ideal, rather than a practical political creed. Disraeli knew, as well as did his readers, that the ideas which he wrote in his books concerning politics could not be realized in the England of 1844,--England controlled by the middle classes. Perhaps, however, he felt it worth while to set up the ideals in order to show the complacent Englishman of the day that all was not as it should be!
CHAPTER III

THE CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE AS PICTURED BY DISRAELI; THE TRUTH OF HIS PORTRAYAL.

Improvement of the "condition of the people" was always one of the first articles of faith in the political creed of Benjamin Disraeli. "There is no subject (he said, speaking to his constituents in the summer of 1844) in which I have taken a deeper interest than the condition of the working classes. Long before what is called the 'condition of the people question' was discussed in the House of Commons, I had employed my pen (1) on the subject. I had long been aware that there was something rotten in the core of our social system. I had seen that while immense fortunes were accumulating, while wealth was increasing to a superabundance, and while Great Britain was cited throughout Europe as the most prosperous nation in the world, the working classes, the creators of wealth, were steeped in the most abject poverty and gradually sinking into the deepest degradation." (2)

As a matter of fact, although Disraeli had denounced the New Poor Law almost as soon as he entered Parliament because he considered that it increased the suffering of the laboring classes, and although he had defended the hearing of the People's Charter in 1839, he had not given any very serious attention in his literary productions to the cause of the poor until he came to write his

(1) Probably refers to Popanilla
(2) Quoted by Monypenny: Life of Benjamin Disraeli N.Y.1913 Vol III p. 231
trilogy of Coningsby, Sybil, and Tancred. Then he avowedly undertook to show the terrible social conditions that existed among the lower classes, and to point out a remedy. In Coningsby he launched this project and gives us a sort of introduction to ideas which were fully developed in Sybil. In Sybil, published in 1845, he made a careful study of the circumstances of the lives of the working people in agricultural districts, in factory towns, and in mines and collieries, and contrasted the lives of this class with those of the aristocracy. This work was a direct outcome of Chartism, and is a social novel. In none of his other stories does he put the chief emphasis on this phase of contemporary life, or develop his ideas so completely. In Tancred, Lothair, and Endymion, written after the publication of Sybil, he sometimes reiterates the social ideals set forth in the works of 1845, but he advances no new ideas. I shall therefore confine myself to Sybil for the most part, in discussing Disraeli's portrayal of the condition of the people in the times in which he lived.

Sybil is essentially a story of the conditions which were the direct cause of Chartism. The People's Charter was only the culmination of the misery and woe brought about in the lower strata of the population of England by the movements usually known as the "Industrial Revolution" and the "Agrarian Revolution." The former of these signifies the change from domestic to factory methods of manufacture, with its accompaniment of new social, political, and moral problems. This revolution took place from the latter part of the eighteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth century, and was caused by the introduction
of the spinning-jenny and power-loom, which made factory production desirable from an economic point of view. Under the old system all manufacture was carried on in the homes of the people, providing employment for all members of the family under favorable sanitary and moral conditions, also enabling them to combine their weaving, spinning, etc., with agriculture. Wages were fairly high. One authority states (1) "A family of four adult persons with two children as winders, earned at the end of the last and at the commencement of the present century 4 l. per week, when working ten hours per day; when work was pressed, they could of course earn more—a single weaver having been known to earn upwards of 2 l. per week." Each family usually owned a little plot of ground and kept a few domestic animals in order to increase its income. On the whole the manufacturing population in the latter eighteenth century lived very comfortably. But by the time Disraeli came into Parliament, the new system had become dominant, and conditions were radically changed. Now the factory hands lived herded together in miserable cottages, under the most distressing circumstances imaginable. Their wages were low; their living conditions both unsanitary and immoral; they were miserably clothed and more miserably fed; they lived in utter ignorance, and despair. Against this new crier, Disraeli protested with all the force of his character.

The "Agraraian Revolution" was somewhat of the same nature as the "Industrial Revolution" in that it produced very similar

results. It involved a change from farming on a large scale which was brought about by "enclosing" commons, small holdings, etc., thus depriving the agricultural laborers of their old rights on the land. They then became entirely dependent upon their wages for support and rapidly fell into abject poverty. When wages became so low that a man and his family reached the starvation level, his wages were supplemented by poor rates. The wages tended to become even lower because of this practice, until a large per cent of the agricultural laborers became entirely pauperized. In 1834, the Poor Law was revised and "out door" relief was abolished. Of course the immediate effect of this revision was even greater distress, but in the long run the results were salutary. Disraeli saw the suffering which the New Poor Law caused, and cried out against it, both in his books (1) and in Parliament, where he made a valiant struggle to defeat it.

In this Parliamentary strife, Disraeli became fairly conversant with the environment of the rural poor, and in 1843 and 1844, he made tours in Northern England, when he studied at first hand not only the facts of life of the farming class of poor people, but of factory workers and miners as well. The controversy in the House of Commons over Chartism also had given him added interest in social welfare, and he determined to put his views before the public. He says: "In Sybil, or The Two Nations, I considered the condition of the people...... At that time the Chartist agitation was still fresh in the public memory and its repetition was far from improbable. I had mentioned to my friend the late Thomas Duncombe, something of what I was contemplating;

(1) See Coningsby p. 134
and he offered and obtained for my perusal the whole of the correspondence of Feargus O'Connor when conductor of the "Northern Star," with the leaders and chief actors of the Chartist movement. I had visited and observed with care all the localities introduced; and as an accurate and never exaggerated picture of a remarkable period in our domestic history, and of a popular organization which in its extent and completeness has perhaps never been equalled, the pages of Sybil may, I venture to believe, be consulted with confidence." (1)

The plot of Sybil is very slight, the book consists for the most part of a series of situations and incidents. The pictures of both "high" and "low" life are the main interest of the narrative. They are presented to us either through the eyes of the characters of the story, or in direct connection with these people. Sybil, the heroine, belongs to the lower classes, although she is the daughter of a man, Walter Gerard, who had come originally from a family of higher station, and she is far above the ordinary girls of her class. Egremont, her lover, is an aristocrat, and heir presumptive to Marney Abbey. He is a very fine, humane, philanthropic, young nobleman, very different from his brother, Lord Marney. This last named gentleman represents the type of landlord who drove the farm laborers to take refuge in Chartism, and even more violent methods of reform. Stephen Morley, in turn, represents a type who is actively struggling against such men as Lord Marney. He is an enterprising young socialist, whose mission in life is

(1) General Preface to the Novels Edition of 1870.
the vindication of the wrongs of the poor. He and Walter Gerard, who is one of the leaders of Chartism, work hand in hand for this end. Through Morley's eyes we are given some very vivid descriptions of conditions in mines near Mowbray, and of the factory system at its worst in the shop of "Bishop" Hatton at Wodgate, otherwise known as Hell-house Yard. Various persons who are products of the factory methods are introduced into the story; there is the handloom weaver, Warner, whose family is literally starving to death because his wages are so inadequate; there are Caroline and Harriet, factory girls, whose moral responsibilities are very light indeed; there is Dandy Mick, an impudent young brawler, the beau of society among the villagers of Mowbray, a manufacturing town; and there is Devilsdust, so called because no one knew his name, who managed to survive the horrors of a baby farm, and grew to manhood despite his adverse environment.

Opposed to characters like these Disraeli depicts the gilded youth of the Alfred Mountchesney type who "likes bad wine because one gets so bored with good," the rich society women of the set of Lady St. Juliana, Lady Marney, the daughters of the Earl de Mowbray, Mowbray himself, and many others of the peerage. He portrays their homes in all their splendid and luxurious details. He describes their manner of living in complete indolence and ease. He shows their utter indifference, in the main, to the miserable lives of the poor wretches who struggle along, barely existing, in order that they may enjoy themselves to the fullest measure.
The estate of Lord Marney is set before us as an example of existing conditions. The home of Lord Marney is described as follows. (1) "Modern luxury, and the refined taste of the lady of the late lord, had made Marney Abbey as remarkable for its comforts and pleasantness of accommodation as for its ancient state and splendour. The apartments were in general furnished with all the cheerful ease and brilliancy of the modern mansion of a noble, but the grand gallery of the seventeenth century was still preserved, and was used on great occasions as a chief reception-room. You ascended the principal staircase to reach it through a long corridor. It occupied the whole length of one of the wings; was one hundred feet long, and forty-five feet broad, its walls hung with a collection of choice pictures rich in history; while the axminister carpets, the cabinets, carved tables, and variety of easy chairs ingeniously grouped, imparted even to this palatian chamber a lively and habitable air." With this scene, Disraeli contrasts the homes of Marney's working class. "Marney mainly consisted of a variety of narrow and crowded lanes formed by cottages built of rubble, or unhewn stones without cement, and from age or badness of material looking as if they could scarcely hold together. The gaping chinks admitted every blast; the leaning chimneys had but half their original height; the rotten rafters were evidently misplaced; while in many instances the thatch yawning in some parts to admit the wind and wet, and in all utterly unfit for its original purpose of giving protection from the weather, looked more like the top of a dunghill than a (1) Sybil, p. 50-51
cottage. Before the door of these dwellings, and often surrounding them, ran open drains full of animal and vegetable refuse, decomposing into disease, or sometimes in their imperfect course filling foul pits or spreading into stagnant pools while a concentrated solution of every species of dissolving filth was allowed to soak through and thoroughly impregnate the walls and ground adjoining. These wretched tenements seldom consisted of more than two rooms, in one of which the whole family, however numerous, were obliged to sleep, without distinction of age, or sex, or suffering."

In order to prove that Disraeli was speaking the truth one has only to turn to the Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, made in 1842 (1). Dr. Barham, speaking of the high death rate among the poor, says, "There is, however, no mystery in the causation. Ill-constructed houses, many of them old, with decomposing refuse close upon their doors and windows, open drains bringing the oozings of pigsties and other filth to stagnate at the foot of the wall, between which and the entrances to a row of small buildings there is only a very narrow passage; such are of a few of the sources of disease." (2) Dr. John Fox, another commissioner, cites a case where eleven persons slept in one room. (3) The same man describes other disreputable cottages, and says, "Persons living in such cottages are generally very poor, very dirty, and usually in rags, living almost wholly on bread and potatoes, scarcely ever tasting animal food,

(2) Page 6 of this report.
(3) Report of the Poor Law Commissioners. p. 9
and consequently highly susceptible of disease and very unable to contend with it." (1) The wages of the agricultural workers were very low. One investigator (2) found that the average wages in this period were only 9s 7d per week, while cottage rent was 74s 6d per year, bread was 1½d per loaf, meat 5d per pound, butter 1s per pound, and wool was worth 1s per pound.

Yet Lord Marney feels perfectly self-satisfied when he considers the condition of his wage-earners, and refuses to believe that the rick-burning on his estate could have been caused by any discontent among his tenants. (3) He says, "I wish the people were as well off in every part of the country as they are on my estate. They get here their eight shillings a week, always at least seven, and every hand is at this moment in employ, except a parcel of scoundrels who would prefer wood-stealing and poaching if you gave them double the wages. The rate of wages is nothing, certainty is the thing; and every man at Marney may be sure of his seven shillings a week for at least nine months in the year; and for the other three, they can go to the House, and a very proper place for them; it is heated with hot air, and has every comfort...... The poor are well off, at least the agricultural poor, very well off indeed. Their incomes are certain; that is a great point, and they have no cares, no anxieties; they always have a resource, they always have the House. People without cares do not require so much food as those whose life entails anxieties." Thus Lord Marney disavowed his responsibilities.

(1) Report of the Poor Law Commissioners p. 9.
(2) Caird's English Agriculture in 1850-1851, London 1852.
(3) Sybil p. 126
Laissez faire in all things was the spirit of the age, and Lord Marney was merely a disciple of that doctrine. Laissez faire lead to Chartism which the working classes as a whole advanced as a hope of remedy for their wretchedness. The People's Charter, as it was called, demanded annual Parliaments, manhood suffrage, vote by ballot, payment of members, abolition of property qualifications for a seat in the House of Commons. The populace thought that if they could gain legislative power they could cure their abuses. Disraeli sympathized with their sufferings, and with their attempt to aid themselves, but he did not think that Chartism was the remedy. He proposed in order to better conditions among the agricultural population a new sort of feudalism in which the State, the Church, and the Aristocracy each did its duty. The State must return to "out door" relief, the Church must go back to giving doles and alms, the landlords must establish model estates, where the workmen had fine, snug little cottages, small garden plots, a living wage, and special aid from the manor house in time of need. The estate of Eustace Lyle in Coningsby is described as the standard which should be attained. Disraeli was applying Young Englandism to the social problem.

Although the conditions prevalent among the poorer classes in the rural districts were most distressing, they were no worse than those in the factory towns. Disraeli takes us to the town of Mowbray to study the lives of the industrial workers. This town was adjoining to the great castle of Mowbray, a dwelling place of great grandeur and magnificence, occupied by a family
no less calloused to the sufferings of their poverty-stricken neighbors than was Lord Marney. This little manufacturing city is the home of Sybil Gerard. With her we visit the home of Warner, the hand-loom weaver, and see the dire straits into which he has fallen. Warner can now earn only a penny an hour at his work, and his daughter who had helped to support the family had tired of spending all her wages thus, and had left home. When Sybil comes on her errand of mercy (she comes to bring them food, clothing, etc.,) the whole family, mother, father and several children, are living in a single room in such reduced circumstances that they have neither food nor fuel, and owe rent. (1)

In Mowbray, also, we become acquainted with Devilsdust. His early days are described as follows: "This was the familiar appellation of a young gentlemen who really had no other, baptismal or patrimonial. About a fortnight after his mother had introduced him into the world, she returned to her factory, and put her infant out to nurse; that is to say, paid three pence a week to an old woman, who takes charge of these new-born babes for the day, and gives them back at night to their mothers as they hurriedly return from the scene of their labour to the dungeon or the den which is still by courtesy called 'home.' The expense is not great, laudanum and treacle, administered in the shape of some popular elixir, affords these innocents a brief taste of the sweets of existence, and, keeping them quiet prepares them for the silence of their impending grave. Infant-

(1) Sybil p. 132-133.
icide is practiced as extensively and as legally in England as it is on the banks of the Ganges; a circumstance which apparently has not yet engaged the attention of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. But the vital principle is an impulse from an immortal Artist, and sometimes baffles even in its tenderest phases the machinations of society for its extinction. There are infants that will defy even starvation and poison, unnatural mothers and demon nurses. Such was the nameless one of whom we speak. We cannot say he thrived, but he did not die. So, at two years of age, his mother being lost sight of, and the weekly payment having ceased, he was sent out in the street to 'play' in order to be run over. Even this expedient failed." From this time on the child took care of himself, living on garbage and sleeping in cellars, he even managed to escape the ravages of fever and other diseases. When he was five or six years of age he managed to get a job in a factory and thereafter managed very well."

Froude (1) commenting upon this episode, says: "Disraeli was startled to find that infanticide was practiced as "extensively and legally in England as it was on the banks of the Ganges." It is the same today; occasional revelations lift the curtains, and show it active as ever; familiarity has led us to look upon it as inevitable; the question, what is to be done with the swarms of children multiplying in our towns; admitting, at present, of no moral solution." Gaskell, also brings ample testimony to support Disraeli's contention. In his book, publish-

(1) Froude, J. A. The Earl of Beaconsfield N Y 1890. p. 121
ed (1) a few years earlier, he details many scenes, and tells of many horrors just as dreadful as those of Disraeli. Through the investigations of Stephen Morley, the Socialist Editor of Mowbray, we are shown something about factory conditions at Wodgate, and also we are made acquainted with the lives of miners and colliers. The manufacturing plant of the 'Bishop' of Wodgate is described, as follows: "At the end of a court in Wodgate of rather larger dimensions than usual in that town, was a high and may windowed house of several stories in height, which had been added to it at intervals. It was in a most dilapidated state, the principal part occupied as a nail work-shop where a great number of heavy iron machines were working in every room on each floor; the building itself in so shattered a condition that every part of it creaked and vibrated with their motion. The flooring was so broken that in many places one could look down through the gaping and rotten planks, while the upper floors from time to time had been shored up with props." The 'Bishop's' character may best be illustrated by the following words of one of his young workers: "I should like to have a crown for every time he has cut my head open." (2) It was the custom of the Poor Law Administrators in the early factory period to apprentice all pauper children to manufacturers or colliers. (3) Hundreds of these poor little waifs were bonded, when they were about eight years old, to be exploited until they reached the age of twenty-one. The Children's Commission of 1842 found that many of them

(1) Gaskell, P. Manufacturing Population London, 1833
(2) Sybil p. 190
(3) H. D. Traill Social England p. 298
were treated with extreme cruelty; they were half starved, were clothed in rags, were made to work from twelve to fifteen hours a day, and were frequently beaten and abused. (1) Sanitary conditions in the places of work were also very bad. The Poor Law Commissioners in 1842 report many cases which go to prove that in the factories throughout England conditions were extremely unhealthy. The following example may be taken as typical. They visited a work room in which eighty men were employed. The room was sixteen or eighteen yards in length by seven or eight yards in width. It was lighted entirely by skylights and there was no means whatever of ventilation. (2)

Conditions in factories were very bad, but those in mines were very much worse. Disraeli draws a very clear and accurate picture for us in his book describing the mining situation as he found it. "They come forth; the mine delivers its gang and the pit its bondsmen; the forge is silent and the engine is still. The plain is covered with the swarming multitude; bands of stalwart men, broad-chested and muscular, wet with toil, and black as the children of the tropics; troops of youth, alas! of both sexes, though neither their raiment nor their language indicates the difference; all are clad in male attire, and oaths that men might shudder at issue from lips born to breathe words of sweetness. Yet these are to be, some are, the mothers of England! But can we wonder at the hideous coarseness of their language, when we remember the savage rudeness of their lives?

Naked to the waist, an iron chain fastened to a belt of leather runs between their legs clad in canvas trousers, while on hands and feet, an English girl, for twelve, sometimes for sixteen hours a day, hauls and hurries tubs of coals up subterranean roads, dark, precipitous, and splashy; circumstances that seem to have escaped the notice of the Society for the Abolition of Negro Slavery. Those worthy gentlemen too appear to have been singularly unconscious of the sufferings of the little trappers, which was remarkable, as many of them were in their own employ.

"See too, those emerge from the bowels of the earth! Infants of four and five years of age, many of them girls, pretty and still soft and timid; entrusted with the fulfilment of responsible duties, and the nature of which entails on them the necessity of being the earliest to enter the mine and the latest to leave it." (1)

These details are far from being exaggerated, every one of them can be proved by half a dozen different contemporary sources. Moreover, when Disraeli said that "the author has found the absolute necessity of suppressing much that is genuine," (2) he spoke the truth. Men, women, and children worked for starvation wages under circumstances too horrible even to be imagined.

Slavery in the United States at its very worst cannot present such dreadful pictures as do those recorded of the mining proletariat in England in the early forties. (3)

(1) Sybil pp. 161-162.
(2) Preface to Sybil
Disraeli does not offer any specific scheme to apply as a remedy for the miners, though Young Englandism would have suggested that the mine-owners, the Church, the State, and the Aristocracy do their duty toward this division of the working class as well as toward others. In regard to the factory hands, he is more specific, and outlines for us a model factory in that of Mr. Trafford, who not only provided a place for his people to work under sanitary conditions, but furnished good schools for them, built them up-to-date cottages, and looked after their physical, moral, and intellectual welfare in every way possible.

(1) This was the sort of solution which Disraeli offered for every evil present in his age.

By the principles which he advanced in *Sybil*, as well as in *Coningsby*, he puts himself in that class of Tories who set their faces against the theory of *laissez faire*, against the Utilitarianism, against the Liberalism of the age, and who looked to the past rather than to the present or to the future for a cure for the ills of their own day. It must be said, however, in justice to Disraeli, that, although in his novels the reforms which he proposed were for the most part those of a dreamer of dreams, in actual life he was very much more practical. During the years when he was a power "to be reckoned with" in the Parliament of England he used every possible influence to pass laws which would ameliorate conditions for the working people. He spent all his life fighting the ascendancy of the great middle class, and opposed every measure which exalted it at the expense of the lower classes. When he passed his great Reform Bill

in 1868 he went far toward granting the demands of the Chartists. Few English statesmen have done more than the author of *Sybil* for the "cause of the people."

*Sybil* itself did a great deal toward arousing interest in the needs of the laboring class, (1) and in showing people just what conditions existed. Kebbel (2) says: "The graphic pictures of the misery and squalor of the factory population which imparted to its pages so vivid a dramatic interest, lent a powerful impetus to the cause of factory reform first initiated by Mr. Sadler, and afterwards carried forward by Lord Ashley. Without it the working classes would probably have had longer to wait for that succession of remedial measures which realized his own prediction, and 'broke the last links in the chain of Saxon thraldom.'" Lord Morley (3) tells us that "Mr. Disraeli's broad imaginativeness of conception gave him a view of the extent of the social revolution as a whole which was wider, if it did not go deeper than that of any other contemporary observer."

Leslie Stephen (4) writes "*Sybil* is chiefly devoted to what its author calls 'an accurate and never exaggerated picture of a remarkable period in our social history.' We need not inquire into the accuracy. It is enough to say that in this particular department Mr. Disraeli shows himself capable of rivalling in force and vivacity the best of those novelists who have tried to turn blue-books upon the condition of the people into

(1) Encyclopædia Britannica. Article by Frederick Greenwood. p. 566
(2) Dictionary of National Biography. Article on Disraeli.
(4) Fortnightly Review-22-430. Article by Leslie Stephen on Mr. Disraeli's Novels.
sparkling fiction. If he is distinctly below the few novelists of truer purpose who have put into an artistic shape a profound and first-hand impression of those social conditions which statisticians try to tabulate in blue-books—if he does not know Yorkshiremen in the sense in which Miss Bronté knew them, or in which Scott know the borderers—he can write a disguised pamphlet upon the effects of trades unions in Sheffield with a brilliancy which might excite the envy of Mr. Charles Reade."

Leslie Stephen, however, thinks that the purpose of the novel spoils its artistic effect.

Stephen is not doubt justified when he says that Sybil is ruined from the point of view of the artist by the fact that the purpose is too conspicuous, for as a matter of fact the social aim in this story stands out above everything else. All other things are secondary. The narrative has other faults as well. Disraeli is so pre-possessed by the idea that a heroine should be of noble lineage that he cannot resist elevating Sybil to the rank of the peerage through the recovery of estates and titles which had been lost by her ancestors. The characterization is not very strong. Sybil is beautiful, ideal, even perfect; the trouble is she is too perfect to be quite convincing

Lord Marney represents the other extreme; he is almost too cruel, grasping, harsh, to have been real. Egremont lacks stamina, and force of character. But despite these faults the novel merits much praise. One can not help but feel that Disraeli's heart was in his work when he wrote Sybil. This can not be said of all of his novels. In many of them one feels that one is being purposely tantalized, played with, baffled,
until one is at loss to know whether or not Disraeli was ever serious about anything. But Sybil seems to be sincere. Also the facts which the author wishes to emphasize are presented with a clearness and vividness which make a deep impression on the mind of the reader. With all its faults Sybil is well worth the reading; it is entertaining, interesting, and forceful.
CHAPTER IV.

THE IDEAS CONCERNING RELIGION, WHICH DISRAELI EXPRESSES IN HIS NOVELS, IN RELATION TO THE ECCLESIASTICAL MOVEMENTS OF HIS AGE.

The century in which Disraeli lived was one which witnessed a revolution in religion as well as in other fields. During the eighteenth century Erastianism had held sway; the Church of England as a whole had been quiescent. The Reverend William Hunt tells us: (1) "With the accession of the Hanoverian line the Church entered on a period of feeble life and inaction: Many Church fabrics were neglected; daily services were discontinued; holy days were disregarded; Holy Communion was infrequent; the poor were little cared for; and though the Church remained popular, the clergy were lazy and held in contempt. In accepting the settlement of the crown the clergy generally sacrificed conviction to expediency, and their character suffered. Promotion largely depended on a profession of Whig principles; the Church was regarded as subservient to the State; its historic position and claims were ignored; and it was treated by politicians as though its principal function was to support the government. This change was accelerated by the silencing of convocation." In general this was the state of the Church of England all through the eighteenth century, and during the early years of the nineteenth.

However, in the fifty years between 1780 and 1830, there grew up a party within the bounds of the Established Church which differed in many respects from the fundamental principles of the Church of England. This was the body known as the Evangelicals, or Low Churchmen. This sect laid stress upon the depravity of human nature, on the necessity of a conscious conversion, on the atonement of Christ, and on the importance of personal salvation. The Evangelical Movement supported the crusade against the slave trade, founded the Church Missionary Society, revived the buildings of churches, and originated Sunday Schools. But the Low Church party included only a small part of the membership of the English Church, and, moreover, its doctrines and teachings were strongly flavored with Calvinism and Methodism, so it had more in common with Dissenters than with the Established Churchmen. Thus it is fair to say that the Church of England was dormant, for the most part, up until about 1832.

But, as we have seen, the Liberal Movement became a powerful force in Great Britian in the early years of the nineteenth century. Naturally Liberalism affected religion just as it did politics, economics, commerce, etc. About 1833, the year of the passage of the first Reform Bill, the High Churchmen, so called in distinction from the Low Churchmen, woke up to the fact that the Established Church of England was being menaced. It had been in a precarious position for several decades, but until the tide of Liberalism swept the country, there had been no actively forceful agent to threaten its destruction.
However, in 1828 the Test and Corporation Acts were abolished, in 1830 Catholic Emancipation was won, in 1832 the Reform Bill was passed; and the Church of England discovered that it must arouse itself from its lethargy to fight for its rights, or give way to the new force which endangered its very existence. A revival of Anglicanism followed which developed into the Oxford Movement.

The Oxford Movement, so called in honor of the university where it originated, was, according to More, (1) "a part of the great romantic flood that swept over Europe." He also says: "The immediate impulse came as a reaction against the all-invading Liberal and Freestian notions of the day, and as an attempt to find a substitute within the Church of England for the fervour of Wesleyanism and for the Evangelicalism, which threatened to convert the Church into a weak imitation of Wesley's congregation." The new movement, according to Newman,—one of its great leaders, began in 1833 when Keble preached his famous sermon "National Apostasy". It was carried on mainly through sermons and "The Tracts for the Times" written by Keble, Froude, Newman, Pusey, and others. The Oxford Movement, as such, was terminated in 1845 when Newman went over to the Church of Rome.

Newman followed Tractarianism,—as the agitation started at Oxford is often called, to its logical conclusion. Reverend William Hunt (2) tells us about Tractarians, or Puseyites, that "their cardinal doctrine was that the Church of England was a

(2) Encyclopaedia Britannica P. 451.
part of the visible Holy Catholic Church and had unbroken connection with the primitive Church; they inculcated high views of the sacraments, and emphasized points of agreement with those branches of the Catholic Church which claim apostolic succession. They wished to revive the faith which existed in earlier days; they wanted to restore the forms and rituals of the Church of the Reformation; they hoped to regain the power which belonged to the church in medieval times; they tried to inculcate once more the asceticism and high standards of morality of the middle ages; they worked to make the Church of England a living force in their own day. Such was the Oxford Movement. It ceased to be known by that name after 1845, but High Church tendencies persisted throughout the century, in later days as the enemy of Science when it threatened to undermine religion.

Shortly after the organization of the Ecclesiastical party just described, there arose another branch of the Church which stood in contrast to the Oxfordians. The followers of this new sect were called Broad Churchmen. They were men who were somewhat influenced by the Liberalism of the day, although they remained within the Anglican establishment. They tended toward rationalism, and were ardently hated by both the Puseyites and Evangelicals. They were Latitudinarian (1) in their views,—they wanted religious freedom for all, they worked for practical philanthropy, they tried to apply common sense to Christianity. This movement was started by Thomas Arnold, and by Whately. It was carried on by Kingsley, Stanley, Maurice, and others, the (2)

advocates of "muscular Christianity." In later days many of the Broad Church party drifted into the field of "higher criticism", and into Unitarianism.

Disraeli came into manhood in the days when Evangelicalism was on the wane; in the period when Liberalism was gaining power; at the time when the reactionary movement was beginning at Oxford. He entered public life in the early thirties at the time when the struggle between High Church and Broad Church was in its initial stages. Disraeli himself was a member of the Church of England, and of the High Church faction, but he was a Jew by birth. It was only natural that he should take an active interest in the religious movements of his day, especially since he was a member of Parliament in an age when the affairs of Church and State were intimately connected. But, though he naturally concerned himself with the status of religion in his times, and was greatly affected by the predominant religious influences around about him, at the same time he was a Hebrew at heart so his point of view differed from that of the ordinary Englishman. In reading Disraeli's novels one is constantly reminded that he was of Jewish birth.

When one has studied all of his stories in order to ascertain the religious views contained within them, one finds three main ideas which stand out above all others. In the first place, Disraeli's real religion was a reconciliation of Judaism and Christianity. The entire purpose of Tancred is to develop the claim which he conceives the Jewish religion has upon that of the Christians. He touches upon this same theme in less detail.
in other narratives. Secondly, he was very tolerant in his attitude toward all Dissenters,—this much he had in common with Broad Churchmen, in spite of the fact that he was decidedly anti-Liberal in most things. He was especially indulgent toward the Catholic Church. Catholics and Catholicism are treated favorably in *They Young Duke*, in *Contarini Fleming*, in *Coningsby*, in *Sybil*, in *Lothair*,—in fact in nearly all of his works.

Thirdly, *Coningsby* and *Sybil* preach many of the doctrines which were held by the followers of the Oxford Movement. Disraeli's religion may fairly be described as anomalous in character. Perhaps one may say that his practical faith was Anglicanism in its ordinary aspects; that his ideal belief was that of Tancred,—a Christianity which acknowledged its debt to Judaism, and a Judaism which accepted Christianity. But the Oxford Movement appealed to him particularly by its medievalism, while Catholicism fascinated him by its mysticism and its estheticism. His tolerance towards all Dissenters may be explained by the fact that he himself was born of a persecuted race.

When Disraeli first meditated the writing of his trilogy he intended to treat among other subjects "the duties of the Church as a main remedial agency in our present state." In *Coningsby* and *Sybil* he partially accomplished this end, but he was not satisfied with the result, so he wrote *Tancred*. In the first two of these books the ideas concerning religion are for the most part similar to Tractarianism, but in the third narrative he was carried away by his Jewish sympathies. He
says in writing of Tancred: "The Church is a sacred corporation for the promulgation and maintenance in Europe of certain Asian principles, which, although local in their birth, are of divine origin, and of universal and eternal application." (1)

In asserting the paramount character of the ecclesiastical polity and the majesty of theocratic principle it became necessary to ascend to the origin of the Christian Church, and to meet in a spirit worthy of a critical and comparatively enlightened age, the position of the descendants of that race who were the founders of Christianity. The modern Jews had long laboured under the odium and stigma of mediaeval malevolence. In the dark ages, when history was unknown, the passions of societies, undisturbed by traditionary experience, were strong, and their convictions, unmitigated by criticism, were necessarily fanatical. The Jews were looked upon in the middle ages as an accursed race, the enemies of God and man, the especial foes of Christianity. No one in those days paused to reflect that Christianity was founded by the Jews; that its Divine Author, in his human capacity was a descendant of King David; that his doctrines avowedly were the completion, not the change, of Judaism; that the apostles and the Evangelists, whose names men daily invoked, and whose volumes they embraced with reverence, were all Jews; that the infallible throne of Rome itself was established by a Jew; and that a Jew was the founder of the Christian Churches of Asia."

(1) Preface to the fifth edition of Coningsby.
"The European nations, relatively speaking, were then only recently converted to a belief in Moses and in Christ; and, as it were, still ashamed of the wild deities whom they had deserted, they thought they atoned for their past idolatry by wreaking their vengeance on a race to whom, and to whom alone, they were indebted for the Gospel they adored."

"In vindicating the sovereign right of the Church of Christ to be the perpetual regenerator of man, the writer thought the time had arrived when some attempt should be made to do justice to the race which had founded Christianity."

These paragraphs just quoted are the essence of the thoughts expressed in Tancred. This novel is the story of a youth who travels to Jerusalem to seek the inspiration of the Christian religion at the fountain head. There he meets a young Jewess,-Eva, by name, with whom he discusses his mission. In their conversation most of Disraeli's ideas regarding the relation between the religion of the Old Testament and that of the New are brought out.

Eva says of Jesus: "He was born a Jew, lived a Jew, and died a Jew; as became a Prince of the House of David, which you do and must acknowledge him to have been. Your sacred genealogies prove the fact, and if you could not establish it, the whole fabric of your faith falls to the ground." (1)

Then she says: "Let me ask you: you think that the present state of my race is penal and miraculous?"

(1) Tancred. p. 190.
Tancred, - the hero, admits this.

"Why do you?" she pursues.

He replies: "It is the punishment ordained for their rejection and crucifixion of the Messiah."

"Where is it ordained?" she questions.

He answers: "Upon our heads and upon our children of his blood."

Then she rises to the defense of Judaism as follows: "The criminals said that, not the judge. Is it a principle of your jurisprudence to permit the guilty to assign their own punishment? They might deserve a severer one. Why should they transfer any of the infliction to their posterity? What evidence have you that Omnipotence accepted the offer? It is not so announced in your histories. Your evidence is the reverse. He, whom you acknowledge as omnipotent, prayed to Jehovah to forgive them on account of their ignorance. But admit that the offer was accepted, which in my opinion is blasphemy, is the cry of the rabble at a public execution to bind a nation? There was a great party in the country not disinclined to Jesus at the time, especially in the provinces where he laboured for three years, and on the whole with success; are they and their children to suffer? But you will say they became Christians. Admit it. We were originally a nation of twelve tribes; ten, long before the advent of Jesus, had been carried into captivity and scattered over the East and the Mediterranean world; they are probably the source of a greater portion of the existing
Hebrews; for we know that, even in the time of Jesus, Hebrews came up to Jerusalem at the Passover from every province of the Roman Empire. What had they to do with the crucifixion or the rejection?" (1)

In Eva's words we have what George Brandes calls "the theological, historical vindication of the Jewish nation." (2)

The heroine carries on her argument through several pages, but reaches the climax when she says: (3) Now tell me: suppose the Jews had not prevailed upon the Romans to crucify Jesus, what would have become of Atonement?"

Disraeli was a Jew at heart, he never forgot that he himself belonged to the House of Israel, he worked unceasingly to remove Jewish disabilities in England, and, even though he belonged to the Church of England in the nineteenth century, his ideal faith was one in which Hebrews and Christians joined hands. Brandes (4) goes so far as to say that Disraeli's Catholic proclivities arose out of his Jewish sympathies because the latter says in Sybil: - "The Church of Rome is to be respected as the only Hebraeo-Christian Church extant; all other churches established by the Hebrew apostles have disappeared, but Rome remains, and we must never permit the exaggerated position which it assumed in the middle centuries to make us forget its early and apostolical character, when it was fresh from Palestine, and as it were, fragrant from Paradise." (5) Brandes

(1) See Tancred p. 190-191 for above conversation.
(2) Brandes: Lord Beaconsfield. Translated by Mrs. George Sturge. N. Y. 1880. p. 279.
(3) Tancred p. 195
(4) Same as 2. p. 268.
(5) Sybil p. 129.
is not entirely justified in his assumption, although he may be stating a partial truth, because, in the first place, he cites an isolated example, and, secondly, he overlooks several pertinent factors, - Disraeli was inclined by temperament to be overly enthusiastic, and to say things at times which he never really believed; he was naturally tolerant toward all Non-Conformists, since he came of a harassed race; moreover, he was undoubtedly affected by the estheticism of the age. Leslie Stephen is probably very much nearer the true solution when he says: "It is this love of splendour,---combined with his admiration for the non-scientific type of intellect, which makes the Roman Catholic Church so fascinating for Mr. Disraeli." (1)

Throughout Disraeli's novels there runs an admiration for the Church of Rome. May Dacre, the lovable heroine of the Young Duke, was a devout member of that church; Contarini Fleming marries a girl of the Romish faith, and becomes an ardent Romanist; Ferdinand Armine in Henrietta Temple is the scion of a prominent old Catholic family; Sybil, the ideal of beautiful womanhood, belongs to the Holy Catholic Church; Eustace Lyle, the model landlord in Coningsby, holds the same religious creed; Lothair comes very near going over to Rome, and many of the most prominent characters in the book of this name, are of the Roman belief. Most of the critics are agreed that Disraeli's early books show a more than friendly feeling toward Catholicism, but think that in Lothair he had changed his mind. They are led to think so

because Disraeli draws a very lurid picture of the effort which the Catholic Church made to capture Lothair. But the critics forget that Disraeli was a satirist, and that this book was written at a period when public sentiment ran high against this religion owing to the fact that the Pope had proclaimed a hierarchy in England in 1850. It is very much more likely that Disraeli, ironical as he was, was making fun of the excited anti-Catholics than that he himself had changed his point of view. The Catholic Church in its grandeur and magnificence, in its forms and ceremonies, in the estheticism of its appeal, always had an almost bewitching influence upon Disraeli. He frequently describes in detail the beauty of the Cathedrals, the sweetness of the incense, the enchantment of the solemn music, and sacredness of the performance of the Mass.

Just as Disraeli's imaginative temperament drew him into sympathy with the Church of Rome, it inclined him to look with favor upon the Oxford Movement. The medievalism and the Neo-Catholicism, especially, of Tractarianism were not lost upon Disraeli. In Coningsby and Sybil one feels that he was very much in harmony with the Oxfordians. Froude tells us(1) that Young Englandism was inspired by the example set by the Oxford leaders. Like the Puseyites, Disraeli wanted to stem the tide of Erastianism with which Liberalism was threatening the Established Church; like them he wanted to elevate the Church to a position beyond the reach of the authority of the State and to

restore Convocation; like them he wanted to bring back the glory, the strength, and the power of the Church of the Middle Ages. All of these ideals are emphasized again and again in the Young England novels.

In *Coningsby*, Millbank says (1): "Divorce the Church from the State, and the spiritual power that struggled against the brute force of the dark ages, against tyrannical monarchs and barbarous barons, will struggle again in opposition to influence of a different form, but of similar tendency; equally selfish, equally insensible, equally barbarising. The priests of God are the tribunes of the people. O ignorant! That with such a mission they should ever have cringed in the anti-chambers of ministers, or bowed before Parliamentary committees!"

In *Sybil*, the following passage occurs: (1) "Oh! there it is," said the stranger, in a tone of plaintiveness; "if the world but only knew what they had lost! I am sure that not the faintest idea is generally prevalent of the appearance of England before and since the dissolution. Why, sir, in England and Wales alone, there were of these institutions of different sizes, I mean monasteries, and chantries and chapels, and great hospitals, considerably upwards of three thousand; all of them fair buildings, many of them of exquisite beauty. There were on an average in every shire at least twenty such structures as this was; in this great county double that number: establishments that were as vast and as magnificent and as

(1) *Coningsby*, p. 359.
(2) *Sybil*, p. 73.
beautiful as your Belvoirs and your Chatsworths, your Wentworths and your Stowes. Try to imagine the effect of thirty or forty Chatsworths in this county, the proprietors of which were never absent. You complain enough now of absentees. The monks were never non-resident. They expended their revenue among those whose labour had produced it. These holy men, too, built and planted, as they did everything else, for posterity; their churches were cathedrals; their schools, colleges; their halls and libraries the muniment rooms of kingdoms; their woods and waters, their farms and gardens, were laid out and disposed on a scale and in a spirit that are now extinct; they made the country beautiful, and people proud of their country."

There are many, many discussions in Coningsby and Sybil which treat of the state of the Church, and all of them cry for a more powerful church of the present day or point with longing to the Church of Medievalism. So much for Disraeli and the High Church in the times in which he lived.

Disraeli's ideal religion was far greater in scope than the Oxford Movement which tried to prove that the apostolic succession in the Anglican Church could be traced back without a real break to the founding of the Church of Christ at Rome. Disraeli says: (1) "The tradition of the Anglican Church was powerful. Resting on the Church of Jerusalem, modified by the divine school of Galilee, it would have found that rock of

truth which Providence, by the instrumentality of the Semitic race, had promised to St. Peter." But Disraeli could not hope to convert the England of his day, with its various creeds and doctrines, to any new faith of this sort which was primarily Jewish in its appeal. So he was forced to be content with publishing his views in order to vindicate his race, and to accept as much of the religion of the Victorian Era as he could.

Certain it is that his creed considered in its entirety seems to be made up of many conflicting elements. He was more tolerant than Dr. Thomas Arnold who wanted to unite all Christians into a common church. (1) He was as ardent in his desire to see the Church of England restored to the glory and power of its earlier days as was any follower of the Oxford Movement. He was a regular communicant of the Anglican Church, in which he was reared after his twelfth year. Yet he preaches his ideal faith of a reconciled Christianity and Judaism with such sincerity and fervour that one can hardly doubt but that it was the religion of his heart. Leslie Stephen says (2) he can only explain Disraeli by accepting the psychological theory of a double consciousness. Perhaps Stephen has hit upon the only way out of the apparent contradictions.

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