

**THE SIX-YEAR-OLD PARLIAMENT
AND ITS APPROACHING
DISSOLUTION. A HANDBOOK
FOR CANDIDATES AND ELECTORS**

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The six-year-old parliament and its approaching dissolution. A handbook for candidates and electors by Anonymous

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SIX-YEAR-OLD PARLIAMENT

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ITS APPROACHING DISSOLUTION.

A HANDBOOK FOR CANDIDATES AND ELECTORS.

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P R E F A C E.

THE greater portion of this Pamphlet is a republication, by permission, of an article which appeared in the 'Edinburgh Review' for October 1864, under the title of 'The Five-Year-Old Parliament.' It has been extended to embrace the principal events of the present Session, and some observations have been added applicable to the coming General Election.

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27

28

29

30



CONTENTS.

	PAGE
The General Election of 1869	1
Reform	3
Finance	6
The Commercial Treaty with France	11
Foreign Policy	15
Relations with China and Japan	26
Colonial Affairs	28
India	31
National Armaments :	
The Navy	34
The Army	39
Fortifications	41
Lancashire Distress	43
Poor Law Reforms	44
National Education and Measures beneficial to the Work- ing Classes	46
Law Reforms	50
Measures of Internal Improvement	61
Summary of Results	64
Semi-Ecclesiastical Questions	55
Trial of Strength on the Dano-German Question	80

	PAGE
Why the Country should Support the Liberal Party . . .	61
Character and Constitution of the Liberal and Con- servative Parties	62
Questions of our Time, and Position of the Two Parties in respect to them	65
Alleged Claims of Conservatives to Power	70
Their Conduct in Office	74
Their Conduct in Opposition	76
Issue now before the Country	78

THE
SIX-YEAR-OLD PARLIAMENT.

THE PARLIAMENT which will shortly conclude its seventh Session was elected in May 1859, under the auspices of the Derby-Disraeli Administration, in answer to an almost personal appeal made by those Ministers to the country. We say a personal appeal, because, as at a former election, the great object of the Conservative Government, as of the Conservative party, appeared to be to clear itself of its antecedents and its character, and, if possible, to divest itself of its identity. Only in 1859, more prudent than in 1852, while breaking with the past, it committed itself to no promises for the future. On the hustings in 1859, the members and supporters of Lord Derby's Government abjured its recent Reform Bill; they professed no financial policy, for, scared by the failure of Lord Ellenborough's India Bill, Mr. Disraeli had contented himself with a budget that was confessedly a makeshift. Their foreign policy was avowedly one of peace and of neutrality; but peace had in

the South of Europe turned to war, and their neutrality was suspected of Austrian tendencies.

The Parliament returned by the country in answer to the appeal so made, at once, by a majority of thirteen, pronounced a vote of want of confidence in those who had summoned it, and installed their opponents in power. After a trial of five years, it solemnly ratified, on the occasion of the Dano-German debate, by a majority of eighteen, the verdict it had given in 1859. It remains for the country to say whether the House of Commons has been justified in the support it has so long given to Lord Palmerston's Government; and this will best appear from a brief survey of the policy it has approved, and of the measures it has sanctioned.

The Reform Bill condemned by the former Parliament, and still more decisively by the country, was a Reform Bill in no ordinary sense of the term. It disingenuously sought, not so much to amend the representation in accordance with the wants of the people, as to cut and carve it to suit the exigencies of the Conservative party. That Bill disfranchised a large body of the most independent electors in counties, namely, the forty-shilling freeholders voting for property within the limits of parliamentary boroughs. It admitted absentee freeholders to vote for boroughs, and *proposed* a suspicious revision of their boundaries.