

**LADY PALMERSTON  
AND HER TIMES. IN  
TWO VOLUMES. VOL. II**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649129393

Lady Palmerston and her times. In two volumes. Vol. II by Mabell

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**MABELL**

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LADY PALMERSTON  
AND HER TIMES

# LADY PALMERSTON AND HER TIMES

BY

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IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II

HODDER AND STOUGHTON LTD

LONDON NEW YORK TORONTO

1922

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## CHAPTER XIII

### QUEEN VICTORIA AND LORD MELBOURNE

A CHANGE took place in Lady Cowper's life late in the year 1839. She had very gradually resumed her place in the world after Lord Cowper's death, but it was a changed world for her. Her home was gone, and in her diaries she says, "how difficult it is to know where to go, and how best to live." She recorded a visit to Panshanger where she had been happier than she expected, but there was a note of relief in her account of the journey back to London on February 5, and an amusing sidelight on the new railways. She posted back. "Great complaints," she wrote, "at the Green Man of the rail-road taking all the travellers. I fear it will be ruin to posting. The tax must clearly be taken off post horses as a little help." Next day she gave an account of the opening of Parliament by the Queen in person :

"Minnie and Fanny went to the House of Lords to hear the Queen read her speech. They came home charmed with their expedition. Most people were in feathers, but they had only diamonds for their full dress. They said

the Queen's delivery very clear & distinct and a beautiful toned voice."

But her thoughts wandered back to past days—and the references to them are numerous. A dinner at home of her family and one old friend made her write :

"All kind & good-humoured and melancholy. The Spirits were forced & all one's thoughts were far away on the one kind heart who used to cheer all these meetings by good humour, and enlivened by his conversation."

On April 6 she wrote :

"Anniversary of my dear mother's death. Tho' 21 years have passed since then, I can yet feel as if it were but yesterday that Lord C. and I stood over her beautiful pale face, & he felt almost the same misery as I did; now I remain to grieve over both."

Her brothers felt her loneliness and *désœuvrement* keenly. They were anxious for her happiness, and yet they must have hesitated in doubt as to the best way of remaking her life. She was nearly fifty-two, but remained handsome and stately. When Queen Victoria said to Lord Melbourne that she thought Lady Cowper was still better looking than younger women, he answered proudly that he agreed, and that "she was always like a pale rose," adding with glee that he had thought "her gown the night before rather dashing." These things, however,

are not sufficient for happiness even at fifty-two, and this her brothers felt.

The Ministry were weak and in difficulties. Much discontent existed, and the want of prosperity at home was supposed to be due to the import duty on foreign corn. Lord Brougham drew attention to this in the House of Lords on February 18, 1839. He did not anticipate much fall in the price here even though the duties were rescinded. He pointed out that though, as was hoped, the removal of the import duty would make it worth while for the Continent to be turned into a vast granary for the support of England, this plan must be approached with caution as it would take years to clear the land of the thick and impenetrable forests which covered it and bring it into a state of cultivation. The Ministry were against an inquiry into the subject, which was negatived without a division at the time, but the question crops up often in Sir Frederick's letters.

Sir Frederick was also much preoccupied about affairs in India. Lord Auckland had succeeded Lord Bentinck as Viceroy in 1836. The secret policy of Russia since the days of Peter the Great had ever aimed at the conquest of India, and our Foreign Office knew well that Russia was making efforts to incite the Shah of Persia against Afghanistan, and also to open negotiations with the Amir Dost Mahommed at Cabul. The Viceroy, disregarding the advice