

**THE RIGHT HON. BENJAMIN
DISRAELI, EARL OF
BEACONSFIELD, K. G., AND
HIS TIMES, VOL. I, PP. 1-238**

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by Alexander Charles Ewald

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Engraved by W. Heath, from a Photograph by James Watson taken by command of H.M. the Queen.

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EARL OF BEAUCONSFIELD, M.P.



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AND HIS TIMES.

BY
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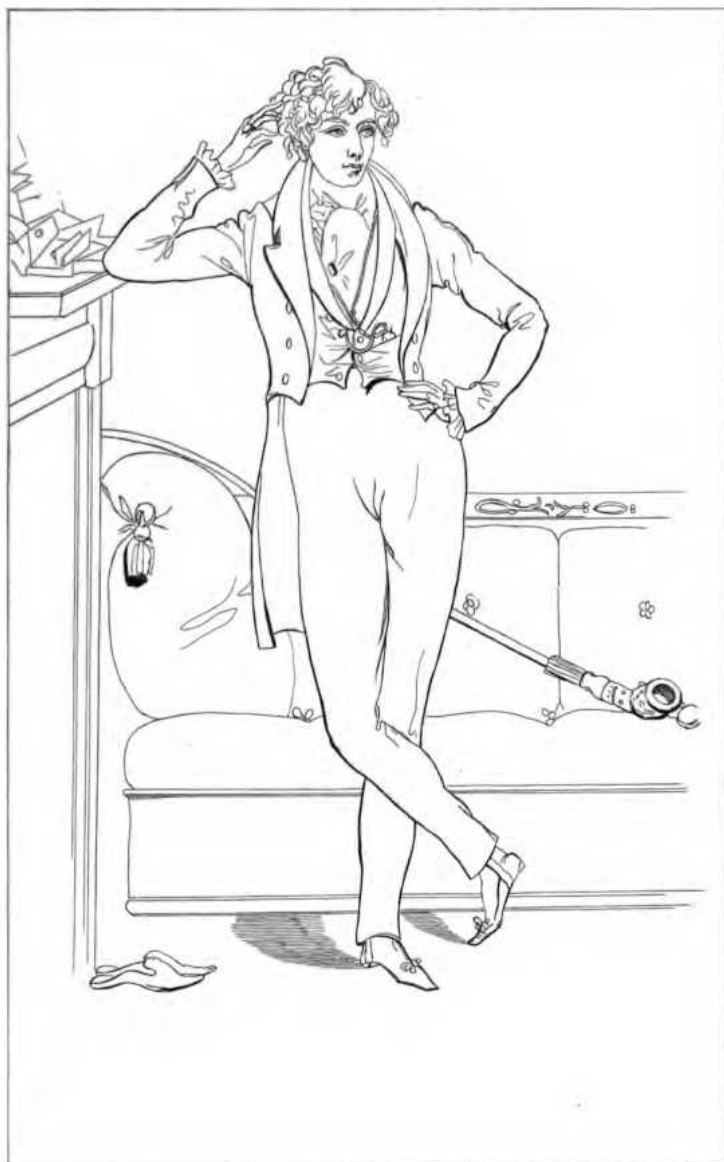


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L. Lawrence, Sc.

BENJAMIN DISRAELI.

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THE
EARL OF BEACONSFIELD, K.G.,
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CHAPTER I.

"DISRAELI THE YOUNGER."

On the bead-roll of English statesmen the name of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield, will only cease to occupy the foremost position when English politics have no further existence. Born to none of those advantages which his predecessors in office enjoyed, he owed the brilliant name he made for himself, and the lofty post he gained with its splendid tenure of power, alone to those rich intellectual gifts which render their possessor independent of the glamour of birth or the favours of fortune. At the outset of his career every obstacle that impediment could devise barred the path of his advancement to the position he subsequently attained, of leader of the English landed interest, and as a potent authority in the councils of Europe. He bore a foreign name; in his veins flowed the blood of a then despised and outcast race; though not poor, his means were too slender to offer any compensation for the disadvantages under which he laboured; he had passed through none of that social preparatory training—boyhood at a public school, manhood at a university—which generally qualifies the English gentleman ambitious of

parliamentary honours; yet ignored, friendless, and the constant butt of all the ridicule and sarcasm that the most venomous malice could inspire, he rose to heights such as Burke had never dreamed of, and swayed a power such as neither Walpole nor the second Pitt had ever exercised. Conscious of the immense talents working within him, quick-sighted as well as far-sighted, a keen judge of character and of the weakness of an enemy's position, with the mordant wit of a Parisian, with all the resources of a complete master of language, and with that exquisite tact which instinctively knows how to make the most of a victory and the least of a defeat, he waited with the patience which is in itself one of the most characteristic signs of great genius, for the moment when his opportunity should come, and the tide, taken at the flood, should bear him on to fortune. In the feverish, harassing struggle of party politics he was always so cool and collected that those who knew not the man said he was indifferent to the conflict around him; whilst the real truth was that his well-balanced judgment was superior to those passions of

the hour which always affect and irritate the shallow and superficial, but leave calm and unruffled the depths of the really great mind. He ran a waiting race; never exhausting himself by futile efforts which might distress and retard him, but keeping his powers well within their grasp, steadily, almost imperceptibly, he drew away from his competitors, until at the supreme moment when called upon by genius, he put forth all his strength and reached the goal a winner, so decided and complete as to leave his victory an event without parallel in the annals of parliamentary triumphs. Criticising Lord Beaconsfield's career from its beginning to its close, we may say that never did ambition seem more hopeless, never was its realization more complete.

In any other profession save that of politics, the success attained by the late Lord Beaconsfield would not have been so singularly remarkable. Men from the most humble surroundings have risen to the serene heights of the bench, have worn the lawn sleeves of the episcopate, have wielded the bâton of the field-marshal, have been created peers for famous achievements. The great prizes of the bar, the church, the queen's services are open to all; and though certain social advantages have, in the different professions, their full value, yet such advantages at the best but give the candidate a good start, and by no means promise him a success positive and assured. Talent, industry, and sound knowledge seldom fail to meet with their deserts in a professional career, whilst factitious combinations only occasionally prosper. With parliamentary life it is very different. To become the head of a great party, to command an obedient and united following, to dominate over the jealousies and spontaneous antipathies of the House of Commons, to be supreme in the council chamber, and to enjoy the confidence both of your sovereign and your country, something more than great abilities have generally been necessary. A lofty name, a

splendid rent-roll, the gifts which captivate what is termed society, have usually been the privileges which surrounded him who held the seals as prime minister. If we look down the list of our English premiers—from Sir Robert Walpole, who was the first to found the office, to its present holder—we shall find that the position and power enjoyed by Lord Beaconsfield are unique. There have been men whom party jealousies have placed at the head of cabinets, and who—mere puppets—were content to act as rival candidates chose to pull the strings; there have been men who have undertaken to form a ministry, simply and solely on account of their illustrious lineage and vast possessions; there have been men raised to supreme power, not because they possessed the confidence of either house of parliament, or because they were beloved by the country, but only because they were the cherished favourites of the sovereign; and again, there have been men who, from comparatively lowly origin, have attained to the position of chief of the cabinet. Yet in none of these instances is there a parallel to the case of Lord Beaconsfield. Walpole maintained his power by judicious distribution of the guineas of the treasury; Newcastle was a simpleton whose dukedom, wealth, and votes in the lower house compensated for his incapacity, and kept him in office; Bute was the pet of the court, and the hated of the people; Addington, Portland, and Perceval were political mediocrities who owed their elevation to the jealousies of the hour. Canning, sneered at as an adventurer, found when he had been appointed to form an administration, that a proud aristocracy declined to obey him. In the political history of Lord Beaconsfield we find, it is true, some of the elements which assisted or hampered his predecessors, but nothing in them sufficiently marked and cohesive as to form a parallel to his exceptional career. In the tactics of parliamentary strategy he was as consummate a master as either Sir Robert Walpole or Sir Robert Peel. Though not unpopular with the people, he cannot be