

CHAPTER XXII

1853-54

CABINET CRISIS—RESIGNATION OF LORD PALMERSTON—
THE 'FOUR POINTS'—LETTER TO LORD CLARENDON

IT was in the middle of those anxious days in December, 1853, when our last efforts, in concert with the other Powers of Europe, were being made to secure a peaceful solution, that we all suddenly found ourselves in a Cabinet crisis by the resignation of Palmerston—not upon the Eastern Question, but upon Lord John Russell's plan of Parliamentary Reform. When Palmerston originally agreed to join the new Cabinet, he had warned Aberdeen that he thought it quite possible that he might be unable to concur in John Russell's schemes of a new Reform Bill. It was understood among us that, in our second session, Lord John was to be free to make some proposal of this nature. We all knew he was working at it in the autumn, and we heard that he was urging an early meeting of Parliament. On the other hand, there was no feeling about it in the country, and no expectation. Justly or unjustly, I hardly know, many of us in the Cabinet thought the whole idea merely another exhibition of the restlessness with which John Russell was consumed. But in so far as I thought seriously at all on the subject of further changes in our electoral system, it was curious to note how, here again, as in foreign affairs, the old lines of party cleavage had completely disappeared. The Peelite Conservatives were most favourable to reform, the old Whigs were pronouncedly adverse. Aberdeen and Graham were

foremost in their willingness, Lansdowne and Palmerston were foremost in their antipathy.

Lord John's plan was crudely simple. It was a mere repetition, of course on a much smaller scale, of the Bill of 1832. There was to be another Schedule A of small boroughs to be disfranchised. There was to be another Schedule B of double-seated boroughs to lose one of their two members. The franchise was to be lowered from £10 to £5, and the municipal franchise was to be the basis in the towns. The moment Palmerston saw the scheme, he opposed it, as going far beyond anything that could be said to be itself desirable. Some modifications were offered by the Committee of Cabinet to whom it had been referred—principally Graham, John Russell, and Aberdeen. But these did not satisfy Palmerston, and on the 10th of December he wrote to Aberdeen intimating his resignation. Aberdeen made no attempt to keep him, and seemed to consider his resignation as a matter of course.

I believe this attitude on Lord Aberdeen's part was due to a chivalrous feeling that he was bound toward Lord John to be guided by him on this question of Reform, and that he must not sacrifice anything that he deemed essential for the sake of keeping Palmerston, especially as Palmerston, in a long letter to Lansdowne, had indicated very plainly his estimate of the incentives which moved Lord John. 'I cannot consent to be dragged through the dirt by John Russell,' were Palmerston's words. Whatever may have been the inducement under which Aberdeen at once accepted Palmerston's resignation, it raised rather a storm in the Cabinet. I was out of town at the moment, but I strongly participated in the feeling of alarm and regret which was widespread among our colleagues. I at once wrote to Aberdeen, telling him that I thought he took the loss of Palmerston too easily, and warning him that, though Palmerston resigned on Reform, he was quite certain to stand on the other leg also—that of disapproval of our foreign policy. I did not know

it at that moment, but I now find that I was quite right, inasmuch as Palmerston, in one of his letters, took up his old parable about more energetic steps against Russia. But besides this, there was a widespread feeling of respect for Palmerston among all of us. The consequence was a strenuous endeavour to induce Palmerston to return. In the meantime came the Turkish catastrophe of Sinope, and, consequent on that, our resolve to occupy the Black Sea with our united fleets. This event, of course, greatly conciliated Palmerston, and when he was assured that the Reform Bill was not yet settled, he agreed to come back, and wrote to Aberdeen on the 28th of December withdrawing his resignation.

Under conditions of insuperable necessity, both military and diplomatic, we had no choice except to send whatever army we could spare, first to cover Constantinople, and then to threaten the flank of any Russian advance across the Danube and the Balkans. Accordingly, from early in January, the whole strength of our great military and administrative departments was exerted to the utmost to concentrate, first at Gallipoli and then at Varna, a powerful fleet and a considerable army. The discredit which a temporary failure subsequently brought on all departments connected with the Crimean War has most unjustly obliterated the memory of the admirable efficiency which they showed in all the initial stages of the expedition. As to this, no better judge could exist than Admiral Lord Lyons, who wrote to Graham on the 6th of April: 'You have made a glorious beginning, and have astonished the world with the rapidity with which you have sent both fleets and armies.'

During the early weeks of 1854 I was a good deal occupied in preparing for publication in the *Edinburgh Review* a careful history of our negotiations with Russia on the Eastern Question, from the moment when our attention was first drawn to it by the squabble between France and Russia about the Holy Places.

This paper appeared in the July number of the old Whig quarterly under the title of 'The Diplomatic History of the Eastern Question.' I venture to think that in that article my readers will find an accurate and authentic account of the course and the causes of the Crimean War. I had, of course, the best materials to work upon, not only having access to all the official documents, but having been myself a party to all the discussions which went on among us, both in the Cabinet and out of it.

I see that the biographer of Lord Lyons attributes to Sir James Graham the merit of having been the Minister who suggested the Crimea as the great object of our attack, or who, by his advocacy, overcame the objections of his colleagues. I do not recognise the truth of this representation, because there never was any difference of opinion in the Cabinet upon this subject from the moment it became apparent—and even before—that our army was of no use at Varna.

The truth is that one glance at the map of Europe, and one moment's recollection of the great object we had in view, were enough to force upon us the conviction that the capture and destruction of Sebastopol and of its fleet would be the very summit of our desire. There were three conclusive reasons in favour of this course. In the first place, it would fulfil, as nothing else could, our avowed object of relieving the Turkish Empire from the most imminent danger to which it was exposed. In the second place, Sebastopol was the point in the Russian dominion most accessible to the assault of fleets, and affording the most secure naval base for military operations, however prolonged. In the third place, it was that point of Russian territory which, at the extremity of her dominions in Europe, would call for the greatest drain on her resources, both as to men and materials of war. It is quite true that Graham, being in charge of our navy, and seeing what an opportunity for splendid service an expedition to the Crimea would give to our sailors, had his attention early fixed

upon it, not a little encouraged by the spirit and zeal of Sir Edmund Lyons. I had been much struck by this admirable man ten years before, when he received me so kindly at Athens. He was now second in command of our fleet in the Mediterranean and Black Sea, and he was the life and soul of all the operations there. In person he had an extraordinary likeness to Lord Nelson, and the likeness extended to his professional character. There was nothing he considered difficult. He acquired a great influence over Lord Raglan, who commanded our army, and inspired everyone with energy and heart and hope. Neither Lord Raglan nor the French commander, St. Arnaud, was disposed to risk the invasion of the Crimea, in almost complete ignorance of the force that they would have to meet. They acted in obedience to the expressed desire of the two Governments at home. Although, of course, our directions were subject to considerations of physical possibility, they placed a tremendous responsibility on the commanders, and I am not at all sure that they would have thought the expedition possible if it had not been for the eagerness, hopefulness, and indomitable energy of Lord Lyons.

As it was, many weeks passed before we could be quite sure that the army could be moved from Varna, and we had the Sebastopol enterprise as our desire and hope all the time.

It was the habit of Ministers at that time to have Cabinet dinners, as well as the usual and more regular meetings in Downing Street. At the dinners the least serious work was done—such, for example, as the final reading of despatches, which in substance had been already agreed to. In this way, after many and long discussions, we had unanimously agreed to send out a despatch to Raglan, directing him to employ our army in an attack on the Russians in the Crimea. This was seen in draft by all of us, and the final reading came on after a dinner at Lord John Russell's, at Pembroke Lodge, Richmond Park. That night is one of those in

my past life which is deeply imprinted on my memory. It is true that our business was purely formal—the sanctioning of a despatch, the purport and the general terms of which had been decided long before. But there are some transactions in which the closing formalities may make a deep impression, and recall with vividness all the emotions through which they have been reached. The final order to launch our comparatively small army of some 30,000 men on the shores of the greatest military country in the world was a transaction of this kind—a transaction to which the final seal could not be put without making a strong impression, at least on those younger members of the Cabinet who never in their lives had had to do with decisions so terrible, because we had never lived in the time of a great war. Some of our elder colleagues were in a very different position, although even they had spent the last forty years of their lives in times of nearly complete European peace. But there were at least three men at that dinner at Pembroke Lodge to whom a great military decision was but a revival of work with which they had been familiar in early life. Lansdowne had lived through all the great contests with Napoleon. Aberdeen had seen with his own eyes the appalling carnage of Leipsic. Palmerston had had the high honour of sending to Wellington his Field-Marshal's baton for the glorious Battle of Vittoria. But most of us had no such familiarity with war, and I confess that I felt very painfully even that small share of our collective responsibility which I could appropriate to myself. I was glad, therefore, when, well on towards midnight, our meeting broke up, and I could escape into the sweet and calm air of a glorious summer night.

A happy incident added to my pleasure, and lent me help in recovering some feeling of assurance. I found that Gladstone had no carriage of his own, and intended to walk to the station and go home by train. I had an open carriage, and begged him to come with

me. He at once agreed, and we had a delicious drive home, through the wide-open spaces and under the massive columns of oak and elm foliage which rose darkly in Richmond Park against the splendour of the constellations. It was midsummer, and the air was full of the smell of all the blossoms that make sweet the whole air of suburban London at that season of the year. I soon found that Gladstone had no misgivings. It was not the habit of his mind to go back upon decisions once reached. On the contrary, he was always disposed to repel doubts and hesitations, even those which he had felt before. An assured and even a passionate advocacy generally took the place of any former hesitations. He was therefore in this, as well as in other matters, a charming companion on that eventful night.

Some two or three days later, one of our usual Cabinets was held in Downing Street. I walked down to it, as I often did, from the Athenæum Club, and on my way I recognised the square form and sturdy step of Palmerston approaching the top of the steps leading down from the Duke of York's column. Hastening my own pace, I soon overtook him, just as he had crossed the Mall and was walking down the Esplanade. Putting my arm under his, and joining his walk, I said: 'Well, Lord Palmerston, I feel sure we have done the right thing in ordering an attack upon Sebastopol. It is not only the best, it is almost the only thing we have to do, and yet I cannot help feeling a little nervous about it. We know so little what force the Russians may have been able to send there.' On which Palmerston replied in his most cheery and jaunty tones: 'Oh, you need not be in the least anxious. With our combined fleets and our combined armies we are certain to succeed. You know,' he went on to say, 'it is an axiom in military science that an invested fortress is sure to fall. It is a mere question of time. It may be longer or shorter, according to circumstances, but the invested fortress must fall. We shall have one

battle to fight outside the walls, and then the siege. The end is certain.' And in this strain he continued till we had reached the Cabinet rooms. I wondered at the sanguine nature of the man. Several doubts occurred to me. Was a real investment possible? Were we quite sure of that? Well might I ask myself this question, for, as a matter of fact, we never were able to invest Sebastopol, and the near approach to failure which at one moment seemed to threaten our expedition was due mainly to the very fact that the first and most important of Palmerston's gay assumptions was never realized. I had no desire to argue with him. I was even too glad to accept the view of a colleague of such long experience both in peace and war. But in my heart of hearts I could not feel wholly reassured. I felt as if I were the elder of the two, although Palmerston was then seventy and I was just thirty years of age.

Before I proceed with the events of our war, I must retrace my steps again for a space, to bring up to date my account of what had been happening in the Cabinet. I have mentioned how Palmerston had been persuaded to rejoin us in the end of December, 1853, after he had left us on the subject of Lord John Russell's Reform Bill. Lord John was besieged by friends who advised him to give up so untimely an enterprise. In the Cabinet he had no strong supporters, except Aberdeen and Graham, whilst Palmerston's objections were so insuperable that it was clear that perseverance would again break up the Government.

Under these circumstances, after several resolutions to resign, Lord John at last consented to intimate his withdrawal of his Bill. I went down to hear him, and was much astonished by seeing him completely break down under the emotion which the sacrifice excited in his mind. It is surely unreasonable that any one man should so identify himself with a great public measure, which is disliked by a majority of his own colleagues, and notoriously by a great majority of the

House of Commons, that he is to claim credit for some special magnanimity in consenting not to press it down their throats. Yet this was what Lord John seemed to claim for himself, and what, strange to say, many of his colleagues and other politicians conceded to him.

It was during the months subsequent to the formation of the Aberdeen Cabinet that my intimacy with Gladstone was cemented. I had known him before, but not intimately. But my enthusiastic admiration of his great Budget speeches, to his colleagues and in Parliament, and the warm support I gave his plan whilst it was yet in danger, had drawn us much together, and I never found that the antagonism of our opinions on ecclesiastical matters made the smallest difference in our friendship. Then there was another bond between us which arose about the same time, and that was the formation of a close friendship between Gladstone and his wife and my mother-in-law, the Duchess of Sutherland. His rich and abundant nature overflowed in his conversation, and the high interests of which it was full were just those to captivate her generous, sympathetic, and appreciative character. The result was a friendship which endured with great enjoyment to both so long as the Duchess lived. One of the opportunities of happy intercourse arose out of the residence of the Duchess at her villa of Clieveden. It was common for Gladstone to come down there by rail after the Saturday's Cabinets, and to stay till Monday. As often as we could, my wife and I were of the party, and every conceivable subject of interest was habitually discussed. On Sundays we used to attend service at the little parish church of Hedsor. It was perched on the top of the steep face of a rolling down, which falls into the valley of the Thames above Maidenhead, and is much beautified by hanging woods of beech. The church is surrounded by a group of old elms, and commands a lovely perspective up the reaches of the river. The steep green banks at our feet, as we used to come out of church, were often yellow with a little

forest of cowslips. Altogether it was an ideal site, and I must add, we always had an ideal service. The incumbent was a Mr. Williams, a country clergyman, without any pretension or affectations, but who had a reverent, sensitive, and tender voice, and who, after a very simple and a very impressive reading of the service, always delivered a sermon of the same character, suited to a congregation mainly composed of peasants of the most rural type. And yet we all listened with something more than pleasure, because of a reality and a heartiness which made it far more impressive than the great majority of ordinary discourses.

It was in that little church that I first noticed the unusual devoutness with which Gladstone took part in the service. The responses seemed no formality to him, and it always interested me much to see the intent and respectful listening which he never failed to give to Mr. Williams' short and simple preaching. One of the most powerful and most cultivated intellects in England was seen bowing its head in reverence and admiration before the most childlike Christian teaching to the poor.

In a political journal which I kept at this time I find the following record of rather a curious conversation with Gladstone at Cliveden on the 30th July, 1854: 'Spoke of the late Reform Bill with Gladstone—whether it would be brought in again, whether the minority clause would ever be carried. My own impression was not. He thought it very essential; doubted whether Reform in the same shape would come before us again at all; said that, in his opinion, that was the last Bill we should ever see attempting organic change. I said I doubted whether it could be called organic change. He argued that it was a question of degree, and that since the Act of 1832 there was no old prescriptive status on which resistance to Reform could be based. I said that, the leading men of so many different sections being pledged

to some such measure, and even the opponents not resting on a refusal of all Reform, it *must* come up again. He said there were no *musts* in our Constitution; so many things had stood, and were standing, of which it had been said years ago that they *must* fall. He quoted, as I have heard him do before, the Irish Church as a remarkable instance of a beleaguered institution, from which the investing forces had almost drawn off.' I quote this conversation because it is a curious illustration of a feature in Gladstone's mind which has rather escaped observation. It is generally supposed that his mind was as original as it was ingenious and passionate and strong. In my opinion, it was quite the most receptive mind I have ever known. It was habitually swimming with the stream—some stream—not always, however, the one most obvious to others. It held tenaciously everything that fell upon it from other minds, or from the suggestions of party tactics—held it till it took fire and blazed out in a conflagration which seemed like spontaneous combustion, or else led to silence and acquiescence. It cannot be denied that in this case his anticipations were absolutely wrong, and that he himself was destined to prove their error. But the explanation is simple. For a good many months he had been living in an atmosphere thoroughly hostile to Lord John Russell's Reform Bill. The majority of his colleagues disliked it. The House of Commons loathed it. The whole political world was sick of the Bill. The receptivity of Gladstone's nature had drunk in this disposition of the political atmosphere, and he had interpreted it in the sense of a permanent alienation from all schemes of the kind.

The illustration which Gladstone quoted to me against there being any 'must' in politics is curious from another point of view. The Established Church of Ireland was the only religious body against which I had ever observed in Gladstone any spirit of intolerance or animosity. In general he was singu-

larly tolerant in speaking of those who differed from him in religion. But on one occasion, especially, I had heard him express himself towards the Established Church of Ireland with a personal bitterness of dislike which astonished me at the time. I ascribed it mainly to the fact that the Church of Ireland was almost universally Low Church in ecclesiastical politics, as the natural result of its position in the face of the Roman priesthood. Here again early prepossessions had seated themselves in his mind, and were ready to break out into fierce combustion when political need and opportunities supplied the spark.

The same explanation applies to his great Budget of 1853. In principle it was not original. The fundamental conception—that, namely, of using the income-tax as a great financial instrument for the reform of the tariff—was entirely borrowed from the financial operations of Sir Robert Peel, ten years before. Gladstone's passionate defence of the income-tax against changes which he thought would break it down, and unfit it for the beneficent purpose to which it had been applied by Peel, and to which he himself wished to apply it further, was thoroughly characteristic of the enthusiastic attachment of his intellectual nature to conceptions which had once taken strong hold upon it. Parliamentary Reform had never been one of his favourite lines of movement, and therefore I was not deceived by his strange vaticinations that we should hear no more of it.

To return to the war. It may well be thought that, when we had launched our great expedition to the Crimea, we had nothing more to do than to watch and await the issue. Of course, no belligerent foresees the terms of peace which he may demand until he knows how far his arms have been successful. But in our case the position was not so simple. We were not fighting any mere battle of our own. We were fighting in the interests of Europe, and it was of the essence of our contest that we should secure at least

the assent, and if possible the actual help, of the other Powers of Europe. But it was a necessary consequence of this position that we should agree with them—in general terms, at least—on the aims and objects we had in view, and which we were fighting to secure. From this it came about that we were fighting and negotiating at the same time—negotiating, not indeed, directly with Russia, but with Austria and Prussia—and it was evident that Austria communicated to Russia the purport of her intelligence from us. The result of this state of things was that, before our army had landed in the Crimea, a formal attempt had been made by the Powers to define the objects of the war, and consequently to foreshadow the future terms of peace.

The objects of the war were reduced to four, thenceforwards known as 'the Four Points,' or 'the Four Bases.' They were these: (1) The abandonment by Russia of any protectorate over the Danubian Principalities; (2) the navigation of the Danube to be under the protection of the principles laid down at the Congress of Vienna; (3) *a revision of the Treaty of July, 1840, in the interests of the balance of power in Europe*; (4) the abandonment by Russia of any claim to protect the Christian subjects of the Porte, whose interests were to be guarded by the Porte in communication with the other Powers of Europe.

Vague as these bases were, they contain in hazy outline the leading ideas that ultimately took definite shape in the Treaty of Paris, which did at last terminate the war. The third basis is perhaps the haziest of all, yet it was quite intelligible to those who had followed recent events, because we had all repeatedly referred to the Treaty of 1840 as having laid down the principle that Turkey was in future to be acknowledged as one of the family of European nations, in which the others had an equal interest. It was in connection with this basis that a diplomatic phrase became established which, in its form, was eminently ridiculous. The

object was declared to be 'to attach the Ottoman Empire to the European equilibrium,' which had not been done when Europe was otherwise settled by the Treaties of 1815. We had nothing whatever to do with any communication of these bases to Russia. But before our army had reached the Crimea, we had heard that Russia refused to accept them, and that Austria, with her usual timidity and shabbiness, had resolved that this refusal would make no difference in her attitude of an armed neutrality. Austria was willing enough that we and France should spend our blood and treasure in securing results which she confessed to be in accordance with her own interests, but she would not risk the wrath of her powerful neighbour by moving a man or spending a rouble to help us.

No words can express the sense of utter weariness with which, during many months, we used to hear the diplomatic rubbish that circled round the discussion of those 'Four Points'—the notes, the conferences, the despatches, the meetings, the conventions, all aiming at the development of these points into definite and intelligible ideas, and all in the vain hope of getting Austria to cast in her lot with the allies. I never had much hope of it. I recollected how unworthily Austria had behaved in the great contest with Napoleon in the days of Pitt, and how she got her deserved retribution in the tremendous overthrow of Austerlitz. None the less, we were compelled to keep Austria at least in tow, and to prevent her breaking off from us and throwing all her weight with Russia—a contingency which would be fatal to our whole game in the East.

At the close of the session we all separated for the recess, leaving in town only our less fortunate colleagues who were bound to the mill of the great administrative departments connected with the war. We did so, I think, in good spirits, all of us expecting more or less confidently, like Palmerston, the successful issue of our great adventure in the Black Sea. We had ample time to nurse these expectations. Things went

well, but slowly. It was in the end of June that we had ordered the expedition; it was the end of July before the French General announced it to his army at Varna. It was past the end of August before the flotilla could be collected. It was well on in September before it could actually sail. On the 18th of that month it landed, and on the 20th its first battle was fought upon the Alma. During all those weeks we were more or less scattered among our country homes, but in constant correspondence with each other and with outside friends and critics.

August and September were our usual months for receiving guests at Inveraray, and amongst those who visited us at this time were Lord and Lady Grey. Lord Grey had been at Inveraray once before, as Minister in attendance on the Queen, when Her Majesty did us the honour of visiting us for a few hours in 1847, on her way round the west coast of Scotland. Since then my relations with Lord Grey had not been altogether smooth. In the Ryland case, in which I had much to do with him, I thought him obstinate, unsympathetic, and unjust. It has happened, however, to me in several remarkable cases to establish intimate friendships with men whom at first I had much disliked, and this was the case with Lord Grey. The Whig party always found him a most difficult man to deal with as a colleague, and, as is well known, his determined refusal to serve in the same Cabinet with Palmerston led on one occasion to the failure of Lord John to form a Government at all, and was the first outward sign of the break-up of the Whigs as a party capable of governing the country. But I could not help recognising in Lord Grey a man of singular honesty, and one who was quite sure to prefer principle to office. In subsequent years we became well acquainted, and I liked him much in private friendship. His intense eagerness in everything was delightful, and I soon found out that, in spite of his coldness and hardness in the Ryland case, he was full of tenderness whenever

the political element did not interfere. Of his great natural ability there could be no doubt. His opinion was, therefore, always worth having. He was, however, too violently opposed to certain politicians to enable him to take an unbiassed view of any course that was identified with them. Gladstone, for example, was a case in point. But this was in rather later years. No prominent part had been taken by Lord Grey on the Eastern Question in 1854, and our course was not at all identified with his name. With Aberdeen he had no relations, either personal or political, except in so far, indeed, as his violent antipathy to the rowdyism of Palmerston may naturally have inclined him to the calm and judicial attitude of Aberdeen in all his relations with foreign Governments. However this may have been, in writing to Aberdeen towards the end of August, I mentioned to him that we were soon to have Lord Grey as a visitor at Inveraray. 'I am glad to hear,' said Lord Aberdeen in his reply, 'that you are to have Grey. I do not doubt you will hear some good sense from him.' And so I did. But for once I found Grey echoing the voice of all the world, and approving heartily of the Crimean expedition and of the attack on Sebastopol. I cannot say that any adverse opinion would have had any effect with me on the long and well-considered arguments which had determined our course. And yet I confess that the hearty approval of so universal and determined an objector gave me a very sensible satisfaction, and convinced me that there was really nothing to be said against our policy.

We found Lord Grey a most agreeable guest, confirming my old doctrine that we can never know each other well until we have lived with each other in a country house. Lord Grey was no doubt much engrossed in politics, and, so far as I could see, he had no interest in any of the physical sciences. But in scenery, in forestry, in farming, and in some branches of natural history, he had all the enjoyment of a very eager

nature. It was with amusement, but I confess also with some alarm, that I saw him limping with his lame leg on the top of a precipitous bank on our river, and casting himself down on the brink, hanging his head over the steep in order to see a lot of salmon in the clear pool below him.

After Lord Grey's visit, during which I made with him a personal friendship that lasted till his death, my wife and I paid our annual visit to my Hebridean estates—a visit which was always to us the special holiday of the year. But we found that we could not enjoy it as before. *Procul negotiis* is a charming idea when it can be realized, but when our *negotia* have so entered into our very souls that they cannot be forgotten, and when we know that they are pursuing a headlong course, only out of our sight and hearing, then rest and enjoyment are impossible. Neither the briny tides of chrysoprase which are always rushing round the shores of Iona, nor the crystal streams of fresh water which carry sea-trout and salmon up into the very bosom of the volcanic hills of Mull, nor the columnar front of Staffa, catching steadfastly the ocean sunsets from the west—none of these things, which had hitherto always laid for me the troubles of business or of politics, could now avail to keep my mind from those distant shores of Europe, where a terrible struggle was going on in which I had a share of responsibility. I knew that any day might bring news of a great triumph or of some great catastrophe, either of which might involve immediate Cabinet meetings and new resolves, not less responsible than those which had gone before. We therefore returned to Inveraray on the 18th of September. On the 22nd of September we heard of the landing of the united armies on the Crimea, but not till the 2nd of October did we hear of the Battle of the Alma, fought on the 20th September; and at the same time came a false report that Sebastopol itself had been taken, after a sanguinary contest. Although this second report was by no means univer-

sally believed, it had a great effect in increasing the excitement due to the really splendid victory of the Alma, and the general expectation was that Sebastopol was sure to fall within a few days.

When men's minds are subject to a condition of excited and confident expectation, occurrences of small importance may inflame them further. In this case one such occurrence had a considerable effect. We had no two armies to send anywhere. But we had two fleets, and we had sent one to the Baltic to see what could be done by ships to damage Russia. The chief arsenals of Russia were found to be impregnable to fleets. But the small Aland Islands, which had been fortified by Russia, were easily accessible to the fire of ships. They were accordingly attacked. The forts were said to be built of granite. It turned out, however, that not the walls, but only the facing of them, was granite. Our fire shook the casing loose, and tumbled it into the sea. The walls were then pulverized by our guns, and the fort became untenable. We landed French troops, and Bomarsund was taken. Men immediately jumped to the conclusion that what ships had done at Bomarsund, ships could also do at Sebastopol, and even so calm and judicial a mind as that of Lord Aberdeen found in the episode of the Baltic fort a ground for increased confidence in the speedy fall of Sebastopol. The political effect of this overconfidence threatened to be serious. It prevailed throughout the whole month of October, almost universally in the press, and to a large extent in the Government. We were all busy counting our chickens before they were hatched, consulting each other and our allies what we were to do with Sebastopol—whether to keep it or to destroy it, or to winter the united armies there with a view to further operations next year. Nothing was heard of terms of peace, because nothing was thought of them, although it was at least possible that the fall of Sebastopol might give us all we had professed to fight for. This condition of things gave me great con-

cern. No one had been more bored than myself by what Clarendon called 'the eternal Four Points.' Neither was any one of us more disgusted than I was with Austria for sitting idly by when we were fighting her battle in the East of Europe. But the nearer we seemed to be to the point of securing a great decisive success, the more it seemed to me we were bound to come to some understanding—at least, among ourselves—as to the objects for which we were fighting. Accordingly, I wrote the following letter to Clarendon in this sense, to be circulated among my colleagues :

'LONDON,

'October, 1854.

'MY DEAR CLARENDON,

'I have a strong feeling that the members of the Cabinet should come to some understanding more definite than exists at present as to what we ought to set before ourselves as the aim and object of this war, and, consequently, what we should demand, or accept, as a satisfactory conclusion of it.

'There is a reluctance, I think, to entertain this question from several different feelings.

'First, we are apt to think that it is not a very pressing question, that events are now beyond our control, and that we must await their result.

'Next, we pay, perhaps, too much regard to a loose and excited state of public feeling, which is as yet jealous and suspicious of the very name of peace.

'Lastly, there may be some feeling that the question is difficult and delicate, as touching on the different tendencies which exist amongst ourselves.

'As regards the first of these feelings, it is true, of course, that no conclusion on our part, however definite, as to the terms of peace can command the attainment of them, or can prevent the variations depending on events. But it is equally true that the want of any such understanding goes far to make any peace impossible by confusing our ideas of present policy and increasing the uncertainty of events. To "let things take their course" in war means to let war feed upon and perpetuate itself. Events are

never so completely beyond our guidance as when we make no attempt to use the means at our disposal for their control.

‘Then, as regards the excitement of public feeling, we are bound to have opinions and principles of our own, and not to swim merely with the stream. Public opinion will never be led so long as it is simply followed. I have a firm conviction that, if the Government knows its own mind clearly and acts accordingly, it will be supported by the good sense of the English people.

‘With respect to the last of the feelings I have mentioned—if it exists at all—the sooner it is removed the better. We owe it to Europe that, if there be any real difference of opinion among ourselves as to the aim and object of this war, the exact amount of that difference should be known and weighed. Otherwise it will extend and widen. There will be discrepancies of language, and even if we escape seeing each other positively committed to opposite conclusions, the result will be a vagueness and uncertainty which cannot fail both to prolong the war and to deprive us of all guidance over its course and its result.

‘On these grounds I venture to think that, although the time is not come for committing ourselves in any formal way to any given terms of peace, it *is* come for arriving at some conclusion amongst ourselves what we should demand and what we should be willing to accept.

‘We have already consented to name four indispensable objects to be effected, and we have secured the recorded opinion of Europe in favour of their necessity and justice.

‘We have guarded ourselves by saying that we consider these as outlines and no more ; and we have expressly warned Austria that, when peace comes to be actually negotiated, the filling-in of these outlines may involve conditions much more stringent than at first sight may appear to be implied in them.

‘It was quite right to speak thus guardedly in reference to a contingency which is perhaps remote ; but amongst ourselves, and for our own guidance, we can afford to look matters a little more closely in the face. It is the more necessary to do so as our shyness of the “Four Points” has grown into a disposition to shake ourselves free from them altogether, and to consider them as no longer bounding, even in outline, the field of our desires. Is this a progress in the right or wrong direction ?

‘Let us look, then, at the “Four Bases.” Austria calls them *Principles*. They are not so much “conditions” as general principles, which subsequent “conditions” must be devised and directed to secure. These conditions will admit of great variety and extension as the events of war enable us to dictate or impose them. This is true even with respect to the most definite among them. For example, the free navigation of the Danube may be secured by depriving Russia of less, or more, or the whole of her former territories at its mouth and on its banks. Again, the revision of the Treaty of 1840 “in the interest of the balance of power” in those countries has been already spoken of as implying a limitation of the Russian naval power in the Black Sea. This, again, may be extended to the extinction of that naval power, and this may be secured by the cession of Sebastopol or of the whole Crimea, or simply by the destruction of Sebastopol as a fortress. But all these are conditions, the largest of which falls *within* the two great bases, or “points,” to which they have reference.

‘I do not contend, therefore, that the Cabinet ought to make up even its own mind, far less commit the country, as to the extent to which we may ultimately find it possible or wise to stretch our demand as to “conditions” such as these.

‘But I think we are called upon to make up our minds whether the Four Great Principles or Bases themselves (without reference to the conditions necessary to secure them) do or do not represent and embrace all that constitutes the legitimate end and object of this war.

‘That object I conceive to be to resist now, and stop effectually for the future, the designs and progress of Russia towards dominion in the East of Europe.

‘This is an object great enough to satisfy our ambition and to fulfil our policy. It is large enough to require all our exertions to secure, specific enough to be easily understood, just enough and needful enough to insure the sanction and, ultimately, the support of Europe.

‘Is there, then, any other object larger and wider which we ought to aim at? If there be, let us define it to ourselves as clearly as we can. If there is not, let us not be insensibly involved in others before we know what they are, or how they are to be attained.

‘Are we to prosecute this war till Russia is dismembered? I have great doubts whether this would be desirable, if it could be done to-morrow. But supposing it to be so, what prospect have we of doing it, and what support are we likely to have in trying it?’

‘But, short of the total dimemberment of Russia, ought we to direct the war to the separation of Finland or the re-establishment of Poland?’

‘There may be much to be said for both of these propositions; but it appears to me that they are both of them results in which England has a comparatively distant interest. The naval power which the ports of Finland give to Russia increases her formidableness to the Scandinavian States, but they can never enable her to contend on equal terms with either France or England. As we are not fighting, however, for any special interests of our own, this objection is not, perhaps, very strong. But there is much doubt whether Finland, even if temporarily wrested, could be permanently held against the great military opportunities of Russia.

‘In respect to Poland, the idea is at best a vague one. If it is for the interest of anyone that Poland should be reconstituted, it is probably for the interest of the German people. But it is questionable whether they think so, and it is certain that their Governments do not. It can hardly be supposed that we can do it without the consent of the German Powers; and I apprehend that our hope of that consent being given must depend on the probability of a previous revolution in their systems of government.

‘Are these, then, objects which we ought to set before ourselves as justifying an indefinite prolongation of war, or, rather, are they possibilities which ought to restrain us from laying down to ourselves more distinctly when and on what terms we should be bound to accept of peace?’

‘There is one other object of the war which I saw lately proclaimed by an M.P. of some ability and note. It was the resistance of despotism, and the relief of oppressed “nationalities.” One effect of a want of definiteness in the language of the Government will be that this sort of nonsense will be encouraged. Discussion on the objects of the war, without guidance from something like authority, will be taken up by different parties in a popular assembly, each bidding against each other in claptrap sayings. In the presence of distinct views on the part of the Government,

these are harmless comparatively, but in the absence of such views they have a real effect in committing the country and embarrassing its interests and its policy.

‘It appears to me that the Four Bases are good and sufficient *as such*, that they are large and wide enough to allow for any amount of change or of extension in respect to “conditions” which, humanly speaking, the events of even the most successful war can place within our reach. My belief is that, if we adhere to them, we shall yet have plenty of fighting to secure them. There is more probability that by insisting on them all we shall necessitate a long course of war, than that by failing to insist on others we shall too early, or too easily, secure a peace. We don’t sufficiently consider how great is the change which these bases will effect, how strong and deep is the current of events which it is their object to dam back or turn aside. Russia will not, and cannot, sacrifice the gains and the policy of centuries in the East of Europe without a desperate struggle.

‘I should not have troubled you with this letter if I did not think that the want of such an understanding as I have suggested has an immediate and injurious effect on *what we are doing and saying* from day to day.

‘The Four Bases represent, all of them, interests which are clearly European. Such they can be shown to be, and as such they can be urged together as a whole. But some of them have a more immediate bearing than others on the interests of individual Powers. For example, the freedom of the Danube and the abolition of Russian protectorate in the Principalities are most immediately connected with German and Austrian interests. Yet they are all closely connected together as one whole, and unless they are all attained *no one of them* will be secure. Thus we have a lever whereby to move Austria, and to hold at least the convictions of the rest of Germany. To secure what they want themselves, they *must* help us to secure what has a large bearing upon Europe. But what is the effect of our shyness in refusing to specify these bases as our aim and object? Why, that Austria is already drawing distinctions between the *two* Bases which *are* German and the *other two* which are *not* German, or are German only to a less degree. We are positively in danger of throwing her back from the position she had been induced to take, and this in spite of her

own convictions ; for the Austrian reply to Prussia proves that she sees clearly enough that the two bases which interest her most nearly are not, and cannot be, secured permanently unless the other two are secured also—unless, that is to say, all claims of protectorate over the Greek subjects of the Porte be abandoned *everywhere* as well as in the Principalities, and unless Russian power be effectually curtailed on the shores and waters of the Euxine.

‘ If there be any fifth basis required, by all means let it be laid down and considered. What I dread is our going on without some purpose more definitely recognised—afraid of public opinion, because we do not try to lead and guide it ; shy of each other, because we do not know exactly each other’s views. I do not believe there is any difference which will prevent a practical conclusion, *provided we try to come to it*. But there is quite enough variety of tendency and of feeling, *if we do not try*, to keep our language various and our course unsteady—perhaps I ought rather to say, to prevent any definite course from being shaped at all. We shall then be at the mercy of *tides*, and our motion becomes a mere *drift*.

‘ I am, my dear Clarendon, yours very sincerely,

‘ ARGYLL.’

It is quite curious how certain we all were up to the end of October that Sebastopol must fall when our siege-train could be brought to bear. Not one military man nor one civilian seemed to have the smallest idea of the resisting power of well-planned and well-manned fortifications in the hands of such a masterly engineer as the Russians possessed in Todleben. This was quite a new lesson in the art of war. When Palmerston had spoken to me so confidently, at the time we ordered the expedition, he referred to the case of a fortress *invested*. But Sebastopol never was invested. We had marched round it, indeed, after the Alma, but this was only a ‘ flank march,’ made to reach a vacant harbour. We never had enough men to invest the place on the north side. Consequently, its communications with Russia were always open, and fresh men

and fresh supplies could be constantly poured in. Our fleets did all that was possible to stop the supplies from the Sea of Azof. Wonders were done there by the zeal and courage of our naval officers. But the main route on the north side was always open, and we relied alone on bombardments, followed by assaults.