

## CHAPTER VIII.

DISRAELI AND GLADSTONE.

1865-1885.

MODERN politics in Great Britain may practically be said to begin at the death of Lord Palmerston; as long as the Liberal party was still generalised, and to a great extent officered, by the old Whigs, the great problems which had started at the time of the first Reform Bill of 1832 were not much pressed towards solution. The governments of the last thirty years had done much in the way of social and economic reform, but they had repeatedly shelved the larger political and constitutional question as to whether Great Britain was to become a democracy or not. In so doing they were but following the wishes of the majority of their constituents. The "ten-pound householders," in whose hands political power had been deposited by the first Reform Bill, were mainly drawn from the middle classes, and had no particular desire to see themselves swamped in the electoral body by the extension of the franchise. The farmers and shopkeepers of the United Kingdom were divided not very unequally between the two political camps: the Whig majority among them, which had been overwhelming in 1832, was much smaller in 1865, for the old prejudice against the reactionary Toryism of Castlereagh and Lord Eldon had been gradually forgotten, except in Scotland and Ireland, where for fifty years an enormous preponderance of Liberal members