

Each of these great ideas of Disraeli's was developed at a period very favourable for their success. The Liberal chiefs of the generation which followed Palmerston were distinctly wanting in a full sense of the greatness of the empire. They have rather cruelly been called "Little Englanders," for their dislike for expansion and their timid colonial policy. In their zeal for economy, they loathed the expenses which empire entails. Some of them occasionally talked as if it was inevitable that our colonies, when they grew strong enough, should "cut the painter"—as the Americans had done in 1776—and refuse to follow any longer in the wake of the mother country. They let the army and navy run so low that in moments of national danger we found ourselves in a perilous state of weakness. An appeal to the people against such a policy was certain of success, for the people has always been convinced of the reality of its imperial destinies. So, too, with regard to domestic matters, there were many things which favoured Disraeli's appeal to the masses. The Liberals of 1865 were steeped in the orthodox political economy; they were ready enough to grant political reforms, or to carry out Free Trade to its logical extreme, but many of them shrank from social reforms, on the ground that by interfering between man and man they were sapping the moral responsibility of the individual, or meddling with the natural law of competition which rules the world, or trying to make the state discharge functions for which it is not naturally designed. The old Liberal "doctrinaires" were very chary of taking in hand the kind of domestic legislation which would appeal to the sympathies of the masses, so that Disraeli had a fair chance of bidding for their support.

The Derby-Disraeli ministry chanced upon very stirring times both at home and abroad; in the very week in which they assumed office (June 19-26, 1866) a great European war broke out. The greedy partners, Austria and Prussia, who