

The Politics of Blackwood's,

1817 - 1846:

A study of the political, economic
and social articles in
Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine,
and of selected contributors.

Submitted to the University of Newcastle upon Tyne
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

J.M. Milne, M.A., M.Litt.

November 1984.

NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

084 10777 X

M5

CONTENTS

Abstract	i
Acknowledgments	ii
List of illustrations	iii
Key to abbreviations and note on published work	iv
1 Introduction	1
2 William Blackwood and Sons	15
3 George Croly and David Robinson	53
4 From loyalty to dissidence, 1821-1828	102
5 William Johnston and Thomas De Quincey	148
6 Ireland and the Catholic Question, 1821-1829	200
7 Parliamentary Reform, 1829-1832	251
8 Archibald Alison and Alfred Mallalieu	305
9 Conservatism under Peel, 1832-1846	351
10 Conclusion	402
Appendices	
I Blackwood family tree	v
II Key to volumes and numbers of <u>Blackwood's</u> , 1817-1846	vi
III Blackwood and Murray, 1818-1819	vii
IV Detailed printing-costs for one month: September 1838	xi
V Balance sheet for July 1838-June 1839	xii
VI London sales figures, 1841-1844	xiii
VII Income tax return, 1845-1846	xiv
VIII J.G. Lockhart and the Catholic Question	xv
IX The reception of Alison's <u>History</u>	xx
X Authors admired by Archibald Alison	xxiii
XI Mallalieu and the Bow St. affair	xxiv
Bibliography	xxvii

Abstract

Ph.D. thesis submitted to the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, by J.M. Milne.

November 1984.

'The Politics of Blackwood's, 1817-1846:

A study of the political, economic and social articles in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine and of selected contributors.'

This study rests upon two main foundations: the first sixty volumes of Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine (particularly the five hundred or so articles on political, economic and social questions) and the first eighty volumes of the Blackwood Papers (with attendant letterbooks and financial records). By combining these sources in a systematic and comprehensive manner for the first time, it has been possible to analyse and explain the political evolution of Blackwood's during its first thirty years. The Magazine's political coverage is shown to be more diverse in viewpoint than treatment in general works would suggest, although Blackwood's always operated within what its founder called 'avowed and determined principles.' Those principles included loyalty to the established Church, defence of the agricultural interest, and resistance to constitutional innovation. Expressed in these terms, the standpoint of Blackwood's might appear narrowly defensive. Such a construction, however, would underrate the imaginative and wide-ranging manner in which the Magazine's writers addressed the complex and controversial problems of their day. Six of those writers have been selected for detailed critical-biographical discussion: Archibald Alison, George Cröly, Thomas De Quincey, William Johnston, Alfred Mallalieu and David Robinson. Although each of them made a distinctive and useful contribution to the Magazine, it is argued that David Robinson did more than anyone to make the political reputation of Blackwood's. His contributions, like those of the other political writers, were anonymous. The role of anonymity in periodical writing is discussed in the conclusion, together with an assessment of the characteristics of political journalism in a monthly magazine like Blackwood's, compared in general terms with daily newspapers and quarterly reviews. It is argued in the conclusion that, for all the consistency of its general principles, Blackwood's Magazine cannot be adequately characterised by any one political label extending over the whole period covered by this study.

Acknowledgments

To list the names of all those who, directly or indirectly, have contributed to such merits as this study may possess would produce a lengthy, perhaps ponderous, catalogue. To mention none would be ungracious. My words of thanks are therefore limited to three instances: first, to Newcastle upon Tyne Polytechnic, for providing me with the opportunity, and the financial support, to undertake periods of study in major libraries, especially the National Library of Scotland; second, to my supervisor, Dr. John Derry, whose encouraging response has reassured me that this dissertation holds sufficient interest to please at least one reader; and third, to Dr. Alan Lang Strout, the doyen of Blackwood's scholars. It is now more than half a century since the first of Dr. Strout's many publications on Blackwood's. From his home in Lubbock, Texas, he continues to give guidance and inspiration to those who are following in his pioneering footsteps. It is to Dr. Strout that this study is gratefully, and affectionately, dedicated.

Maurice Milne
20 November 1984

List of illustrations

Item	Between pages
Advertisement appealing for financial help to David Robinson. (Royal Literary Fund, File 1180)	101-102
Letter from Thomas De Quincey to Robert Blackwood, 16 Feb. 1842 (NLS, MS4060, f.229)	180-181
Copy of 'Swing' Letter, transcribed at office of Wm. Blackwood's London agent, to which it had been sent. (NLS, MS4028, f.259)	276-277
Income tax return for Wm. Blackwood & Sons, for 21 March 1845-30 June 1846 (NLS, Acc.5644, D3)	Appendix VII

15

Key to abbreviations and note on published work

Abbreviations

- Annals I, II Mrs. Oliphant, Annals of a Publishing House: William Blackwood and his Sons, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1897).
- Maga Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine (For simplicity, only the month and the year are given in the notes. See Appendix II for a chart correlating dates with volumes and numbers.)
- Strout, Bib. A.L. Strout, A Bibliography of Articles in Blackwood's Magazine, 1817-1825 (Lubbock, Texas, 1959).
- NLS, MS4001, (et seqq) Blackwood Papers in the National Library of Scotland, volumes listed in the Book Catalogue.
- NLS, Acc.5643 and 5644 Blackwood Papers in the NLS, not listed in the Book Catalogue.

(When correspondence is quoted from MS sources, the folio number of the first page of the letter is given, except when letters of unusual length make a fuller indication more appropriate. The abbreviation 'ibid.' is used only for two successive citations of the same letter. Where different letters from the same miscellaneous volume are used, the abbreviation 'loc.cit.' is preferred.)

Published work

Appendix VIII, 'J.G. Lockhart and the Catholic Question', has been published in Victorian Periodicals Review, XVII, 1 & 2 (Spring & Summer, 1984), 49-51.

The first half of an earlier draft of Chapter Two has been accepted for publication in Publishing History, 16 (1984), under the title, 'The "Veiled Editor" unveiled: William Blackwood and his Magazine.'

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine is too important a periodical to be left to the literary critics. Historians have, of course, made use of Blackwood's, particularly if they were seeking an articulate expression of ultra-Toryism in the age of Grey and Peel. The political nation in that period was confronted with challenging questions of public policy, giving rise to anxious, at times impassioned, debate. Should tariff protection be replaced by reciprocal reductions, or even free trade? How far should the inflated paper currency of the war years be contracted in favour of a metallic-based currency? Was there any argument - be it 'natural' justice, compassion for Ireland's problems, or the threat to public order - strong enough to justify the 'breaking-in' upon the Protestant constitution? Should the system of parliamentary representation be reformed, and, if so, how? Most fundamentally of all, what kind of society was the political nation seeking to preserve - or to bring into being? Was England to remain a society secured upon agriculture, the territorial constitution and the aristocratic principle, or did the future lie with commerce and manufacturing, with an enlarged political community, and with careers open to talent unfettered by religious persuasion or accident of birth? Such questions called for - and received - extensive discussion, in parliamentary

debates, in pamphlets, and in the periodical press. The great quarterly reviews - the Edinburgh, the Quarterly, and the Westminster - stood at the height of their prestige in this period, and the liveliest of the monthly magazines, Blackwood's and Fraser's, also commanded widespread attention. Hence, historians interested in the great public issues of the time have, in varying degrees, made reference to the major periodicals.

The use made of Blackwood's Magazine, however, cannot be said to have been commensurate with either the contemporary importance or the enduring quality of that periodical. As will be shown below, political articles in Blackwood's were read - perhaps regularly, certainly on occasion - by politicians of the stature of Canning, Huskisson, Wellington and Peel. More committed attention was given, at least in the critical period 1829-34, by leading ultra-Tories such as the Duke of Newcastle, M.T. Sadler and Sir Richard Vyvyan. The articles in Blackwood's, moreover, were - at their best - free of the ephemeral character of daily editorials in the newspaper press. The Magazine's main political writers normally contributed only one political article in each monthly number, allowing time for mature reflection and space for extended argument.¹ Their discussions can still be read with profit by historians of ideas. Indeed, the debates conducted within the columns of Blackwood's about the evolving policies of Tory, or Conservative, leaders bear a striking resemblance to debates within the Conservative party at the present day -

1 The usual length of a political article in Blackwood's was c.8,000 words, but sometimes the figure was nearer to 12,000.

a resemblance which, in an academic study such as this, it would be inappropriate to pursue.

Historians have dealt with Blackwood's in, broadly, one of three ways. They have devoted a significant proportion of space to indicating the Magazine's political views (defining 'significant' as extending to pages rather than sentences); or they have made brief mention of such views; or they have neglected to make any mention, even when the subject-matter of their work would seem to have made the views of Blackwood's relevant to their discussion. A sample of works on aspects of British politics and society in the first half of the nineteenth century may substantiate this tripartite picture.²

The first category was inaugurated by three publications in successive years - 1959, 1960 and 1961. The first chapter of R.B. McDowell's British Conservatism, 1832-1914 makes repeated reference to political articles in Blackwood's. Brief characterisations of Archibald Alison, W.E. Aytoun and George Croly (two of whom will be discussed at length below) show that McDowell had the measure of some

2 Robespierre is supposed to have said, 'To be safe, you must kill everyone.' The corollary, in this less lethal sphere, would be, 'To be safe, you must read everything.' Even if there had been time to do so, however, there would hardly have been space to make all the necessary references here. The sample which follows may fairly be claimed to be representative. To avoid an unwieldy mass of footnotes, citations are generally confined to the text. More complete versions of the titles may be found in the Bibliography. This survey relates to works completed before 1980, the year in which preparatory reading for the present study gave place to archival research.

of the Magazine's main political writers, although his starting-date caused him to miss the best of all - David Robinson. F.W. Fetter's article³ remains the most valuable published study of the Magazine's ideas. If the present dissertation can lay claim to a paternity, then Fetter's work deserves the credit. He was the first scholar to concentrate upon what Blackwood's actually said about important politico-economic questions. Fetter's introductory account of the Magazine, however, is perforce very brief. The notes indicate no first-hand use of the Blackwood Papers, and the scope of the discussion, as the title indicates, does not cover the full range of Blackwood's concerns in matters of public policy, let alone the 'weltanschauung' of which the politico-economic articles formed a part. While Fetter takes pride of place for the specialist, however, it was D.C. Moore's famous article 'The Other Face of Reform', in Victorian Studies (1961), which did more than anything else to put Blackwood's on the historical map. As a substantial part of the seventh chapter of this dissertation will be devoted to correcting the impression of Blackwood's which may have been created by Professor Moore's article, it is sufficient here to acknowledge that article as a major stimulus to the present enquiry.

Since these pioneering studies, there have been two important expositions of the Magazine's social philosophy,

3 F.W. Fetter, 'The Economic Articles in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, and their authors, 1817-1853,' Scottish Journal of Political Economy, VII (June 1960), pp.85-107, cited hereafter as Fetter, J.P.E.

by Harold Perkin in 1969 and by David Roberts in 1979. Professor Perkin devotes a section of his book on The Origins of Modern English Society to 'The Revival of the Aristocratic Ideal,' concentrating on the ideas of M.T. Sadler and of Blackwood's Magazine, particularly as expressed by David Robinson and William Johnston. In so doing, Perkin has helped to give credit where it has long been due. He has, however, been misled into creating an exaggerated impression of the circulation of Blackwood's, which he twice describes as 'the most widely read journal of the day' (pp.244, 251). This problem will be resolved in the next chapter, but it prompts the observation here that one of the prerequisites for handling Blackwood's Magazine is the possession of a sense of humour. Another prerequisite is familiarity with the history of the periodical press, which in England has often tended to be a rare specialism, whereas in America it is part of the mainstream of historical scholarship. Professor Roberts exemplifies the latter position most admirably in his book on Paternalism in Early Victorian England. His second chapter, 'Paternalism made popular,' locates the ideas of Blackwood's firmly with those of Fraser's and the Quarterly in a way that offers a valuable alternative model to the approach adopted in the present monograph.⁴

4 As Professor Roberts will appreciate better than most, after his generous review of my book, The Newspapers of Northumberland and Durham, there comes a time when the attractions of knowing one periodical really well outweigh the appeal of surveying a whole range.

A student of British political history between 1815 and 1846 is most likely to encounter the name of Blackwood's in the form of a passing reference in the text, or a listing in the bibliography, of works falling within the second category of this survey. Proceeding chronologically, a likely starting-point would be the still useful two-volume work edited by G.M. Young, Early Victorian England, 1830-1865 (1934). In a comprehensive chapter on 'The Press', E.E. Kellett neatly describes Blackwood's as 'the monthly hope of stern and unbending Tories' (II, 76). He lists, very briefly, the names of the main contributors to the Magazine in the 1830s. A more specialised work, dating back to 1949 but still indispensable in its field, is A. Aspinall's Politics and the Press, c.1780-1850. Although this might well be regarded as the book which founded the sub-discipline to which the present study belongs, Aspinall's work concentrated upon the newspaper press, to the near-exclusion of magazines and reviews. There are only two references to Blackwood's in the index, both relating to an article about the press, which appeared in the Magazine for September 1834.

Turning to studies of specific questions, one may find evidence for the use of Blackwood's by Michael Brock in his account of The Great Reform Act (1973), by D.P. O'Brien in his study of The Classical Economists (1975), and by Boyd Hilton in Corn, Cash, Commerce (1977).⁵ The most obvious place in which to expect citation of Blackwood's, however, yields surprisingly meagre results. Studies of Conservative politics have not added to McDowell's opening-up

5 These works will be further discussed in the appropriate chapters of this study.

of Blackwood's; if anything, they have proceeded in unhelpful directions. Robert Blake, in his account of The Conservative Party from Peel to Churchill (1970), discusses the formation of an aristocratic/working-class alliance against the middle classes as one possible course for the party after 1832, an alliance congenial to the ideas of Sadler, Oastler and Coleridge. 'The intellectual organ of this group', Lord Blake asserts, 'was Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine', (p.21). Insofar as Blake had in mind a dislike of Benthamite utilitarianism and economic liberalism, there was indeed common ground between Tory-Radicals like Oastler and some of the Magazine's writers on social questions in the 1830s. Lord Blake's general interpretation, however, seriously distorts the main thrust of the Magazine's political line after 1832, which was pitched firmly in the direction of rallying the middle classes to the Conservative side. Citations of the views of David Robinson (derived from Perkin) do not really help Lord Blake's case, as Robinson had left the Magazine at the end of 1831. The most representative Blackwood's writer from 1832 was Archibald Alison, who, until Peel went too far for him over currency and the Corn Laws, regularly endorsed Peel's Conservative strategy. It may^{be} urged in Lord Blake's defence that he was only giving a general survey, but the same excuse cannot be made for the doctoral thesis of D.G.S. Simes.⁶ In many ways, Dr. Simes is entitled to the gratitude of a fellow-labourer in the same field, but his discussion of 'the Blackwood's circle', in the second

6 D.G.S. Simes, 'The Ultra Tories in British Politics, 1824-1834', (unpublished dissertation, Oxford, 1974).

chapter of his thesis, is below his general standard. He derives his high estimate of David Robinson only indirectly, from reading Perkin, and twice (pp. 53, 54) repeats Perkin's questionable description of Blackwood's as 'the most widely read journal of the day.' Finally, in the second category of this survey, Dr. Robert Stewart, in his valuable account of The Foundation of the Conservative Party, 1830-1867 (1978), finds room to mention only one Blackwood's article, that on 'Conservative Associations,' by Archibald Alison (unattributed).

The third category may be swiftly disposed of. Blackwood's Magazine does not appear in either the index or the bibliography of W.R. Brock, Lord Liverpool and Liberal Toryism (1941), Asa Briggs, The Age of Improvement (1959), G.I.T. Machin, The Catholic Question in English Politics (1964 - in bibliography only), G.B.A.M. Finlayson, England in the Eighteen Thirties (1969), R.L. Hill, Toryism and the People (1929; 1975 repr. - in bibliography only), or Travis L. Crosby, Sir Robert Peel's Administration (1976). Perhaps the most surprising name of all to be placed in this third category is that of the most distinguished historian of Conservative politics in this period: Professor Norman Gash. Neither in his two-volume biography of Peel, nor in his masterly survey of the party's history 'From the Origins to Sir Robert Peel',⁷ does Gash find room to mention Blackwood's Magazine. This neglect of one of the outstanding theatres of Conservative debate is, perhaps, less puzzling if one

7 The first part of Lord Butler (ed.), The Conservatives. A History from their Origins to 1965 (1977).

applies to Gash the character which may be found in his hero. Peel, as McDowell succinctly puts it (p.17), was fundamentally 'an administrative rather than a philosophic conservative'. One senses in the standpoint of Gash something of a disdain for Conservative scribes, when there was so much real work to be done. What that work should be, however, and how it ought to be accomplished, were matters for reflection and argument, and here lay the proper sphere of Blackwood's Magazine.

Granted, then, that Blackwood's deserves, and needs, the application of more systematic study from the historical side than it has hitherto received, the historian's first point of recourse must be to those books and articles which fall within the literary and bibliographic tradition of Blackwood's scholarship. That tradition was founded by a Blackwood's writer, Mrs. Margaret Oliphant, in her Annals of a Publishing House: William Blackwood and his Sons, published in two substantial volumes in 1897. A third volume, in the same format, was added in 1898, written by Mrs. Gerald Porter, the daughter of John Blackwood.⁸

Mrs. Oliphant had died before the publication of her history, having revised the proofs of the first volume, the work of checking the second volume being undertaken by William Blackwood III. She covered the period up to the death of William Blackwood II, in 1861, and created a vivid and affectionate portrait of the family enterprise. She made assiduous use of the Blackwood papers, although often without providing precise dating and sometimes with errors

8 For the Blackwood family tree, see Appendix I.

in transcription. Her methods on occasion left something to be desired. She mislaid William Blackwood's first letter to Coleridge, and neglected to return to the firm two letters from Sir Walter Scott to Blackwood.⁹ A more serious liability, in the present context, is that Mrs. Oliphant was much more interested in the practitioners of 'belles lettres' than in the political contributors to the Magazine. Writers of the calibre of David Robinson and William Johnston are left out of the index and appear only fleetingly in the text. The political articles in the Magazine are never discussed except when they are mentioned in quoted correspondence, or in the passages linking such extracts. In depicting the manner in which William Blackwood and his sons conducted their business, Mrs. Oliphant made an enduring contribution to knowledge, but, for all her merits, she did not serve historians as well as she served students of literature.

F.D. Tredrey's handsome volume, The House of Blackwood, 1804-1954: The History of a Publishing Firm (1954), also came from an inmate of the house. It has the advantage over the Annals in covering a greater period in a shorter space, and in having some fine illustrations. Tredrey's book, however, does not constitute a significant contribution to knowledge, at least as regards the period covered by Mrs. Oliphant. For these years he incorporates the same biographical information and family correspondence as can be found in the Annals, within a more briskly moving

9 Annals, I, 407; H.J.C. Grierson (ed.), The Letters of Sir Walter Scott, 12 vols (1932-37), V, 181.

chronological framework.

The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals begins with Blackwood's and provides an indispensable first point of reference for any scholar in pursuit of a particular article or contributor.¹⁰ The brief introduction, however, is surprisingly slipshod (although the errors were noticed in a subsequent volume, covering other periodicals). The original magazine, published from April to September 1817, is mistitled, and the two editors receive each other's forenames; the Noctes Ambrosianae are wrongly stated to have ended in 1830, and the Blackwood who died in 1834 is erroneously said to be John.¹¹

Finally, there is the work of Dr. Alan Lang Strout. Beginning with his first publication in January 1932, Strout has assembled a daunting array of articles and monographs, providing critical and bibliographic insights into the work of the first Blackwood's writers.¹² The culmination of this endeavour was Strout's remarkable Bibliography of Articles in Blackwood's Magazine, 1817-1825 (Lubbock, Texas, 1959). In selflessly guiding other scholars through the Blackwoodian maze of anonymity compounded with deliberate mystification, Strout did not leave himself time to complete his biography of James Hogg, or to collate his disparate pieces on J.G. Lockhart into a coherent study. No one this century has been better equipped to produce a

10 Walter E. Houghton (ed.), The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals 1824-1900, vol.I (Toronto and London, 1966).

11 See below, Chapter Two, for the correct version of these details.

12 See the Bibliography of this study, section headed 'Publications of A.L. Strout'.

single, definitive account of the early years of Blackwood's Magazine. That account remains unwritten; Mrs. Oliphant remains unrevised; the possibilities suggested by the work of McDowell and Fetter remain under-explored; Wellesley only points the way. Before a modern work of synthesis can be written, the Blackwood Papers require to be connected with the political, social and economic articles in the Magazine in a systematic and critical manner. That is the task which this dissertation is designed to accomplish.

A Note on Method

The organising-principle behind this study is that the articles in Blackwood's cannot be divorced from their writers. The point may seem crashingly obvious. Yet it is generally the case that the Magazine is referred to as if it were a self-existent entity: 'Blackwood's believed....,' 'Blackwood's regretted....,' and so on. At best, with the few creditable exceptions noted above, we are told that 'a writer in Blackwood's argued....,' with no name being supplied, even in the post-Wellesley era, as if that particular detail did not matter. In a sense it did not: the prevalence of anonymity in political writing in periodicals did tend to merge a writer's individuality into the safe haven of the editorial 'we'.¹³ Yet the Magazine only existed because certain individual writers put pen to paper. They brought to their work their own disparate backgrounds, their own several stocks of reading and experience, their own principles and prejudices, their

¹³ The role of anonymity is further discussed in the Conclusion.

own peculiarities of style and argument. Even though the political alignment of Blackwood's was plainly on the Tory side, debates within Toryism/Conservatism left room for differences of opinion about a whole range of policies.¹⁴ The articles appearing in the columns of the Magazine cannot be properly explained if they are discussed without reference to the writers who most commonly wrote them.

Out of the many political contributors whose work appeared in the Magazine during the thirty years covered by this study, six have been selected for critical-biographical appraisal. They occupy the top six places in the attributions of authorship of articles on political, economic and social questions, as given in Strout's Bibliography and in the Wellesley Index. The order is as follows (taking August 1846 as the stopping-point):

Archibald Alison	103
David Robinson	91
George Croly ¹⁵	60
William Johnston	38
Thomas De Quincey	30
Alfred Mallalieu	21
Total	<u>343</u>

Their total figure amounts to about two-thirds of the 500 or so articles on this side of the Magazine's coverage. Other writers, whose contributions will be discussed when appropriate, but who will not receive extensive characterisation:

14 See especially the first part of Chapter Four, and Chapter Seven.

15 Adding Croly's miscellanies, 'The World we live in', and 'Things of the day', which sometimes contained political comment, would add a further 20 to his total.

included (in the range of more than ten, but less than twenty, political articles) Samuel O'Sullivan, James McQueen, John Galt, Charles Neaves and George Moir. They were joined, near the close of the period of study, by two important contributors for the future: W.E. Aytoun and W.H. Smith. Many of these writers, both in the top six and below, also contributed a wide range of other work to Blackwood's - articles on history, travel, taste and the like. This was especially true of Alison, Croly and De Quincey, among the top six, bringing the grand total for that group to over 700 articles.

To give a sound analysis of even the half of that impressive total which belongs to the sphere of this study clearly poses problems of compression. One device which has been adopted here is familiar enough to literary critics and historians of ideas,¹⁶ but is less common amongst political historians. A single article from each writer had been selected for close criticism, paying attention to stylistic peculiarities, devices of argument, and sources of ideas. The contributors to, and the readers of, Blackwood's Magazine belonged to an era before the advent of narrow specialisms. Although this dissertation belongs to, and must conform to the requirements of, an era of professional specialisation, it will not have fully succeeded in its purpose if it does not reflect something of the variety and vitality to be found in Blackwood's Magazine.

16 I am happy to acknowledge the benefits which I have derived from working for many years with colleagues on the BA(Hons) English and History, and M.A. History of Ideas, at Newcastle Polytechnic.

CHAPTER TWO

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS

The most powerful impression produced by studying Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine is that of coming to know a family. The members were not restricted to the bearers of the Blackwood name, which was given to the publishing house and to the Magazine. Rather, it was an extended family, embracing the regular contributors and, arguably, the regular readers. Standing at the head, until his death on 16 September 1834, was the founder of the publishing house, William Blackwood. Born in Edinburgh, of mercantile stock, on 20 November 1776, he served his apprenticeship with the book-sellers, Bell and Bradfute. In 1796 he went to Glasgow to take charge of a new bookshop, established by the Edinburgh firm of Mundell. His work soon brought him into contact with Archibald Constable, then still a bookseller, but later to become the publisher of the Edinburgh Review, from its inception in 1802.

In the careers of Constable and Blackwood a new phase can be traced in the history of the Scottish Enlightenment - or, arguably, a new post-Enlightenment era came into being, with the central focus shifting away from philosophy and social science towards imaginative literature and periodical essays. Several of the giants of the eighteenth century were now dead : David Hume, Adam Smith and William Robertson. Scholars of European reputation, they had secured London publishers for their works. Printing and paper-making had both greatly expanded in Edinburgh during the second half of the eighteenth century, but the centre of publishing in

Britain continued to be found in the vicinity of the Strand and Paternoster Row. The trade - or profession - of publisher was not, in any case, as yet clearly differentiated from that of bookseller. The main Edinburgh bookseller, Creech, published the second edition of the poems of Robert Burns. Booksellers' premises were the favourite gathering grounds of the literati, fulfilling a role not unlike that of the French salon. It was in the early nineteenth century that this function came to be performed by the offices of the publishers: John Murray in Albemarle Street, London; Archibald Constable in the High Street, Edinburgh, and, in due course, William Blackwood in Princes Street.

Having gained further experience of bookselling and cataloguing, in Edinburgh and London, Blackwood began trading in his own right, at 64 South Bridge, Edinburgh, in 1804. Landmarks in his progress included becoming the Edinburgh agent for John Murray in 1811, the publication of Blackwood's catalogue of 15,000 volumes in 1812, and the co-publication, in 1816, with John Murray, of the Black Dwarf, the first of a projected new series of novels by Walter Scott (not named on the title page), to be known as the Tales of My Landlord. In January 1819, however, Scott sold the copyright of the Tales to Constable, so that Constable was able to announce the forthcoming publication of a fifth edition, while Blackwood still had unsold copies of the fourth edition on his hands. After an acrimonious correspondence between Blackwood and Scott's partner, James Ballantyne, the latter agreed to repurchase what remained of the fourth edition, at the subscription price. By misdating this episode to 1817, Mrs. Oliphant reflected unfairly on the conduct of James Ballantyne, while also creating the false impression that Blackwood's

Magazine was founded partly in pique against Constable's acquisition of the Tales.¹ It was while he was still Scott's publisher that Blackwood resolved to challenge Constable's dominance of periodical publishing in Edinburgh.

The standard histories of the Blackwood firm envisage the target of the new magazine as being the Edinburgh Review.² It would, however, be more realistic to see Constable's other periodical, the Scots Magazine, as the prime object of William Blackwood's attack. The counterpoint to the Whig Edinburgh was John Murray's Tory Quarterly Review, published in London, admittedly, but manifestly the rival of the Edinburgh in its field. To depict what was first founded as the Edinburgh Monthly Magazine, in April 1817, as though it were intended to take on the mighty organ of Jeffrey, Smith, Brougham and Horner, is to import a future knowledge of what Blackwood's periodical became into the situation appertaining in the early months of 1817. The enfeebled state of the Scots Magazine invited competition, and it would appear that the idea of founding a rival magazine had occurred first in the previous year to Thomas Pringle and James Cleghorn, who then persuaded Blackwood to support their project.³ The arrangement was that Blackwood, as publisher, would see to the printing, while Cleghorn and Pringle recruited literary contributors. The editors would

1 Annals, I, 83, 86, 97. c.f. Grierson, op.cit., IV, 430 n.2.

2 Annals, I, 97. (Mrs. Oliphant does, however, refer to the Scots Magazine, p.98) Tredrey, p.23. Wellesley Index, p.7. Dr. Josephine Haythornthwaite (see under Theses), p.75, prolongs the old version, describing the new magazine as being 'intended as a Tory counterblast to the Whig Edinburgh Review'.

3 A.L.Strout, 'James Hogg's Forgotten Satire, John Paterson's Mare', PMLA, 52 (June 1937), p.430, note, citing Cleghorn and Pringle's Notice of the Transactions between the Publisher and Editors of the Edinburgh Monthly Magazine, October 1817.

receive jointly £50 per month, some of which might perhaps have to be passed on to contributors, but the apparent expectation was that most of these would not require payment.⁴ The publisher and co-editors would then divide any ensuing profits.

The moment was certainly ripe for a new venture in periodical publishing, both within the Edinburgh context and in the wider arena. There was room for a magazine that came out more frequently, and with shorter articles, than the two great reviews, but partaking of their intellectual vitality and critical vigour rather than repeating the traditional formula of the Gentleman's Magazine. The attractions of periodical writing were well summarised by J.G. Lockhart, who was to play a formative part in the early years of Blackwood's Magazine.

In the present day, I look upon periodical writing as by far the most agreeable species of authorship. When a man sits down to write a history or a dissertation - to fill an octavo or quarto with Politics, Morals, Metaphysics, Theology, Physics, Physic, or Belles-Lettres, he writes only for a particular class of readers and his book is bought only by a few of that particular class. But the happy man who is permitted to fill a sheet, or a half-sheet, of a monthly or quarterly journal with his lucubrations, is sure of coming into the hands of a vast number of persons more than he has any strict or even feasible claim upon, either from the subject-matter or execution of his work. The sharp and comical criticisms of one man are purchased by people who abhor the very name of wit, because they are stitched under the same cover with ponderous masses of political economy, or foggy divinity, or statistics, or law, or algebra, more fitted for their plain, or would-be plain understandings; while, on the other hand, young ladies and gentlemen, who conceive the whole sum and substance of human accomplishment to consist in being able to gabble a little about new novels and poems, are compelled to become the proprietors of so many quires of lumber per quarter, in order that they may not be left in

⁴ Annals, I, 99; Strout, op.cit., p.431.

ignorance of the last merry things uttered by Mr. Jeffrey, or Mr. Southey, or Mr. Gifford, or Sir James Mackintosh. 5

The moment then, was ripe, but the Edinburgh Monthly Magazine was not the periodical to take it. The contents of the first number, in April 1817, might have possessed an appeal for antiquarians, but they hardly constituted a new departure in periodical writing. The publication was envisaged in its introductory statement as a 'repository', and the features selected for special mention were the Antiquarian Repertory, the notices of articles in other periodicals, and the Monthly Register, a lengthy digest of home and foreign news, including births, deaths and marriages. Modesty of aspiration also manifested itself in a remark to a correspondent, with perhaps a hint of irony:

The paper by 'Junius' is in many respects interesting, but it is unfortunately so overloaded with "fine writing", as to be quite unfit for our humble miscellany in its present shape.

To humility and eclecticism could be added the further characteristic of political neutrality. The opening article, 'Memoir of the late Francis Horner, Esq., M.P.,' consisted of a collection of public tributes to the deceased Whig worthy. Ricardo was approvingly discussed in the next number, and in August the Edinburgh Review was praised for an article therein about pauperism. In any case, contributions about political, social and economic questions (mainly economic) in the first six numbers occupied only 26 out of the 672 pages. The feebleness of this first

5 (J.G. Lockhart) Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk (1819), II, 192-3. (A 'sheet' comprised about 16 pages of octavo. Contributors to periodicals were generally paid at so much per sheet.)

volume, however, which has been a matter of agreed comment in earlier studies,⁶ ought not to prevent reference to the calibre of individual contributors. Scott, Hogg, Lockhart and Wilson all contributed to the first number - and, indeed, to most of the numbers in the first volume.

A vital ingredient was lacking, however, as John Wilson recalled three years later:

Our first six numbers were but so-so. They were like loaves made of tolerably fair flour, but with indifferent yeast - poorly kneaded and baked in a cracked oven. They did not rise well - felt heavy in hand - when cut up looked blue - and were, to young people at least, of slow and difficult digestion.⁷

The uninspiring impression left by the whole enterprise is a further instance of a maxim in the past and present affairs of periodicals: real success comes when the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Cleghorn and Pringle were not the men to achieve the chemical fusion out of which a new periodical compound could be created. Blackwood swiftly realised this, and after the completion of the third number, he gave the co-editors three months' notice to quit their positions.⁸ An announcement in the September issue was worded as though the whole enterprise were being concluded.

6 'meek and mild', Annals, I, 100; 'meek and mild', Tredrey, p.23; 'a very sucking dove in mildness', Strout, op.cit. p.431.

7 Maga, Oct. 1820, p.80.

8 In a letter to Scott on 20 Aug. 1817, Blackwood claimed that, after serving notice, he offered Pringle the sole editorship, properly paid, and with all contributors thenceforth to be paid. (The policy which Constable had adopted with the Edinburgh Review, from the outset.) Pringle appeared to agree, but suddenly joined Cleghorn in defecting to Constable. Letter quoted by A.L. Strout in 'James Hogg's "Chaldee Manuscript"', PMLA, 65 (Sept. 1950), pp.696-7.

We beg leave to announce to our Subscribers and the Public, that this Work is now discontinued, the present being the last Number of it.

A new title did not have to be found on legal grounds, as Blackwood acquired the copyright, but commercial considerations dictated a change of name. The contents page of the first number of the new title, in October 1817, omits volume and issue numbers, but thereafter continuity with the original publication was restored through the designation 'Volume II, Number VIII', et seqq. Cleghorn and Pringle both limped⁹ away from Blackwood's handsome new premises in Princes Street and found refuge with Constable in the old town. There they became editors of the Edinburgh Magazine, and Literary Miscellany, being a series of the Scots Magazine. Blackwood purchased the copyright of this publication after Constable's crash in 1826, Cleghorn and Pringle having already departed elsewhere.

The birth, or re-birth, of Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, in October 1817, is one of the classic episodes in the history of periodical literature. This is not the place in which to traverse familiar ground, however tempting the territory.¹⁰ Suffice it to say that the refounded publication was strikingly different in character from its predecessor: confident to the point of arrogance, partisan to the point of bellicosity, personal to the point of defamation, and witty to the point of hilarity. The 'Chaldee Manuscript' set Edinburgh by the

⁹ (They were both lame).

¹⁰ For the details, see Annals, I, 114-154, amplified in articles by A.L. Strout, listed in the bibliography. The best source of all is, of course, the October number. The full text of the 'Chaldee Manuscript' can also be found in Tredrey, Appendix II.

ears, while the London literary world was shocked by the assault on the 'Cockney School'. Coleridge was mauled in a savage review of his Biographia Literaria. So began his tortuous relationship with the Magazine, which ended in mutual admiration, tinged, on the Blackwood's side, by disappointment at what remained unfulfilled from their dealings.

The October number achieved a succès de scandale, an outcome that might not have been entirely unanticipated by those responsible. A second edition had to be printed, although shorn of the shocking delights of the 'Chaldee Manuscript', which compounded personal insults with the parodying of biblical language.¹¹ It was with mingled pride and unease that Blackwood sent a copy of the original October number to Scott:

I hope you will be pleased with this number on the whole and think that it is likely to make some noise. I anxiously hope you will not be displeased with the Chaldee MS. There will be various opinions as to the propriety of publishing this. The Editor took his own way and I cannot interfere with him.¹²

In this last sentence, William Blackwood made the first use of a crucial invention in the 'Chaldee Manuscript' - the veiled Editor. (In ch.2 vs.2, Blackwood is encouraged by an apparition: 'a man clothed in dark garments, having a veil upon his head'. The veiled figure recruits a new team of contributors). It became a standard tactic, especially in the controversial early numbers, for the

11 See the five public letters from 'Calvinus', protesting at the parody of Scripture, collected in a volume of Tracts on Blackwood's Magazine, held in the NLS.

12 NLS, Acc. 5643, B1, f.2. Quoted (with minor variations from the letterbook version) in Annals, I, 149-150.

'Editor' to serve as a kind of whipping boy, blamed by the publisher for his wilfulness, whilst the two principal contributors, John Wilson and J.G. Lockhart, disclaimed editorial responsibility. Such a device might work with uninjured neutrals, like Scott and William Laidlaw, but it was insufficient to deflect a really injured party, such as J.G. Dalryell, the victim of the most tasteless, and unfunny, verses in the 'Chaldee Manuscript'. Blackwood wrote to him, through his legal representative, on 6 November 1817.

I can assure you that as Publisher of that Magazine (over the articles of which I have no control) it is my uniform desire, as it must ever be my interest, that nothing should appear in it which can justly give offence to any one.¹³

Being well aware that the law could not take cognizance of a mythical editor, Blackwood offered Dalryell an out-of-court settlement, to be assessed by agreed counsel. Dalryell received £230 damages.¹⁴ Subsequent sallies in the Magazine cost the publisher substantial sums, whether in legal costs or in private payments, to placate Hazlitt, Professor Leslie, Richard Martin M.P., and others. A.L. Strout computes Blackwood's bill as at least £830, plus legal expenses, by 1822. Theodore Besterman suggests that the total figure for the whole period of Blackwood's proprietorship 'cannot have been far below £3,000'.¹⁵ Such notoreity, of course, brought its compensation in the form of increased sales (a tactic

13 NLS, Acc.5643, B1, f.15.

14 A.L. Strout, 'The Cost of Libel and Maga', TLS 28 March 1936.

15 T. Besterman, 'The Cost of Libel and Maga', TLS 25 April 1936.

which neither began nor ended with Blackwood's Magazine), but there would have come a time when it became counter-productive, had it not been enhanced by more creditable ways of stimulating the readers' interest. The short-lived connection with John Murray¹⁶, in 1818-19, was beneficial in leading to the recruitment of London contributors. The development of the political side of the Magazine, from 1820, enabled Blackwood's to make up in political debate what it began to lose in literary raillery.

For a proper understanding of the location of editorial responsibility within the Magazine, it is necessary to draw aside the veil behind which the conductors sheltered. The device was denounced in a pamphlet entitled 'A Review of Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine for October 1817.'

In such a production the Editor is responsible for every article admitted. If these articles are false, and in opposition to his own sentiments, he is doubly blameable and cowardly; if they are true, and yet in opposition to his own sentiments, he at once acknowledges his ignorance, imbecility and unfitness.¹⁷

Taking, for the moment, Blackwood's word to Scott, Laidlaw and others, that there was an editor, but that he was not the man, it must follow that either Wilson or Lockhart was the editor, for no one else was so close to the heart of the Magazine. The three most contentious - and eye-catching - pieces in the October 1817 number came from their hands.¹⁸ During the Murray period, it has been estimated by A.L. Strout that they contributed 43% of the

16 See Appendix III, 'Blackwood and Murray, 1818-19'.

17 Tracts, op.cit., p.10.

18 The 'Chaldee Manuscript' was a joint effort, expanding upon the original version by James Hogg; Wilson undertook the demolition of Biographia Literaria, while Lockhart assailed the Cockney School.

total contents - a remarkable achievement in range, quantity and, not least, sheer speed of composition. Mrs. Oliphant quotes a letter from Lockhart¹⁹ in which he claimed that Murray and Blackwood wished Wilson and himself to be joint editors, at a salary of £500 per year between them - a proposal probably arising out of Murray's desire to regularise the situation. If the scheme ever came to anything, however, it ended with Murray's disassociation, and Wilson and Lockhart claimed never to have received any payment under this heading. A.L. Strout has found correspondence in 1819 which leads him to suggest that Wilson and Lockhart were taking turns in editing successive numbers.²⁰

A study of the first Blackwood's letter-book reveals that Wilson, and probably Lockhart, handled some of the correspondence with contributors. There are seven letters signed 'Christopher North', who became Wilson's alter ego. One of these, in Wilson's own hand, was to 'R.T.S.' (i.e., William Maginn, who defeated the Blackwood's obfuscators at their own game) inviting him to become a regular contributor.²¹ Lockhart assumed the guise of 'Editor' in wooing Coleridge²², although the copy in the letterbook is not in his hand, probably being the work of an office copyist.²³ Against this, however, there are 125 letters in this letterbook ending 'W. Blackwood', or 'signed, W.

19 Annals, I, 191.

20 Strout, Bib., p.6.

21 NLS, Acc.5643, B1, f.86.

22 Annals, I, 411.

23 NLS, Acc.5643, B1, f.70.

Blackwood'. This quantifiable evidence from the letterbook must be set against one letter, in particular, therein.

On the day that the first number of Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine was published, Blackwood wrote to Wilson to express his appreciation.

My Dear Sir,

As in duty bound I send you the first complete copy I have got of the Magazine. I also beg you will do me the favour to accept of the inclosed. It is unnecessary for me to say how much and how deeply I am indebted to you and I shall only add that by the success of the Magazine (for which I shall be wholly indebted to you) I hope to be able to offer you something more worthy of your acceptance.²⁴

Wilson's creativity was essential to the success of the enterprise, and in time there was to be good reason for regarding him, in the guise of 'Christopher North', as the personification of Blackwood's. At first, however, 'Christopher North' was a shared persona, and Maginn, still writing from the Minerva Rooms, Cork, as 'R.T.S.', thought the wearer of the disguise was Lockhart. A reply from Blackwood corrected his misapprehension:

Your letter to Christopher has amused us not a little. The Editor still continues veiled, but he is not surprised at the mistake you have fallen into by giving his office to Mr. Lockhart, who has certainly been one of our most efficient supporters. He shewed your letter to Mr. L. who as much amused with it as we were.²⁵

Unless Blackwood was communing with a phantasm, this reply can only mean that he regarded Wilson as more properly performing an editorial role than Lockhart. Perhaps Blackwood was lost in his own fog, given the confusion of singular and plural forms in his reply to a complaining

²⁴ 20 Oct. 1817, loc.cit., f.1.

²⁵ 19 June 1820, loc.cit., f.122.

letter from the London publisher, Henry Colburn:

This however is not my affair, but the Editor's, as I never on any occasion interfere with them.²⁶

Whatever the precise disposition of functions within the triumvirate in the earliest years of Blackwood's, two events, in August 1820 and February 1821, respectively, accentuated the responsibility of William Blackwood for the direction of the Magazine. John Wilson won a spirited contest for the chair of Moral Philosophy in the university of Edinburgh; and J.G. Lockhart was badly shaken when his friend Christie killed John Scott of the London Magazine in a duel, arising out of a war of words between Lockhart and Scott in their respective periodicals.²⁷ Wilson's energies were diverted to writing his course of lectures. Between August 1820 and June 1821 (inclusive) he only appears to have contributed one definite and two possible pieces to the Magazine.²⁸ As for Lockhart, in the six months following the duel, there are no articles definitely attributable to him.²⁹ On 13 July 1821, Lockhart wrote to James Hogg:

Wilson is quite mad wt. idleness & champagne ever since his lectures were done. Blackwood seems in great feather but how he gets on w his magazine God in heaven knows. He won't tell me the name of the author of a single paper now-a-days. I have not written a line for these eight or ten months & Wilson nothing since the Tete a tete.³⁰

26 18 Aug. 1819, loc.cit. f.80. (My underlining).

27 For the details of these two episodes, see Annals, I, chs. V and VI; biographies of Wilson and Lockhart; A.L. Strout, 'John Wilson's Election to the Professorship of Moral Philosophy, 1820', ELH(Dec.1939), pp.291-9; statements from John Scott and J.G. Lockhart (before the duel) in Tracts, op.cit.

28 According to the attributions listed in Strout, Bib.

29 Ibid.

30 Quoted in A.L. Strout, The Life and Letters of James Hogg (1946) I,215. For the 'Tete a tete' in October 1820 see below.

Lockhart and Wilson did, of course, resume their contributions to the Magazine. Wilson's exuberant temperament, however, was unsuited to the daily routine of handling contributors, drawn now from a more distant circle; and late in 1825 Lockhart left to become editor of the Quarterly Review. Thenceforth, the Magazine was indeed 'Ma Maga', as William Blackwood was fond of calling it. The general verdict appears sound:

... the only real editor of Blackwood's Magazine was Blackwood himself.³¹

With Wilson and Lockhart among its principal contributors, and its sagacious publisher to edit it ...³²

Although there is no doubt that Blackwood was the effective editor of his publication, he found it convenient sometimes to pretend that he was not.³³

I do not think that even for these six months³⁴ they were ever free from the silent authority behind (their) backs ...³⁵

(Blackwood) was his own editor in so far as the practical management of the magazine was concerned - but he was not entirely its editor in the purely literary sense of the word.³⁶

I need not tell you how proud I am of your praise of my Magazine. It is my darling child, to which my whole heart and soul are devoted.³⁷

William Blackwood
Bookseller in Edinburgh
Originator
And for seventeen years
Conductor and Publisher
of
The Magazine which bears his name.³⁸

31 Elsie Swann, Christopher North (1934) p.107.

32 DNB.

33 Wellesley Index, op.cit., p.7. 34 (The Murray period).

35 Annals, I, 192. 36 J.F. Ferrier (Wilson's son-in-law) in letter, 8 Dec. 1855, quoted in Strout, Bib, p.3.

37 W. Blackwood to S.T. Coleridge, May 1832, NLS, Acc.5643,B9.

38 Memorial stone in Old Calton Burial Ground, Edinburgh. (Archibald Constable's grave is only twenty yards away).

At this point in the chapter, therefore, it is necessary to show, from the Blackwood Papers, how William Blackwood conducted his Magazine in its formative years.

The most obvious of Blackwood's personal attributes was his energy. The letter-books provide abundant proof. Copies of letters to contributors and other correspondents cover a total of about 3,800 pages in the ten letter-books relating to the period October 1817 - May 1834.³⁹

Sometimes Blackwood made his own copy, otherwise the task was left to an office copyist. Normally these copies end with the words 'W. Blackwood', or 'signed W. Blackwood'. Where letters actually sent have been located, they were written and signed by Blackwood himself. As these were written to political notables, however, this cannot be taken as proof that Blackwood personally wrote all of his letters. Given the desire of his main contributors for confidentiality, however, it is reasonable to assume that Blackwood corresponded with them in his own hand. Also, on stylistic grounds, the voice of Blackwood is evident throughout the correspondence, even if it might sometimes have taken the form of dictation to a copyist. To this impressive mass of outgoing correspondence must be added the task of reading an equivalent volume of letters coming into the office from contributors and other persons concerned with the Magazine. J.G. Lockhart gave a vivid characterisation

39 One of Blackwood's last signed letters in the letter-book (NLS, Acc.5643, B10, f.359) was to his son William, on 2 May 1834. A few others, in the summer months, are signed for him (by his son Alexander, where legible) or as 'William Blackwood and Sons'. After Blackwood's death in September, Alexander Blackwood handled the correspondence to the end of this letter-book, Feb. 1835).

of Blackwood's bustling energy:

He is a nimble active-looking man of middle age, and moves about from one corner to another with great alacrity, and apparently under the influence of high animal spirits. His complexion is very sanguineous, but nothing can be more intelligent, keen, and sagacious, than the expression of the whole physiognomy ...⁴⁰

This account by a member of Blackwood's circle can be broadly corroborated by the impressions of an American writer, John Neal, who met Blackwood in 1825.

I found him a short, "stubbed" man, of about five feet six, I should say, with a plain, straightforward business air, - like that of a substantial tradesman, - and a look of uncommon though quiet shrewdness. You could see at a glance that he was a man to be trusted, - frank and fearless, without being either boastful or aggressive.⁴¹

Blackwood's 'frank and fearless' character was revealed in the way that he weathered the storm over the October 1817 number, (partly by exploiting the 'veiled editor'), while Wilson and Lockhart took refuge in the English Lake District. He even had the temerity to criticize the later stages of the plot of the Black Dwarf, despite the risk of offending Scott - who did, indeed, refrain from entrusting further novels to Blackwood. Subsequent critical opinion has tended to vindicate Blackwood's judgement in this matter, and his record in recruiting contributors to his Magazine provides substantial evidence of his shrewdness in assessing a writer's worth. The two principal political writers in the Magazine during the 1820s, George Croly and David Robinson, were both invited by Blackwood to become regular contributors at a very early stage in their dealings with the firm.⁴² Acting upon a suggestion from Croly, Blackwood recruited Alaric

⁴⁰ Peter's Letters, II, 188.

⁴¹ Quoted in Strout, Hogg, op.cit., p.126

⁴² See below, Chapter Three.

Watts as his London informant about interesting new books and their writers, and about developments in the London periodical press.⁴³ As an increasing part in the Magazine came to be played by London contributors (a process accentuated by the departure to London of Lockhart and Maginn), Blackwood endeavoured to create an esprit de corps among them by encouraging social intercourse⁴⁴ and by entertaining them at the Somerset Hotel when he was in London.

The Magazine remained an Edinburgh publication, however, and Blackwood's Scottish patriotism can be discerned in several of his letters to contributors. In the summer of 1824, for example, in corresponding with David Robinson about a forthcoming article on the Church of England and the Dissenters,⁴⁵ Blackwood informed him,

Presbyterian as I am, perhaps I do not differ much from you in some of the views you give of the spirit and tendency of the conduct of some of the early reformers, but no Scotsman can help feeling how much Scotland owes to the zealous and faithful men who opposed themselves to a corrupt court and under providence won the means of preserving ought that is valuable in our national institutions.⁴⁶

While this was hardly a Tory view of history, Blackwood's attitude to contemporary politics was that of an uncompromising Tory. He wrote admiringly to Croly and Robinson about their onslaughts on Whiggism and their critiques of lukewarm and innovating Tories.⁴⁷ He sent copies of his Magazine containing important political articles to Lord Liverpool,

43 7 Feb. 1822, NLS, Acc.5643, B2, f.253.

44 For Blackwood's abortive efforts to bring together Robinson and Maginn see below, Chapter Three.

45 Maga, Oct. 1824.

46 25 Aug. 1824, NLS Acc.5643, B3, f.325.

47 See below, Chapter Three.

Sidmouth, Peel and Canning, and was delighted when Wellington, on becoming Prime Minister, ordered a full set.⁴⁸ Although he envisaged his Magazine as a miscellany, with room for individual expressions of opinion, the whole had to be founded upon 'avowed and determined principles'.⁴⁹ The intellectual fount of Blackwood's political ideas - as of the ideas of several of his main political contributors - was Edmund Burke. He invited Robinson to review a new life of Burke, and suggested to Croly that he wrote a series of biographical articles on Burke in the Magazine.⁵⁰ Although Blackwood wrote nothing in his refounded Magazine, he showed in his correspondence that he could engage his contributors in political debate. He also acquired some political experience in his capacity as a baillie of Edinburgh.

For all his readiness to allow his political contributors to express their own ideas, Blackwood had the final say over amendments, excisions and even outright rejections. Instances of the latter were rare, as the publisher and his main political writers shared the same general standpoint. The following instance can be cited as an example of the combination of tact and firmness with which Blackwood handled a contributor when returning an article. The victim was David Robinson, who had committed the double offence of sending in a piece that was too late for publication and of writing something that was below his usual standard. Blackwood advised Robinson to re-read his

48 The details are given below, Chapters Three and Four.

49 Blackwood to Robinson, 3 Jan. 1826, NLS, Acc.5643, B6, f.28. (The relationship between the parts and the whole will be explored below, Chapter Four).

50 See below, Chapter Three.

article coolly and impartially, and he would see why it had been returned. The piece went over old ground and showed 'a tendency to acrimony' which might harm 'the good cause in which we are all engaged'. This advice came from a candid friend:

In conducting the Magazine I have a difficult course to pursue, but to the best of my judgement I have gone on, and will continue to go on in a straight forward manly way without fear or favour.⁵¹

Conducted in this fashion, the Magazine established a sound and steadily, if slowly, growing circulation. Mrs. Oliphant quotes a letter from Lockhart to David Williams, a contributor, in 1818, in which Lockhart observes, 'They at present print 6000, and expect soon to sell that number regularly'.⁵² In April 1827 Blackwood informed his son William that he would soon have to enlarge the impression of 6300 copies.⁵³ Similar information was given by Blackwood to Alaric Watts, when the publisher informed him, 'The sale of Maga is increasing every day and is now considerably above 6000'.⁵⁴ In February 1828, David Robinson told Blackwood, 'I have derived much pleasure from seeing that you have substituted 7,000 for 6,500 in your Advertisement'.⁵⁵ The consistency of these statements, in private correspondence, makes it plain that the monthly sale of Blackwood's Magazine during its first decade was between 6,000 and 7,000 copies. This figure should be set against the impression created by a much more widely-known work than the present study: Professor Harold Perkin's The Origins of Modern English

51 24 May 1830, NLS, Acc.5643, B9, f.30.

52 Annals, I, 191. 53 Ibid, II, 75.

54 23 Nov. 1827, NLS, Acc.5643, B7, f.335.

55 NLS, MS 4023, f.20. 56 Perkin, op.cit., p.244.

Society. Perkin describes Blackwood's Edinburgh Review (sic) as 'the most widely read journal of the day,' and he states that it 'sold more than twice as many copies as the Edinburgh Review or any other Opposition journal'.⁵⁶ The source which he cites for this 'information' is Blackwood's, vol.VIII, 80-81. This is, in fact, part of John Wilson's 'An Hour's Tete-a-Tete with the Public', in October 1820. Whilst this piece does contain some revealing information about the character of Blackwood's, the circulation claims clearly emanate from the Magazine's mystification department. Quotation captures the spirit of the piece:

From the 24th till the 40th Number our sale has been progressive. Positively, we have barely face to whisper the amount, SOMEWHERE BELOW 17000! Compare this with the known sale of other periodicals, and you will not find it inferior to that of the best of them. The sale of the Quarterly is about 14000 - of the Edinburgh, upwards of 7000⁵⁷ - of the Gentleman's Magazine, about 4000 - of the British Critic, 4000 - of Baldwin, 1100 - of the British Review, between 3 and 400 - of the Scots Magazine, as we have been assured by authority, from 100 to 150. ... It is not our intention, at present, to suffer our sale to go beyond 17000.

Indeed not!

Another large pinch of salt needs to be taken when reading the claims in the 'Tete-a-Tete' about the profitability of the enterprise to 'Christopher North' and William Blackwood. The commercial side of the Magazine will be discussed more closely below. For the moment, it is enough

56 Perkin, op.cit., p.244.

57 c.f. the authoritative figures of F.W. Fetter: 'In its best years the Edinburgh sold around 15000 copies, the Quarterly close to 10,000, Blackwood's 6,000 or more ...' 'Economic Controversy in the British Reviews, 1802-1850', Economica (Nov.1965), p.425. Sir Henry Lucy, in 'Buff and Blue', Cornhill (Jan.1922), p.69, states that in 1817 the Edinburgh Review reached its circulation peak of 13,500 copies.

to know that the stated cover price of 2/6, and the trade price of 2/-, are indeed correct, but that less credence should be attached to the claim that the editor and his publisher each received about £4,000 per annum from the venture.⁵⁸

The readership of Blackwood's was, of course, considerably in excess of the 6,000 or so copies printed monthly. Multiple readership was widely practised for the newspapers of the period, when the 'taxes on knowledge' were at their peak, and although monthlies and quarterlies escaped the excise stamp, the nature of their contents made them appropriate to be passed on to friends, or kept on the tables of libraries and reading-rooms. By 1824, it would seem that the readership of Blackwood's was evenly divided between England and Scotland.⁵⁹ One change, of significance to the study of Blackwood's political articles, which occurred at the end of February 1825, was that instead of coming out on the twentieth of the month named on the cover, the Magazine was ready for publication at the end of the month prior to that appearing on the cover, and was officially published on the first day of the new month.⁶⁰

The appeal of Blackwood's Magazine was undoubtedly enhanced by the advent of the Noctes Ambrosianae. Between

58 This claim (p.88), already inflated more than tenfold as regards Wilson (taking him, as the author of the piece, to be 'Christopher North'), is further inflated, by some spuriously precise corrections, to yield £6,000 per annum to him, and nearly £5,000 to Blackwood. The principle behind this detailed fantasy seems to be that of Samuel Butler: 'I do not mind lying, but I hate inaccuracy.'

59 Letter from David Robinson to W. Blackwood, 31 Aug.1824, NLS, MS 4013, f.81.

60 The numbers for February and March 1825 were published at the same time: brief note on reverse of title-page.

March 1822 and February 1835, a total of 71 dialogues appeared in the Magazine, under the heading Noctes Ambrosianae. They purported to be accounts of conversations amongst the principal contributors to Blackwood's, and their friends, refreshing themselves in Ambrose's Tavern with hearty meals and even heartier drinking, and talking deep into the night. The first 23 pieces in the series were the work, in about equal measure, of Lockhart, Maginn and Wilson.⁶¹ With the departure to London of Lockhart and Maginn, the Noctes came more completely (but not entirely) into the hands of John Wilson. In their range, wit and vitality, and especially in the part-representation and part-invention of the character of the Ettrick Shepherd, they represent Wilson's greatest achievement in his periodical writing. The appeal of the Noctes was one factor in the steadily-growing circulation of Blackwood's in the late 1820s and early 1830s. A.L. Strout suggests that they were the most popular serial publication before the 'Pickwick Papers'.⁶² They could, on occasion, serve as a vehicle for political comment, perhaps reaching some less serious readers who skipped the political articles. This facet of the Noctes will receive occasional notice here.

In the closing stages of his proprietorship, William Blackwood began to attend to the arrangements for his succession. As regards the leaving of a son and heir, he had, if anything, over-provided himself. He had seven sons and two daughters; their ages, at the time of his death in September 1834, ranging from 28 down to eleven.⁶³ Three

61 A.L. Strout, 'The First Twenty-Three Numbers of the Noctes Ambrosianae,' The Library (June 1957), pp.108-118.

62 Ibid. p.108.

63 See family tree, Appendix I.

of the sons were to make their careers in India, (one indeed was already there), another became a Writer to the Signet in Edinburgh, and a fifth, John, was still at school.

The task of running the publishing house and the Magazine thus devolved clearly upon the two oldest brothers, Alexander and Robert. William Blackwood carefully prepared his sons to take over his responsibilities. In his annual visits to London, around Easter, to meet metropolitan contributors and other useful contacts, Blackwood began to take either Alexander or Robert with him, leaving the other brother to 'mind the store' in Edinburgh. Thus in 1831 Robert accompanied his father, meeting Lockhart, Croker and regular contributors, while Alexander took responsibility for the Edinburgh end. In 1833 the roles were reversed. Such visits provided valuable experience, although at some financial cost. In 1829, for example, when Alexander accompanied his father, the table of expenses was as follows:⁶⁴

	£	s	d
By Tickets in Steam Boat to and from London	20	-	-
By expences on board " " " "	3	10	-
By Bill at Somerset (Hotel)	22	4	-
By Expences in London	8	17	6
	<hr/>		
	£ 54	11	6
	<hr/>		

The Magazine continued to do well commercially in this period. Indeed, William Blackwood claimed in a letter to M.T. Sadler, M.P., that his Magazine was outselling the Edinburgh Review.⁶⁵ In a political article in May 1831, Archibald Alison remarked that 'there are nearly 9000 copies of this Journal sold every month,' (p.757). The authorship

64 NLS, Acc.5644, A2, 24 April 1829.

65 24 Sept. 1830, NLS, Acc.5643, B9, f.72.

and location of this claim make it more worthy of credence than if it had occurred in one of John Wilson's flights of fancy, although it may be suggested that the real figure was probably closer to 8000 than to 9000. Writing to his son William, in India, in 1833 and 1834, Blackwood refers to the Magazine's sales keeping on 'flourishingly' and 'most flourishingly'.⁶⁶

Corroborating evidence of the success of the Magazine can be seen in the adoption of a clearer, more elegant type face, from November 1829, and in the acquisition of handsome new premises, at 45 George Street, in April 1830. The purchase price was 3500 guineas, and Blackwood expected to spend up to £1500 in alterations.⁶⁷ The range and quality of the contributions to the Magazine touched new heights. A notable example was the number for March 1832. An extensive review by John Wilson of a pamphlet on 'The Present Balance of Parties in the State' was followed by a lengthy discussion of the Belgian question by Archibald Alison. The causes of the Bristol riots were discussed, with first-hand knowledge, by John Eagles, and then came literary and travel pieces by William Godwin, James White and Samuel Warren. Next, T.P. Courtenay (writing in his own name) contributed a well-informed comparison of Castlereagh and Canning. Courtenay, who had dealt with Canning as Secretary to the Indian Board of Control, maintained that policy-differences between the two Foreign Secretaries had been overstated, 'and particularly that Lord Castlereagh did not systematically suppress, nor

66 27 Jan. 1833, quoted in Annals, II, 107; and 2 May 1834, NLS, Acc.5643, B10, f.359.

67 Letter to William Blackwood (jnr), 12 April 1829, quoted in Annals, II, 88.

Mr. Canning systematically support, liberal and popular institutions in other countries', (p.520), an interpretation that has come to be generally accepted. The European-wide scale of the Magazine's interests was emphasised by the next two articles, one on the Papal government,⁶⁸ and the other on Chateaubriand. A political article by William Johnston concluded a number of remarkable richness. As the Reform Bill crisis abated, and as the Whigs became more firmly entrenched in office, the emphasis in the Magazine began to move away from the political side towards the literary. Where there had often been three or more articles on current political questions, the monthly numbers were more likely, from the middle of 1832, to contain only two.⁶⁹ Serialised fiction, and travel-writings, two of the staples of the modern 'Maga', became more in evidence, with historical-biographical subjects also well represented.

In William Blackwood's final years, two serious rivals to his Magazine were launched: Fraser's in 1830 and Tait's in 1832. Although Tait's was published in Edinburgh and attracted the talented services of De Quincey for a time, Fraser's was the greater threat. Where Tait's was Whig in politics and broadly non-partisan on its literary side, Fraser's succeeded in achieving the hitherto unique Blackwood's admixture of independent Toryism and irreverent criticism. The explanation for the success lay in the driving spirit behind Fraser's, the brilliant, renegade William Maginn, once of Blackwood's. Where

68 This was originally attributed by Wellesley to Stendhal (entry 1044), but corrected to the credit of Croly.

69 Political articles numbered (approximately) 46 in 1831, 25 in 1833, and 23 in 1835.

Blackwood's had 'Christopher North', Fraser's had 'Oliver Yorke'. Where Blackwood's rejoiced in the nickname of 'Maga', Fraser's styled itself 'Regina', the queen of magazines. Both were Tory, both were imbued with strong social compassion, both juxtaposed the informative and the critical, the scholarly and the personal, the polemical and the mischievous. William Blackwood's initial reaction was one of fury rather than of anxiety.

Fraser's Magazine is a very disgusting affair. I did not think it possible that Maginn could have so far degraded himself. He is the very last man who should have written the vile stuff which appears in that production. The leading object seems to be to provoke Maga to notice it in some way or other but the thing is too contemptible.⁷⁰

The response of the ultra-Tory Morning Journal, however, boded ill for Blackwood's London market.

Why should there not be a genuine 'maga' in the south, especially so since the influence of the metaphysical Mister William Hazlitt, and of the yellow-breeched divinity of Cockaigne, is palpably and notoriously on the wane, and, as we opine, about to set for ever?⁷¹

Although the claim, in Fraser's, that the circulation, after one year of publication, had reached 8700 copies deserves to be treated with scepticism, it can at least be suggested that the advent of Fraser's checked the growth in Blackwood's London sales.

William Blackwood experienced further aggravation from another periodical, this time one of his own enterprises. He became involved in publishing a weekly newspaper in Edinburgh, the Chronicle,⁷² in 1830-1. The printer and

70 Blackwood to W. Johnston, 25 May 1830, NLS, Acc.5643, B9,f.27.

71 Morning Journal, 1 March 1830, review of Fraser's.

72 This newspaper is obscure even by the standards of failed newspapers. All the information given here comes from the Blackwood Papers.

editor John Johnstone, wrote to him on 23 January 1831, offering excuses for delays in printing and assurances of his commitment to the enterprise. Indeed, Johnstone went so far as to promise that he would forfeit five guineas for each future deadline-failure, if empowered to reject late, long communications.⁷³ In a further letter, on 28 January, Johnstone pleaded with Blackwood to give the paper a fair period of trial before abandoning it. He also complained that Blackwood's connexions had not led to much assistance in the literary or local news departments. One capable contributor whom Blackwood did recruit was William Johnston, who sent occasional contributions to the Chronicle, by way of Blackwood himself.⁷⁴ Johnston's good nature was also tried by the printer, as he complained to Blackwood:

I was vexed with the printing of the last letter in the Chronicle, which appears not to have been corrected at all, and is consequently absurd and unintelligible.⁷⁵

Two days earlier, Blackwood had written to the printer in his sternest tone, rebuking Johnstone for 'tardiness and procrastination' and seeing no purpose in continuing a newspaper which was so inefficiently managed.⁷⁶ A further letter gave Johnstone an ultimatum: he should either take over the whole concern himself or empower Blackwood to find a replacement for him.⁷⁷ Another ultimatum followed, a few days later: as Johnstone was manifestly incapable of effecting the first alternative, he was given 48 hours

73 NLS, MS 4030, f.55.

74 NLS, MS 4027 (1830), passim.

75 31 Jan. 1831, NLS, MS 4030, f.20.

76 29 Jan. 1831, NLS, Acc.5643, B9, f.124.

77 14 Feb. 1831, loc.cit., f.131

to accept an offer from Blackwood to take over his share, including the printing materials, otherwise Blackwood would simply dispose of the business.⁷⁸ A subsequent request to Johnstone for a statement of account⁷⁹ would suggest that the printer received some recompense. The implication of a letter from Johnstone in 1833 is that the two men disposed of their interests in the Chronicle to a third party.⁸⁰

The political situation at this time must have added to William Blackwood's ill humour. In 1832, writing to William Johnston, he bemoaned the state of the Tory party.

It is really lamentable to think that there is such a want of concert and vigour. Peel is I fear to be the curse of the country, for I doubt he is more than half a liberal and will therefore never be a proper leader in the House of Commons, for attacks upon Free Trade, and the Anti-Colonial System of the Whigs should be the chief engines in pulling down the Ministry.

81

In the year of his death, Blackwood was still troubled by the 'sad lack of proper spirit and feeling' in the party.⁸² Blackwood's correspondence with politicians in these later years reveals a significant contrast with the letters which he wrote to Tory ministers in the early and mid-1820s. Now his correspondents belonged to the ultra-Tory wing of the party: Sir Richard Vyvyan, M.T. Sadler and the Duke of Newcastle. Letters from Vyvyan in 1829 complimented Blackwood

78 19 Feb. 1831, loc.cit., f.140.

79 14 April 1831, loc.cit., f.167.

80 28 Oct. 1833, NLS, MS 4036.

81 26 Oct. 1832, NLS, Acc.5643, B9, f.551.

82 Blackwood to W. Johnston, 25 April 1834, NLS, Acc.5643, B10, f.355.

on the constancy and perceptiveness of the Magazine's political articles, and acknowledged that 'you do stand alone, maintaining the cause of truth against a host of weak or base men who attempt to sway the public mind through the periodical press ...'⁸³ M.T. Sadler, in 1828, considered a request to contribute to the Magazine as being 'the highest and most decisive compliment paid me,' a compliment to which he had been unable to respond, being preoccupied with a work on population and poverty. Whilst Sadler was obviously looking for a favourable review of his newly-published work, it is worthy of note that he attributed the genesis of his ideas on poor law policy to an early article in Blackwood's.⁸⁴ Sadler continued to elude Blackwood as a contributor, despite a further overture from the publisher in 1830.⁸⁵ The Duke of Newcastle proved a more constant friend. Writing from Clumber on 10 January 1829, the Duke thanked Blackwood for his 'persevering and spirited exertions in favour of all that is right.'⁸⁶ Another warmly complimentary letter came from Clumber on 28 December 1832, acknowledging receipt of an article about to appear in the Magazine.

I read this article with extreme pleasure, I read it aloud to my family still farther to confirm my children in the principles which it inculcates, and to incite them to actions worthy of them. I never read anything more calculated to do good in the manner of all others the most desirable, nor can I imagine anything better suited to these extraordinary

83 28 May and 22 June, 1829, NLS, MS 4026, f.210 and f.212.

84 4 April 1828, NLS, MS 4023, f.73 (The article in question was probably a short piece on 'Poor Rates' in April 1819).

85 24 Sept. 1830, NLS, Acc.5643, B9, f.72.

86 NLS, MS 4024, f.51.

times.⁸⁷

The Duke's compliments, and the offer to send a print of himself to Blackwood, drew equally warm expressions of thanks from the publisher. Blackwood wrote proudly to his son William with the news, remarking, 'if we had more men like him, the country would soon recover.'⁸⁸ The Duke was also ready to use his good offices to arrange an introduction for Blackwood to meet one of the most revered figures in their mutual sphere of politics - Lord Eldon. Sadly, because Blackwood became indisposed during his last visit to London, a few weeks later, the meeting had to be cancelled.⁸⁹ The sincere regard in which the Duke held the publisher can be seen in the entry in his diary at the time of Blackwood's death:

Blackwood the honest and loyal bookseller is dead - he is a very great loss.⁹⁰

The obituary in the Magazine was written by J.G. Lockhart. Allowing for the location, and for the conventions of such notices, Lockhart's assessment of his former employer still carries conviction, when judged alongside the mass of William Blackwood's correspondence which has been examined in preparing the present study. Part of Lockhart's assessment may therefore serve as a concluding appraisal here.

His opinion was on all occasions distinctly expressed - his questions were ever explicit - his answers conclusive. His sincerity might sometimes be considered as rough,

- 87 NLS, MS4032, f.89. Also quoted in Annals, II, 106, but with the wrong date and some words omitted. (The article must have been Alison's 'Future Balance of Parties'.)
- 88 9 Feb. 1833, NLS, Acc.5643, B10, f.79.
- 89 Eldon to Blackwood, 4 May, 1833, NLS, MS4037, f.50.
- 90 Newcastle MSS, Ne2 F4, f.311.

but no human being ever accused him either of flattering or of shuffling; and those men of letters who were in frequent communication with him, soon conceived a respect and confidence for him, which, save in a very few instances, ripened into cordial regard and friendship ... He dealt by parties exactly as he did by individuals. Whether his principles were right or wrong, they were his, and he never compromised or complimented away one tittle of them.⁹¹

Alexander and Robert Blackwood took over the business, fortified not only by their previous experience but by the advice of Thomas Cadell, their London agent. Cadell made some sound recommendations to the brothers in a letter sent on 7 October 1834:

The plan to be adopted in general as regards the Magazine, will I conceive be an adherence to its present political spirit, not to be too meagre in piquant articles of a miscellaneous nature, to give occasional pieces of good poetry, and to steer clear of personality and scurrility.⁹²

Cadell went on to emphasise the importance of maintaining the Magazine's standard in the coming months, when rival periodicals and Whig and radical newspapers would be looking for signs of decline. Another source of good advice was John Dickinson, the paper maker, who was both a business associate and a family friend.⁹³ The respective roles of the two brothers overlapped at the time, and have caused some confusion since. Mrs. Oliphant contradicts herself. Her first version (II, 139) has the brothers operating in different departments - 'Alexander, the more literary; Robert, the more energetic and enterprising in

91 Maga, Oct. 1834, pp.571-2.

92 NLS, MS 4038, f.131.

93 Annals, II, 246.

in all things connected with the trade.' Later, however, (II, 215) Mrs. Oliphant came to see things differently:

Whether the letters were addressed to Alexander or Robert mattered nothing: there does not seem, so far as the business was concerned, to be anything visible even of that division of labour which is usually thought convenient in such circumstances. My own impression was, that Alexander had more of the intellectual work and Robert of the business transactions. But I do not find my surmise to be founded on reality. As a matter of fact, they were one...

Mrs. Oliphant's second impression seems closer to the truth.

(Had she lived to revise her second volume, perhaps she might have edited out the first impression.) Not only is there a considerable interchange in the correspondence, but Alexander's bouts of ill health obliged Robert to take full responsibility on occasion. Alexander became ill with asthma in 1835, and more seriously so in 1836. On medical advice, he spent the autumn and winter of 1836-7 in Italy. It may well be, however, that Alexander's inclinations lay more to the literary side. It is interesting to note that when Alexander died in 1845, the younger brother John, rather than Robert, is recorded as becoming editor of the Magazine.⁹⁴ Evidence of Robert's preference for the managerial side can be seen in his acquisition of a newspaper, the Berwick Warder, which he attempted to invigorate, with the aid of leading articles from a capable London journalist, Samuel Phillips.⁹⁵

94 DNB., entry for John Blackwood. Also, John's gravestone, in the Old Calton Burial Ground, Edinburgh, records him as having been 'Editor of Blackwood's Magazine for 33 years'. He died in 1879, which would take the date back to 1846.

95 Annals, II, 311.

Both brothers were concerned to maintain the standard of the Magazine's political coverage. Alexander expressed his anxieties about the paucity of capable contributors in this sphere, in a letter to Robert in June 1836. Robert, however, took a more confident view in a letter which he wrote to his brother in September, pointing out that political articles were pending from Croly, Alison and Mallalieu.⁹⁶ Commercially the Magazine continued, at first, to maintain its position, and even a fire at the Edinburgh warehouse, where large quantities of back numbers were kept, ultimately proved of financial advantage. After some debate with the insurers about how saleable such back numbers really were, agreement was reached on a figure of £2,000 compensation. 'It is a good bargain for us,' Robert informed his brother.⁹⁷ An important development in 1840 was the acquisition of their own London premises, rather than continuing to operate through the office of Thomas Cadell (Cadell himself having died). Apart from marking a further advance in the standing of 'William Blackwood and Sons', the London premises, at 22 Pall Mall, provided the opportunity for a third brother, John, then aged only 21, to show his mettle. He was given charge of the London end, and Alexander informed him that he would immediately be brought into the partnership, his share value to be enhanced as the London business increased.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ NLS, MS 4042, f.90 and f.118.

⁹⁷ 7 March 1837, NLS, MS 4044, f.48.

⁹⁸ 18 Nov. 1840, NLS, MS 4050, f.157.

John brought to the family business, not only his lively personal qualities, but a very useful contact, his friend J.T. Delane. In 1840 the two shared lodgings in St. James's Square,⁹⁹ Delane having recently left Oxford to take a junior position on the staff of The Times. The death of Thomas Barnes in 1841 was to prove an even greater opportunity for the young Delane (then aged only 23) than the opening of the Pall Mall branch proved for John Blackwood. As editor of The Times, Delane could acquaint John Blackwood with items of political gossip (although exercising due caution about the timing of his disclosures), and he could provide space for occasional citations of Blackwood's Magazine in The Times.¹⁰⁰ One one occasion, however, Delane republished an item before the Magazine had been officially published, to John's mingled annoyance and pride:

I was perfectly astounded when I saw the Times this morⁿ. - I only gave the article to Delane yesterday afternoon & he (sic) dined together at the Parthenon so it was not at the office until past nine - I am further annoyed that he should have put in so nearly the whole of it. He was here today & says it took the place of the President's message which he had been calculating upon & that he had told them to cut out more. As it is however it is a famous specimen of how we commence the year.¹⁰¹

Five years later, shortly before John began to concentrate upon the Edinburgh rather than the London end of the business, he was still in regular contact with Delane, and still in receipt of well-informed political disclosures:

I had a long talk with John Delane yesterday, he is confident as ever that Peel is going to repeal the Corn Laws bodily. He says that everybody will be so

99 E. Cook, Delane of The Times, (1915), p.10.

100 NLS, MS 4054, passim, esp. f.104, f.134 and f.154.

101 John to Alex. 28 December 1841, NLS, MS 4054, f.241.

staggered by the extent of the scheme that many people will not know on which side to vote.¹⁰²

The financial records of the firm are more ample in the period of the brothers than in the time of William Blackwood. They can be used to produce a fairly comprehensive account of the income and expenditure generated by the publication of a monthly periodical in this period. The massive Publication Ledger,¹⁰³ covering the years 1838-47, gives a monthly breakdown of the printing costs of the Magazine. In 1838-9 they averaged around £270-£280 per month¹⁰⁴ - amounting to £3,320 for the year. The next largest item of expenditure was the payment of contributors. For the fifteen-month period from 26 March 1845 to 27 June 1846, the total¹⁰⁵ came to £2173: that is, about £145 per month, or £1740 per year. Other expenses, including carriage, advertising of the Magazine, and advertisement duty, added about £1400 to the debit side.¹⁰⁶ These figures give a total on the outgoings side of about £6460 per annum. The income side was dominated by the sales of current numbers, yielding (for July 1838 - June 1839) £7338, with a further sum of £131 from the sale of back numbers, supplemented by revenue from advertising amounting to £1381, to yield a grand total of £8,850. The apparent annual profit (for 1838-9) of about £2,400 needs to be offset by unstated sums for depreciation on premises and equipment, but the financial

102 John to Robert, 14 Jan. 1846, NLS, MS 4077, f.280.

103 NLS, Acc.5644, F2.

104 For a detailed statement of one typical month's costs, see Appendix IV.

105 Cash Ledger, NLS, Acc.5644, B2.

106 For more precise details, see Appendix V.

position looked very healthy. During the 1840s, however, the Magazine's circulation fell. The major reduction of the printing-run occurred in July 1843, when the main printing fell from 7,000 copies to 6,000, with the extra printing (probably for back-numbers) adding a further 439 copies, to produce a grand total of 6,439, as against the previous monthly total of nearly 7,500 copies.¹⁰⁷ The new figure was held (with a slight drop of about 100 copies from January 1844) until January 1847, when there was a further reduction by 300 copies, to leave a total printing of just over 6,000 copies, as against the 7,500 copies in the early 1840s. The annual balance sheets are consistent with this reduction, showing a fall in printing costs, in sales revenue, in advertising revenue received, and in advertising duty paid. Further corroboration comes from the decline in London sales to be traced in the figures given by John Blackwood in his letters to his brothers.¹⁰⁸ Although this downward movement must have been a disappointment, after the steady growth in the 1820s and 1830s, the Magazine remained profitable, and the capital value of the publishing house had become very substantial, as the data assembled for the income tax return indicates.¹⁰⁹

In this later period, the circulation pattern probably showed a ratio of 2:1 in favour of English as against Scottish sales (compared with a roughly equal balance in the early years), reflecting the wider range of the Magazine's contents. Irish sales (almost certainly confined

107 Publication Ledger, NLS, Acc.5644, F2

108 See Appendix VI.

109 See Appendix VII.

to the protestant community) amounted to perhaps 500 copies. In addition, a colonial edition was launched (first recorded as an item in the publication ledger on 31 December 1843), initially taking a print-run of 1,000 copies, but soon settling down to a figure of 350 copies monthly. Here lay the origins of one of the future strengths of the Magazine, appealing to expatriates in the Indian civil service and in other professions and trades in the colonies. This loyal following was one factor in the longevity of Blackwood's Magazine, enabling it to last for 163 years.

The year 1846 marked something of a turning-point in the history of the Magazine, as it did in the history of the political party which, in its own way, Blackwood's had championed. John Blackwood, who, more than any of his brothers, inherited his father's qualities of vigorous enterprise and literary discrimination, returned to Edinburgh after the death of Alexander Blackwood. Robert Blackwood's last major contributions to the running of the firm were the superintending of the move into new London premises, 37 Paternoster Row, from 31 July 1845, and the installation of printing equipment at the Edinburgh premises, in the latter part of 1846, so that the Magazine could, for the first time, be printed by the publishing firm. Not long afterwards, Robert's health gave way, and he ceased to take any active part in running the business about two years before his death in 1852.¹¹⁰ The beginning of the John Blackwood era also marked the approaching end of John

110 Annals, II, 417. The implication of a letter from John Wilson to Alexander Blair is that Robert had some form of mental breakdown. See Swann, op.cit., pp.236-8.

Wilson's long connection with the Magazine. Wilson's contributions had been very infrequent since 1840, and, after an attempt to recapture something of the character of the Noctes Ambrosianae in a series entitled Dies Boreales, in 1849-52, the stream of literary outpourings finally dried up. No other writer had done so much to give Blackwood's Magazine its distinctive character, and there was no one to match him when it came to filling-out a number of the Magazine, with the printing-deadline only hours away and a sheet still to be completed (though it must be said that Wilson was as likely as any to be to blame for the emergency). Giving Wilson all due credit, however, the weighty evidence of the Blackwood Papers does confirm the somewhat sternly-worded judgement of Robert Blackwood, writing about Wilson's role to the manager of the London office:

He never had any responsibility for what appeared in the Magazine, except his own contributions and poetical criticisms. The publishers always had, and ever will have, so long as it bears the name of 'Blackwood's Magazine', the sole and undivided responsibility of everything that appears in the work; while at the same time they will ever acknowledge with the liveliest gratitude the powerful and efficient aid of distinguished individuals in very trying times.¹¹¹

111 10 July 1847, quoted in Annals, II, 416. c.f. the broadly corroborating correspondence on this subject between Wilson and Alexander Blair, quoted in Swann, op.cit., pp.236-8.

CHAPTER THREEGEORGE CROLY AND DAVID ROBINSON

During its first two years, Blackwood's Magazine did not have a regular political writer. Articles on political, social and economic topics were generally short, and diverse in scope. In the third volume,¹ for instance, there were pieces (with page-lengths) on the poor laws (4½), Germany (6), farm servants (4), the qualifications of a Speaker of the House of Commons (5), tithes (4), criminology (2), a report on the poor in Scotland (3), public opinion in 1792 (7), commercial statistics in the Pacific (6), and the state of parties (8). Only the last of these had any political bite.

The most interesting article in the fourth volume was a 'Letter on the Present State of Administration,' by J.G. Lockhart.² The article eulogised Burke and Pitt, especially for their stand against the French Revolution. As for the Ministers of the day, they 'have arisen from Pitt's grave like stock-shoots from a felled oak,' but, for all their merits, 'they are yet rather a body of ministers than an administration.'³ They were too fragmented in their departments, too bound up with their official dependents, and too torpid in peacetime. Pitt would have

1 For the correlation of volume numbers and dates henceforth, please see the key in Appendix II.

2 Attributions for articles appearing before 1824 are based on Strout, Bib., and from 1824 on Wellesley I.

3 Maga, Nov. 1818, p.204.

taken the initiative in domestic improvement and not allowed 'the Tierneys and the Broughams' to make the running.

He who would not consent to repair his house in the hurricane, would have set about the task with energy so soon as the sky was calm above his head.
(p.204)

Ministers had shown 'a passive and temporizing character,' and had weakly given ear to experiments advocated from the other side of the House. Yet the writer retained confidence in them as the saviours of Europe, hoping for a display of similar energy in peacetime.

This piece is of unusual interest, both as a rare instance of serious political discussion in the early Blackwood's, and for the critical tone adopted towards the Tory government. It was felt necessary to insert a postscript from the 'Editor'.

We are far from wishing it to be understood that the tenour of the above letter is wholly consistent with our views. We have inserted it because we wish our pages to be open to free discussion on every subject; and because it is the production of one whose opinions, whatever they may be, are entitled to be listened to with respect. (p.206)

This open policy did allow, in the early years at least, for political contributions not only by non-Tories but even by self-styled Whigs. In December 1819, and in February and April 1820, three articles appeared by 'a liberal Whig' with the pen-name of 'Metrodorus,' (J.H. Merivale). The first of these prompted an editorial interjection:

The above is one of about thirty letters that we have received within the last quarter of a year, containing criticisms on us and on our Journal. We have selected it from the rest on account of its sense, liveliness, and spirit - and can scarcely believe it possible that Metrodorus can be a Whig... The number of Whigs who write to us is quite astonishing

- some in sorrow, some in anger, and some in fear. One or two have tried contempt in the beginning of a letter, but have terminated it in evident consternation.⁴

The most interesting set of political articles in the Magazine, before the advent of Croly in November 1820, was the series by 'The Warder,' beginning in November 1819 and continuing regularly until April 1820, with an eighth 'Warder' being contributed by Croly himself in March 1821. Although written from a more partisan standpoint than 'Metrodorus', their chief target was the radicals, with additional fire being directed against those Whigs who expressed sympathy with radicals, in such matters as the Peterloo affair. The identity of the Warder remains a mystery that has baffled even A.L. Strout. In his Bibliography (p.61) Strout suggests two possibilities: Mr. Russell, who wrote an article on 'The State of Parties', in the number for September, 1818, or J.G. Lockhart. A careful check of the letter-book in the months immediately before and during the main 'Warder' period revealed no reference to the 'Warder' - although relatively few letters had been recorded in any case. On the admittedly unsatisfactory grounds of negative evidence, it could be suggested that the writer was 'in house', which perhaps points to Lockhart. Also, it is unlikely that an outside contributor would have been treated to the discourtesy of having the final article in the series entrusted to another writer - Croly.

⁴ Maga, Dec. 1819, p.290.

George Croly

Of the six contributors selected for special attention in this study, the first to write regularly on political topics was the Rev. George Croly. He became one of the great stalwarts of Blackwood's Magazine, contributing over three hundred articles, from his first, in November 1820, to his last, in March 1856. Mrs. Oliphant observes of Croly, and another long-serving clerical contributor, the Rev. G.R. Gleig:

They were not, perhaps, of the sparkling or brilliant order, like those whose performances made the reputation and founded the fortunes of the Magazine, but they were most useful and able workmen, doing yeomen's service, always faithful, always ready, and gaining much applause and a steady little thread of income ...⁵

Dependability and versatility were indeed the hallmarks of Croly, who could turn his hand to prose or poetry, politics or fiction, criticism or biography, as the mood took him, or as the occasion demanded.⁶ In the number for February 1828, Croly contributed five pieces. Three were brief items on 'The burning of Indian widows', 'Sentiment', and 'Inclosure Bills'. A slightly longer piece dealt with 'Mr. Wilmot Horton and Emigration', and the main article, of thirteen pages, denounced the new Wellington administration for being founded on 'the principles of Whiggism'. Such proliferation raises at once the question of whether this was merely 'hack'

⁵ Annals, I, 478.

⁶ For a survey of the full range of Croly's work, see the introduction to W.R. Thompson's doctoral thesis, 'The Letters of George Croly to Wm. Blackwood and his Sons', 2 vols (Texas Technological College, 1957). Dr. Thompson did not study the letters from Blackwood to Croly, nor does he discuss the content of the articles which occasioned the correspondence.

journalism, or serious periodical writing. Certainly Croly was not proud of all his publications, and wrote slightly to Blackwood of his contributions to other journals. Against this, however, it can be argued that Croly had a distorted perception of where his real merit lay. The recognition which he craved as a clergyman, a theologian and a poet, was never fully accorded to him, yet his anonymous work for Blackwood's Magazine helped to sustain that periodical throughout its greatest period.

George Croly was born in Dublin on 17 August 1780, the son of a physician, with ancestral roots in the north of Ireland. Entering Trinity College, Dublin, he showed proficiency as a classical scholar, winning the Berkeley gold medal for Greek. He also became a forceful public speaker. His family had intended him for the bar, but he preferred to study for the Church and took holy orders in 1804. Sent to a curacy in northern Ireland, he began to fret at the lack of prospects for advancement. In 1810, accompanied by his sisters and widowed mother, he departed for London. Unable to obtain preferment, he earned a living by his pen. Croly contributed to The Times, the New Times and the Literary Gazette.⁷ His pieces included dramatic criticism and, apparently, foreign correspondence, if the memory of Henry Crabb Robinson is to be trusted. Meeting Croly at dinner in 1854, Robinson recorded in his diary:

The Doctor is a character. I met him at Walter's some thirty years ago or more, when I was requested to give him some hints about being The Times correspondent

⁷ Croly's wife, Helen, whom he married in 1819, had contributed poetry to the Literary Gazette.

at Paris. Walter asking what I thought of his friend, I said: 'Had I met him in the evening in a retired spot I should have fallen on my knees and said: "Take my money and spare my life."' He has a large person and a fierce physiognomy pitted with the smallpox, and a loud voice ... Pride will have a fall, at least, I think so. In fact, he has been a literary adventurer. He and I sparred and talked freely ... He is growing deaf and is a discontented man - a general fault-finder.⁸

This unflattering characterisation seems to typify the recorded impressions of Croly's acquaintances.⁹

David Lindsay, in a letter to William Blackwood, probably late in 1825, remarked,

I have seen Croly too - and think with many others, how much the manner spoils the man - what makes the fellow walk so desperately, and constantly upon stilts? - he is too great to be so little, as his absurd assumption of aristocratical manners makes him appear. He has I believe the passion of poor Congreve, disliking any respect to his talents, and only seeking it in quality of a Gentleman.¹⁰

It was Croly's talents, rather than his social pretensions, that interested Blackwood. A favourable review, by Lockhart, of Croly's 'The Angel of the World',

8 D. Hudson (ed.), The Diary of Henry Crabb Robinson (1967), entry for 12-23 September, 1854.

9 If the physical description is correct, it brings out the irony in another version, by William Maginn, in Fraser's Magazine for May 1830. An article entitled, 'The Election of Editor for Fraser's Magazine', described in burlesque tone how various aspirants to the editorship delivered their own nomination-speeches. 'Mr. Croly then stood, a "cherub tall", on the top of Mr. Soane's Egyptian capital; and they who are conversant with the physiognomy of the gentleman will alone be able to conceive what benignant suavity struggled through every pore of his face, and fell, like beams of holiest light, upon the upturned countenances...' (p.499).

10 Quoted in A.L. Strout, 'Knights of the Burning Epistle', Studia Neophilologica, (Uppsala) XXVI (1953/4), p.97.

in the Magazine for October 1820, gave Blackwood the opportunity to make contact. On 25 October, he wrote, in very respectful terms, to Croly, thanking him for the 'beautiful verses', received through B.W. Procter, and inviting contributions both in poetry and in prose, at the usual rate of ten guineas per sheet.¹¹ Croly replied on 7 November, thanking Blackwood for the review, and adding,

As to prose contributions - it will give me pleasure to take any share in assisting the principles which your valuable work supports.¹²

Croly wasted no time in making good his offer. His article on 'The Queen's Trial' appeared in the November issue. It was warmly praised by Blackwood, although he had to point out,

My editor desires me to say that he hopes you will not be displeased with the few sentences he has concluded the article with. We are most anxious that you should continue to give us a political article every month, and I need hardly add that whatever you may send, whether political or miscellaneous will always be most acceptable.¹³

Croly proudly reported that the article had been quoted in the New Times and the Morning Post. He fully approved of the editorial addition although he did tactfully suggest,

In future - perhaps it will be more convenient - for the purpose of distinguishing the Editor's peculiar remarks from those of the Correspondent - to let some signature remain, - & affix the remarks below the signature. This saves us both from mingling opinions, which, tho' they agree perfectly in the present instance, might, by possibility, differ at another time.¹⁴

11 NLS, Acc.5643, B1, ff.172-3.

12 NLS, MS4005, f.31.

13 23 Nov. 1820, NLS, Acc.5643, B1, f.179.

14 5 Dec. 1820, NLS, MS4005, f.35.

So began a relationship in which Croly promptly established himself as the political mainstay of Blackwood's Magazine. Within the next three years he had contributed some twenty political articles (allowing for some doubtful attributions).¹⁵ The second of these pieces, 'Domestic Politics', (a common title for Croly's articles), published in the issue for December 1820, has been selected for close scrutiny here. It reveals several characteristic features of Croly's political writing. The article is headed by a quotation from Coriolanus.

It is a purposed thing, and grows by plot,
to curb the will of the nobility:-
Suffer't, and live with such as cannot rule,
Nor ever will be ruled.

The opening paragraph would not be ill-placed as the utterance of one of Shakespeare's patricians. Croly asserts that the tide has turned against Queen Caroline.

The impulse of vehement faction will always make some impression on the vast and fluctuating expanse of the public mind, but its mightier movements are obedient to laws from no temporary authority; and it is never stirred in its mass, but by an influence beyond the sphere of our low, intemperate, human passions. (p.329).

The Queen is depicted as the puppet of faction, giving some shadow of royal authority to the actions of malevolent men.

The junction of the Queen's cause with that of the radicals, makes both the fitter objects for administrative vigilance. Radicalism is subversion, total excision and overthrow, - the substitution, not of one order of polity for another, but an utter destruction of the present state of things ... (p.329).

Croly uses irony and metaphor in his depiction of impatient radicals.

15 For details, see Strout, Bib., pp.143-4.

The processes of nature are too slow for the rapid intelligence of revolution. Their harvest must be raised from a soil which has never been polluted by the ignorant husbandry of past generations. They will not dip their plough into the clay, unless it has been cleared by a general deluge. (p.329)

The organic metaphor recalls Burke, as does the distinction between the English and French characters, which Croly makes when commenting on the tactical error of the Queen's supporters in processing to St. Paul's cathedral.

The people of England are unwisely attempted by those who reason from their civil captiousness to their religious indifference. No demagogue has ever succeeded by adding the insult of religion to the insult of the laws. Fanaticism has done much, but atheism is not yet a passport to the errors even of the mob. England is not France. (p.330).

After giving vent to his bitter humour with regard to the Queen's entourage, for six further columns, Croly then raises the level of his discussion.

The old game of statesman against statesman is superseded... The legitimate trials of ability among the leaders of the great parties of the Legislature ... all this generous and stately contest has at least, for this time, come to a close. The danger has descended among the whole lower multitude, and has become only the more deadly... The mind of the realm is now to be summoned to stand upon the dykes, and repel the entrance of the rude and dreary element that now roars and beats round its boundaries. (p.334)

The notion of civilisation under threat from the rabble recalls Burke's 'swinish multitude', and the parallel with the era of the Reflections is conveyed more forcibly in the next paragraph.

The question is not whether Whig or Tory shall sit on the treasury bench, but whether we shall manfully, and by the exertion of our reason and strength, abate the nuisance of the state, or see the guillotine erected at Charing Cross? (p.334)

The real choice is no longer between groups of politicians of similar background, although with differing personal attributes - the temperate Castlereagh and the dignified

Liverpool versus the eloquent Canning and the vain and garrulous Brougham. Should the former persons be replaced by the latter, they in turn would be swiftly ousted from their places.

They would be leapt into, before they were cold, by the men of the dungeon - by hungry fraudulent bankruptcy - by rapine fresh from his chains - by haggard, insane, remorseless homicide. (p.336)

Croly then draws back from this awful vision to have some fun at the expense of Brougham, who had been discomfited by Cobbett in a libel case. The passage is doubly interesting, both in providing an example of the admiration - grudging, perhaps, but nonetheless sincere - which several Blackwood's writers had for Cobbett, and in revealing Croly's scorn for a politician in whose debt he came near to finding himself in later years.¹⁶ The article draws to a close with some approving remarks about the proposed formation of a 'Royal Society for the encouragement of Literature',¹⁷ and some disapproving comments about the Edinburgh Whigs, who had fraternised with 'the men of the Cowgate.' Croly ends with what became a recurrent theme of Blackwood's during the 1820s, that moderation in the face of the enemy could sometimes be overdone on the part of 'our friends the Tories (as they are absurdly enough called, for want of a better name) ...' (p.337).

In this article we have much of the quintessential Croly. There is the unyielding animosity towards democratic egalitarianism, deriving from Croly's consciousness of his own superiority, from his sense of history, particularly the history of the preceding thirty years, and from his

16 See below, p.71

17 Croly became a member of council of the RSL in 1823. Thompson, thesis, p.XV.

present disquiet at the gyrations of the mob. His vision of the guillotine at Charing Cross might be dismissed as absurd hyperbole. Certainly Cartwright, Cobbett and Hunt were far removed from Danton, Marat and Robespierre. It is worth observing, however, that the article was written in the year of the Cato Street conspiracy, and within vivid memory of more bloody antics across the Channel. The tactic of dismissing the Whigs as feeble-minded and deluded men, who, once in office, would be overborne by the radicals and the rabble, became a stock theme of Blackwood's in the 1820s. Croly is at his best in moving from the prejudices of the moment to wider political generalisation. Some of his pronouncements would not seem out of place in the writings of Burke, for whom Croly had an enduring admiration.¹⁸ By the same token, Croly, like his fellow alumnus of Trinity College, Dublin, exposed himself to the accusation of ruining his case by overstating it. There was a deep reservoir of sobriety and soundness between the froth of the Whigs and the dregs of the 'haggard, insane' beings whom Croly imagined to lurk directly below.

The quality of writing gives ample proof of Croly's classical education. Latin phrases are numerous - there are eight (including single words) in the final two pages. It reads somewhat incongruously to see Cobbett, the personification of John Bull, depicted as the radicals' 'clarum et venerabile nomen'. (p.336) Surprisingly, for someone of Croly's scholarly attainments, there is a misquotation. Some words from Juvenal (unattributed) are

18 In 1840, his life of Burke was republished in book form, having originally appeared as a series of articles in Blackwood's.

printed as

Nos, Fortuna,
Te Deum facimus, et caelo locamus. (p.335)

The correct rendering should be

Nos te,
Nos facimus, Fortuna, deam caeloque locamus.¹⁹

Amongst the deeper springs of Croly's thought was his commitment to the protestant side of the Anglican tradition. His Blackwood's colleague, Archibald Alison, remembered him as

a living type of the Protestant and Orange party in the north of Ireland... He was deeply imbued with the feelings and prejudices of the Irish Protestants, and on that account was by no means a safe guide to follow in political opinion... 20

Croly left Blackwood in no doubt of his position, when referring to a proposed measure for Catholic emancipation in April, 1821: 'I am a strong Anti-Catholic.'²¹ Later that month, Croly expanded on his attitude, explaining that he regarded popery as inimical to civil liberty, and protestantism as the bulwark of freedom.²² Even the proposed building of an Anglican cathedral in Liverpool was too much for Croly, who saw it as a useless project, evoking 'the idolatrous tricks or the pompous train' of the medieval prelacy.²³ He was hostile to Puseyism, and

19 Juvenal, Satires, X, 365-6. (Croly was probably quoting from memory. The faulty gender of the deity could be the mistake of the hapless printer who had to decipher Croly's script).

20 A. Alison, Some Account of my Life and Writings. An Autobiography, 2 vols (1883), II, 272-3.

21 NLS, MS4006, f.78.

22 loc.cit., f.82.

23 Maga, Jan. 1828, pp.90-1.

adopted a literal rather than a figurative treatment of the Scriptures. A more distinctive feature of his religious outlook was his preoccupation with the Apocalypse. In 1827 he asked Blackwood to insert a notice of his forthcoming work on the subject, 'The Apocalypse of St. John, or Prophecy of the Rise, progress and fall of the papacy - The Inquisition - The French Revolution - The Universal War; and the final triumph of Christianity.'²⁴ This attempt to read contemporary history into the Revelations of St. John was followed by Protestantism the Pole Star of England, and, in 1834, by Divine Providence in the three Cycles of Revelation.

Croly had a marked propensity to predict the Day of Judgment whenever contemporary politics went awry. In 1833 the threat to the revenues of the Church of Ireland portended the ruin of the king, should he give his assent: 'he will be as surely undone in some shape or other - as any Charles or Louis that ever mounted the scaffold, or rambled a beggar and an exile.'²⁵ In 1835 the prospect of further concessions to Catholicism provoked a recapitulation of the disasters that had been sent by Providence on previous such occasions.²⁶ Under the modest

24 19 March 1827, NLS, MS4019, f.37.

25 Croly to Blackwood, 21 March 1833, NLS, MS4035, f.133.

26 Croly to Blackwood, 2 July 1835, NLS, MS4044, f.166. (The tradition of such writing lives on. In 1984 the first British edition was published of a work by the American evangelist, Dr. Billy Graham: Approaching Hoofbeats. The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.)

heading of 'Parliament', in the October 1836 number of Blackwood's, Croly touched new heights - or depths - of apocalyptic prophecy:

Twelve months more, and we may have lost the language of liberty. The constitution may be the ballot, universal suffrage, and annual Parliaments; the state a heap of civil ruin, the religion a mass, a wafer, and a cardinal; the Englishman a serf, a soldier sadly girding himself for civil war; or a chained wretch sending up his last breath at the stake, in the midst of exulting monks and the familiars of the Inquisition. (p.458)

Whilst such highly-charged writing possessed a certain rhetorical flourish, its content must have appeared exaggerated to all but the most die-hard of ultra-Tories. Although such zealots were part of the constituency in which Blackwood's found its readers, the Magazine could not have attained real stature as a political periodical if Croly's jeremiads had been unaccompanied by other, more reasoned, forms of discourse.²⁷

Blackwood's Magazine was not the only periodical to which Croly contributed. He also wrote on occasion for the Standard, Morning Herald and Whittaker's Universal Review.²⁸ Such proliferation might have prompted some remarks by 'Odoherthy' in the Noctes for September 1822, to the effect that London writers were fickle in contributing to more than one periodical. Croly defended himself to Blackwood with the argument that such involvement was an insurance against being libelled in the periodicals concerned.²⁹ In the 1840s Croly was, for seven years, the

27 Croly's connection with the ultra-Tory Duke of Newcastle was considered sufficiently close by Blackwood for Croly to have to give his emphatic assurance that he had not helped the Duke to compose his public letter concerning Catholic emancipation. Croly to Blackwood, Jan.1829 (n.d.) NLS, MS4027, f.64 (wrongly filed).

28 Gentleman's Magazine, 3rd Ser.vol.X(1861),pp.104-7, obituary of Croly.

29 6 Dec.1822, quoted in Thompson, thesis, p.59

editor, or principal leader-writer, of the Britannia newspaper. Alongside this regular activity in the periodicals, Croly found the time and energy to write lengthy poems of his own, and to edit the poetry of others for an anthology. His other literary work included plays, novels, contemporary history, and hymns.³⁰

Although Croly is characterised in DNB³¹ as 'contentious and supercilious, yet not devoid of geniality', there is little sign in the Blackwood Papers of the former traits. His tone in the letters to Blackwood was very polite, and he did not presume to teach his publisher his business. Blackwood was so pleased with Croly's article on Lord Liverpool, in July 1822, that he sent a copy of that number to Liverpool himself.³² A more censorious piece on Castlereagh caused Blackwood some anxiety.

Your cutting up of poor Castlereagh for his foreign predilections, however just and true is not quite in accordance with other things in Maga - but n'importe, Christopher saves his credit by a note, and everything you say goes in as it is.³³

The Blackwood letterbook contains occasional notes of concern about late contributions, or non-submission of material. Croly was clearly regarded as a mainstay of the Magazine. When the Edinburgh Review of February 1823 was rude about Croly, in the course of a review of an edition of Grattan's speeches, Blackwood readily offered Croly space for a reply by a signed letter.³⁴ Croly

30 This side of Croly's work is the main concern of Dr. Thompson's introductory survey.

31 The contributor was Richard Garnett.

32 Blackwood to Croly, 26 July 1822, NLS, Acc.5643, B3, f.26.

33 13 Nov.1822, loc.cit., f.62.

34 24 April 1823, loc.cit., f.146.

preferred to retaliate against the author, Brougham, in one of his anonymous articles, although the force of his thrust was somewhat weakened when the characterisation of Brougham as a 'miserable mercenary' was first moderated to 'hired pleader' and then misread by the printer as 'kind pleader'.³⁵ When Croly eventually did send a signed reply, Blackwood decided to omit it to avoid the accusation of 'soreness'.

Later that year came the only recorded moment of asperity in Croly's relationship with Blackwood. With the best of intentions Croly volunteered the opinion that,

The Magazine might be made a powerful political engine - without being exactly a political work - or degenerating into an instrument of Ministers - a set of men who, unquestionably better occupants of power than their opponents, are yet miserably insensible to the services of the willing literary mind of their adherents. A bolder tone in your political papers would be more popular, & might have a more productive effect on your personal objects.³⁶

Blackwood took exception to this advice.

It is very easy to say what a Periodical Work ought to be, but it is not quite so easy to get executed all that one would wish to see in it. Whatever may be the faults of my Magazine I do not think it has been wanting in a bold and independent tone, and I hope it will every day shew more and more that it is to the country and not to Ministers that it looks up.³⁷

Now it was Croly's turn to be upset, and Blackwood had to write to soothe him. The publisher's anxieties were heightened by his knowledge that Croly had an interest

35 27 May 1823, loc.cit., f.161.

36 8 Nov.1823, NLS, MS4010, f.60.

37 22 Nov.1823, NLS, Acc.5643, B3, f.226.

in a new periodical, Whittaker's Universal Review. Croly's contributions to Blackwood's Magazine were confined to literary pieces between September 1823 and February 1824, causing Blackwood to lament, 'You seem to have forgotten poor Maga altogether.'³⁸ The political side of the Magazine was about to be strengthened by the advent of David Robinson, but Blackwood could not easily forget his reliance upon Croly.

These light matters are really very well in their way but I would really like to see you again handling subjects more worthy of your powers.³⁹

In fact, Croly did not recover his position as the Magazine's principal political contributor. In the mid-1820s his pieces were confined to literary topics and foreign affairs. Thereafter his range once more included domestic politics, notably with regard to Catholic emancipation and the revenues of the Irish Church, but such articles were outnumbered by those on literature, foreign affairs and biography. Friendly relations with William Blackwood were resumed however, and in 1834 Croly paid tribute to his publisher for 'the manliness of your principles, the integrity of your public life, the purposes with which you began, & the objects which you have accomplished.'⁴⁰ He followed this with a letter on a similar theme to that which had caused the temporary estrangement in 1823, but couched in more general terms, arguing for the need to capture public opinion through greater investment in the periodical press.⁴¹ The day after this was sent, Croly

38 24 Jan. 1824, loc.cit., f.251.

39 23 July 1824, loc.cit., f.311.

40 30 July 1834, NLS, MS4038, f.175.

41 20 Sept. 1834, loc.cit., f.179.

received Alexander Blackwood's letter, informing him of William Blackwood's death.

Under Blackwood's sons, Croly was prepared to exercise self-censorship when he felt, on reflection, that he had gone too far. He followed a manuscript, in which he had roughly handled Lord Melbourne, with a letter advising the deletion of six pages.⁴² The excisions were taken still further at the Blackwood's office, at the expense of animadversions on Lord Durham and the Duke of Sussex, so that the ensuing article, when published as 'Our Would-Be Rector', was only two pages long! Croly took the deletions calmly, observing that 'political writing is of all kinds the most difficult'.⁴³ He was equally philosophical when a difference arose over Indian politics.

I wish you to understand always, that I regard your opinions as the only ones to be attended to in a publication which is so entirely your own... Of course, where affairs of conscience are concerned, neither you nor I would relax our opinions - but in politics it is conjectural & there may be all kinds of differences without disagreement & all kinds of concession without compromise.⁴⁴

The picture of Croly that emerges from his correspondence with William Blackwood and his sons is considerably removed from the pompous and contentious individual of contemporary recollection. He never argued about money. He readily acknowledged the right of the publisher to have the final say in matters of policy. He occasionally suggested ways in which the Magazine might be made stronger politically, or

42 9 Nov. 1838, quoted in Thompson, thesis, p.310.

43 8 Dec. 1838, NLS, MS4046, f.129.

44 3 May 1842, NLS, MS4060, f.173.

more entertaining in its contents, but, even allowing for an element of self-interest, he had the interests in mind of the publication which he served for thirty-five years.

A recurrent feature of Croly's correspondence was his acute anxiety not to be known as a contributor to the Magazine - above all, not as a political contributor.⁴⁵ The explanation lay in Croly's fear that knowledge of his political writings would jeopardise his chances of ecclesiastical preferment. Certainly that preferment was unconscionably long in coming. Croly was over fifty before he received his first benefice. A personal manner which some found unattractive, and an adherence to a strident brand of Apocalyptic theology, go some way towards accounting for the neglect. It could also have been that, despite his efforts to preserve his anonymity, Croly was known to be a polemical writer in periodicals.

With a pleasing irony, the process which led to Croly's first - and only⁴⁶ - permanent benefice was initiated by the Whig Lord Chancellor, Henry Brougham. Brougham's involvement⁴⁷ was prompted, not so much by magnanimity, as by consanguinity - he was related to Croly's wife. As the living which he offered, Bondleigh, was only a few

45 See NLS, MS4010, ff.45-63, passim; MS4016, ff.195-205, passim; MS4019, f.57; and, especially, MS4035, ff.129-135, relating to Feb.-April 1833, when Croly's requests for Blackwood to burn his letters and MSS were at their most insistent.

46 Croly did have temporary charge of the parish of Romford, Essex, during the illness of the vicar, 1832-35.

47 This episode occurred when Croly's pleas for secrecy about his political writings were at their height. See n.45, above.

miles to the north of Dartmoor, there was perhaps an ignoble ingredient in Brougham's gesture. Croly declined the offer, and the task of finding him a parish was inherited by the Tory Lord Chancellor, Lyndhurst. Croly thus became Rector of St. Stephen's Walbrook, in 1835, retaining the charge until his death in 1860.

The verdict on Croly's long and busy life must be that it was one of frustrated expectations. So Croly felt it to be, his bitter words being reported by John Blackwood in a letter to Robert.

They call me a disappointed (word omitted). I do not deny that I am so, who would not be with such a pittance when fools or knaves are daily put over my head. I have filled a very large church that had not a sitter when I went. I have led an irreproachable life and done more for the conservative party than any man in the church - yet here I am getting old and with a salary that would not support my family were it not for what I get from you and other means.⁴⁸

John Blackwood considered this 'an infernal shame', but it was in his own Magazine that some consolation could have been found. Croly's periodical writing, what the Gentleman's Magazine called 'the anonymous inculcation of virtuous morals, the promotion of useful purposes, and the dissemination of improvement',⁴⁹ enabled him to preach to a larger congregation, and to address a larger readership, than he could have reached from his pulpit, or through his forgotten tomes of Apocalyptic theology.

48 8 Jan. 1843, NLS, MS4064, f.1.

49 Gentleman's Magazine, op.cit., p.106.

David Robinson

In the Noctes Ambrosianae for March 1823, 'Christopher North' and 'Timothy Tickler' were speaking in unusually complimentary terms of the latest number of the Quarterly Review. North especially praised an article entitled 'The Opposition', and they began to speculate about its authorship. Could it have been by Canning? North thought not: 'it has neither his rhetoric nor his oratory'. Croker perhaps? Again North demurred: 'it wants his rapidity and his vivenda vis.' Then could it be by Gifford himself? North thought this possible, as 'it has much of the masculine determined energy of Gifford's mind.'⁵⁰

This admiring, but erroneous, piece of speculation gave rise, some months later, to the following letter.

24 Paradise Row
London
Jan. 2nd 1824

To The Editor of Blackwood's Magazine
Private and confidential.

Sir,

I beg permission to place the accompanying sheets at the service of your admirable Magazine. They are from the pen of the Author of the Quarterly's Article on "The Opposition", and I have been led to forward them by the favourable mention which you made of that Article.

They are written by a man who cannot afford to write for nothing, and therefore if you think them worthy of purchase, you may, if you please, pay me for them according to your usual terms. I however transmit them without solicitation, and therefore, if it please you better, you may insert them without

50 Maga, March 1823, pp.378-9. The author of this Noctes was J.G. Lockhart: Strout, Bib., p.106.

payment; or, if you deem them unworthy of insertion, you may cast them into the fire. I trust it is not necessary for me to say that I have written them expressly for you, and that they leave me without having been seen by any man but myself.

I would willingly become an occasional contributor, if you think it would benefit your excellent work. Should you wish it, you will oblige me greatly by favouring me with a line as soon as you conveniently can. I have some arrangements on my hands respecting the future employment of my time which could be affected by it, and which I shall therefore not close until the time passes which would enable a letter from you to reach me.

I ought perhaps to say, that I have written the sheets with a view to their appearance in your next number, when public attention will naturally be almost exclusively directed to the opening of the session.

I give you confidentially my name and am with the greatest respect.

Sir

Your most obedient servant

David Robinson⁵¹

Thus began a correspondence which was to extend to two hundred letters on Robinson's part, accompanying the 93 articles which he published in Blackwood's. Even at this early stage, something of Robinson's character was indicated in his letter. There is the anxiety about confidentiality, and the slightly awkward combination of wishing to receive payment, yet not wanting to sacrifice his self-respect. Robinson lacked the easy confidence of address that characterised the correspondence of most of the other political writers who regularly contributed to the Magazine during its first thirty years.

William Blackwood, however, showed his customary perspicuity in seeing Robinson's potential. The misunderstanding with Croly⁵² made the publisher unsure of

51 NLS, MS4013, f.53.

52 See above, p.69

the services of his main political contributor at the very moment when a promising new recruit appeared on the scene. Blackwood replied promptly, expressing the hope that Robinson would become 'a constant and regular contributor,' and sending a retaining fee of ten guineas.⁵³

The publisher's response - and the money - must have come as a great relief to Robinson, who was at that time in the depths of despair. A letter in the Canning papers,⁵⁴ written a month previously, revealed his plight, and, in the process, shed light on his early life. The subsequent importance of Robinson to Blackwood's Magazine - to the extent that, it will be contended, he more than anyone made its political reputation - renders it appropriate to quote substantially from this cri de coeur. Robinson addressed Canning 'with the utmost diffidence and reluctance', and presented a 'statement.'

Three years ago I came from Yorkshire to London, a destitute stranger, to seek bread as a writer, and made my first appearance in print in the letters of Cato, which were published in the New Times.

After receiving the first 'Cato' letter, the editor contacted Robinson and engaged him for ten guineas per week to write for the Constitutional Association. Robinson was, he claimed, mainly responsible for drawing up the first address of the association and for writing further 'Cato' letters in the New Times in its support. This work done, he was dismissed. The editor of the Quarterly Review, however, not knowing Robinson by name, wrote to him as 'Cato', through the office of the New Times, inviting him

53 14 Jan. 1824, NLS, Acc.5643, B3, f.249.

54 Harewood MSS, 94, 4 Dec. 1823.

to contribute a political article. So came about the article on 'The Opposition.' Gifford expressed his admiration, and Robinson offered his services as a regular contributor. The offer was ignored until, eight months later, Gifford wrote to praise the article, 'but still he said nothing respecting another, or my offer'. Robinson then acquainted Canning with his early life.

In speaking of my humble productions, I ought perhaps to say that the only education which I owe to others was received at a village school in the first twelve years of my life, - that, a farmer's son, I laboured on his farm until I was nineteen the same as his servants, - that I then became a village schoolmaster, then a merchant's clerk, then entered into business in a pretty large way on my own account, acquired considerable property and lived very respectably, - and then, partly from villainy, partly from being suddenly called upon to repay a considerable sum of borrowed money just when I had expended a large sum in machinery, and partly from having made myself responsible for, and being called upon to pay, the heavy farming debts of my step-father, I was ruined and cast upon the world a beggar.

After working in 1822 for the New Times, where, as he rather pointedly observed, he wrote the leading articles advocating Canning's appointment to the Foreign Secretaryship, Robinson turned his attention to poetry. A volume of poems was offered for publication to John Murray, but politely declined. Robinson then commenced another volume, but had come to realise that his only hope of publication was to publish the poems himself. Unfortunately, he had exhausted his funds.

I am therefore both friendless and destitute, and if I cannot meet with a friend, I must abandon my literary pursuits for ever.

It was this crisis in his life that had caused him to write to Canning.

If I could get a situation in any public office that would leave me one hundred per annum, and would not confine me too closely, or bring me into contact with low company, I should be most thankful. Or I should be still more thankful if I could find two or three individuals among the great who, on account of what I have written, would lend me one hundred pounds. This sum would enable me to print a small edition of my work, and it would likewise support me until I could get it finished and published. I trust that a year would enable me to repay the money with interest.

I ought perhaps to say that I am a married man, my age is thirty six, and my moral character is I hope irreproachable ...

Robinson added that he was 'a decent accountant', with some knowledge of Latin, French and German (although not fluent), and that he could supply references. He emphasised that he was addressing Canning in that gifted man's literary character: 'I seek nothing as a political partizan.' This was the first such letter he had ever written and it would be his last. It had cost him dear: 'I have my full share of pride and independence of feeling.'

The Canning papers are filled with requests for patronage, as one would expect of any major office-holder in this period. His obscure correspondent - a failed businessman, a failed journalist, a failed poet - was hardly likely to commend himself for special favour. In the circumstances, Canning's reply was polite, sympathetic and kindly - but in the negative.⁵⁵ The best that Canning could offer was that if (doubly underlined) he could see any way to be of help in the future, he would write again.

55 Copy in the Canning papers, dated 13 Dec. 1823.

Canning did indeed write promptly to Gifford, on 13 December.

My dear Gifford, - How do you do? I am in bed with the gout.

What do you know of Mr. David Robinson, who wrote Cato's letters, and an article called 'The Opposition' in the 'Quarterly'?

Surely he was - and is, I suppose - a writer far above the common.

But if you think so, why did you, or do you never, employ him no more?

Have you any reason, or is it pure accident? I hear he is very poor.

Ever affectionately yours,

George Canning.⁵⁶

Gifford, in reply, explained how he had first made contact with Robinson (corroborating Robinson's version) and was evidently ready to receive further contributions. Gifford, however, was unwell and, between his infirmity and Robinson's reserve, the opportunity for renewed contact was lost. In despair, Robinson wrote the letter to Blackwood that was to prove his salvation. His eventual reply to Canning's letter, on 25 May 1824, was noticeably more crisp, although observing polite conventions.

Sir,

A letter with which in a moment of distress and desperation I presumed to trouble you, and which (although I am not aware that it contained any thing that an honest and honourable man circumstanced as I then was ought not to have written) I shall remember with shame to the last hour of my existence, impels me once more to obtrude myself upon your attention.

Some time after I wrote it, without applying to any other individual high or low for assistance and without being indebted to any one to the value of a farthing in favour or generosity, I obtained a literary connexion which supplies my limited wants....

56 E.J. Stapleton (ed.), Some Official Correspondence of George Canning, 2 vols (1887), I, 129. (Stapleton persistently misspells Gifford as Giffard).

Robinson therefore withdrew his application to Canning, with his thanks for the polite manner in which it had been noticed. To a man of his prickly pride, it must have been doubly hurtful, both to write a begging letter and to have it declined, however civilly. Although Robinson's sustained campaign against Canningite policies in 1825-7⁵⁷ was undoubtedly actuated by deeply-held political convictions, it is reasonable to suggest that the special vehemence with which Canning personally was assailed owed something to the wounded feelings of a rejected applicant.

In Blackwood's affirmative reply to Robinson, the veiled editor was banished further into the shades by the admission that 'the correspondence with contributors is devolved upon me.' The publisher assured Robinson that his confidentiality would be respected, and his precaution in giving only Robinson's initials in the order on Cadell brought an appreciative reply.

The exposure, or concealment, of my name, is perhaps of consequence to my feelings alone, but I still wish it to be concealed. The Liberals are cut-throats when they can lay hold of a name, and, independently of this, my reserved and secluded habits have much distaste for notoriety. I feel perfectly assured that my secret will be safe in your hands.⁵⁸

Blackwood had found a controversialist of the highest calibre. Unknown in his own day, beyond a narrow circle of cognoscenti, Robinson has recently begun to receive the personal recognition which, beyond that circle, he never sought, but which he richly deserved. As usual, the modern scholarly reappraisal begins with A.L. Strout. In the

⁵⁷ See below, Chapter Four.

⁵⁸ 21 Jan. 1824, NLS, MS4013, f.55.

introduction to his Bibliography, Strout observes of Robinson, that 'A Study of his letters and of his articles should make some contribution to the political history of the early Nineteenth Century.'⁵⁹ Although not a political historian, Strout did write an unpublished typescript about Robinson.⁶⁰ It contains a useful ten-page survey of Robinson's life and ideas, introducing a list of his contributions to Blackwood's Magazine. The work of attribution has become the province of the Wellesley Index, but a full discussion of Robinson's ideas, combined with as thorough a biographical study as the scanty evidence will allow, remains to be done. In the key area of Robinson's economic thought, significant progress in the work of elucidation and reappraisal has already been made. The pioneer was F.W. Fetter,⁶¹ and the work of specialised economic analysis has been continued by B.J. Gordon⁶² and Salim Rashid.⁶³ The best-known appreciation of Robinson's merits is by Professor Perkin, who describes him as 'by far the most brilliant and original' of the Blackwood's contributors on economic topics, developing in his articles

59 Strout, Bib., p.16.

60 'A Champion of Ultraconservatism, 1824-1831: David Robinson of Blackwood's Magazine.' I owe my copy to the kindness of Dr. Salim Rashid, concerning whom see below, n.63.

61 Fetter, J.P.E., pp.91,93-6.

62 B.J. Gordon, 'Says Law, Effective Demand and the Contemporary British Periodicals 1820-1850,' Economica (1965), 438-446.

63 Salim Rashid, 'David Robinson and the Tory macroeconomics of Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine.' History of Political Economy 10:2 (1978), 258-270. Dr. Rashid has already studied the articles and correspondence of David Robinson, as part of his work on the economic ideas of the ultra-Tories. He has, however, generously refrained from developing his work on Robinson, pending the outcome of this thesis.

a 'proto-Keynesian economics.'⁶⁴ Robinson's economic ideas will be discussed in the next chapter. The purpose of the present chapter is to provide an analysis of Robinson's qualities as a political writer, linked with a close study of his dealings with William Blackwood, and amplified by such biographical information as can be abstracted from the correspondence and other sources.

As a case-study, Robinson's article on 'The Poor Laws'⁶⁵ reveals him at his best. It opens with the observation that the Poor Laws are assailed on all sides, yet, after all the complaints of improvers and all the efforts of committees, the laws remain unimproved. Hence, in despair, the drastic remedy is proposed of abolishing public relief for the able-bodied. It is against this proposal that Robinson deploys his case.

There are, he maintains, two prime considerations in considering this question. First, to adhere to the facts, not to fashionable theories; and second,

that everything which can be urged in favour of the Poor Laws ought to be dispassionately, carefully, and even indulgently examined, for the sake of the many millions, who, while they are threatened with the loss of their subsistence in the hour of need, cannot make themselves heard, and can scarcely find an advocate to plead their cause against the tremendous mass of power, prejudice, and interest, which is arrayed against them. (p.923)

The critics of the existing laws do not impress Robinson. The Economists allow theory to prevail over experience; the Scots 'are prompted by an improper feeling, and speak from hearsay evidence' (p.923); and the Irish

64 Perkin, op.cit., pp.245, 250.

65 Maga, June 1828, pp.923-936.

absentee landlord, seeking to avoid being compelled 'to give bread to the poor wretches who are starving on his Irish estate,' is a moral criminal. The London press is no better, as it 'is chiefly in the hands of Scotchmen and Irishmen' (p.924), and the complaints of ratepayers do not, of themselves, overturn the principle that poor rates should be levied. In any case, Robinson asserts that, despite their understandable grumbles, nine-tenths of the payers of the English poor-rates would 'wish to give their poor food and raiment' (p.924).

Robinson then proceeds to the main body of his argument. He points out that there are fluctuations in the demand for labour, and therefore there are times when the labourer is unemployed through no fault of his own. The advice to the labourer that, if he cannot obtain work in one place, he should look for it in another, is dismissed as nonsense. Agricultural distress operates throughout the country when it occurs, so where is the destitute farm labourer to go? The further advice that he should seek a different kind of employment is treated with equal contempt. The ploughman cannot suddenly turn himself into a weaver or a tailor. Neither could the silk-weaver have speedily acquired a new skill during the depression in the silk industry in 1825-6. It is more sensible and more practicable to support such people through the poor rates until their particular trade recovers. Even disregarding trade fluctuations, the supply of labour is never exactly aligned with demand: there are always some areas of surplus or deficiency. It is surely

preferable to make provision for the surplus, rather than to be handicapped by a shortage of labour.

What, in any case, are the alternatives? No one would seriously recommend leaving the labourers to starve, and starving men would resort to robbery if there were no other recourse. The suggestion that the employed worker should save money whilst in employment, against the advent of hard times, is impracticable and unfeeling, given the lowness of wages. The benefit societies deserve praise and encouragement, but they are operating in an economy which aims to reduce wage-costs. Voluntary charity will not suffice. Church provision does not operate on the same basis in England as in Scotland, where it takes the form of a weekly collection, distributed by the elders. In England, it is a sacramental offering, infrequent and unreliable. As for subscriptions, they provide a valuable support at times of particular distress, but cannot serve as a constant means of relief. Relying upon charity on the part of individuals would, in practice, leave an unsustainable burden upon the charitable minority, whilst encouraging begging. Why not, therefore, 'make charity general and methodical? Why not make it a rule for every member of the community to contribute to the needs of the poor, according to what he possesses? The Poor Laws stand on this principle, although they do not apply it so far as they ought, and it is an unassailable one' (p.929).

Robinson next makes a point already familiar in his economic writings, where it forms part of those theories through which he is credited with anticipating John

Maynard Keynes. When public funds are spent on poor relief, the money is swiftly translated into consumption. This boosts trade and thereby the profits of the trading classes, who thus recover as income what they disbursed as ratepayers.

The Malthusian analysis, with its cheerless remedy of 'moral restraint', is vigorously attacked.

The great body of labourers, from low wages and occasional loss of work, cannot save anything worth mentioning before they marry, though they continue single to the last year required by the Economist. Human nature is so constituted, that if their wages were better they would not save. The mass of the lower orders must marry before they make any provision for the future, or they must never marry. The case has always been so, and it will be so for ever. But granting that marriages under thirty could be prevented, could the sexes be, until marriage kept asunder? Would not this "check" to the multiplication of legitimate children multiply alarmingly others of a different character? Would not this preventive of marriage be the parent of lewdness and licentiousness? Men who know the world well, know that the multiplication of their species is not to be prevented by restrictions on marriage; and they well know, too, that nothing could be more destructive to public morals than such restrictions.

But can nothing be said in favour of early marriages? How many young men have they not reclaimed from a dissolute life, at the critical moment when nothing else could have reclaimed them! How many young men have they not preserved from a life of vice and iniquity! How much have they not contributed to the industry, frugality, and sobriety of the working classes! They have done infinitely more service to society on the one hand, than they have done injury to it on the other.

A reasonably high standard of living, and proper knowledge, are essential for preventing the lower orders from marrying improvidently. The abolition of the Poor Laws, by reducing the standard of living among them to the lowest point, and plunging them into savage ignorance, would greatly increase the number of early marriages. It would make such marriages almost a matter of interest, and remove every restraint in respect of feeling.

(p.932)

Where Malthusians talk of overpopulation, Robinson would point to underemployment as the fundamental problem. Rather than denying relief to the able bodied poor, he would support schemes for land reclamation and emigration. The few 'worthless' families in each parish who intentionally exploit the existing system of relief are greatly outnumbered by those who would much prefer to be in work rather than under the aegis of the overseer. To assume otherwise is but one of the false assumptions which Robinson now proceeds to recapitulate.

It is assumed, that if labourers lose employment in one place, they can always regain it in another; this is demonstrably false. It is assumed, that the body of the working classes have the means of saving when they have employment, what will support them when they have none; this is demonstrably false. It is assumed, that to protect destitute individuals and families from the vice and guilt into which begging would lead them, is to demoralize them; this is demonstrably false. It is assumed, that the present excess of population arises wholly, or chiefly, from the early marriages of English labourers; this is demonstrably false. And it is assumed, that the pauperism which prevails arises in a great degree from the improvident marriages and general bad conduct of the labouring orders; this is demonstrably false. Men of common sense will go round the circle of false assumptions without our further assistance. (p.933)

The article concludes with a recognition of those faults in current practice which ought to be amended. Poor rates should not be spent on employed as well as unemployed labourers. Negligence in the administration of urban relief should be corrected. Irish immigration should be diverted from England to the colonies. But the abolition of the poor rates would be a remedy more deleterious than the disease.

Although this article lacks the vitriolic quality of some of his political pieces, notably on Catholic emancipation, it displays many of Robinson's distinctive characteristics. There is, throughout, the sense of a planned, controlled argument. Rhetorical flourishes are rare, literary quotations even rarer. In contrast with Croly's articles, there are no Latin tags or classical allusions. We are given neither the baroque exuberance of Wilson nor the wide-ranging scholarship of De Quincey. Instead, we are presented with a closely-reasoned, combative piece, in which cogent argument and mere assertion are intermingled. Compare, for example, the persuasive point about fluctuations in the labour-market with the uncorroborated claim that nine-tenths of all ratepayers accept the principle of the poor-rate, confining their objections to its practical application. One has the sense of being forcefully conveyed down a particular course of argument, without the opportunity to pause and to question. What becomes of the point about the problem of transferring occupations if certain occupations are in fact undergoing long-term diminution rather than short-term fluctuation?

Robinson's English nationalism makes itself felt in his comments about half-informed Scots and immigrant Irish. The side-swipe at the disproportionate role of Scottish and Irish journalists in the London press is another recurrent theme.⁶⁶ A pride in adhering to the facts of common experience, rather than to elaborate theories, is another salient characteristic of the writer, although Robinson proved more than capable of handling difficult economic

66 See below, p.88

theory, in particular, when the occasion arose. In his demonstration of the sheer lack of realism of the Malthusian doctrine of moral restraint (given the insistence of Malthus that artificial methods of avoiding procreation were sinful) Robinson combined debating skill with human insight. Likewise, in shifting the focus of the discussion away from negative deterrence towards a positive policy of protecting and creating employment, he foreshadowed the subsequent critique of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, although that measure did embody the continued acceptance of the right of the able bodied poor to a form of relief, thus rejecting - as Robinson rejected - the abolitionists' case.

Robinson owed his livelihood to his pen 'I devote the whole of my time to writing', he informed Blackwood, promising that his periodical pieces would be almost entirely reserved for the Magazine.⁶⁷ He lacked the natural fluency of Wilson, confessing 'I am at the best a slow, fastidious writer and cannot get through work like many.'⁶⁸ What attracted him to Blackwood's was its openness to independent political comment.

I do not much like the London publications on our side (of) the question: they are so servile and timid, that scarcely a word must be spoken, unless Ministers have previously, either directly, or indirectly, spoken it. This is both contemptible and injurious. If a writer write boldly, he will no doubt occasionally 'get his foot in it' - (I am a Yorkshire Wolds' man and you will know the meaning of this saying in Scotland) but I am sure he will write so much the more effectually upon the whole.⁶⁹

67 21 Jan., 1824, NLS, MS4013, f.55.

68 3 March 1824, loc.cit., f.61.

69 Ibid.

Robinson was to 'get his foot in it' with his colleagues at Blackwood's, notably in October 1826, when he followed up an increasingly vociferous series of articles against the liberal Tories with what he afterwards admitted was a 'hasty' letter.⁷⁰ In his somewhat grudging apology, he explained that he had believed that one of his articles had been criticised by Maginn; he accused Lockhart of trying to silence the Magazine through the columns of the Quarterly; and he promised not to embarrass Wilson by any further personal attacks on Canning.⁷¹ As if that were not sufficient controversial matter, he had once again ground his axe on the subject of Scottish and Irish journalists.

What I said respecting Scotch and Irish writers was not intended offensively, for I am not an enemy to nationality. It has always appeared to me that the Scotch and Irish writers of London hang much to each other, and have a strong feeling against English ones. I pick no great quarrel with this for it is natural and it may be in some degree provoked, but however now that they have monopolised the chief part of the Press it is calculated to operate greatly to the prejudice of unknown and unconnected English scribes.

Robinson ended this apologia with a revealing indication of his approach to his work.

I assure you that I am sorry for the intemperate sallies of my Papers, but I cannot avoid them. I cannot write in cold blood. I must be well warmed or I can write nothing, and hence arise my excesses. I may plead policy to a certain extent in my vindication. A political writer in these days has very difficult cards to play. He ought I think to avoid poetical quotation, metaphor and fine writing, or what is called, perhaps, very improperly, eloquence. I know the great authority of Malagrowther⁷² is against me but still I think so. He is thus restricted from resorting to those things which form the great charm

70 28 Oct. 1826, NLS, MS4018, f.147.

71 See Chapter Four, p.139.

72 Pen-name of Sir Walter Scott, as pamphleteer.

of other writers. On the other hand if he confine himself to naked, tame reasonings and details, he may please the few but he will not gain the notice of the general reader. He must depend a good deal on sarcasm, invective and allowable personalities for obtaining him a hearing from the public at large: with the mass of men the understanding can only be laid hold of and set to work through the passions. The difficulty is in keeping within due bounds and this I cannot master.

73

Robinson's writing was predominantly serious, occasionally enlivened by passages of harsh irony. There is nothing of the irresponsible gaiety of the Noctes or the lighter touches to be found in the literary contributions. For Robinson, these were the attic salt to accompany the main dish. He writes of the July 1825 number of the Magazine:

The No. will I think sell all the better for comprehending a good portion of grave, reasoning Articles. Wit and humour like all delicacies are delicious in small quantities, but we cannot take so much of them as of plain, solid food.⁷⁴

Insofar as his thought derived from his reading, rather than from the application of his personal experience and independent judgment, there can be no doubt that Robinson's chief mentor, like Croly's, was Edmund Burke. He readily accepted William Blackwood's offer to send him a life of Burke, as the subject of a review article. Robinson welcomed the opportunity to discuss the life and writings of 'that wonderful man.'⁷⁵ The best example of Robinson's indebtedness to Burke's political theory came, in fact, in the middle of one of his diatribes against the Irish Catholic priesthood for supporting O'Connell.⁷⁶ Pausing from his tirade against O'Connell's 'spiritual coadjutors' and the 'horrible impurities of their religion,' Robinson

73 28 Oct. 1826, NLS, MS4018, f.147.

74 30 July 1825, NLS, MS4015, f.191.

75 10 Aug. 1824, MLS, MS4013, f.79.

76 'The Roman Catholic Church of Ireland', Maga, March 1825.

raised the whole level of his discussion, setting out his theory of moral and physical government. Moral government was held to consist of 'good opinions, feelings, and habits', whereas physical government represented the institutional framework. The former predated the latter, helped to form it, and remained infinitely more important. The laws of moral government punish failings of character which are beyond the reach of the laws of physical government: idleness, extravagance, cowardice, covetousness. The moral laws are enforced by their own functionaries. 'The parent, the master, and the superior, act as the spies and administrators of the laws of the moral government, against the child, the servant, and the inferior.'(p.256). The greater the power of the moral government, the less the need for the physical government, and the better society will become. Misguided libertarians wished to destroy the moral government and contract the physical government, little realising that 'the inhabitants of a country have as much to fear from the tyranny of each other, as from that of their rulers.'(p.257)⁷⁷

Yet not even Burke was safe from Robinson's censure. When Blackwood returned an article in which Robinson had discussed the American War of Independence, Robinson preferred to sacrifice publication rather than his principles.

The Constitution and laws of my country will not permit me to believe that his Majesty's subjects are at liberty to take up arms against laws regularly enacted by the legislature and executive, but I even

77 c.f. the well-known passage in the Reflections on the Revolution in France which reaches the conclusion that 'the restraints on men, as well as their liberties, are to be reckoned among their rights.'
(The Works of Burke, Oxford 'World's Classics' edn., IV, 65.)

did not say so far as this. I said in substance, that whatever was the case with the colonists when they drew the sword, they became rebels and traitors when they fought for independence. I still think so notwithstanding what may be thought at Edinburgh. Fighting against a particular tax is one thing, and fighting for independence is another. You cannot very well agree with both Lord Chatham and Burke ... Although Lord Chatham supported the Colonists in resisting the attempted taxation, he protested to the last against American independence. Burke belonged to that party which at length advocated such independence and granted it - which did what Lord Chatham would have died on the block sooner than have done. If you can approve of Fox, Burke, etc., for wearing the American uniform, and doing other things still more abominable, I cannot.⁷⁸

In writing his economic articles, Robinson drew upon his personal acquaintance with agriculture, arising from his early days in Garton, in the Yorkshire wolds. He accompanied a paper on English and Irish land-letting with the remark that it contained 'some information which none but a man having some practical knowledge of farming could give.'⁷⁹ In London, he had contacts in the shipping trade and frequently championed their interests. Learning in 1827 that General Gascoigne intended to move a motion concerning the shipping interest, and more particularly about the threat to the preference for Canadian over foreign timber, Robinson offered to write an article, confident that 'these merchants and shipowners will supply me with every information I may need'.⁸⁰ The article eventually appeared in the July number of the Magazine, asserting that 'the interests of the Shipowners are the interests of the empire', and bolstering the case against the government with an array of statistics. Robinson found kindred spirits in two Glasgow men, James

78 19 Dec. 1826, NLS, MS4018, f.157.

79 30 April, 1825, NLS, MS4015, f.184.

80 25 Feb. 1827, NLS, MS4020, f.87.

McQueen, geographer, editor of the Glasgow Courier and propagandist for the West Indian slaveowners, and Andrew Ure, scientist, whom he met when dining at McQueen's.⁸¹ He found these men more congenial than the professional journalists of London, such as Giffard of the Standard, whom he met at the same dinner party.

I shall be glad if he be the last writer by profession that I ever meet ... I fear he is little better than the rest of the Pressgang.⁸²

Given Robinson's contempt for metropolitan journalists, and his antipathy towards the Irish, it was inevitable that his dealings with William Maginn should be fraught with irritation. Blackwood tried to bring together his new contributor and the anarchic Irishman, who had gone to live in London. Robinson's visit to Maginn's residence, at Blackwood's prompting, was delayed by illness, but Maginn was out when he called. Robinson left his card, but there was no response, and a second visit proved equally fruitless. He resolved, therefore, not to call again on such an ungentlemanly fellow.⁸³ Blackwood, professing himself 'very vexed indeed at Dr. Maginn's inattention', blamed the confusion upon Maginn's servant and assured Robinson of Maginn's 'great regard and esteem' for him.⁸⁴ The initial difficulty was soon forgotten, and the two contributors began dining together. In 1826, however, a more serious contretemps occurred, arising from Maginn's involvement in the new Tory newspaper, The Representative. Maginn had invited Robinson to write an article, and the

81 31 Aug. 1829, NLS, MS4026, f.115.

82 Ibid.

83 30 April 1824, NLS, MS4013, f.65.

84 4 May 1824, NLS, Acc.5643, B3, f.280.

topic chosen was, probably, a critique of Huskisson's speech on free trade, delivered in the House of Commons on 23 February (and, when circulated as a pamphlet, attacked by Robinson in Blackwood's, April 1826).

Robinson happened to meet Maginn in the street, and was given this explanation for the non-appearance of his article in The Representative:

He said that my paper was too true and they durst not publish it. It was as you say exceedingly foolish in them to get me to write any thing on such a subject, for what could they expect but that I should tear the speech to pieces. He said that on the Catholic Question and some other topics I might write as I pleased for them, but I told him the Paper was a concern that did not suit me and that I should wash my hands of it.⁸⁵

Later that month, Robinson informed Blackwood that he did not expect to see Maginn again.

You astonish me by what you say of him touching money, as I thought him incapable of such dirty conduct. Do not concern yourself about having introduced him to me, as I have suffered nothing from him, not even so much as a fit of vexation, and I believe from what I now know that I shall never be more in his power than I am at present.⁸⁶

The irony attending that last observation will only now become apparent to scholars. The third volume of the Wellesley Index, published in 1979, contained in its corrections to volume II a lengthy list of articles in Fraser's Magazine, during the 1830s, attributed for the first time to David Robinson. The editor, or, more precisely, the person who came nearest to performing the functions of editor, of Fraser's was William Maginn. After his final

85 8 March 1826, NLS, MS4018, f.123.

86 27 March 1826, loc.cit., f.125.

rift with Blackwood at the end of 1831, Robinson had to swallow his pride and seek his livelihood with what Wellesley terms 'the English Blackwood.'⁸⁷

Robinson's irascibility was partly occasioned by poor health - or, perhaps, hypochondria. His letters catalogue his ailments and lament the climatic conditions which brought them on. March and April were regularly the months which most afflicted him, with rain and fogs disabling his faculties. Abandoning the taking of snuff, as 'a dirty, costly habit' (although one favoured by Blackwood), produced a writing block and the habit had to be resumed. A further congestion of his mental faculties was inflicted by 'the long course of wet, warm, unwholesome weather', and he pined for 'some sharp, bracing weather'. Rallying, he hoped for 'a month of good biting north easters to brace me.' Later in that same year, 1828, he claimed that good effects were coming from 'rigidly adhering to Abernethy's starving system'. In February and March 1829, he was the victim of a 'a severe nervous attack', and remained ill during April. By October he had made some recovery, but remained unwell. 'I do not suffer alone, as nervous disorders have been and are very prevalent around us. Every member of my family has been affected as I have been ...' Further recovery was followed by a set-back in the new year, 'when I was seized with one of the attacks of bilious obstruction to which I am subject.' Robinson's medical problems continued in 1831 when, 'sharing in the illness which has been so general, I have scarcely been able to write a line in the last three months'.

87 Wellesley, III, 989, entry 316.

The affliction continued, 'on my nerves and head, impeding Robinson's efforts to complete what proved to be his final article for Blackwood's Magazine

Before relations became irreparably strained, Robinson gave hospitality to members of the Blackwood family on their visits to London and was welcomed in return to their London quarters, at the Somerset Hotel. On one occasion he would appear to have lapsed from his usual austerity, while dining as the guest of Blackwood's brother. 'He will tell you what a fool I made of myself, tell him from me that I hope he will pardon me. I am in these days so easily overpowered with wine that I have almost made a resolution never again to dine out in company.'⁸⁸

William Blackwood's skill in handling his contributors was shown to particularly good effect in his dealings with David Robinson. The desirability of retaining the services of a first-rate political contributor had to be set against the repeated provocations of belated contributions, financial embarrassments and clashes of opinion. The most common source of trouble was Robinson's failure to complete articles in good time. A late arrival could mean the hasty insertion of another piece to fill the requisite pages (emanating, sometimes from the fertile pen of John Wilson).⁸⁹ Or, if the printing was held back, the distribution of copies had to be hurried, involving use of the mail coach rather than the slower, but cheaper,

88 28 Oct. 1826, NLS, MS4018, f.147.

89 Mrs. Oliphant, Annals I, 300-301, gives an instance, in December 1826 (mentioning Robinson in her text, although he is not listed in the index).

steamboat. Political articles which missed the monthly deadline could be overtaken by events and therefore have to be dropped or re-written. Robinson's usual excuse was illness, which must indeed have imposed considerable strain on him, as he struggled to complete the articles on which his livelihood depended.

If Blackwood had cause to complain of late articles, Robinson felt he had cause to complain of late payments. His letters in 1824 and 1825 contain numerous gentle hints to Blackwood to pay for articles which he had written. In 1826, stung by the return of the article in which he had differed with Blackwood over the War of American Independence, Robinson raised the whole question of his mode of payment.

My Papers from their nature have required double the time and labour required by those of most of your other writers, yet with a few exceptions, you have only paid me what you pay to the least valuable of these writers. Looking at your type, you have paid me little more than half of what Colburn pays for the New Monthly; and little more than a quarter of what is paid by the Quarterly and Edinburgh for laboured political Articles. Notwithstanding this you have seemed to expect from me first-rate papers on hotly contested subjects which should please every one. You have not been content to let the merits and applause weigh against the faults and censure; but no matter how well an Article may have been received by a part of the nation, still, if it have offended this great man or that petty newspaper, it had drawn upon me your dissatisfactions. You have reposed in me no confidence; any malevolent whisperer, or paltry newspaper scribe has been able to make you think me in the wrong. I may have been always in error, but it is not in human nature for me to think so...

I think you have treated me unhandsomely. This is not only my opinion in my present irritation, but it has been for some time my opinion in my cool moments as well as in my hot ones. You have an unquestionable right to do what you please with your work; and I have

an equal right to do what I please with my pen. If this pen cannot procure me a paltry three pounds per week without subjecting me to the humiliation and vexations of a servant, I will soon throw it into the fire.⁹⁰

William Blackwood was not prepared to yield to this onslaught, even if it meant losing his ablest political contributor. He returned a spirited reply..

I am the Manager of the Magazine myself, and I need not repeat to you what have been my difficulties and struggles in bringing it to its present state. Often have ruin and danger of every kind stared me in the face, but I kept on my course with the same fearless and honest spirit which first attracted you to it ... I feel no little pride in saying that there is no Journal existing which could have published your excellent papers with such effect and very few indeed that would have had the independence to have given them a place.⁹¹

Robinson's recurrent financial anxieties underline the extent to which he deserves admiration for being prepared to sacrifice an article - and its payment - rather than deviate from his principles. He was willing, on occasion, to accept excisions, although he was unhappy if anyone other than Blackwood took such action.

With regard to the parts you struck out of my last, I do not object to the expunging of obnoxious parts, provided it be done by yourself, and not by the writers around you. If a writer differ from me in opinion, and be actuated by an unfriendly spirit, it is not likely that he will do it to my satisfaction.

92

This could be a covert reference to John Wilson, whom Robinson suspected of animosity towards him, because of his articles against Canning. There was also, perhaps, a

90 19 Dec. 1826, NLS, MS4018, f.157.

91 25 Dec. 1826, NLS, Acc.5643, B6, f.505.

92 8 Oct. 1827, NLS, MS4020, f.126.

tinge of jealousy, provoked by Wilson's closeness to the heart of the Magazine, his facile pen and, Robinson suspected, his superior rates of payment.

I cannot believe that the Professor will write for the rate at which you are now paying me, and I assure that I would not knowingly accept less than you pay him. I know that my Articles in general require three times the thought and toil that his require.⁹³

Certainly communication at a distance must sometimes have complicated the relationship between Robinson and his publisher. Blackwood testified to this in his reply to one of Robinson's missives.

Instead of writing you, which is apt to be misunderstood, I would give anything to have five minutes conversation with you, when I feel confident you would be at once satisfied that you had done me great injustice by having most completely mistaken my whole motives and policy.⁹⁴

In 1830, the opportunity arose for Robinson to become editor of a London newspaper, the Morning Journal, which espoused an extreme form of ultra-Toryism.

Several exalted individuals are I believe ready to advance a sum of money for the purchase of the Paper, provided it be put under my direction; but there are obstacles put forth by the people connected with it which I regard as insurmountable. I therefore look on the matter as hopeless. The Paper I suppose must be laid down which I am sorry for as under proper management it might have been made an excellent property.⁹⁵

During the crisis over the Reform Bill, Robinson's refusal to suppress his conviction that the Tory leaders were wrong to offer a general resistance to parliamentary

93 28 July 1828, NLS, MS4023, f.36.

94 19 Oct. 1826, NLS, Acc.5643, B6, f.435.

95 7 April 1830, NLS, MS4028, f.176. (The final issue of the Morning Journal was on 13 May 1830).

reform placed him increasingly at variance with Blackwood and the other political contributors to the Magazine.⁹⁶ Where they continued to blame the 'apostate' Peel more savagely than the Duke of Wellington for Catholic emancipation, Robinson rightly saw that the future of the party lay with Peel. He therefore condemned the reported intention of certain Tories, abetted by the Quarterly Review, to oust Peel in favour of the Duke and a die-hard resistance to reform.

Peel I am sure would make much the most acceptable Minister to the country at large, and if he was associated with honest men he would make much the best for retrieving the fallen fortunes of his party. Never can the Tories rise again if they do not endeavour to gain the body of the people; and never can they gain this body if they do not heartily unite on principles really constitutional and in harmony with freedom. I never dreamed that Toryism connected its creed with those high doctrines on which it seems to rest its hopes.⁹⁷

Robinson marked his estrangement from the Magazine by signing his articles for the issues of September and November, 1831, 'A Bystander', instead of the unsigned contribution which denoted membership of the fold. The final break came when a parcel, probably containing a returned article, and a letter from Blackwood, reached him on 22 December 1831, after a lengthy delay.

The parcel and your communication were both unsealed, therefore I conclude they have been pretty well conned over by the people in whose hands they have been so long lying.

On your extraordinary letter, I will merely observe

96 See below, Chapter Seven.

97 2 May 1831, NLS, MS4031, f.54. Robinson had already argued in the Magazine, in October 1829, that Peel should not be made the sole scapegoat for the enactment of Catholic emancipation. See below, Chapter Six.

for the thousandth time and the last, that
 I can only write the dictates of my conscience...
 In that spirit of honest independence which I know
 pervaded every Article I ever sent you, I close
 our connexion.⁹⁸

On this unhappy note ended the relationship between
 William Blackwood and his difficult, but outstandingly
 able, contributor. The last act of the tragedy was played
 out twelve years after Blackwood's death, when the
 following pathetic letter was received by the firm.

17 Stafford Place, South,
 Pimlico,
 London

To William Blackwood & Sons, Esqrs. Aug. 1st 1846.

Dr. Sirs,

I some time since duly received my unfortunate
 manuscript, and your favour. I had previously been
 compelled to part with my business at a sacrifice which
 left me scarcely any thing, and disabled me from
 paying the money you had kindly advanced. I have
 since been wholly without the means of paying it,
 and I and my family must have perished from want,
 had it not been for the kindness of some friends.

I offer this Article to your Magazine as my
 only means of repaying you. If you think it deserving
 of publication and worth any trifle more than the sum
 I owe, you will do me a great kindness by sending me
 such trifle, as I am almost destitute of the means
 of subsistence. I have no desire to become a
 contributor to your Magazine in opposition to the
 wish of any individual connected with it, but if you
 take this one article of me provided it be worthy,
 it will enable me to repay you, and its publication
 may be of service in procuring me literary employment,
 or a situation of some kind.

I am,

Dr Sirs, very faithfully yours,

David Robinson.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ 22 Dec. 1831, NLS, MS4031, f.71.

⁹⁹ NLS, MS4080, f.120.

A cheque for £10 was sent to Robinson by the Blackwood firm, but his forlorn effort was not accepted for publication. The endeavours of friends on his behalf fared no better. An application to the Royal Literary Fund was rejected because of the rule that the writer concerned had to have published 'a substantive octavo work.'¹⁰⁰ As a last resort, an advertisement was inserted in the press.¹⁰¹ For a man of Robinson's self-respect, death must have come as a release. His death was noticed in The Athenaeum for 3 March 1849:

We have to announce, too, the death last week, at Wickham, Hants - whither he had gone for the benefit of his health - of Mr. David Robinson. Though little known by name, Mr. Robinson was for many years a contributor to the leading magazines: his writings often displayed great power, and excited much attention. Mr. Robinson was, however, one of those victims with which the byeplaces of literature abound, - for want of some institution within the republic of letters itself on which the sick and the destitute might have a citizen's claim. After years of hardly requited toil, his latter days were tortured by an amount of distress and destitution such as seldom falls to the lot of the suffering class to which he belonged. He has left a wife and aged mother to an inheritance of his sufferings aggravated by the memory of his loss.¹⁰²

100 E. Lankester to Blackwood, 14 Oct. (1847), NLS, MS4722, f.126; RLF, file 1180, application signed 11 Oct. 1847, supported by E. Lankester, M.D., Physician to the Royal Pimlico Dispensary, and by Martin Tupper. (In 1855 the regulations were changed to allow 'authors of important contributions to periodical literature' to receive grants.)

101 See photocopy overleaf.

102 Reprinted in the Gentlemen's Magazine for April, whence A.L. Strout transcribed it for his typescript. Robinson was born on 22 July 1787 (RLF file 1180) and was therefore 61 when he died.

THE Advertisers are anxious to draw the atten-

tion of the wealthy benevolent to a LITERARY MAN in great DISTRESS. Although educated for business, at an early period of life accident determined literature as his profession. For many years he was a principal contributor to the "New Times," and subsequently to "Blackwood's" and "Fraser's Magazines." Under his literary labours his health broke down, and subsequent efforts at gaining a livelihood in business have entirely failed. Although his contributions to the above serials equal 28 volumes octavo, an application made by his friends to the Literary Fund failed because he had not published a separate work. At 61 years of age, with a constitution so broken up by disease as to render him incapable of severe application, and a wife and mother dependent on him for support, he has no alternative but the workhouse, unless the public will step forward and rescue him from his present wretched condition. This advertisement is addressed to all those who can sympathise with the cultivated mind in a distress deeper than that of physical want, and especially to those for whose political views, as the brilliant pages of "Blackwood" will testify, the distressed author may be said to have sacrificed his health and strength. The advertisers hope that the liberality of the benevolent will enable them to raise enough money to procure an annuity that will place the object of their solicitude for the remainder of his life beyond the reach of the excessive poverty which now distresses him. Subscriptions will be received by Dr. Lankester, 22, Old Burlington-street; Rev. J. Kelly, Churton House, Belgrave-road, Pimlico; and W. C. Montes, Esq., 43, Chester-square, Pimlico, to whom application may be made for further particulars of the history and character of the person for whom the appeal is made, and who can supply abundant evidence that his distress is not the result of indolence or intemperance.

CHAPTER FOUR

FROM LOYALTY TO DISSIDENCE

1821-1828

After 1820, the focal point of Blackwood's notoriety ceased to be its literary criticism. There was nothing on the literary-critical side to equal the impact of the castigation of the 'Cockney School,' the cruel sneering at Keats, the bludgeoning of the Biographia Literaria, the twitting of Wordsworth by alternate praise and censure, the recognition of the poetic genius of Byron and Shelley - all of which had occurred in the Magazine before the end of 1820. Blackwood's retained its literary importance thereafter by virtue of the Noctes, the espousal of German literature¹ and the serialising of fiction, notably by Galt, Warren and Bulwer. Estimable though these activities were, they did not (except for some sallies in the Noctes) generate the same excitement as had been provoked by earlier numbers. It is not surprising, therefore, that the literary bias of modern Blackwood's scholarship has caused this period to be seen as one of greater calm and less contention. The Wellesley Index refers to the Magazine's 'more restrained tone', and

1 A.L. Strout, 'Writers on German Literature in Blackwood's Magazine,' The Library (March 1954), 35-44. (Reference therein to B.Q. Morgan and A.R. Hohlfield, German Literature in British Magazines 1750-1860, (1949).) See also E. Block, 'Carlyle, Lockhart, and the Germanic Connection,' Victorian Periodicals Review, XVI, 1 (Spring 1983), 20-27.

Strout writes of 'the period from 1826 on, when that publication settled down into a more staid, yet always sufficiently stimulating, organ of the Tory party.'²

From the perspective of the political historian, however, it is precisely at this time that Blackwood's becomes really interesting. During the 1820s, the Magazine moved from a position of loyal - but never subservient - support for the Tory government to one of persistent and acute criticism of a whole range of government policies. Adjectives such as 'restrained' or 'staid' would have been almost the last to have occurred to ministers smarting under the lash of articles denouncing their policies on currency, trade, shipping and banking.³

The number for February 1821 can be taken as the point when the political dimension of Blackwood's began to balance the literary side, coming within a few years to outweigh it, before the literary side recovered its primacy during the 1840s. The February number contained a lengthy opening article, 'Thoughts on the Present Political Aspect of the Times,' written by Henry Matthews; and three shorter pieces dealt with the 'State and Prospects of the Whigs,' 'Lord Lauderdale's Proposed Address to the King,' and the 'Meeting of Parliament.' The latter two were probably by

2 Strout, Bib., p.3.

3 Ireland, and particularly Catholic emancipation, was a further source of contention, but more through anxious anticipation than over actual policies, before 1829. Discussion is therefore reserved until Chapter Six.

Croly.⁴

Serious consideration of Blackwood's as a political periodical should begin at this point. Several questions can be raised, which it is the purpose of the present chapter to answer. How wide was the range of political debate within the Magazine? What was envisaged as the primary object of allegiance - the government, or the Tory party, or the Pitt tradition? What were the chief targets of Blackwood's animosity - all Whigs, per se, or only some; all political economists, or only particular exponents of the 'dismal science'? When did loyalty give place to dissidence as the dominant characteristic of the Magazine? Why did this occur? By considering the published articles in close conjunction with the private correspondence, it should be possible to shed light on all these questions.

Although Blackwood's Magazine was unquestionably and unashamedly a Tory periodical, there was room for debate within its columns. In 1821-22 there occurred what Boyd Hilton has termed 'the rural flight from high protection.'⁵ Once agriculturists realised that there was no hope of increased protection, beyond the 1815 Corn Law, they began to place more emphasis upon underconsumption as the main cause of their distress. Attention therefore turned to ways of stimulating internal demand by a paper inflation, in opposition to the evolution of the government's policy of deflation and sound money. Some agriculturists matched

4 Strout, Bib., p.76. (Strout is doubtful about the Lauderdale item).

5 Hilton, op.cit., p.127.

Cobbett in their animosity to the fundholders, and there were calls for the repudiation of public and private debts. There were echoes of this debate in Blackwood's. Henry Matthews, in a wide-ranging discussion of contemporary politics, in February 1821, wrote of the need to tackle the national debt. He observed that David Hume's prediction, of seventy years previously, was coming true: either public credit would 'die of the doctor' in an attempt to bolster it up - the probable outcome of Ricardo's plan - or it would expire through sheer inability to pay the interest. Matthews carried his speculation further.

A national bankruptcy would not perhaps be so terrible a calamity as some persons imagine. If it should ever be a question between the preservation of the nation, and the keeping faith with the national creditor, it is clear that the safety of millions ought not to be sacrificed to the interests of thousands. And if we consider it merely as a question of finance, it seems probable that public credit would not only survive the ruin of the public creditor, but be restored by that event to all its pristine vigour.⁶

Matthews did draw back in his next paragraph from this daring speculation, recognising the cruelty to the creditors of such a step. The suspicion implicit here, however, and in other articles, that financiers were being favoured by fiscal policies drew a reply in the following year from John Galt. As well as enriching the Magazine with his serialised fiction, Galt contributed several articles in the 1820s about economic questions, usually under the pen-name of 'Bandana.' Galt's contacts

6 Maga, Feb. 1821, pp.493-4.

with the Glasgow business community and his active involvement in promoting emigration to Canada, where he became employed in colonial administration from 1826, made him more sympathetic to the entrepreneur than was the case with apologists for the landed interest. In the second of his 'hints to the Country Gentlemen,' in November 1822, Galt argued that the enterprising class which prospered from the raising of loans during the French wars should not be penalised by a too sudden reduction of the national debt. The maintaining of proper interest rates for the fundholders would enable them to afford to purchase the produce of agriculture and manufacturing. Nor were the fundholders some tiny and exclusive minority. The capital of savings banks, Galt pointed out, was invested in the funds, and thus labourers and servants were in effect fundholders. Moreover, the fundholding system was so intimately linked with the banking system that a blow to the one would be a blow to the other, and this would do widespread economic damage.

Parliamentary reform was another question which brought out differing opinions within the Magazine. In May 1821, Croly wrote to Blackwood, suggesting that 'something may be said on Mr. Lambton's motion of Reform - an absurd experiment of a saucy boy.'⁷ An article by Croly promptly appeared in the May number.⁸ It contained the usual Croly recourse to history and hyperbole, predicting the awful consequences that would come from

7 NLS, MS4006, f.84.

8 Maga, May 1821, pp.222-5, 'On Parliamentary Reform.'

'opening the flood-gates of democracy.'

In contrast to this jeremiad, J.G. Lockhart adopted a more moderate tone. Referring to a speech by Canning on parliamentary reform, Lockhart gently hinted that Canning erred, if anything, in the direction of intransigence in his opposition to the reform of parliament. He derived some consolation from the thought that Canning's opposition to all versions of parliamentary reform made it that much harder for the radicals to achieve any reform of the kind they wanted. There is a suggestion of some sympathy on Lockhart's part with the desire for moderate reform, 'which is perhaps a true spirit.'⁹

John Galt provided a more overt statement of support for a measure of parliamentary reform.¹⁰ He argued that it was right to champion the old institutions unreservedly during the Revolutionary shock, but now that we were in calmer times, those institutions 'must be modified and adapted to suit the wants, and to satisfy the judgment of the people.' Galt did not seek for 'general and entire changes,' rather for progressive improvement. He pointed out that there had, after all, been two major reforms of parliament in the previous century: the Acts of Union with Scotland and Ireland. It was not unreasonable, therefore, to consider a reform of the manner of election. Typically, Galt took the argument in a new direction, by discussing the need for colonial representation. He advocated a

9 Maga, Dec. 1822, p.789.

10 Maga, Jan. 1824, pp.45-50, 'Bandana on Representation'.

legislative union, with, perhaps, an elected upper house, carrying further the elective principle already existing among Scottish peers.

The Magazine's coverage of foreign affairs also provided room for internal debate. Those sections of articles in February 1822 and October 1824¹¹ bearing upon the question of Greek independence revealed a marked divergence of opinion, only partly resolved by the consideration that the writer of the earlier article, Croly, saw the Greeks as being disregarded by the Whigs, whereas the writer of the later article, Robinson, saw the Greeks as enjoying Whig support. Croly called shame on the Whigs for shunning the Greek revolt because it 'had no parade of tricoloured banners, and no emblems of mountebank rebellion, - no fantastic codes of Rights of Man.' Croly went on,

On the subject of the Greek insurrection, the opinion of the rational public is decided. There is but one wish, for the overthrow of the Turkish supremacy over a people whom they have shewn themselves unfit to rule. (pp.245-6).

Robinson, on the other hand, while granting that the Turkish government was despotic and cruel, and wishing to see the Greeks 'possessed of a due portion of liberty,' berated the degeneracy of the modern Greeks: 'with regard to knowledge, they hardly equal our West India slaves; and with regard to morals, they fall far below them.' The right advice to the Greeks should therefore be:

Obey the Turks, until you become intelligent, virtuous, and reasonably powerful. You must become this, or

¹¹ Maga, Feb. 1822, pp.242-9, 'Domestic Politics,' and Oct. 1824, pp.442-455, 'The Liberal System.'

you will never win freedom. (p.444)

The subject of political economy might seem the least likely topic to reveal divergence amongst contributors to the Magazine. Fetter, indeed, writes of 'the opposition of Blackwood's to economists and all their works.'¹² He adds that 'Blackwood's basic approach was to ridicule the economists as impractical theorists,...'¹³ Both these generalisations, however, appear oversimplified when all the relevant articles are considered. In particular, due weight should be given to the series of articles by William Stevenson, beginning in May 1824. Entitled 'The Political Economist,' these essays had a primarily didactic, rather than polemical, purpose. Fetter mentions them, introducing them with the phrase 'many a barbed shaft,' but this understates their professed purpose.

It is our intention, in the course of a series of papers, to investigate, establish, and explain the primary and fundamental principles of Political Economy; to deduce from them the less obvious and more complicated doctrines, and to apply these principles and doctrines to the elucidation and solution of the most interesting and important practical questions on this subject.¹⁴

Salim Rashid dismisses the articles as long-winded,¹⁵ but they did attempt painstakingly to educate the Magazine's readers, and the standpoint adopted was openly stated to be a middle position between those who dismissed political

12 Fetter, J.P.E., p.88.

13 Ibid., p.89.

14 Maga, May 1824, p.527.

15 Rashid, op.cit., p.259, n.7.

economy as being of no practical utility, and those who claimed it was the perfect guide to every practical problem. Writing to Stevenson, whom he addressed as 'Librarian, Treasury,' Blackwood praised the new series, adding, 'One must read very doggedly and attentively as your essays are no child's play.'¹⁶

The stereotype of Blackwood's as unrelentingly opposed to political economy, and relying mainly on ridicule to express dissent, thus will not do, even with the authority of D.P. O'Brien to support it. O'Brien characterises the Magazine as being 'strenuously contemptuous of economics' and publishing articles 'full of vulgar ridicule and coarse abuse directed at economists.'¹⁷ Such a portrayal must contend, not only with the Stevenson series, but with articles which appeared in the Magazine both before and after that series.

The second number of the Magazine (May, 1817) contained a review of Ricardo's Principles of Political Economy and Taxation which adopted a very respectful tone towards the subject. There was reference to 'the profound and original inquiries of Mr. Malthus,' while Ricardo himself was praised in that his new work had 'established some highly important principles, and rectified many prevailing errors.'

16 25 May 1824, NLS, Acc.5643, B3, f.292.

17 O'Brien, op.cit., p.15.
(As Fetter, Rashid, and others, have pointed out, the word 'economist' in this period did not simply denote any writer on economic theory, but was used strictly to refer to the group of writers who traced their origins to Adam Smith and who acknowledged the primacy - although not necessarily the infallibility - of Ricardo in their own day).

This, of course, was in the early, dull days of the Magazine, before it came into the hands of Lockhart and Wilson, but even under the new regime there was no immediate switch to a frontal attack. The April 1818 number contained an article on the Poor Laws, signed 'A Political Economist,' advocating reforms similar in several respects to those adopted in 1834. Two months later, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland was commended for warmly welcoming a report by its committee into the management of the poor in Scotland, showing by its approbation 'the most ample acknowledgment of the truth of those principles of political economy, which, however they may have been admired in theory, have hitherto been allowed to exercise but too little practical influence on national measures.'¹⁸

In the following year the attitude towards Ricardo shifted from praise to reasoned criticism. Ricardo's theory of the inverse relationship between wages and profits was deemed to be sad if it were true, but to be questionable in any case. The writer pointed out that the introduction of new farming techniques would bring higher productivity, a greater yield, and thereby enhance both profits and wages.¹⁹ Similarly, Adam Smith's free trade theories were treated respectfully by 'Tickler' in September 1819, but J.R. McCulloch was rebuked for his imperfect understanding, unoriginal reiteration and unsound modification of Smith's ideas.²⁰

18 Maga, June 1818, 'Principal Baird's Report.'

19 Maga, May 1819, pp.171-3.

20 Maga, Sept. 1819, pp.655-9.

It was in 1821, and more so in 1822, that one (but not the only) of the characteristic approaches of Blackwood's towards political economy emerged: that of ridicule.

A piece by D.M. Moir ironically suggested that the high poor rates could be abated if the surplus population could be persuaded 'either to be transported beyond seas, or dispatched in as gentle a manner as could be devised.'²¹

In similar, but more outrageous, vein, J.G. Lockhart adopted the guise of 'Professor Gunthred Bumgroschen' in order to resort to a reductio ad absurdum.²² Applying strictly economic principles, the 'Professor' argued that the practice of burying corpses is wasteful. Corpses should first be dissected, to establish cause of death, and then be delivered to 'the College of Arts and Manufactures,' for public benefit. The skin should be detached and converted into leather.

The more delicate hides of ladies will form wash leather, for the purpose of making gloves, free-mason's aprons, spreading of blisters, tying over marmalade and pickles.

The fair-skinned inmates of a convent of nuns could be converted into vellum for missals, while the darker-skinned could be used for book-bindings, for example, of Don Juan. Fat could be converted into soap and lamp-oil; hair could serve as stuffing for chairs and sofas; and bones could be used for manure. The good Professor then concluded,

Thus it will be seen that the post-obituary employment of the human remains is the elevated

21 Maga, March 1821, pp.605-7, 'Strictures on Political Economy.'

22 Maga, Nov.1822, pp.525-530, 'Political Economy. Elements of Save-all-ism; or, an Introduction to the Science of Sifting Cinders.'

system of philosophical and political economy,
the grand desideratum of national wealth.

That our response to this flight of fancy should be one of distaste rather than of mirth is perhaps a verdict upon the era in which we live, when such fantasies became a reality.

In the early part of 1827, three short articles concerned with economic theory were published in the Magazine.²³ Suttie's contribution was written in matter-of-fact tone, and referred on several occasions to Ricardo as an authority on economic questions. It subscribed to the view, however, that the protection of the wages of agricultural labourers was fundamental to the prosperity of the nation. Mease, who stated that he 'was once a student under Adam Smith's system,' offered theoretical objections to Ricardo's theory of rent and thus to the policy of decultivating marginal land. 'Christopher North,' in a dissenting footnote, came to the defence of the Ricardian theory, adding that, in any case, it did not conflict with Adam Smith's theory, but merely made a different point that Smith had overlooked, namely 'the fact of the different rates of fertility in the soil.' David Low, in a soberly-written contribution, regretted the 'tone of sarcasm and ridicule' in which a recent pamphlet, published by Blackwood, had attacked Ricardo's theory. Low asked anxiously,

If the propositions of Ricardo, in regard to
the nature and causes of rent, must be abandoned,

23 Maga, Jan. 1827, pp.1-8, 'Letter from a Scottish Freeholder on the Effects of the Introduction of Foreign Grain upon the Condition of the Labouring Population,' (Suttie); Jan., pp.74-78, 'Letter on Ricardo's Theory of Rent,' (L. Mease); March, pp.311-314, 'On the Theory of Rents,' (D. Low).

what is that which is to be received in their stead?
Are the propositions of Malthus and West also erroneous,
or with what limitations may they be admitted?

This was a problem which, until solved, 'will continue to detract from the credit of the science' of political economy. Such thoughtful articles hardly accord with D.P. O'Brien's depiction of Blackwood's. Even David Robinson, for all his vitriolic articles, could write to Blackwood in that year in calmer terms about economic theory.²⁴ He informed the publisher that he did not share De Quincey's support for the Ricardo doctrine that as wages rise, profits fall. Robinson preferred the Malthusian view that they can both rise together. He added that he agreed selectively with different economists, but could not embrace the system of any one of them as a whole. This evidence constitutes at least a gloss on the assertion by Fetter (in discussing theories of effective demand) that,

So deepseated was the opposition of Blackwood's to political economy that in the 1820's and 1830's only one writer - Alan [sic] Stevenson - seems to have sensed the basic disagreement between Ricardo and Malthus.²⁵

It should therefore be apparent from this survey that Blackwood's Magazine was no mere monolith. Granted a broad agreement on general principles, which the next section will attempt to delineate, there was room for differences of opinion, to an extent which makes it hazardous, even misleading, to write of 'the attitude of Blackwood's' as though the Magazine were a soloist, rather

24 8 Oct. 1827, NLS, MS4020, f.126.

25 Fetter, J.P.E., pp.102-3.

than a choir singing their various parts in broad harmony, with the occasional discordant voice.

The private correspondence of William Blackwood confirms the loyalty to the government which his Magazine professed in the early 1820s. In November 1820, Blackwood wrote to the Earl of Liverpool, enclosing a copy of the Magazine.

The object of my wish has always been to support the best interests of the country, and I flatter myself it has not been unsuccessful. I would feel very proud indeed if I knew at any time that any article in it met with your Lordship's approbation.²⁶

In July 1822, Blackwood again sent Lord Liverpool a copy of the Magazine.²⁷ Canning also was the recipient of copies, that for March 1821 being accompanied by a very deferential letter, in which Blackwood offered to send his periodical via one of Canning's official friends, as he was then out of office.

I trust however this will not be necessary, and that all who love their country will soon have the happiness of seeing you again at the helm.²⁸

The Magazine for July 1821 was sent to Lord Sidmouth, with his lordship's attention being specially drawn to the political article by Croly.²⁹

If the loyalty of Blackwood's to the government was beyond question, it proved too ardent for some tastes. In

26 NLS, Acc.5643, B1, f.188.

27 loc.cit., B3, f.123.

28 loc.cit., B1, f.262. (In 1823 Blackwood sent Canning a complimentary copy of Lockhart's novel, Reginald Dalton, which Canning's secretary passed to Mrs. Canning. Canning Papers, Harewood MSS, 90, 4 June 1823.)

29 loc.cit., B2, f.117.

October 1821 Viscount Henry Lascelles published a signed letter in the Magazine, observing that 'you now and then have an ultra excess of loyalty.'³⁰ This early usage of a term that would later be commonly applied to Blackwood's came from someone who styled himself, not a politician nor a rigid partizan, but 'a true government man.' Probably with some of Croly's pieces in mind, Lascelles remarked that,

You seem to think, that the same causes which overthrew the ancient government of France, are actively at work in this country, and struggling onward to the same issue.

This was true to the extent that the seeds of disorder were always present, but it would be a mistake to understate the effectiveness of public policy in weakening 'the germinative principles of popular disaffection.'

The attitude of Lascelles could be regarded as consistent with the Pitt tradition, wherein politics was perceived in terms of the art of government, rather than of party rivalry, and the role of government was to provide practical administration, rather than the espousal of abstract ideals.³¹ John Galt probably came closest of the Magazine's contributors to identifying with that tradition. In 1823 he argued that the government was still operating on Pittite principles; not that there was anything innovative about such principles.³² Retrenchment

30 Maga, Oct. 1821, p.334.

31 J.W. Derry, Castlereagh (1976), pp.22-3.

32 Maga, May 1823, pp.515-518.

was imposed upon Pitt in the 1780s by the circumstances occasioned by the American War, just as it was upon Liverpool's Ministry in the 1820s, in the aftermath of the French wars. Similarly, the Ministry's opposition to the provocative interventionism of the Holy Alliance mirrored Pitt's opposition to the interventionism of the French Jacobins. And, in resisting parliamentary reform, the government was not turning against Pitt's responsiveness to public opinion. The rise of the newspaper press had made it far easier to know public opinion than any change in the representation would accomplish.

Pitt avoided using the label 'Tory', and there were those who wondered whether the conductors of Blackwood's were right to adopt it. Colonel John Matthews, in a friendly letter to 'Christopher North,' protested about the usage of that 'obnoxious appellation.'³³ The word Tory had its origins in seventeenth century notions of the divine right of kings, passive resistance, and supposed sympathy with the Church of Rome. Such sentiments had nothing to do with Blackwood's or its writers, so they would be wise to drop the Tory name.

Matthews drew a distinction between the Whigs of 1688 and those of his own day, and this thought had already been voiced by other contributors to the Magazine. In the preface to the eleventh volume, in June 1822, the writer (perhaps J.G. Lockhart) confessed,

We should indeed be very much ashamed of ourselves,
if we believed ourselves to have merited or moved

33 Maga, Dec. 1823, pp.666-668.

the spleen of the true old English Whigs. Not at all. We have among them many fast friends, nay, many admirable and valuable contributors; and these are every day increasing.

A similar argument was advanced a year later, although the title of the piece, 'The Tory,' and the authorship, by Croly, hardly raise the expectation that this will be the case.

The name of Tory was once obnoxious, from its connexion with the dangerous and exploded doctrines of the Stuarts. But time changes the spirit of titles as well as of men. Toryism, in 1823, is the representative of Whiggism in 1688. The tremendous lesson of the French Revolution, has perhaps impressed it with a deeper fear of popular licentiousness, and a more solemn deference for the wisdom of our ancient institutions; it may feel an inferior jealousy of the throne, from a fuller experience of the checks on its power; and a keener alarm at innovation in politics and religion, from the knowledge that it is only preparative to the betrayal of both. But in all that made the great national service of Whiggism in 1688, its manly adherence to the national privileges, its honest love of liberty, its homage to the supremacy of the laws, its vigilance over the conduct of ministers, its sincere reverence for the Constitution in Church and State, Toryism now stands on the same lofty ground with the spirit of our glorious Revolution.³⁴

David Robinson, in reviewing a life of Burke, likewise traced the pedigree of contemporary Toryism back to Whig roots.

The Toryism which flourished forty or fifty years since has vanished from the land, and that which was then Whiggism is now Toryism; in truth, our present Tories have embraced no small portion of that new Whiggism which that genuine Whig Burke so loudly reprobated.³⁵

34 Maga, July 1823, p.76.

35 Maga, Jan. 1825, p.12.

Such gestures towards those readers who hesitated to adopt the label of Tory were probably not unwelcome to the publisher, as they brought with them the prospect of widening the circulation-base of the Magazine. This attempt at comprehension did not extend, however, to followers of contemporary Whig politicians. Here no quarter was given.

When all allowances have been made for openness of discussion, there can be no doubt that Blackwood's Magazine in 1820-23 was a forceful champion of the Tory government. This consideration helps to explain the strength of feeling generated during the ensuing five years, when a deepening gulf opened between the Magazine and the Ministry.

The deterioration in the relationship owed much to changes in personnel, both in the cabinet and on the staff of the Magazine. Although historians now tend to emphasise the continuity between the pre- and post- 1822 periods of Liverpool's Administration,³⁶ a fresh momentum was given to commercial policies after 1823, when Huskisson entered the cabinet as president of the board of trade, on the transference of Robinson to the exchequer. It took a year for the new appointments to make a full impact on policies, just as it also took a year for the full significance of David Robinson's advent to the Magazine to become apparent. The year 1825 marks the beginning of Robinson's full-scale onslaught on the

36 N. Gash, 'The Earl of Liverpool', in H. van Thal, ed., The Prime Ministers (1974), pp.289, 293-4; amplified in Gash, Lord Liverpool (1984).

economic policies of the government. There were, however, portents in the previous year, with the first hint that Canning was proving a divisive element in the cabinet. In an article on 'The late Session of Parliament,'³⁷ Robinson drew attention to the Whig tactic of seeking to disunite and then infiltrate the Ministry. Hence their flattery of some ministers, and their suggestion that Canning had become a Liberal. On policy grounds, however, Robinson maintained that the evidence was 'altogether against the alleged apostasy of Mr. Canning,' although the Whigs' flattery had, regrettably, caused him to cease attacking them. Even this mild criticism of Canning proved too much for J.G. Lockhart. Assuming the editorial mantle of 'Christopher North,' he added a note to the end of Robinson's article.

We have always wished, and avowed our wish too, that this Magazine should be the vehicle of free political discussion. We would admit even Brougham or Cobbett with pleasure to write half a sheet every month for us; reserving, however, of course, our own right to answer and destroy their effusions in our own way. We have had, therefore, great pleasure in opening our pages to the preceding article, although our able correspondent has adopted views, in very many particulars, considerably at variance with our own. (p.86)

The postscript ended with a professed intention to reconsider this subject in the next number, in the hope of seeing Tory differences healed. It was not until the following March, however, that the delicate question was reopened, and then only in the amiable forum of the

37 Maga, July 1824, pp.74-85.

Noctes. John Wilson's dialogue has 'Christopher North' purporting to be untroubled by reports of divisions in the cabinet. The government should not be monolithic, but should represent the soundly differing opinions of the House and of the country, and then agree upon the most practically prudent policy, rather than adhere to one man's pure doctrine. When James Hogg retorts that North should therefore adopt a divided administration of the Magazine, the 'editor' replies,

You could not have chosen a more unfortunate simile, Hogg. Sir, my Cabinet is completely a divided one. I look on myself as the Liverpool of it - You, Tickler [Lockhart?], are decidedly the Canning - the Adjutant [Maginn] is our Peel and our Wellington both in one - Y.Y.Y. [Robinson] is our Eldon.³⁸

Insofar as Lockhart was identified with Canning, his departure at the end of that year to edit the Quarterly Review removed a barrier to the full expression of Robinson's animosity towards the Canning and Huskisson wing of the government. Lockhart was later to strive from London to weaken the force of Robinson's attacks.³⁹

The campaign opened in earnest in May 1825, with Robinson's twentieth article for the Magazine. Entitled 'Free Trade,' the article voiced suspicions of interference,

38 Maga, March 1825, Noctes, p.380. (it is of interest that in the same month, Blackwood wrote to Canning in highly confidential terms about a 'plan' which he had put to Canning when he saw him in London in the previous year. Canning Papers, Stapleton MSS, 20, 5 March 1825: c.f. Blackwood Letterbook, B3, f.278, 24 April 1824. A few of Blackwood's close friends were in the secret, including a fellow member of the Edinburgh town council. It may be suggested that the project could have been to set up a Tory newspaper in Edinburgh. Blackwood was later involved with an Edinburgh newspaper. (See above, Chapter Two).

39 See below.

based on untested theories, in tariff policies that had been working well. Robinson could see no harm in giving a monopoly to domestic producers, if there was reasonable competition amongst them to keep prices fairly competitive. Not that the cheapening of prices should be the supreme goal, in any case.

The extreme of general cheapness must ever produce the extreme of general poverty, when it flows from the extreme of competition.

Then followed a series of questions aimed at the new policies, both actual and anticipated. Why exert ourselves to give fleets to other nations? Why deprive our agricultural labourers of the protection of the Corn Laws, to the alleged benefit of higher-paid manufacturing labourers? The piece ends with stern censure of the new tendencies.

We cannot approve of that liberality which, to increase trade, seeks to make us dependent on other nations for both bread and raiment; we cannot approve of that liberality which, to secure their present prosperity to the traders, to the comparatively contemptible few, seeks to involve the vast overwhelming majority in distress and privation. (p.563)

The article had the warm support of Blackwood himself. The publisher wrote to Robinson,

I am quite delighted with the way in which you state the subject of Free Trade, and just now when ministers seem to be giving way to all the speculative notions of the Economists, and the Country Gentlemen are beginning to be alarmed as well as the Farmers at the proposed alterations in the Corn Laws, it must have a capital effect.⁴⁰

39 See below.

40 22 April, 1825, NLS Acc.5643, B5, f.85.

The repeal of the Combination Laws was another source of disquiet to David Robinson. He wrote to Blackwood in October 1824 to ascertain whether the publisher shared his unease. Some months later it was Blackwood's turn to revive the question in Robinson's mind, with the suggestion that,

An article upon the present combinations among the mechanics might have a good effect. Everywhere they are dissatisfied, and evidently wish to be masters instead of servants.⁴¹

Robinson responded with an article in the Magazine for July 1825 on 'The Repeal of the Combination Laws.' It was one of his most reflective pieces, deeply imbued with Burkean conservatism.

It is, in our eyes, one of the great recommendations of our laws and institutions, that, generally speaking, they did not emanate from the reveries of speculation - that they were not formed to supply wants which were not felt, or to correct theoretic faults which were not proved by experience to be injurious. They only received being when the necessity was distinctly apparent, and when the evil called aloud for remedy... The Laws against Combinations thus originated. They were formed to remedy evils which existed, and which demanded remedy. (p.20)

The laws were not faultless, but they were effective and beneficial. The prime movers in their repeal 'avowedly acted upon abstract reasoning.' The outcome was thus industrial indiscipline, followed by the reimposition of legislation, although, Robinson feared, only a 'milk-and-water measure.' Whilst affirming that 'there is not a finer race of people in the universe than the working classes of Britain,' Robinson did not regard that as a reason for exempting

41 24 May, 1825, NLS, Acc.5643, B5, f.116.

them from proper control. The repealers sought to destroy the obedience of servants towards their masters. Robinson found it significant that Brougham, in his pamphlet on the education of the people, did not use 'the good old English words - servant and master,' but adopted the American importations 'the working classes and their employers.' Robinson would do away with such 'American trumpery.' (p.24).

A further baneful effect of combinations was that they emancipated the workers from the moral surveillance of their masters. The master ought to be able to discharge a labourer of bad morals, but the union would prevent him. Likewise, the master should advise his men on how they ought to vote, but his advice would be disregarded at the behest of the union. In an effort to reassert paternalistic principles in an industrial context, Robinson advised employers to hire their workmen on longer terms - but with varying terminations, so that they could not all combine at the time of renewal. They should insist on maintaining their authority over their servants, and the men should realise that 'they will ever benefit far more from gaining the respect and good-will of the masters, than from exciting their animosity.' (p.31)

In a further article on 'The Combinations' in October 1825, Robinson turned the argument against Huskisson. Whilst laying down the weapon of the law, with one hand, Huskisson took up in the other the more insidious weapon of foreign competition, as a way of keeping the unions in

check. The unfairness of this tactic was that it punished the masters as much as the men. Huskisson, in company with 'Prosperity' Robinson, came in for further criticism with regard to the reduction of the silk duties, which became one of David Robinson's most persistent and vehement lamentations. The first step, of reducing the revenue duty, was compatible with the old system, but now dealers saw this as only the first stage in opening the door to foreign silk. Purchases of English silk had therefore fallen and the native industry was in stagnation.⁴²

The commencement of a new volume of the Magazine in January 1826 gave the opportunity to review the evolution of its policy in a lengthy preface. The work of several hands,⁴³ the preface contained a justification for the Magazine's current political stance, written by David Robinson. Blackwood's stood firm by the principles of Toryism.

Upon these principles, the Ministry has long acted, and so long we have been its warm friends. It has, however, on some occasions, in the last two years, wandered far from them to adopt others, which have hitherto been regarded as the essence of Whiggism and the reverse of Toryism. (p.xviii).

The new policies were then itemised: reduction of tariffs, relaxation of the Navigation Laws, repeal of the Combination Laws. The worth of the new policies had yet to be proved, and their wisdom was open to question.

We are not here touching any doctrine of political economy, much as we are disposed to question some of the axioms of the science. We are only contending,

42 Maga, Dec. 1825, pp.736-750, 'The Silk Trade.'

43 Wellesley Index, I, entry 271.

that while the world consists of separate communities and different nations, it is the duty of the respective governments of each to regard exclusively their own interests. (p.xx)

As the parliamentary Opposition was even more favourable to the changes than the Ministry, it had been left to Blackwood's, outside parliament, to speak out against 'this new anti-national system.'

The Ministry, however, by its change, placed us in a most painful and embarrassing situation. It naturally carried along with it all its own prints, and many of its friends. Its new principles and measures were cried up by the Opposition, and, as it seemed, by the greater part of the nation. To oppose these we had to oppose men whom we had long, and whom we still, venerated; we had to oppose both the Ministry and the Opposition, a united Parliament; a united Press, and, to a very great extent, public opinion. We had no party in the field to heed and support us... Nothing but the commands of conscience could have engaged us in such a contest. (pp.xx-xxi)

In this difficult position, the Magazine relied on recognition of its integrity.

We have not been mistaken. A regularly and greatly increasing circulation attests that our conduct has lost us no friends,⁴⁴ and that we have had credit given us for honesty, if not for wisdom. (p.xxi)

This section of the preface concluded with the observation that time had not yet proved the Ministry right, or Blackwood's wrong, but if that were to become the case, there would at least be the consolation of having stood loyally by the old ways of proven success.

The tone of this piece, written more in sorrow than in anger, was considerably more restrained than that of the articles by Robinson which followed in 1826. The economic

44 In March 1826, Robinson wrote to Blackwood, 'I am glad from my soul that the sale of the Magazine increases.' NLS, MS4018, f.123.

depression of that year was taken to vindicate earlier forbodings. Even if Robinson's diagnosis was not necessarily sound, he does deserve credit for having begun his criticisms of the new policies during the buoyant months of 1825, rather than merely being wise after the event, when things went wrong after the banking failures in December.

In the first article of his 1826 campaign, in March, Robinson turned his attention to agriculture. Opening with a quotation from Burke, 'It is a perilous thing to try experiments on the farmer,' Robinson complained that theorists, with no practical experience of agriculture, were attacking the Corn Laws through the maxims of political economy. It was a lamentable feature of the times that theoreticians were now more heeded than practical men.

The primary directors of public affairs have lately been closet visionaries - men thoroughly destitute of experimental knowledge, and having a character for anything rather than ability and wisdom. The Ministry and Parliament may have carried into effect, but these men - the Humes - McCullochs, and Benthams - have formed the plan and laid down the principle. (p.288).

Robinson argued for the old and beneficial policy of restriction, where our agriculturists and our merchants and manufacturers were compelled to buy from each other, to their mutual advantage. Under the 'new liberal system' of Huskisson and F.J. Robinson, in contrast, agriculturists could already buy manufactures from other nations, and soon the trading classes would no longer be compelled to buy our home-grown produce. In that event, it would not only be agriculturists that would suffer from the importation of foreign corn.

The merchants and manufacturers may buy corn much cheaper abroad than at home; but if they buy the foreign corn, they must very greatly reduce the consumption of our own corn-growers. They will sell far less goods and labour; their prices will be greatly reduced, and their cheap foreign corn will be, in reality, infinitely dearer to them than the dear corn of England. (p.297)

The converse argument applied to agriculturists in their purchase of manufactures. This theme of mutual interdependence within the nation was central to Robinson's whole case against the introduction of free trade, just as the theory of international interdependence was central to classical economics. At the heart of the dispute was the question of marginal land. Ricardo's 'corn model',⁴⁵ the key proposition of his Principles of Political Economy and Taxation (1817), postulated that the Corn Laws, by hindering the importation of foreign corn, caused the resort to inferior land at home. This caused a reduction in the average yield and thereby a reduction in the average product from capital investment, to a point where it would soon cease to be worthwhile continuing the process. We would then reach the dreaded 'stationary state.' Robinson, on the other hand, maintained that the importation of cheap foreign grain would depress domestic prices, thus forcing formerly marginal land out of cultivation, just when it had been made productive. In losing cultivated acres at home, we would become correspondingly dependent on foreigners, who would be unable to supply our needs at times of general scarcity.

Here was the crux of the problem. Could the nation's food-supplies be better safeguarded by protection and the

45 D.P. O'Brien, op.cit., p.41.

cultivation of marginal land, as Robinson argued, or by encouraging foreign suppliers to export to Britain, at the price of the decultivation of our marginal land? By 1826 the course of the government was set on the latter objective. Ministers had reached this conclusion, according to a modern authority,⁴⁶ not by being captivated by a theory and then turning it into practice, but by making their paramount concern the securing of a stable food-supply, and then perceiving, in Ricardo's corn model, a theoretical vindication of what empirical evidence was already suggesting.

Nonetheless, theory was important to the government's proceedings. Hilton is inclined to accept the view of W.D. Jones⁴⁷ that 'Prosperity' Robinson had a consistent theoretical commitment to free trade.⁴⁸ Huskisson, in contrast, saw theories as debating-weapons when justifying policies adopted on pragmatic grounds. Such theories, however, were important to him in demonstrating his consistency to his political critics, and they satisfied what Hilton terms his 'schematic intellect.'⁴⁹ The antithetical case mounted by David Robinson in Blackwood's, therefore, is valuable to the full understanding of a decade when economic theory and economic policy were unusually closely intertwined.

The next target for one of David Robinson's increasingly

46 Boyd Hilton, op.cit., ch.4.

47 W.D. Jones Prosperity Robinson (1967). (Ricardo paid tribute to F.J. Robinson's grasp of economic theory: Jones, p.101).

48 Hilton, op.cit., pp.182-3.

49 Ibid., p.304.

trenchant critiques was the government's currency policy. The implementation of what became known as 'Peel's Act' of 1819 had already attracted criticism in the Magazine before David Robinson's time. Henry Matthews, in the number for February 1821, had claimed that the contraction of note-issue by the Bank of England was stifling commercial activity.⁵⁰ Robinson took up the argument in 1826, when the government first prohibited the stamping of any new small notes emanating from country banks and then proposed the cessation of all existing small notes within three years. The outcry this raised from country banks and from dissident Tories caused Lord Liverpool to make a concession that the Bank of England could continue to stamp new small notes until October, 1826.⁵¹

It was into this debate that David Robinson plunged in April 1826, with a forceful article on the 'Public Distress.' He accused the Ministry, specifically Liverpool, Robinson and Huskisson, of having blamed the price fluctuations of 1824-6 solely upon paper currency. Never mind such factors as bad harvests or interruptions to sources of supply or demand. Never mind the fluctuations in the price of corn during the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries, when we had a metallic currency. Blame it all on the 'unfortunate bank note.' The symptom was thus confused with the cause. It was because prices and consumption were rising in 1824-5 that farming families, in particular, needed some notes in hand, living as they often do some miles from a bank. Notes

50 Maga, Feb. 1821, pp.494-5.

51 Hilton, op.cit., p.222.

are simply a convenience, they are not the essential cause of rising prices or increased consumption. Neither were they to blame for the distress, which arose from several factors: the disruption caused by combinations, the undermining of the domestic silk industry, the loosening of our hold on the carrying trade, and the occurrence of gluts when consumption fell away before production did. In this uncertain climate, the government could have rallied confidence and eased liquidity by a timely loan of exchequer bills to merchants and leading manufacturers. This, however, was not in accordance with the principles of political economy, so, of course, it was not allowed.

Ministers professed themselves to be guided by the new theories - by that 'philosophy' which Mr. Canning lauds so unmercifully, and which stinks in the nostrils of the whole nation. (p.441)

Canning vaunted the new system and trumpeted Huskisson's schemes.

Is there a single English stomach that has not been turned by this nauseous arrogance, bombast and swagger?
(p.442)

Robinson insisted that the withdrawal of notes from circulation would do more harm than good. He maintained

that, in so far as a paper currency raises prices, it raises them by promoting trade and creating employment for labour, and that it can never raise them permanently above what public prosperity calls for. (p.445)

We simply did not have enough gold in this country to meet our currency needs. A paper currency would be more convenient, and the notes of country banks were trusted in their locality and rarely counterfeited.

We shall soon discover that the want of capital is even a more grievous thing than the excess of it

- that occasional paroxysms of gout are to be preferred to the never-ceasing effects of atrophy.
(p.446)

The debate on the restriction of note-issue in England was mild compared with the furore that greeted the government's attempt to extend the prohibition of small notes to Scotland. Sir Walter Scott, in the guise of 'Malachi Malagrowther,' was provoked into his only publication on a political question. His three long and forceful letters to the Edinburgh Weekly Journal, appearing in February and March 1826, were promptly reprinted by Blackwood as a pamphlet, which went through several editions.⁵² 'Malachi' argued, from a combination of Scottish pride and practical judgment, that the stability of Scottish banks rendered it unnecessary and improper for their activities to be cramped, simply because some English country banks had proved unsound. He could not see the justification for a policy that seemed to assume that 'if our superiors of England and Ireland eat sour grapes, the Scottish teeth must be set on edge as well as their own.'⁵³

David Robinson was gratified to find such an ally in his campaign against the government's currency policy. He wrote to Blackwood in March, thanking him for a copy of the letters.

I have been greatly delighted with them, and they have raised their illustrious author many degrees in my estimation. I had previously been led to think him a pluckless, liberal kind of person in politics, and I was therefore greatly astonished to find him

52 The Letters of Malachi Malagrowther, reprinted by Wm. Blackwood & Sons in 1981, with a stimulating preface by P.H. Scott.

53 Ibid. p.39.

display such a large portion of sterling
old feeling.⁵⁴

Blackwood suggested that Robinson should contribute an article on the subject, and it duly appeared in the May number, championing 'Malachi' against the strictures of a hostile pamphleteer 'E.B. Waverley' (J.W. Croker). After disputing E.B. Waverley's contentions point by point, and asserting his confidence in the practical merits of small notes, Robinson ended with a confident prediction that the innovators would be routed.

In truth it matters not how these changes and innovations may be defended - it matters not by whom their defence may be undertaken - it matters not what Tories and Tory publications may toil at the filthy work of retailing the hackneyed opinions of Bentham, Ricardo, and their disciples - it matters not, if those whose duty it is to guide public feeling, reverse their path and principles - all this we say matters not, for the flame is now kindled in the nation, which will soon consume the new creeds and systems.⁵⁵

What Robinson had in mind here was not merely the specific case of the Scottish notes, where indeed the government did give way, but the greater matter of the general election which was about to take place. In June 1826, writing as 'One of the Old School,' Robinson addressed a 'Friendly Epistle to John Bull Esquire,'⁵⁶ attempting to recall that quintessential Englishman to his senses.

I can only hear you lisp, and drawl, and stammer at the fifth hand the stale, puerile, contradictory, and cold-blooded dogmas of the Economists. (p.632)

Leaving aside the question of Catholic emancipation, all the Ministers in the House of Commons now went with the

54 NLS, MS4018, f.125.

55 Maga, May 1826, p.607.

56 Maga, pp.631-650.

new or liberal Tories.

The old Tories in this house have been betrayed; they have no leaders; they are but a number of unconnected individuals, destitute of voice and influence. (p.637)

Robinson now moved to a point that anticipated the role and opinions of the ultra-Tories in 1829-30. He argued that the old Tories and the country gentlemen were the victims of an unholy alliance of Ministers, Whigs and Tories in the close boroughs. The government's majority

consists, in a very great degree, of the close-borough members of both sides. I, sir, never was a Reformer, and I am a decided enemy to what is called Parliamentary Reform; but I cannot close my eyes to the fact, that a more terrible curse could not visit the empire than the combining of the close-borough members. (p.638)

In the Magazine for August 1826 (Part 1), Robinson found an ally in the campaign which, until then, he had fought almost single-handed amongst Blackwood's writers. Josiah Rivers, whose pen-name, 'R.R.R.', recalls Robinson's early nom-de-guerre, 'Y.Y.Y.', delivered himself of some 'Free Strictures on the Parliamentary Logic of "Philosophical Statesmen."' About four years ago, Rivers recalled, 'Christopher North' had eulogised Lord Liverpool's administration.

You now characterise this same administration as the patrons of quacks, and projectors, and innovators, - you now accuse them of subjecting themselves to the dictation of that very 'rabble of Whiggism'... (p.221)

Is North inconsistent then? 'No,' replied Rivers. It is Lord Liverpool that has changed. He could have prevented the overturning of 'our established system of commercial policy,' but did not do so. Rivers did not fudge his

censure by blaming subordinates.

I regard his Lordship as one who has given a casting vote - I consider his Lordship's hand to have been upon the rudder. (p.222)

In this respect, Rivers went beyond Robinson, who had avoided a frontal assault on the Prime Minister, concentrating his fire on Canning, Huskisson and F.J. Robinson, although Liverpool was included in general indictments of the Ministry. Although Robinson most commonly named Huskisson in his critiques of the government's commercial policies, the special target of his animosity was Canning. This was apparent to William Blackwood, who was uneasy about becoming too embroiled in personalities. In March 1826, in a long letter to Robinson, the publisher admitted to have toned down part of Robinson's counterblast to a speech in which Canning had rounded on his critics.⁵⁷

It struck me that whatever Mr. Canning meant in his attack, it would not be good policy to apply ourselves to his contemptuous expressions, but rather to keep the thing general, and not to make Maga appear

57 After declaring that 'with his soul he adopted, and with his whole strength he would endeavour to maintain, Mr. Huskisson's measures,' Canning went on: 'I have not to learn that there is in the Country a faction (not political), small in numbers and powerless in might, who think that all advances towards improvement are retrogradations towards Jacobinism.' He added the warning that 'they who resist indiscriminately all improvements, as innovations, may find themselves compelled to submit to innovations, although they are not improvements.' Quoted in A.G. Stapleton, The Political Life of the Rt. Hon. George Canning, 3 vols (1831), III, 53-5, passim. The wording in Hansard differs slightly: 'I have not to learn that there is a faction in the country - I mean not a political faction, I should, perhaps, rather have said a sect, small in numbers ... (as above). Hansard, Parl. Deb. NS XIV, 854-5, 24 Feb. 1826.

defending her own cause, but the general cause of the country.⁵⁸

Blackwood went on to give Robinson a broad hint to soften his treatment of Canning, for the sake of John Wilson, the mainstay of the Magazine.

Some months ago the Edinburgh Whigs by secret influence and the aid of Mr. Huskisson had very nearly got [two illegible words] McCulloch appointed Regius Professor of Political Economy, and it was only through Lord Melville's and Mr. Canning's personal friendship to Mr. Wilson that this intrigue was knocked on the head. Had the Stot (McCulloch) been appointed it would have interfered most materially with Prof. Wilson's class.⁵⁹ I need hardly tell you therefore that he stands in a delicate situation just now.

Elsie Swann mentions this episode in her biography of 'Christopher North,'⁶⁰ but without giving particular credit to Canning. She quotes a neutral reply to Wilson from Huskisson. Canning's views are not given, but can be ascertained from a letter which he wrote to Huskisson on 11 June 1825.⁶¹

It appears to me that Mr. Wilson would have had good cause of complaint, if Mr. McCulloch's project had been encouraged. And I should have had a pleasant time at Storrs⁶² to which Mr. Wilson is next neighbour.

The influence of Canning, and Wilson's own exertions, had blocked the project, at the price of Wilson's being obliged to deliver his own course of lectures on political economy.

58 22 March 1826, NLS Acc.5643, B6, ff.158-162.

59 (Because of the Scottish system of selling tickets for lecture-courses).

60 Swann, op.cit., p.176.

61 Canning Papers, Harewood MSS, 68 - copy of letter.

62 Adjacent to Wilson's cottage at Elleray, beside Lake Windermere. Canning was to go there on holiday in August. Wendy Hinde, George Canning (1973), p.399.

This information did not cause Robinson to repent of his strictures.

I cannot think well of Mr. Canning. His speech to which I have in former letters alluded was I think the most mean and abominable one that was ever delivered in Parliament by any Minister. He and his friends have been the chief means of bringing the country into its present wretchedness and if they go on as they have done they will drive us to revolution.⁶³

Coincidentally, on the same day that this letter was written, Canning sent Blackwood a formal note about his subscription.

Mr. Canning will thank Mr. Blackwood to inform him what is the amount of his debt to Mr. Blackwood for former numbers of his Edinburgh Magazine.⁶⁴

The antagonism towards Canning occasioned an anxious letter to Blackwood from J.G. Lockhart.

You will perhaps say that I am infected with the chill air of the Metropolis. But I wish, in spite of that, to say a single word on a very delicate subject.

Attack Political Economy as much as you like, but don't permit this Robertson [sic] to go on attacking so savagely the motives of Canning, etc. Why should you and Wilson suffer - in yourselves, perhaps - very probably (in his case extremely probably) in your families, for the sake of allowing a person of this kind to insult such a man as Canning? ... What I wish to see particularly avoided is any allusion to Canning personally; and I know he feels that personally and avenges it so also.⁶⁵

Huskisson was in fact the chief target of Robinson's lengthy articles in August and September attacking the government's intentions over the Corn Laws and the reciprocal relaxation of the Navigation Laws.⁶⁶ The

63 29 April 1826, NLS, MS4018, f.131.

64 Copy in Canning Papers, Stapleton MSS, 15.

65 28 March 1826, quoted in Annals I, 240.

66 Maga, Aug. 1826, pp.359-385, 'Jacob's Report on the Trade in Foreign Corn;' Sept., pp.442-468, 'The Shipping Interest.'

former article referred very critically to a speech which Huskisson had delivered in Liverpool in defence of his corn policy, his views being reported in a paragraph in a Liverpool newspaper. Huskisson read the Blackwood's article as soon as it appeared, and wrote to Canning with his reaction, noting a 'wonderful sympathy' between the sentiments of the writer and those of some of their colleagues, in respect to the Liverpool paragraph.⁶⁷

Blackwood denounces it to the Country Gentlemen as "exceedingly indecent, highly unbecoming and even unconstitutional."⁶⁸

My unknown Colleague⁶⁹ denounces it to the Head of the Government, I suppose, as a breach of good faith towards his Govt. Both are driving at the same object. The Pamphleteer, however, hints at "Impeachment." My Colleague, I hope, would be content with something short of that. Nous verrons.

Although Robinson's next article was also directed mainly at Huskisson, it contained enough adverse reference to Canning for the author to feel it necessary to defend himself.

If the Professor be under personal obligations to Mr. Canning I think the better and not the worse of him for being sore at what I have said against the latter. I attacked Canning in "The Shipping Interest" because he signed the reciprocity treaties along with Huskisson, and because he declared in Parliament that he had embraced Huskisson's principles with all his soul and would support them with all his strength

67 22 Aug. (1826). Canning Papers, Harewood MSS, 68.

68 The article declared Huskisson's speech to be 'exceedingly indecent' in taking for granted that parliament would accept his scheme. This was 'highly unbecoming - we might say unconstitutional.' Maga, Aug.(no.2), 1826, p.368.

69 (Wellington) W.R. Brock Lord Liverpool and Liberal Toryism (1967 ed.), p.223.

I look upon him as the real head of the new system; without him Huskisson could not be kept in office for a week and the whole system would at once fall to pieces. I will however as I have said name him no more. I do not wish it.⁷⁰

This privately expressed truce was unlikely to have been known to Lockhart when, a fortnight later, he wrote again to Blackwood on the subject, in the course of declining an offer to contribute to the Magazine, because of his duties at the Quarterly.

Besides, your political tone must not be mine. I think it is wrong in all points of view, and particularly in the personal style in which Canning has been attacked in a work to which Wilson is an avowed contributor of the first importance. Others may point the dart; so it is. But who gives the shaft its wings? But for Wilson's wit, how few would read R.'s declamations, however clever!⁷¹

If Robinson now deferred to the feelings of his colleagues regarding personal attacks on Canning, he remained unrepentant in his criticisms of the 'new system,' even to the point of not disowning the label that came to be applied to Blackwood's in the late 1820s.

Let us be branded as bigots and Ultra-Tories, - let us be stigmatised by the tools and toad-eaters of Mr. Huskisson, as men destitute of intellect, information, and principle, - but, in Heaven's name! let us be spared the damning disgrace of being called POLITICAL ECONOMISTS and PHILOSOPHERS!⁷²

In his economic articles during the first half of 1827, Robinson avoided personal attacks on Canning. His chief named target was McCulloch, and in referring to the government he usually confined his censure to 'Ministers' in general. Writing privately to Blackwood, however, after Liverpool's paralytic seizure, Robinson still engaged

70 28 Oct. 1826, NLS, MS4018, ff.147-8.

71 16 Nov. 1826, quoted in Annals 1, 241.

72 Maga, Dec. 1826, p.871.

in personalities, not sparing the highest in the land.

We shall now feel bitterly what we have lost in the death of the Duke of York. His Majesty is I fear at the best a great trimmer, and he seems to have no advisers about him save the Canning people. As to Peel I cannot understand him; he appears to have been for some time playing a very discreditable double game. The Times puffs him for being friendly to every thing 'liberal,' and there seems to me to be some truth in the puffing. The man can never be so far vexed as to be fired into eloquence; he has too much temper to be the frank and open person which some people call him. Time however will shew what he is.⁷³

The accession of Canning to the premiership was naturally viewed with consternation by Robinson. Blackwood shared his anxiety and wrote to encourage Robinson to give of his best at this crisis in public affairs.⁷⁴ The letter in the copy-book is barely legible, but its purport was clearly to urge Robinson to be true to the 'high independent tone' of the Magazine and to his own independence of judgment whilst avoiding whatever is 'merely personal.' By 'pursuing this dignified course,' Blackwood argued, it would be shown that 'our cause is not the cause of faction or party but of the country.' Robinson, at work on his article, wrote to express his fears that the piece would not suit the publisher.

In deference to the feeling which has prevailed in Edinburgh in favour of Mr. Canning, I have on various occasions been silent respecting this unprincipled mountebank when a sense of duty commanded me to speak; but silence now would disgrace me as an honest man. I have only one course before me. I cannot see the greatest and best men of the age and the flower of my countrymen blackguarded as they are by the tools of Mr. Canning, and still say nothing. I cannot be other than the enemy of such a Minister as Mr. Canning now is, and of a Ministry composed of apostates and Whigs.⁷⁵

73 25 Feb. 1827, NLS, MS4020, f.87.

74 19 April 1827, NLS Acc.5643, B.7, ff.105-8.

75 27 April 1827, NLS, MS4020, f.93.

A fortnight later, Robinson sent most of the article, but had not yet finished it. Time had been lost in substantial rewriting, 'from the fear of its being too strong.'⁷⁶ A 'liberal order' from the publisher rewarded him for his pains and reassured him about the content.

I certainly was greatly bothered in writing the Article, for it is a distressing thing to me, to embroil you with your friends, or get any one connected with the Magazine into hot water. For a long time I have felt writing to be almost a hateful occupation, on account of the unnatural condition of parties; but I hope it will now be different. The Tories will now go heartily with us, and I am sure we have the body of country.

... I am told that Ministers say, your Magazine has done them more injury than all the Whig and Radical publications ever did. In so far as this concerns me, I esteem it a huge compliment.⁷⁷

Robinson's article on 'The Change of Ministry' eventually appeared in the Magazine for June 1827. It began with self congratulation, in that the writer's previous warnings about the drift of the government towards conjunction with the Whigs had now come true. Canning's conduct, from the time when he succeeded Castlereagh, had 'astonished and grieved the whole country,' especially those who, like the writer, had supported his becoming leader of the House of Commons, in order to counter the Whigs and Radicals in debate. Instead, Canning promptly embraced nearly all their principles, other than parliamentary reform. 'On being intrusted with the command, he carried over the army to the enemy.' (p.745) The now-defunct Ministry became 'the most odd, incongruous, loathsome and portentous thing conceivable.' Sustained in arbitrariness by 'the combination of great borough interests,' and flattered by the 'Oriental bombast and hyperbole' of the press, the Ministry could not be

76 12 May 1827, loc.cit., f.97.

77 24 May 1827, loc.cit., f.99.

effectively opposed; but its internal divisions created the means of its own destruction. Now that 'the unnatural union of parties is dissolved,' there were once more checks upon the government. Robinson would have preferred a Ministry formed of the outgoers rather than those who remained in office, but at least they were separated and the country could regain its voice through those who had broken with the government.

Wellington and Eldon had been unfairly blamed, the article continued, for abandoning a Ministry in which their presence was clearly uncongenial to Canning. The character of the old Lord Chancellor was eulogised by Robinson, and Wellington was praised for sharing his principles. In their place had come the 'wicked and disgusting coalition' between Canningites and Whigs, compared with which that 'between Mr. Fox and Lord North was the essence of purity and consistency.' At least Earl Grey had shown 'manly, consistent, and high-minded conduct' in refusing to participate. Robinson was gratified by this.

We hope it will be the means of keeping the old, honest, steady independent race of Whigs in existence; for, although we differ very widely from them, we should deplore their extinction as a public calamity. (p.760)

The continuance of Robinson's onslaught on the liberal economic policies, with Huskisson's relaxation of the Navigation Laws as the prime target, enjoyed the more confident support of his publisher, now that the high Tories were outside the government. Blackwood wrote to his son William, serving in India, about the campaign against

free trade.

You will have seen some admirable papers on the subject by Mr. Robinson in the Magazine. These have made a great impression everywhere, and with his other political articles he has done more to raise the character and sale of the Magazine than any of my Contributors not almost excepting the Professor.⁷⁸

With Blackwood's now an openly anti-Ministerial publication, the scales were balanced by the inclination of the Edinburgh Review to the government side. Blackwood asked Robinson to write a riposte to a 'blackguard puerile article' by Macaulay on the new Ministry. The publisher offered to re-copy Robinson's manuscript in his own hand, so that no one but John Wilson would know the authorship.⁷⁹ After a delay occasioned partly by a respectful silence after Canning's death and partly by Robinson's moving house, the article appeared in October.⁸⁰ The opening salvo was fired at the Magazine's old foe.

The Edinburgh Review, after having so long warred against everything sacred to British affections, and dear to British prejudices, may now be regarded as the leading Ministerial publication. (p.403)

Ministers and their supporters formed a 'faction,' which was manifest in three articles in the Review, including one on 'The Present Administration.' Robinson apologised even for mentioning this piece (by Macaulay - whom he named a few pages later), which was so abysmal that, but for its location, it would be beneath criticism.

We scarcely ever met with a more striking specimen of frothy, shallow, pointless, feeble declamation - of puerile, low, scurrilous "sound and fury, signifying nothing." (p.403)

78 9 Sept. 1827, NLS, Acc.5643, B7, f.515.

79 25 July 1827, NLS, Acc.5643, B7, f.227.

80 Maga, Oct. 1827, pp.403-431, 'The Faction.'

The deceased Canning escaped lightly.

Mr. Canning, a highly gifted man, is no more, and at present we will say nothing touching his character. (p.407)

As for his successor, Goderich, he was good-natured and honourable, but 'has never displayed, or attempted to display, any great capacity for general politics.' (p.408). Unflattering characterisations of other Ministers followed, accompanied by the usual charge that they were slaves to the dogmas of political economy.

The infallible dicta of the Holy Mother Church of Political Popery supersede and suppress everything that can be offered by reason and evidence. (p.411)

Robinson then indulged in a long and jaudiced review of the 'liberal' policies of recent years, before turning his attention to Peel's reforms as Home Secretary. Whilst these had not noticeably benefited society at large, they had not done any great harm, being based on the old principle of improvement, not the new one of speculative innovation.

We differ widely from him on several important questions, but this does not cause us to think the less highly of his powers. In accurate vision, depth, and solidity of understanding, and all the higher qualifications of the statesman, he has not his equal in the Cabinet, or House of Commons. In kind of talent, he makes a nearer approach to Mr. Pitt than any man in Parliament. (pp.423-4)

Robinson pursued his reflections about Peel in his November article.⁸¹ In an interesting analysis, Robinson observed that there were two Whig and two Tory parties, both competing within themselves for leadership of their respective political communities, and at the same time against the other side for possession of office. Peel had

81 Maga, Nov. 1827, pp.612-6, 'The Opposition.'

a difficult part to play. He and his friends should distance themselves from the Goderich party and form a distinct opposition. Goderich and company would then be 'melted into the Whigs,' and the country would recover the opportunity to choose a consistently Whig or Tory government, with a clear opposition to check it. To this end, it was vital that Peel and his friends were reinforced by more debating talent. Robinson welcomed the rumour that a certain Tory peer⁸² intended to replace some of his borough members with abler ones: 'we shall rejoice to find such a system adopted.' The Opposition should be responsibly conducted, appealing to 'the cautious, reflecting, independent part of the community.' The leaders should each specialise in a particular department - finance, trade, foreign policy and so on - in preparation for ministerial office. Robinson concluded this stimulating article with a Burkean tribute to the role of parties in parliamentary government, in public discussion and in the popular character of the constitution. His final thought provided another anticipation of the ultra-Tory attitude to parliamentary reform. Innovations in this sphere were unwelcome, but 'should the great borough interests be permanently combined into a whole, they ought to be annihilated.' (p.616)

The return to office of Wellington and Peel - but not Eldon - was not strictly in accord with Robinson's wishes, as the Ministry was still tainted by Huskisson.. William Blackwood was at first delighted about Wellington's premiership, writing proudly to his son in India with the

82 (The reference was to the Duke of Newcastle).

news that, on the very day that the Duke had been sent for, he had written to Blackwood in his own hand, offering his best compliments, and enclosing a draft for £25-10s for a set of the Magazine.⁸³ A month later, the publisher expressed mixed feelings, in a letter to Robinson, urging a wait-and-see approach in the political articles.

I confess to you that while that cunning knave Huskisson has so much power and Mr. Peel appears to identify himself so much with him, I have my own fears. Still it is a matter of rejoicing that the Whigs were defeated in their intrigues to obtain the ascendancy in the Cabinet, and that they and that silly noodle Goody Goodrich [sic] were kicked out to put such a man as the Duke at the head of the Administration. He has such a firmness and directness about him and must feel himself so identified with the genuine Tories that I have still great hopes things will yet go well.⁸⁴

Robinson was less confident about Wellington. I do not doubt the Duke's intentions,' he told Blackwood, 'but I doubt his qualifications.'⁸⁵ Wellington appeared to know nothing of domestic matters.

I have no wish to attack the Ministry; on the contrary I wish it to stand, for it seems to be the best one we can have; but then I shall be loth to remain passive if this Ministry attempt to knock on my head my own principles... The Magazine has now no mean political reputation, and I think it has gained this in some degree, not from following this knot of men or that, but from its independence and adherence to principle.

Blackwood began to share Robinson's doubts about Wellington.

It is to be wished if not hoped for that the Duke will pursue a right course, but should he unfortunately implicate himself in the liberal measures then of course we will not shrink from a fair exposure of this folly and iniquity.⁸⁶

83 27 Jan. 1828. Quoted in Annals, II, 80.

84 25 Feb. 1828, NLS, Acc.5643, B7, f.406.

85 27 Feb. 1828, NLS, MS4023, f.20.

86 21 March 1828, NLS, Acc.5643, B7, f.448.

For the present, however, the Magazine must not aid the Whigs by undermining the Ministry. By giving the Duke the benefit of the doubt until events proved otherwise, the support of the public would be retained. The alternative - to accuse the Duke of supporting Canningite policies - would merely hasten the adoption of such policies or the advent of the Whigs.

This policy of waiting and watching, converted into more threatening language, was expressed by Robinson in the Magazine for August 1828. Reverting to his technique, at the time of the 1826 general election, of addressing a letter to John Bull from 'One of the Old School', Robinson introduced a speech which ought to have been delivered in the late session of parliament. Emphasising his concern with principles, the imagined speaker affirmed that, just as he had opposed Canning and Huskisson because of their principles and policy, he would deal in the same way with Wellington and Peel should the need arise.

Even Robinson could hardly have expected that this threat would be called into furious reality only six months later, and that the occasion would be the decision of Wellington and Peel to implement Catholic emancipation.

CHAPTER FIVEWILLIAM JOHNSTON ANDTHOMAS DE QUINCEY

The two writers who form the subject of the present chapter represent the most obscure and the most famous of the six contributors selected for special attention in this study. William Johnston is not listed in the index to Mrs. Oliphant, although there is a passing reference in the text to Irish recruits such as 'the Johnstons.'¹ The manuscript list of early contributors to Blackwood's Magazine records 'William Johnstone'² merely as 'London - contributed numerous political, social, economic articles.'³ F.W. Fetter acknowledges that he was unable to identify Johnston positively, but suggests that he was probably an Irish journalist living in London.⁴ This correct inference is the only biographical detail cited by the Wellesley Index. The latter source, however, does add considerably to the short list of articles attributed to Johnston by Fetter. The full figure amounted to fifty, of which thirty-eight dealt with political, social or economic questions, as

1 Annals, I, 493.

2 The incorrect addition of an 'e' to Johnston's surname has been followed by those who have used this list, notably Fetter and the Wellesley Index. Johnston's signature, and other references in the Blackwood Papers, establish that the 'e' is erroneous.

3 NLS, MS4892.

4 Fetter, J.P.E., p.92.

distinct from the dozen pieces on travel or literary topics. Except for one item, in the latter category, in February 1834, all Johnston's articles were concentrated in the period 1828-32. William Johnston was thus one of the Magazine's principal writers on current affairs during the most critical period of its political coverage. This fact alone would entitle him to consideration, but Johnston merits special attention because of the quality of his contributions. On Irish affairs and on social questions, William Johnston represents Blackwood's at its best.⁵

Johnston's first contact with William Blackwood was, like David Robinson's, prompted by a favourable notice in the Magazine. His pamphlet on the condition of Ireland was extensively reviewed by John Wilson, who called it 'a most excellent pamphlet,' the author of which would 'doubtless sympathise with our sentiments.'⁶ Thus encouraged, Johnston wrote to Blackwood on 4 December, offering an article for the Magazine.⁷ The article, based on a journey in Kerry which he had taken with his brother, may possibly have been a joint effort.⁸ His next publication in Blackwood's, however, was all his own, and it marked his debut as a political writer in the Magazine.⁹

In his general dealings with William Blackwood, Johnston

5 In order to provide a coherent discussion of the Magazine's views on Ireland and the Catholic question, and to avoid tedious cross-referencing, Johnston's part in these discussions has been reserved for Chapter Six.

6 Maga, July 1827, pp.18-31.

7 NLS, MS4019, f.234. (Johnston's address at the time was 17 Newman St., Oxford St., London.)

8 For Edward Johnston, see below.

9 'Letter from a Whig-Eater,' Feb. 1828, pp.178-182.

adopted the urbane tone of one gentleman addressing another. The publisher reciprocated, writing in friendly, complimentary fashion, and showing a readiness to discuss general politics. Johnston's response to Blackwood's query about terms catches the spirit of their relationship.

I should wish in that respect to be placed on the same footing as others of whose literary assistance you avail yourself. I do not write merely for the sake of remuneration, but like other men, I have no objection to remuneration for the sake of what I write. This matter, however, I am content to leave entirely to your management.¹⁰

Johnston received the usual rate of £10 per sheet. His next political article, however, was rejected, for being too severe upon the 'liberal' side of the Ministry. Johnston deferred to Blackwood's judgment, although regretting that the Magazine deemed silence the more prudent course.¹¹ He also apologised, in this letter, for writing in the guise of Christopher North, and promised, good humouredly, not to assume that name again.

When I write politics, I must write after the fashion of an "old Tory" let who will be in the ministry - I shall send you a political letter in time for next no., but if you don't like it, don't send it back to me; either print it, or put it in the fire, so that it may blaze somewhere.

Blackwood replied encouragingly.

I haste to tell you how very anxious I am you should write completely after the fashion of an "old Tory," straight forward without let or hindrance.¹²

There continued to be occasional differences about the merits of Johnston's contributions, with Johnston not

10 7 Jan. 1828, NLS, MS4022, f.15.

11 26 Feb. 1828, loc.cit., f.21.

12 1 March 1828, NLS, Acc.5643, B7, f.445.

afraid to speak his mind, but not taking deep umbrage when rejected. An article on 'Happiness', of which he was proud, was dropped after being put into type. His mild protest produced the bland explanation that 'Happiness' had not been 'one of your happiest efforts.'¹³ A more serious disagreement occurred soon afterwards, when Johnston's article on Irish affairs was returned, even though he had written in the guise of 'Phelim McGillicuddy' in order to avoid being taken to express the viewpoint of the Magazine. He took exception to Blackwood's use of the word 'paltering', which he felt to be an unfair epithet to address to someone who did not write merely for money.¹⁴ Blackwood sent a conciliatory reply, to which Johnston responded in like spirit.

As an 'old Tory', Johnston welcomed the premiership of the Duke of Wellington, both in his 'Second Letter from a Whig-Hater,' published in April, and in his private correspondence with Blackwood. The exodus of the Canningites prompted Johnston to remind Blackwood that this was what he had predicted in his rejected article earlier in the year.¹⁵ He apologised for a grammatical lapse in a recent piece,

for I place bad grammar the fourth in my list of accursed things - Irreligion - Ingratitude - Whiggism - bad English - all these are abomination in my light.¹⁶

13 29 Nov. 1828, NLS, MS4022, f.46; and 2 Dec. 1828, Acc. 5643, B8, f.120.

14 18 Dec. 1828, NLS, Acc. 5643, B8, f.146; and 22 Dec. MS4022, f.53.

15 2 June 1828, NLS, MS4022, f.26.

16 Ibid.

In the Magazine for September 1829, (part II), Johnston wrote an article on 'The State and Prospects of the Country.'¹⁷ He began by observing that, although there had been within recent memory more overt threats to the security of the country, whether from foreign invasion or domestic turbulence, there was now a more profound danger.

The vessel of the state floats, indeed, upon a calmer sea, but seems, as it were, to rot by reason of the very stillness; and the strength, the energy, the stout heart, and the lively activity of Great Britain, are dying away. (p.464)

Only the fundholders were prospering. Distress affected almost all the common people, in the manufacturing and industrial districts alike.

It is not merely the privation of ordinary necessities and comforts - the receiving from the hands of cold, calculating, and not unfrequently insulting, parish officers, the pittance which preserves their wretched existence; but all the kindly affections which made up the happiness of the lives of the poor, are withered and blasted by this extreme penury, which makes a man's wife and children a curse instead of a blessing to him. (p.465)

To his compassion, Johnston added a sense of social injustice.

But while so much misery exists among the poor, there never was a time in which the luxury of the rich was carried to a more extravagant degree of wantonness. Never was pleasure hunted after with more curious zeal and more lavish expense; never did the provinces of England, taking them altogether, suffer more pinching distress and misery, than they have just done during "the season," as it is called in London, which has just closed. (p.465)

17 As a slight departure from the plan of concentrating upon one article only, for each selected contributor, the next article in the series is also discussed, as Johnston replied therein to criticisms of his major piece.

Johnston conceded that there was some validity in the economists' contention that conspicuous consumption brought employment to those who ministered to it. He denied, however, that this was the most effective use to which surplus income could be put. Nor did he have any respect for the Malthusian theory, which converted short term gains for labouring people into long-term misery..

It is enough to chafe the temper of the mildest man, to hear a cold-blooded philosopher of the present day, arguing that it is wrong to promote the comforts of the poor, for this will "operate as an impulse to population," and so make their distress the greater hereafter. (p.465)

Against such cold theorising, Johnston countered with common benevolence, nature and religion. Anticipating that none of these would be heeded, he advanced the practical argument that the money expended upon one fashionable banquet would be better employed in providing smallholdings for the neighbouring poor.

Johnston then gave a lucid and generally cogent account of the origins of the current distress. The period of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars had been one of high prices, labour scarcity, relatively high wages, and considerable investment in new machinery. Lured by short-term gains, labourers had parted with older sources of security: their plot of land and the simple contrivances of the domestic system. Population had risen, adding to the labour force just when the return of peace brought demobilisation. Manufacturers preferred to retain their machinery rather than maintain full employment. An unprecedented situation had thus been created, in which

the aggregate wealth of the country could be increased, by the aid of machinery, while the position of the labouring classes deteriorated.¹⁸

Confronted by this problem, the action of the Legislature had been to exacerbate it by restricting the circulation of currency.

Not that we mean to say that the currency should have been left as it was, or that there is nothing impolitic in allowing the unrestricted issue of paper money by chartered and private banks. We would advocate no such wild and dangerous system, which must ever encourage improper speculation, and ruinous revulsions in trade; but the object should have been to make the paper currency safe, and not to destroy it. The evil which the country laboured under, and which the working classes felt most severely, was the tendency of capital to accumulate in large masses, instead of being generally diffused amongst the people; and this evil the alterations which were made had a direct and immediate tendency to aggravate. (p.467)

Commercial policies had added to the harm done by currency policies. Capitalists were enabled to buy goods and services - such as shipping - in cheaper foreign markets, to the neglect of home suppliers. Again, Johnston explicitly refrained from denying that this course of action could be conducive to the national wealth, but if the price was the deprivation of our own labouring people, then it was not

18 This part of the discussion is strikingly similar to the argument of Thomas Carlyle in 'Signs of the Times', published in the Edinburgh Review, in the same year. Dubbing his time 'The Age of Machinery', Carlyle observed 'how wealth has more and more increased, and at the same time gathered itself more and more into masses, strangely altering the old relations, and increasing the distance between the rich and the poor.' Carlyle noted in his journal for 5 August, 1829: 'Also just finished an article on the "Signs of the Times" for the "Edinburgh Review".' Quoted in J.A. Froude, Thomas Carlyle, A History of the First Forty Years of His Life. (1882) II, p.76. Johnston sent his article to Blackwood on 3 August. NLS, MS4025, f.3r. It would appear that these two important articles were completed in the same week.

worth paying. Johnston was not ashamed to call poetry to the service of his argument, quoting the lines from Goldsmith's Deserted Village:

Ill fares that land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay.

Johnston conveyed his sense of the gulf which existed between the rich and the poor, in language that strikingly anticipated Carlyle's Past and Present (1843) and Disraeli's Sybil (1845).

Though it be true, that at no former time were the warehouses of our manufacturers and merchants more full of goods; that our edifices are more extensive, magnificent, and costly, than they ever were before; that gorgeous furniture, splendid equipages, trains of idle servants, unwisely kept for shew; that plate and jewels, and every luxurious convenience that the improved invention of man can devise, are far more abundant than they have been in times past; still it is also true, that the common people of England are neither prosperous nor happy. (p.468)¹⁹

Further poetic quotations about selfishness preceded a warning about the dangers, as well as the sadness, of the situation. Blatant inequality will not be endured indefinitely. Once the poor see that their misery would be alleviated by a redistribution of wealth, they will cease to bear 'the cold neglect of scientific speculators in politics.' Criminal activities amongst the lower orders presaged a more fundamental threat to the current maldistribution of wealth. The Legislature must act before it was too late. Yet, lamentably, we were burdened with a dull, commonplace House of Commons. Where once there shone the oratory of Burke and Pitt and Fox, there was now the tedium of speeches from Peel and Goulburn. Amongst

¹⁹ c.f. the opening paragraph of Past and Present, and Book 1, chapter v, of Sybil: the 'two nations' speech.

ordinary members, there were those befuddled by book-learning, others heedless of their responsibilities, and others preoccupied with their own self-interest. An infusion of new blood was needed.

The experiment has been tried by the patron of the borough of Newark, and has been attended with such remarkable success as should induce others to imitate his example. (p.471)²⁰

Patrons 'should look about for men who have some heart, along with political information,' who can recall the House to its duty, for 'we cannot stand on the rotten foundation of passive obedience.'

Specifically, Johnston recommended a parliamentary inquiry into the state of the labouring population, and the adopting of the remedies thereby discerned, even if they appeared adverse to the interests of the rich. Common prudence should tell those wishing to retain their wealth that it was better to part with a little than to risk the whole. If it became apparent that agriculture was depressed because money was scarce and dear, then the remedy was obvious.

We can go back to the old abundant currency, and we can do so with all the advantage of experience, to teach us measures of precaution for its security and proper regulation....Let men only look simply at the relation between cause and effect, and have the courage to treat as it deserves Mr. Peel's darling folly of a metallic currency, and one most fruitful source of the people's penury will be removed. (p.472)

Further remedies suggested by Johnston recalled the measures which David Robinson had been advocating in the Magazine for the past three years: protection of the silk

20 A reference to the Duke of Newcastle's installation of M.T. Sadler, who was greatly admired by Blackwood's writers.

trade and glove trade, protection of home-based shipping and wool-producers. Here, again, was the basic protectionist case that the interchange of goods and services within the country brought a more broadly-based national prosperity than could be achieved by involvement in the international market.

Let it be again and again impressed upon the legislature, that the country has within it abundant means to support all the people in comfort and abundance, and that therefore all who are ready and willing to labour, have a natural right to full subsistence. (p.473)

The compassion that animated this article is apparent on every page. The theories of the economists, on currency, free trade and the like, are countered with appeals to 'heart' and 'feelings', and even to 'natural right.' At times, Johnston's sense of injustice interferes with his control of argument. An early claim that only the fundholders were prospering is soon undermined by the broader, and more persuasive, picture of the gulf between the two nations. In an age when new farming techniques were more suited to larger holdings, the appeal for the endowment of smallholdings smacked more of Goldsmith-like nostalgia than sound economic sense. If machines were indeed more efficient than men, and cheaper to maintain, it was not clear how the 'natural right to full subsistence' could be met, except by perpetual public assistance to those who lost their jobs to machines. The case for some form of short-term intervention remained strong, but the trust of most economists in the long-term gains which would accrue from the development of the international economy remained more persuasive than the policies advocated here.

Johnston's argument, however, was no mere effusion of the heart: not that human sympathy should, in any case, be discounted as a response to the widespread distress experienced in England in 1829. There is cogency in his points about currency-restriction and the exposure of domestic industries to foreign competition. The extremes of wealth and poverty did threaten the stability of the country. Nor did Johnston ruin his case by over-stating it. He conceded that there was something in the 'private indulgence, public benefit' argument; that there was a need for some restriction upon paper currency; that buying in foreign markets could, as the economists claimed, add to national wealth. For all his sincere indignation at the sufferings of the poor, Johnston retained an essential reasonableness of tone. He was less brutal than David Robinson in dealing with opposing arguments; less shrill than Croly in lamenting that the times were out of joint. It is a further point of contrast with Croly that Johnston resorts to only one classical quotation in his article. There are three quotations from English poetry, which help to enhance the personal, accessible tone of Johnston's argument. He reasons with the reader, appealing to his finer feelings, rather than debating like Robinson or fulminating like Croly. The least known of the major political contributors to Blackwood's in this period, Johnston emerges from his published writings, as from his private correspondence, as in many ways the most attractive.

The article attracted considerable attention. The Tory

Standard and the Whig Morning Chronicle united in praising it.²¹ The Standard observed that the article was 'of a degree of excellence unusual even in Blackwood.' It had been intended to provide an abstract of 'this able and eloquent essay', but as the Morning Chronicle had already done so, and 'as the tribute of an opponent is always more valuable than the attestation of a disciple,' the Standard readily gave space to the observations of the Chronicle. The extract showed, declared the Standard, that the Morning Chronicle assented to the proposition so admirably put by Blackwood - 'a proposition which was never indeed disputed until, alas! for the Church of England, it was impugned by a minister of the gospel, namely "That property is held by the rich under the responsibility of providing for the poor."' The Chronicle's précis of Johnston's article followed, together with the Chronicle's comment that, from the sympathy with the poor revealed therein, 'we are almost tempted to conclude' that the Blackwood's article was written by one of the leaders of the Barnsley artisans, who had been speaking against the distress during recent local disturbances.

Certainly, Johnston's article proved too trenchant for some. He reported to Blackwood that it had apparently caused the Magazine to be accused of advocating 'levelling principles.' This was, of course, the reverse of its intention.

They must have grossly misunderstood the article, who thought it advocated any such principles. The

²¹ Standard, 1 Sept. 1829, and extract therein transcribed from Morning Chronicle.

object was to advocate strenuous political exertion in favour of justice and humanity in order to avert the levelling storm which it is to be feared will take place if the cup of the people's wrath be made to overflow.²²

Johnston published a more sustained defence of his article in the November number of the Magazine. In 'Our Domestic Policy No.I,' he noted how his previous piece had aroused 'the virtuous alarm of those whose nice gentility is shocked by the mention of any thing so coarse as the rights of the common people.' (p.768) There had been accusations of 'levelling principles' and 'Spencean doctrines.' Johnston scornfully dismissed such 'erroneous imputation', but welcomed the sympathetic response of those who praised his exposition of 'true Tory principles - of principles which, while they maintain the due order and proportion of each separate rank in the state, maintain also that protection and support are the right of all, so long as there are the means, within the state, of affording them.' (p.768) Against professed liberality and actual neglect, Johnston offered his own rule of policy: 'govern the people, and govern them strictly, for their good, but see that they are fed.' (p.768) Rarely can the message of paternalism have been conveyed more succinctly. Johnston went on, in the same paragraph, to state the paternalistic case more fully.

As Tories, we maintain that it is the duty of the people to pay obedience to those set in authority over them: but it is also the duty of those in authority to protect the people who are placed below them. They are

not to sit in stately grandeur, and see the people perish, nor, indeed, are they ever to forget that they hold their power and their possessions upon the understanding that they administer both more for the good of the people at large, than the people would do, if they had the administration of both themselves. (p.768)

To maintain that the poor had a right to be cared for was a conviction deriving, not from levelling principles, but from deeper sources.

It is to advocate the principles of the Bible. It is to advocate the principles of the wisest philosophers of antiquity - the principles of the common law of England, and of that illustrious statesman, under whose auspices the statute for the parochial relief of the poor was first enacted; but it is not to advocate any thing which is not strictly constitutional. (p.769)

To substantiate his reference to 'philosophers of antiquity,' Johnston then quoted, in translation, some words of Cicero,²³ commending two precepts of Plato, consistent with the above views. In the course of preparing the present study, much time has been devoted to reading expositions of the paternalistic ideal, both within Blackwood's and beyond. Nowhere, however, has a clearer or more concise exposition of paternalism been encountered, than in these two successive columns of Johnston's November article.

So much of William Johnston's thinking about social and economic questions is expressed in his September article and its sequel, that it is possible to cover related points more succinctly. He disliked the advocacy of emigration as a remedy for distress, preferring the more active exploitation of domestic resources.²⁴ He agreed with the doctrines of the Physiocrats that all wealth was derived from the soil, but rejected what he regarded as

23 From De Officiis.

24 'Emigration,' Maga, May 1828 (part I), pp.615-620.

their levelling tendencies.²⁵ He regarded the period of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars as having invigorated economic activity. It was a time when government had not been afraid of adding to the public debt or of circulating a plentiful paper currency. Currency was essentially a device for facilitating economic activity. Real wealth, deriving from 'soil and population, or, in other words, produce and labour,' rested upon agriculture. That being so, the protection of agriculture was of prime importance. As a debating point, designed to enlighten the 'doctors' in 'the great new day-school north of Russell Square,'²⁶ Johnston did not scruple to press into service a dictum of Adam Smith:

Food not only constitutes the principal part of the riches of the world, but it is the abundance of food which gives the principle of their value to many other sorts of riches.²⁷

Johnston's identification of true wealth with the produce of the soil accorded well with his professional position. He was secretary to Lord Lowther, the son and heir of one of the greatest of northern landowners, the Earl of Lonsdale. When the Canningites left Wellington's Ministry in May 1828, Lowther returned to office as Commissioner of Woods and Forests. 'Lord Lowther has got into the Woods and out of Parliament,' Johnston informed Blackwood.²⁸ Johnston dreaded the prospect of a contest for Lowther's seat (which he had to resign, and seek

25 'Agriculture and Commerce. By an Ancient Country Gentleman.' Maga, May 1828 (part I), pp.632-642.

26 Also known as 'the godless institution of Gower Street.'

27 Quoted in the May 1828 article, p.642.

28 2 June 1828, NLS, MS4022, f.26.

re-election, on attaining office), not from fear of the outcome, but from distaste for the 'Eatanswill' side of politics.

I was at the last, and was very considerably disgusted - Conceive what it is to be within a few hours drive of the most delicious scenes in the world, yet compelled to remain for nine days of intollerable [sic] heat, surrounded by an universal glut glut, and guzzle guzzle - fellows vomiting that they may run back to gorge, and afterwards rush into all manner of riot and ruffianism.²⁹

Although Johnston's next letter was written from Lowther Castle, where he had gone to assist in the election, Henry Brougham decided not to fight on that occasion, and Lord Lowther was spared the trouble of a contest. Instead, Johnston returned to London and busied himself with 'reading about Forests and planting and so forth.'³⁰ He confirmed his position to Blackwood a few weeks later: 'I am now officially attached to the First Commissioner of the Woods.'³¹

Earlier that year, Blackwood had met William Johnston when visiting London. He wrote to his son Alexander, who was minding the business in Edinburgh,

Tell Prof. Wilson that Mr. Johnston dined with me yesterday, and seems a clever pleasant young man. He is very much with Lord Lowther.³²

Johnston, on at least one occasion, brought the Magazine to Lord Lowther's notice:

I drew the attention of Lord L. to the "Court and Cabinet" which he read, and deemed to think it very clever.³³

His lordship's admiration, however, did not apparently

29 Ibid.

30 30 June 1828, loc.cit., f.30.

31 7 Aug. 1828, loc.cit., f.38.

32 n.d. (prob. early May, 1828), NLS, MS4021, f.69.

33 7 Oct. 1829, NLS, MS4025, f.40.

extend to paying for his own copy:

Even my good friend Lord L. instead of subscribing to your magazine, stuffs my number into his pocket to read as he travels to the country.³⁴

At least Lord Lowther made some amends by adding to the European reputation of Blackwood's. During a lengthy holiday in Italy, Lowther wrote an appreciative letter from Milan, which Johnston passed on to Edinburgh.

The article³⁵ you sent me from Blackwood has delighted the Authorities here. The Governor, and some of the Generals, were quite surprised that so favourable an article should be published in England. However it is very deficient in many parts - I mean that many valuable additions could be made, to shew how much the Austrian government has done to promote the prosperity of Lombardy... The article has been in such request that I have given it to the Governor who means to have it translated and published in some of the Newspapers here.³⁶

Johnston's position on the fringe of government was imperilled by Lord Lowther's deep revulsion over Wellington's adoption of Catholic emancipation in February 1829.³⁷

J.W. Croker recorded in his diary for 9 February:

Lowther is still very reluctant to stay in; he showed me a long explanatory letter which the Duke has written to the Duke of Rutland, and of which he had sent copies to the other grandees, and amongst the rest to Lord Lonsdale. Lord Lonsdale's answer was that he could not pledge himself.³⁸

Lowther did indeed resign on this issue, but was prevailed upon by the Duke of Wellington, in a letter citing the King's wish, to withdraw his resignation.³⁹

34 31 Aug. 1831, NLS, MS4030, f.38.

35 'The Austrian Government of Italy' (by G. Moir), Maga, Oct. 1834.

36 29 Nov. 1834, NLS, MS4039, f.71.

37 Johnston's own views will be discussed in Chapter Six, below.

38 The Croker Papers, ed. E. Pool, (1967 ed.) p.122.

39 Lonsdale Papers, CRO D/LONS/L Acc.629: letter from Wellington to Lowther, 16 April 1829, & copy of Lowther's reply, 18 April.

Given Lowther's delicate situation, Johnston did not wish to embarrass him by asking for a government frank for a packet going to Blackwood's address.⁴⁰ The packet contained an article (not accepted) about which Johnston felt obliged to ask for discretion as to its provenance.⁴¹ He remained anxious about his anonymity some months later, when he felt that it was 'hardly fair' of the newly-founded Fraser's Magazine to introduce his name into an article.⁴² In any case, Johnston's anxiety about his semi-official position came to an end with the fall of Wellington's Ministry at the end of the year.

A combination of ill-health and the difficulties of the political situation had brought a significant diminution of Johnston's work in Blackwood's during 1830. The gap was partly filled by other writers, notably Edward Edwards and William Mudford. The latter began a series in April 1830, under the title of the 'Silent Member.' It could have been some unease about his own position that caused Johnston to ask Blackwood whether he intended to continue with that series, or would prefer to have a monthly London letter from Johnston, 'in dashing style', to Christopher North.⁴³ Johnston's idea was accepted, and in the first half of 1831 he contributed a monthly series of 'Parliamentary Sayings and Doings', on the lines of the columns by gallery correspondents in

40 Johnston to Blackwood, 12 Feb 1830, NLS, MS4027, f.240.

41 Ibid.

42 Johnston to Blackwood, 14 May 1830 loc.cit., f.246. (The offending reference, to 'Lord Lowther's Johnson', came in the burlesque account of the election of an editor for Fraser's, May 1830.)

43 1 Nov. 1830, NLS, MS4027, f.253.

modern newspapers.

William Johnston's loyalty to his brother, Edward, sometimes caused him to write to Blackwood in complaining terms that were rare as regards his own work. Edward sent fewer pieces, but encountered more rejections. Still in Ireland, Edward wrote frankly to Blackwood about his inferior situation.

I am not very vain of my own powers, and am exceedingly conscious that I possess neither the singularly advantageous position for gaining information, nor the abilities to make use of it, which stamp so high and peculiar a value on my brother's communications; but I had conceived that there was a tacit arrangement between us, that I was to occupy nearly the same place in Maga with respect to Dublin, that he did in the much more important city of London.⁴⁴

Interestingly, in this letter, Edward complained that he felt such neglect, 'like many another Scotchman', in his pride and in his purse. This, and the surname, would suggest that the Johnstons were of Scots-Irish ancestry. Edward's situation was eased when he was ordained an Anglican clergyman in 1829; and he received payment for contributions to another of William Blackwood's publications, the Agricultural Journal. He also became an editor of minor periodicals in Ireland: a critical journal in Dublin, in 1829; a religious publication (when he returned to Dublin) in 1838; and the Ulster Times, in Belfast, in 1840.⁴⁵ Edward continued to experience problems, however, in attaining the standards of Blackwood's Magazine. He struggled through the summer months of 1829 with an article on education, to no avail. William complained on his

44 28 Nov 1828, NLS, MS4022, f.13.

45 12 Oct. 1829, NLS, MS4025, f.16; 10 Dec. 1838, MS4046, f.217; 10 July 1840, MS4052, f.3.

behalf:

By the bye, you have said nothing about his Education paper either to him or me. This should not be, as it vexes a man to be left in ignorance whether he should go on, with a matter on which he has bestowed some thought, or cast it aside.⁴⁶

Following Lord Lowther's loss of office, William Johnston had to look to his own situation. 'As I am now one of the "outs,"' he told Blackwood, 'I must work - I was called to the English Bar on Wednesday...'⁴⁷ He also had the idea of starting a weekly periodical in London, being pessimistic about his prospects as a lawyer, but lacked the energy and resources to launch such a venture. Instead he became involved in an existing London weekly, formerly known as the Intelligence, but renamed the Alfred. In addition, he wrote leading articles for the Morning Post.⁴⁸ Domestic responsibilities now came upon him. William Johnston was married in September 1831, with his brother officiating.⁴⁹

In November 1831, Johnston took upon himself a burden that was to weary him and reduce his contributions to Blackwood's. He became editor of a London evening newspaper, the Albion, a rival to the Standard, which was still an evening publication. His next article in Blackwood's did not appear until the following March. In May and June 1832, Johnston was still bemoaning the pressure of editing the Albion, with no support from the

46 8 Dec 1829, NLS MS4025, f.53.

47 27 Nov 1830, NLS, MS4027, f.256.

48 31 Aug. 1831, NLS, MS4030, f.38.

49 (He told Blackwood he was disobeying Aristotle's precept of waiting until the age of 37 before marrying. Ibid.)

Tory party in the way of political articles.⁵⁰ By September he was rid of the burden of the Alfred, but continued to struggle with the financial problems of the Albion. What proved to be his last political article in Blackwood's appeared in November. An article offered for the March number in 1833 was rejected for being too critical of Peel's passivity towards the Ministry. Johnston, as ever, accepted Blackwood's right to determine the Magazine's political line, but wondered whether there was more to the rejection of this and other pieces than had been expressed.⁵¹ He was wearied by the strain of daily composition, and his fragile self-esteem was 'somewhat broken' by his difficulties with Blackwood's. The Magazine's exalting of the 'rival journal' to the Albion (the Standard) was a further humiliation. Johnston therefore decided not to send any more papers for the time being. Instead, he devoted his energies to the 'horrid fag' of editing the Albion, and to attending Westminster Hall in term time. By 1834, the strain made him feel 'as if I were growing old before my time.'⁵² Another rejection from Blackwood's for the May number - which was a double issue - must have come as the final straw. Johnston's 'tale' was returned, as being 'not exactly the thing for

50 15 May and 18 June 1832, NLS, MS4033, f.175 and f.180. (There was some financial support from Tory politicians, however, including Lord Lowther. Aspinall, op.cit., p.338).

51 11 March 1833, NLS, MS4036, f.133. (Archibald Alison had become a regular political contributor in 1831, with considerable success. William Johnston's value to the Magazine was correspondingly reduced. See below, Chapter Eight.)

52 31 Jan. 1834, NLS MS4039, f.63.

Maga.⁵³

On this unhappy note, the correspondence between Johnston and William Blackwood came to an end. Johnston did not reply to the letter of rejection, and it was with mingled grief and guilt that he responded to the news of William Blackwood's death in September 1834. He informed the late publisher's sons that he had written an obituary in that day's Albion.⁵⁴ The notice was very brief, describing Blackwood as 'a man of much energy of character, and warmth of feeling.'⁵⁵ Johnston occasionally wrote thereafter to Alexander Blackwood, although he no longer contributed to the Magazine. In January 1836 he wrote to announce that the copyright of the Albion had been purchased by Baldwin of the Standard.⁵⁶ This left Johnston with only 'a little scribbling for the Morning Post,' and he offered his services once more to Blackwood's. Although grateful for the reply which he received from Alexander Blackwood, Johnston decided instead to accept two offers to write for London daily newspapers.⁵⁷

It seems probable that one of these positions was as a more regular leader-writer for the Morning Post, with which Johnston had been connected since 1831. A letter from Edward Johnston to Alexander Blackwood, on 10 December 1838, refers to William as 'still very delicate but working

53 31 Jan. 1834, NLS, MS4039, f.63.

54 19 Sept. 1834, NLS MS4039, f.67.

55 Albion, 19 Sept. 1834.

56 13 Jan. 1836, NLS MS4040, f.310. (Ought to be filed in MS4043.)

57 8 Feb. 1836, NLS, MS4043, f.82. (Johnston made another overture to Blackwood's on 29 December, 1840, again with no outcome. NLS, MS4052.)

away, chiefly I think in the Morning Post.⁵⁸ Johnston's fellow leader-writers at the Morning Post during the 1830s, included W.M. Praed (1832-4) and Benjamin Disraeli (1835).⁵⁹ The views of the Morning Post on social questions in this period accorded closely with Johnston's established outlook. In particular, it is tempting to surmise that the writer of the Blackwood's articles on the social distress of 1829 was the Post leader-writer of 1842 who advocated 'kind and careful government of the working people.'⁶⁰ While this must remain conjectural, there is, at least, further corroboration of Johnston's connexion with the Morning Post. On 13 September 1841, J.G. Lockhart wrote to J.W. Croker:

There is a most respectable man in the Post - Wm. Johnstone a countryman of yours... Johnstone is a man of good scholarship.⁶¹

A decade later, Johnston expressed his views on the condition of England in a more enduring format than the periodical article or newspaper editorial. He published, through John Murray, a two-volume work entitled, England As It Is, Political, Social and Industrial, in the Middle of the Nineteenth Century (1851). Although the connexion between the authorship of this book and the earlier work for Blackwood's has not hitherto been established, there

58 NLS, MS4046, f.217.

59 W. Hindle, The Morning Post 1772-1937 (1937), pp.148-9. W.F. Monypenny, Life of Disraeli (1910) I, 304-5.

60 Morning Post, 29 Aug. 1842, quoted in Hindle, op.cit., p.161.

61 Croker Papers, William Clements Library, University of Michigan. Quoted in Fetter J.P.E., p.219n. (The word 'Post', being non-italicised, can be read in various ways. Fetter does not make the connexion with the Morning Post, which the evidence in the Blackwood Papers now makes possible.)

can be no doubt that the writer was one and the same man. On the title page of his book, Johnston styled himself 'Barrister at Law,' the profession which he had told Blackwood he was entering. The Preface makes a political statement entirely consistent with Johnston's articles in Blackwood's. The 37 chapters of Johnston's book contain further evidence relating to his previous career and known views. Parts of the fourth and fifth chapters, on the revenue from taxation and on foreign trade, had already appeared in the Quarterly Review.⁶² Using the Wellesley Index, these can be traced to the Quarterly for March 1850, in an article entitled 'Facts in Figures.' The writer is correctly identified as 'William Johnston,' but he is listed separately in the Wellesley Index from the 'William Johnstone' [sic] who had contributed to Blackwood's. Most revealing of all is the chapter on 'The Press', wherein Johnston reveals his inside knowledge of the workings of a newspaper office, his familiarity with the contents of Blackwood's Magazine - including a lengthy quotation from an article dating back to 1834⁶³ - and, even more characteristically, his lifelong frustration at the contrast between the considerable influence of journalism upon the course of public affairs and the low esteem and rewards attaching to that profession. He noted that whereas barristers and physicians could earn rich rewards,

The man who only writes what concerns the public interests of his country, and influences the minds

62 As stated in a note at the end of the Preface.

63 The extract came from Archibald Alison's 'The Influence of the Press,' Maga, Sept. 1834.

of hundreds of thousands upon questions which, next to those of religion, are the most important of all questions, is by no means likely to arrive at more than a decent competence, and that only so long as his mental and bodily powers are equal to his daily task. The lot of those who have written most, and most effectively, for the public press, is to live in obscurity and to die in neglect. (p.228)

Had not William Johnston enjoyed the consolation of his legal profession, these words might have served as an epitaph upon him, as they could indeed serve for the one Blackwood's writer who was his superior in addressing social questions, David Robinson.

Thomas De Quincey

A recurring theme of the present study has been that of resistance to temptation: the temptation, that is, of succumbing to the intrinsic appeal of subjects that have been adequately covered elsewhere, when so much new knowledge needs to be brought to light here. Thomas De Quincey provides a case in point. He falls into a different category from the Blackwood's writers so far discussed. De Quincey needs no exercise in biographical re-creation. His life and works have attracted the attention of scholars on both sides of the Atlantic, from the closing stages of his own life to the present day.⁶⁴ More distinctively, there are De Quincey's own 'Confessions'

64 Collected editions of De Quincey's works were prepared during the closing decade of his life by J.T. Fields in Boston and by James Hogg in Edinburgh. The standard collected edition was completed by David Masson in 1889-90, (Edinburgh; A. and C. Black). Masson also wrote one of the standard biographies, in 1881, as did A.H. Japp (as 'H.A. Page') in 1877, (2nd edition revised and enlarged 1890), H.A. Eaton in 1936 and Grevel Lindop in 1981. Other relevant discussions will be mentioned in subsequent footnotes.

and 'Autobiographical Sketches'. As John Beer rightly observes, 'De Quincey himself was such a compelling autobiographer that his own accounts necessarily overshadow those of later writers.'⁶⁵

It is particularly relevant to the present study that Grevel Lindop's biography, The Opium Eater. A Life of Thomas De Quincey, was published in the interval between the researching and the writing of this chapter. Lindop has produced a useful book, relying on the substantial body of published material and on manuscript sources, including the Blackwood Papers. As a scholarly narrative, Lindop's work renders the inclusion of a biographical outline here superfluous. Lindop, however, admits not to have attempted a 'critical' biography (Preface, p.x.) His discussion of De Quincey's political writings is brief, and does not include any scrutiny of De Quincey's political articles in Blackwood's. Thus, once the nature of De Quincey's relationship with the Blackwood firm has been established - a task already undertaken by Lindop, but too pertinent to the present study to be evaded here - the remainder of this section will concentrate upon assessing De Quincey's qualities as a political and economic writer.

De Quincey's involvement with Blackwood's Magazine came through his friendship with John Wilson. Drawn by their early reverence for Wordsworth, both Wilson and De Quincey had settled in the Lake District - Wilson at Elleray, beside Windermere, and De Quincey first as Wordsworth's house-guest,

65 TLS, 25 Sept. 1981, review article.

and subsequently as tenant of Dove Cottage when the Wordsworth's moved to Allan Bank. It was at Allan Bank that De Quincey and Wilson met, in November 1808, becoming warm friends. In these early years, De Quincey was still 'in funds', and in 1813 he lent John Wilson £200 when Wilson was in financial difficulties, before Wilson's financial disaster in 1815.⁶⁶ By 1819, the roles had become reversed. De Quincey borrowed £40 from Wilson, with further bills following, and it was with one eye on De Quincey's debts and the other on the enrichment of the Magazine, that Wilson began to urge De Quincey to contribute to Blackwood's. Despite the inducement of ten guineas a sheet, promises from De Quincey were unfulfilled. His potential value to Wilson was enhanced, however, when the latter became Professor of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh, in August 1820. Wilson had need of De Quincey's wide-ranging scholarship in preparing his lecture course, and William Blackwood joined Wilson in exhorting De Quincey to involve himself in their respective undertakings. In early December 1820 De Quincey went to Edinburgh.

Encouraged by De Quincey's arrival, and by the receipt of part of his first contribution, a translation of a short story by Schiller, Blackwood wrote to his new recruit in terms that show how soon the publisher appreciated both the creative potential and the capacity for procrastination that were to become De Quincey's hallmarks.

I am so happy to receive any thing from you that your two pages appear like the 24 of any one else, because

66 Lindop, op.cit., p.209.

now that you are fairly begun I feel confident you will do justice to yourself. It was the knowing what you could do, if you once resolved to do which made my repeated disappointments so very mortifying to me.⁶⁷

De Quincey's response set the pattern for all his future dealings with the Blackwood firm. On the strength of five pages (when in printed form) already completed, and the promise of eleven more to follow, he asked for £10 immediately, to settle a debt. In return, he offered a more binding relationship:

To-morrow, however, I will send you my bond (if I may so call it) selling myself soul and body to the service of the Magazine for two years (if that time is agreeable to you)...⁶⁸

The promised additional material was not forthcoming, however, and Blackwood began to lose patience. A complaining letter from the publisher brought an insouciant reply from De Quincey, and, in sending his belated manuscript, he ventured upon even greater familiarity of tone:

If Wilson and Lockhart do not put themselves forward for the Mag. I foresee that the entire weight of supporting it must rest on my shoulders: I see clearly that I must be its Atlas. For excepting our friend Gillies's translation (from a cursed dull thing though), and excepting that spirited Political article at the end,⁶⁹ - a more dreary collection of dulness and royal stupidity never did this world see gathered together than the December No. exhibits. Positively it would sink any work in the world. No, no! I see clearly that I must write it all myself - except one sheet which I will leave to Gillies and a few pp. to the

67 13 Dec. 1820. NLS, Acc.5643, B1, f.194. Also quoted in Annals, 1, 424-5, and Lindop, op.cit., p.243.

68 NLS, MS4006, f.172. Partly quoted in Lindop, p.243. (To be in the correct date-sequence, the NLS folio sequence should be 172, 169, 171, 170.)

69 The article by Croly selected for special attention in Chapter Three, above.

other man.⁷⁰

It is doubtful whether any contributor to the Magazine could have indulged in such sauciness unscathed. As a writer of almost no proven worth, whatever his potential, De Quincey had presumed too much. Blackwood replied cuttingly on the same day:

I can only excuse your letter which I rec'd to-day by supposing that you were hardly awake when you wrote it. When I apply to you to be the Atlas of my Magazine it will be time enough for you to undertake the burthen. And in the meantime I beg leave to say that if you cannot send me anything better than "the English Lakes" it will be quite unnecessary for you to give yourself any further trouble about the Magazine.⁷¹

Now it was De Quincey's turn to take umbrage.⁷² If he did complete his article, it was rejected, and he did not contribute to Blackwood's again until 1826. Having been rebuffed in Edinburgh, he eventually took his services to what had been the most virulent foe of Blackwood's, the London Magazine. It was in the interval between his departure from Edinburgh and his arrival in London (during which he returned home to the Lake District), that the duel took place between Lockhart's friend Christie and John Scott of the London Magazine. Scott's fatal wound led to the transference of control of the London Magazine to Taylor and Hessey, with whom De Quincey shared mutual friends. Thus it came about that, having begun the year

70 8 Jan. 1821, NLS, MS4006, f.171. Also quoted in Annals, I, 427, and Lindop p.244.

71 NLS, Acc.5643, B1, f.204. Also quoted in Annals, I, 427-8, and Lindop p.244.

72 His reply is quoted in full in Annals, I, 428-9.

1821 as a contributor to Blackwood's, De Quincey published in the London Magazine for September and October his 'Confessions of an English Opium Eater.' His literary fame was now assured.

John Wilson did not give up hope of recalling De Quincey to the fold. He introduced the 'Opium Eater' into the Noctes Ambrosianae for October 1823, and, discerning that De Quincey was tiring of the London literary scene, Wilson invited him, in 1826, to contribute again to Blackwood's. The outcome was De Quincey's first sustained period of work for the Magazine, from November 1826 to August 1834, with peaks of activity in the first four months of that period, and again between August 1830 and August 1831. It was at the end of the first 'peak' that De Quincey favoured the Magazine with his classic essay 'On Murder Considered as one of the Fine Arts.' His first political article came two years later, in March 1829, on 'The Duke of Wellington and Mr. Peel.' His second peak of activity coincided with the Reform Bill crisis, and represented his first flourishing as a political writer in Blackwood's. Over the whole period of his service in the Magazine, ending with another classic piece, 'The vision of sudden death', in December 1849, De Quincey contributed 95 articles (counting parts of a series, such as 'The Caesars', as separate pieces). Of these, thirty were political articles, the second major cluster of these being during Peel's second Ministry, especially from August 1842 to November 1843. Thus although De Quincey's role as a political contributor was only intermittent, his two

most active phases coincided with important episodes for the Conservative party.

Blackwood was delighted to welcome back such a gifted, if wayward, contributor, being 'perfectly confident that you will do all that you have so long intended, and what I have so anxiously expected.' He looked forward to rewarding De Quincey in future with 'good round sums.'⁷³ Thenceforth the correspondence in the Blackwood Papers relating to De Quincey was dominated by his financial problems, compounded by an inability to produce whole articles on time. The pathetic sequence was established of a few pages being sent, accompanied by a letter begging payment in full and holding out the promise of further pages to follow. On the Blackwood side, this was countered by a general insistence on the policy that payment should be made only for work actually completed, tempered in De Quincey's case by the concession that part-payment could be made for a part-article, and, in extremis, by payment in advance. To follow the correspondence in detail is to enter into a nightmare version of the world of Micawber - if De Quincey cannot receive an advance to pass on to his harassed wife, she might commit suicide; twelve people are dependent upon him (his wife, seven children, his father-in-law, and others); he is selling his books at a fraction of their value to make ends meet; he is in hiding to escape arrest for debt, and sends his letters in secrecy with one

73 16 Oct. 1826, NLS, Acc.5643, B6, f.418.

of his children as messenger; money should not be sent to his home address or it will be seized by the landlady; he cannot afford to buy paper or ink; please could he have £1 on account?⁷⁴ In 1840 De Quincey's children (their mother having died of typhus fever in 1837) found sanctuary in a cottage at Lasswade, seven miles outside Edinburgh, while De Quincey himself sent articles to the Blackwood brothers from his own place of refuge, Glasgow, in 1841-43. His distracted state can be seen in the letter which he wrote to Robert Blackwood from Glasgow on 16 February 1842. (See photocopy, overleaf). The Blackwood incoming correspondence file for 1843 includes two touching letters from De Quincey's daughter, one enquiring anxiously as to whether the publishers had heard from her father, the other asking their help in sending medication to him.⁷⁵ Thereafter De Quincey's own letters more commonly took the form of briefer, more businesslike, notelets, rather than the chaotic, larger sheets. His old habits, however, of wanting part-payment, or payment in anticipation of copy, continued with the Blackwood brothers, as they had with the father.⁷⁶

74 All of these pleas have been noted from De Quincey's letters. Rather than give a lengthy set of NLS references, it is more practicable to cite Lindop pp.298, 302, 305, 307, 311, 327, 328, 330, 336, 344.

75 NLS, MS4065, ff.160 and 166.

76 Although normally accurate, Lindop seems strangely unsure when dealing with William Blackwood's sons. Referring to 1833 (p.305), he depicts William Blackwood as handing over routine responsibilities to Robert and John, although John was then aged only fifteen. In the context of William Blackwood's death in 1834, it again John and Robert, in that order, who are mentioned for their less sympathetic handling of De Quincey (p.324). Referring to the year 1849, it is stated that John Blackwood was running the firm alone, his brother having recently died (p.358). Robert, however, the only brother mentioned, lived until 1852. There is no mention of William Blackwood's eldest son, Alexander, the senior /.....

There can be few more striking contrasts in English literary history than that between De Quincey's distraught style of living and the urbane, polished quality of so much of his writing. A connexion can, of course, be made between his chequered life - with his opium addiction, his nocturnal ramblings, his ailments, his deeply upsetting bereavements and his generally unsettled mode of existence - and his most distinctive form of creative expression, the 'impassioned prose', of which he was such a master. This is not the place in which to explore that connexion.⁷⁷ Nor is it pertinent here to examine whether the disordered nature of De Quincey's life was the product of circumstance or of his complex psychology. One can merely note that while Bonamy Dobrée observes that 'it can hardly be said that he shaped his life,'⁷⁸ Grevel Lindop concludes that 'De Quincey in fact chose with varying degrees of consciousness all the main conditions of his life.'⁷⁹

There was more to De Quincey's writing, however, than

.... editor from 1834 until his death in 1845, either in the text or in the index. These errors and omissions prompt the conclusion that Lindop is either unaware of Alexander's existence, or at least, does not recognise his intimate connexion with the firm. Also, the unfortunate destruction of part of a prospective De Quincey article by one of William Blackwood's younger children is wrongly blamed upon the offspring of Robert (p.305), when neither Robert nor Alexander ever married. The letter bearing the news, in February 1833, has the usual signature, 'W. Blackwood.' NLS, Acc.5643, B10, f.73.

77 See V.A. De Luca, Thomas De Quincey: the Prose of Vision, (Toronto, 1980).

78 Bonamy Dobrée (ed.), Thomas De Quincey (New York, 1965)p.2

79 Lindop, op.cit., p.389.

'impassioned prose.' He was an engaging autobiographer; a vivid, if sometimes mischievous, chronicler of his contemporaries amongst the Lake Poets; a translator and expositor of German literature and philosophy (sharing with Coleridge both a deep interest in German thought and a tendency to plagiarise what he found there); a classical scholar, who wrote learnedly in Blackwood's about the Caesars; an ironist, with a penchant for black humour, as in his two papers in Blackwood's on 'Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts' (Feb. 1827 and Nov. 1839); an economic theorist who wrote with some authority about political economy (to be discussed below); and, not least, a political controversialist. The editor of one of the older anthologies of De Quincey's writings rightly praises the 'pervading intellectuality that gives dignity and grace to his writing.'⁸⁰

The focus of attention here must be upon De Quincey's writing as a political journalist and economic theorist. His first experience of political writing was gained through his contact with Wordsworth, whom he assisted to produce a pamphlet attacking the Convention of Cintra. A decade later, Wordsworth's connexion with the Lowther interest helped De Quincey to become editor of the Westmorland Gazette, from July 1818 to November 1819. Almost another decade elapsed before he resumed newspaper writing. From July 1827 to July 1828 he contributed to the Edinburgh Saturday Post, having returned to Edinburgh to write literary pieces for Blackwood's (although his Post period

80 W. Sharp (ed.) Confessions of an English Opium-Eater. (Walter Scott Publishing Co., n.d.) p.vii.

coincided with a lull in his Blackwood's activity.) As a political writer for the Post, De Quincey developed his facility for setting transient political controversies against the broader backcloth of political history, and especially against the age-old struggle between 'jacobin' and 'anti-jacobin' principles: principles that were rooted in human nature, long before their characterisation in current political terminology.⁸¹ His depiction of the Whig and the Tory parties as a party of change and a party of conservation, each necessary to the other, and both necessary for political well-being, recalls Edmund Burke's principles of 'conservation and correction', and anticipates Coleridge's analysis of the opposing forces of 'permanence and progression', as set out in his On the Constitution of the Church and State (1830).⁸²

It was only after this long, if intermittent, apprenticeship, that De Quincey began to contribute political articles to Blackwood's Magazine. His first piece, 'The Duke of Wellington and Mr. Peel', came in the Blackwood's number immediately following the news that the government had decided to introduce Catholic emancipation.⁸³ It was noteworthy for its opening aphorism: 'We live in an age made great by its events, and little by the character of the actors': and for the virulence of its denunciation of Peel, compared with a readiness to find excuses for the

81 See S.M. Tave, (ed.) New Essays by De Quincey: His Contributions to the Edinburgh Saturday Post and the Edinburgh Evening Post, 1827-8. (Princeton, New Jersey, 1966). Tave is summarised in Lindop, pp.285-6.

82 John Barrell, in his introduction to the Everyman edition of Coleridge's book (1972) makes a link with German thought, viz. Schiller's concepts of Person and Condition, 'a something in man which endures and something which constantly changes.' (p.xvi).

83 Maga, March 1829, pp.294-302.

conduct of the Duke.⁸⁴ It took another major event, the French Revolution of July 1830, to revive De Quincey's political contributions, and his article, 'French Revolution', has been chosen for scrutiny here.⁸⁵

The opening revealed De Quincey at his florid worst:

REVOLUTION! - French Revolution! - Dread watchword of mystery and fear! - Augury of sorrows to come! - Record of an Iliad of woes! Is it then indeed true that another French Revolution has dawned? (p.542)

After this Cassandra-like utterance, De Quincey proceeded to reasoned discourse, making a point that was valid as an argument, but was not to be borne out by events. Against those who reassuringly claimed that July 1830 was a far cry from the horrors of the first Revolution, De Quincey argued that the real point of comparison should be, not with 1792-3, but with 1789.

That revolution, even more than this, was won with moderation and civic hands. That also seemed freighted with golden hopes for France, and, through France, for universal Europe. (p.542)

Yet the hopes aroused in that blissful dawn had been cruelly dashed in the outcome.

How those visions perished, in what manner that dawn of celestial promise was overcast, and deformed by storms such as never had descended upon civilized communities; and how, at last, the billowy agitations of popular frenzy were smitten by the petrific mace of military despotism, and republicanism swallowed up by a power growing out of itself, - all this is recorded in the blood and tears of every nation, and in the debts which cripple the leader of the Anti-Gallican crusade. (p.542)

If this sequence of events had happened once, could it not be repeated? Perhaps so, but in the outcome, France was

84 This point is pursued below, Chapter Six.

85 Maga, Sept. 1830, pp.542-558.

spared a repetition of the chaos and bloodshed of the 1790s, and Europe escaped another visitation of revolutionary wars. In predicting, (pp.551-2) that the new king would ultimately be unable to stem the republican tide, however, De Quincey was eventually proved correct. Louis Philippe gave way to the Second Republic before De Quincey ceased to write for Blackwood's.

In making a further prediction about the kind of leader who would most appeal to Frenchmen, De Quincey put forward a generalisation about the French character which, although something of a cliché, contains, like many clichés, at least a grain of truth. Noting the enthusiasm with which Napoleon had been received on his return from Elba, De Quincey drew the inferences that,

how much soever the French nation may value civil liberty, they value the national glory still more; that consequently, a brilliant and fortunate leader will meet with unmeasured indulgence even in his utter abolition of all free institutions; and, on the other hand, that the most conciliatory and popular demeanour, and the most perilous concessions to the cause of civil liberty, will, at the utmost, obtain a toleration (and scarcely a toleration) for a king who is not distinguished by shining personal qualities. (p.543)

Without wishing to force the parallels too strongly, one can reasonably set alongside this anticipation the actual course of French history in the generation after 1830: the 'conciliatory' Louis Philippe, undistinguished by 'shining personal qualities', did indeed give place, after the interlude of the Second Republic, to a leader who was 'brilliant and fortunate' in name at least.

De Quincey can, of course, be criticised for the

over-anxious terms in which he assessed the situation in 1830, but in predicting that the revolution in France, even if unaccompanied by European war, would still have a destabilising effect upon the rest of Europe, he again deserves credit for his perceptiveness. Surveying Europe, he dealt first with Germany, where he observed that 'the excitable classes are to be found only in the middle or upper classes.' (p.553) After offering an apocalyptic vision of what might happen in the Hapsburg Empire, and dismissing the prospect of an original movement of insurrection occurring in Bavaria, it was in Saxony and Prussia that De Quincey anticipated 'a fiery struggle.' (p.554) The ruler of Saxony - as was the case with several other German states - was indeed forced to grant a more liberal constitution, although in less 'fiery' circumstances than De Quincey envisaged. As for Prussia, he did allow the possibility that a show of military strength would keep the opposition in check. He saw a more perilous situation in the Netherlands.

So many ties of neighbourhood, familiar use of the French language, and old political connexions, unite the Low Countries with France, that it will require something stronger than the Orange sceptre to repress the progress of the new opinions. Wherever the Rhine flows, we venture to predict, that within eighteen months this great river will water a country changed, or changing, in the spirit of its institutions. (p.554)

This prediction must have been written by the middle of August, to meet the Magazine's printing deadline. It was on 25 August that demonstrations occurred at the Opera House in Brussels, rapidly followed by revolts in provincial towns, leading to the declaration of Belgian independence on 4 October. At the other end of the Rhine

there was trouble in the cantons of Switzerland, leading to the adoption of more liberal constitutions.

Although the complexity of the situation in southern Europe caused De Quincey to think it hazardous to make predictions, he did suggest that, 'In Northern Italy, perhaps the constitutional languor of the natives will yield at length to the double excitement from France and from Germany.' (p.555) At the end of 1830 there was a revolution in Modena, followed by one in Parma a few weeks later.

This wide-ranging article earned praise from William Johnston, who wrote to Blackwood, admiring its informative quality.⁸⁶ Certainly De Quincey displayed an extensive knowledge of European affairs. His tone might at times sound too shrill for modern ears, but it is important to recall the events of the period through which he had lived and upon which he drew in judging contemporary politics.

Towards the end of this article, De Quincey outlined his theory of English political parties, a theory which one is tempted to call 'dialectical,' despite the insistence of Grevel Lindop (in the context of De Quincey's earlier articles for the Post) that this would be a mistake.⁸⁷

Philosophically speaking, neither Whigs nor Tories, taken separately, express the truth of our constitution - but both in combination. They are the antagonist forces of the English constitution, as necessary to each other as the centrifugal and centripetal forces in another system, which by mutual hostility produce an equilibrium, and a uniform motion, that could not otherwise have resulted. (p.556)

86 15 Sept. 1830, NLS, MS4027, f.252.

87 Lindop, op.cit., p.286.

To claim, as Lindop does, that this theory is really 'no more than the old idea of compromise', seems somewhat reductive. Whereas compromise suggests some form of stasis, the dynamic character of the interplay of forces, as expressed by De Quincey, is essentially dialectical. Nor is it possible to agree with Lindop that such a theory 'undermines the validity of any particular commitment.' A commitment can have its own internal validity for the adherent, as well as a wider validity for the whole political process. Consequently, Lindop's assertion, made with reference to De Quincey's service at the Post, but not modified by any subsequent reference to Blackwood's, that 'Often he was just taking the side assigned to him in the political shadow-boxing, opposing for the sake of opposing', cannot be regarded as satisfactory, either as regards De Quincey or as a representation of the deep political conflicts of this period.⁸⁸

Other modern scholars who have referred to De Quincey's political writings - approaching them from a literary-critical background - have similarly damned them with faint praise, if indeed they have praised them at all. Bonamy Dobrée omits from his anthology De Quincey's 'excursions into politics, which have little value at the present day, even for the historian.'⁸⁹ S.M. Tave characterises De Quincey's politics as 'interesting, but not, I think, edifying.'⁹⁰ Recognising that De Quincey, at his best, could

88 All the quotations from Lindop in this paragraph come from p.286.

89 Dobrée, op.cit., p.11.

90 Tave, op.cit., p.17.

combine the qualities of imagination and intellect, in the way that Edmund Burke had done, Tave does not discern that happy combination in De Quincey's political writings.

But in his politics, though there is much feeling it is usually without thought, and though there is a good deal of thought it is too often without feeling. He performs no service in a liberal world because his is the narrower world, with its automatic responses and its fixed language that makes discussion impossible - in party politics a lifeless "equilibrium", in religion a "fine old patriotic chant of No Popery", in slavery a "panic of property", in political economy a "doctrine."⁹¹

As this is one of the few assessments of De Quincey's politics to be found in modern works, it merits further attention. The disjunction of 'thought' and 'feeling' has about it the nice ring of Gibbonian antithesis - and about as much fairness. The article on 'French Revolution' can reasonably be regarded as containing both thought and feeling. The article particularly mentioned by Tave, 'On the Approaching Revolution in Great Britain', (Maga, Aug. 1831, pt.2), which Tave deems 'important' (p.18n.), struck the present writer (reading De Quincey's articles before reading Tave) as one of De Quincey's worst efforts. It must be allowed that the pressures of topical writing did give rise to sub-standard performances. A general verdict, however, ought to take account of the good as well as the bad.⁹² As for rebuking De Quincey for performing 'no service in a liberal world,' the rejoinder seems almost too obvious to require stating: the whole point of De Quincey's political writing was to impede the advent of that liberal world, not to serve it.

91 Tave, op.cit., p.21.

92 De Quincey's contributions to Blackwood's during the Reform Bill crisis, and Peel's Ministry of 1841-46, will be discussed below, Chapters Seven and Nine.

Nor are 'automatic responses' and 'fixed language' restricted to one side of political discourse. If Tave sees De Quincey's equilibrium as "lifeless," it can only be repeated that the concept of interacting forces can reasonably be viewed differently.

The philosophic cast of De Quincey's Toryism was consistent: from the Edinburgh Saturday Post, through Blackwood's to Tait's Edinburgh Magazine. Tait's, which opposed De Quincey's politics while welcoming his literary pieces, did give him space for two articles, in December 1835 and January 1836, on 'A Tory's Account of Toryism, Whiggism, and Radicalism.' De Quincey envisaged Toryism as having three relations, each distinct. First, the 'permanent,' dating from its origin, and inherent in human character; second, the 'accidental,' dating from reactions to the French Revolution; and third, 'derivative', taking the form of inferences from its own distinguishing principles, perceived in contradistinction from the doctrines of radical reformers. At the foot of almost every column of De Quincey's double-article, the editor inserted disputatious footnotes, and he refused to publish a further piece entitled 'Political Parties of Modern England.' This eventually came into print in the collected writings.⁹³ Here De Quincey provided a further re-statement of his principle of action and reaction, conceiving Whigs and Tories as 'able to exist only by means of their coexistence,' but serving, in their rivalry, to bring wider political benefits.

93 An extract can also be found in the most representative of the De Quincey anthologies, that assembled by M.R. Ridley for the Oxford edition of 1927, pp.79-82.

De Quincey's role as an exponent of Ricardian economics has been widely recognised. F.W. Fetter describes him as 'the contributor to Blackwood's who came closest to being an economist, in the technical sense of being interested in the mechanism of the market...'⁹⁴ D.P. O'Brien characterises him as 'Ricardo's only other close disciple apart from Mill.'⁹⁵ Mark Blaug prefaces his survey of Ricardian economics⁹⁶ with a quotation from the Confessions, in which De Quincey describes the impact upon him of first reading Ricardo's Principles of Political Economy and Taxation. Blaug, however, does note instances where De Quincey dissented from Ricardo (Blaug, pp.169,187), and O'Brien cites a case where 'even De Quincey' could not entirely accept Ricardo's reasoning (O'Brien, p.43). A similar process of detracting from the indebtedness to Ricardo of other economists, particularly J.R. McCulloch and J.S. Mill, prompted Samuel Hollander's massive exercise in rehabilitating Ricardo's influence upon the economic thought of the period.⁹⁷ Hollander readily endorses (p.669) J.S. Mill's recognition of De Quincey's general allegiance to, and further illustration of, Ricardo's doctrines. To participate in the wider debate would be, not only presumptuous, but a distortion of the true purpose of the present study. Adhering firmly to the matter in hand,

94 Fetter, J.P.E., p.92.

95 O'Brien, op.cit., p.7.

96 M. Blaug, Ricardian Economics. A Historical Study (1958, repr. 1973).

97 S. Hollander, The Economics of David Ricardo (1979).

however, it will be shown below that, profoundly influenced by Ricardo as he undoubtedly was, De Quincey was no mere, unquestioning retailer of his master's teachings.

Before writing for Blackwood's, De Quincey had contributed a series of expositions of Ricardian economics to the London Magazine in 1824. The 'Dialogues of Three Templars on Political Economy', whilst praising Ricardo's insights, particularly in value theory, suggested that his book could have followed a more logical arrangement of chapters. The same point was later to be made by Karl Marx.⁹⁸

Eventually De Quincey was given space to explain Ricardian economics to the readers of Blackwood's. His set of three articles on 'Ricardo Made Easy,' in the Magazine for September, October and December 1842, formed the basis of his book, The Logic of Political Economy, published by Blackwood in 1844. It is on these writings that De Quincey's claim to be ranked as an economic theorist of some consequence chiefly rests. His discussions are noteworthy in two important respects: first, in demonstrating that he was not merely a slavish disciple of Ricardo, and second, in that the quality of his exposition attracted the

98 See the Introduction, by Piero Sraffa and Maurice Dobb, to the C.U.P. edition of the works and correspondence of D. Ricardo, vol. I, On The Principles of Political Economy and Taxation, (p.xxii, n.3).

admiring attention of John Stuart Mill.⁹⁹

The full title of the Blackwood's articles established from the outset that Ricardo's book was not to be treated as holy writ: 'Ricardo Made Easy; Or, What is the Radical Difference between Ricardo and Adam Smith? With an Occasional Notice of Ricardo's Oversights.'¹⁰⁰ The running title was 'Ricardo and Adam Smith.' After opening with a tribute to the epochal importance of the publication of Ricardo's Principles in 1817, De Quincey proceeded to a discussion of value theory (following, in fact, the chapter-sequence of the Principles throughout his three articles). De Quincey disputed Adam Smith's distinction between value in use and value in exchange, which he considered set up a false

99 See J.S. Mill, Principles of Political Economy, Book III, ch.s 1, 2 and 3, esp. pp.456-7, 466-9, 474-6, in the Toronto edition (1965). The accessibility of this text, and Mill's citation of De Quincey's book, rather than his Blackwood's articles, make it inappropriate to discuss here what Mill made of De Quincey. Attention will be concentrated instead upon what De Quincey, writing in Blackwood's, made of Ricardo. The present purpose is limited to revealing De Quincey's capacity for independent thought, without confronting the deeper question of whether De Quincey was 'right' in what he said about Ricardo. Here one has considerable sympathy with a remark of F.W. Fetter: 'The judgments of economists on Ricardo suggest the opinions of the nine blind men who felt various parts of the elephant and then described the animal.' Fetter, 'The Rise and Decline of Ricardian Economics,' History of Political Economy, 1 (Spring 1969), p.67, quoted in Hollander, op.cit., p.4.

100 Maga, Sept. pp.338-353; Oct. pp.457-469; Dec. pp.718-719.

dichotomy. Instead, he postulated the concepts of 'affirmative' value and 'negative' value, denoting the former as a 'power,' related to utility, (how strong is the inherent desirability of a commodity?), and the latter as a 'resistance,' related to the labour necessary to be deployed in its production, (what recompense is required for the provision of a commodity?). The 'affirmative' thus had a 'plus' value, and the 'negative' or 'resistance' factor had a 'minus' value. In place of two separate definitions, we therefore had the continuous attraction and repulsion of linked forces. 'We thus obtain the precision and the breadth of an algebraic distinction.' (p.343). It is worth recalling that according to his Confessions, referring back to the year 1819, De Quincey had intended his Prolegomena¹⁰¹ to amplify Ricardo by means of 'algebraic symbols', which he thought would do the job 'more briefly and elegantly... than in the usual clumsy and loitering diction of economists.' One can also discern here that fondness for the idea of mutually interacting forces which characterised De Quincey's political theory. The understandable reluctance of literary critics to devote attention to the 'dismal science', and the comparable disinclination of most economists to divert their attention into the reminiscences of an opium-addicted literary figure, have perhaps prevented sufficient justice being done to the internal consistency of De Quincey's writings.

101 (The Prolegomena to all future Systems of Political Economy was not completed.)

Amongst the illustrations which De Quincey provided for the initiation of Blackwood's readers into value-theory, was that of the price of salmon. The current figure of fifteen pence per pound, he suggested, represented the 'resistance' value. The effect of the price gravitating towards the 'affirmative' would be to increase it, given that most people would prefer to eat salmon rather than beef. A maximum limit, however, was set upon such price movement by the availability of similar, but even more desirable fare, particularly turbot. The case therefore turned more upon the relative difficulties in obtaining salmon or turbot than upon some notional figure of what people might be willing to pay for the pleasure of eating salmon. That is, while the potential price was governed by the 'affirmative' power, the actual price was governed by the 'resistance.' The outcome of this discourse was thus to confirm Ricardo's labour theory of value. It was doubtless with this passage in mind that John Stuart Mill admiringly noted how De Quincey's discussions were 'enriched with many acute remarks... on any subject, important or trifling, from the qualities of turbot to the laws of thought.'¹⁰²

Turning to rent, De Quincey re-stated the basic Ricardian position, that difference of soil was the governing factor. He was at pains to emphasise that 'rent cannot inflame prices.' (p.457). Rent did not take place until a

102 Review of The Logic of Political Economy, in Westminster Review, June 1845, p.330.

high price had actually occurred, and even if rent were to be abolished, the yield of the lowest quality soil would still set the price, 'and that soil already, by the case, yields only profit and wages.' His emphasis on this point had political connotations. He did not wish Ricardian doctrines to be exploited by enemies of property. Mark Blaug supports this point with a pertinent quotation from the Logic of Political Economy.

It happens that in no instance has the policy of gloomy disorganising Jacobinism... received any essential aid from science, excepting in this one painful corollary from Ricardo's triad of chapters on Rent, Profit and Wages... Separate, the doctrine of rent offers little encouragement to the anarchist; it is in connexion with other views that it ripens into an instrument of mischief the most incendiary.¹⁰³

The most interesting part of De Quincey's commentary occurs in the closing section of his second article, where he discusses Chapter XXI of the Principles: 'Effects of Accumulation on Profits and Interest.' His discussion reveals his readiness to put Ricardo to rights when necessary. While accepting that the tendencies of the principle (De Quincey's italics) which governs profit are downwards, he maintained that 'the degree in which the tendencies may be allowed to operate, seems open to indefinite modification.' (p.464). Once profits had come to a maximum, there was an 'oscillation' about that point, rather than a prevailing downward tendency. De Quincey based his view on a survey of profitability between 1715 and 1815 (an indication that he was prepared to modify an

103 Blaug, op.cit., p.169, quoting the Logic, pp.250-1.

a priori theory in the light of empirical evidence). He admitted that there had perhaps been a downward trend in Britain since 1815, occasioned by particular factors, including competition from Western Europe, but his long-term view was not despondent.

De Quincey's most direct contradiction of Ricardo occurred in this section, with reference to a footnote in Chapter XXI.¹⁰⁴ Ricardo had taken Adam Smith to task for citing Holland as affording an instance of the fall of profits from the accumulation of capital. Smith's argument was that a superfluity of capital kept interest rates low, and by causing over-bidding for labour, kept profits low also. Ricardo countered by putting the blame on Holland's need to import almost all of her corn and on the raising of the wages of labour by the taxation of necessities. 'These facts will sufficiently account for the low rate of profits and interest in Holland.' De Quincey pounced on this double blunder, as he saw it. First he deployed Ricardian theory against its originator, to show that Ricardo cannot have meant that wages were raised as against employers of labour. Rather, their weight fell upon the purchaser, that is, upon the whole community. With this gloss, Ricardo's point did indeed bear upon Holland's shortcomings in profitability, but his other point - the effects of corn-importation - while also valid, came strangely from him.

Here we have him, here we have the great master, caught in flagrante delicto, (hot foot, red hand, as

104 Principles (C.U.P. ed.), p.290,n.

the ancient law expresses it) - absolutely charging upon this ruinous system of importing foreign corn, all the commercial decline of Holland. Upon this foreign dependency for grain, it is a fact that Ricardo peremptorily charges the Dutch ruin... And we British, it seems, shall not be ruined, because we have a vast area of land, and the Dutch have a small one. Well, most excellent David, but that being interpreted means - that, whilst the Dutch decayed under a certain constraint to which their poverty in land and not their will consented, we British (liberated from this Dutch constraint of alien dependency) are liberated from the Dutch consequences of galloping consumption. We never doubted it.. But thou, David, ringleader of the wicked anti-corn-law mutineers, how is it (to speak in Chaucer's nervous language) that "very filth and shame" did not check thee in thus calling for aid upon that honest truth which thy whole faction had so deeply foresworn? (pp.465-6)

In fairness to Ricardo, it should be pointed out that he was not the 'ringleader of the wicked anti-corn-law mutineers.' Mark Blaug rightly observes that 'the hero of the League was Adam Smith, not Ricardo.'¹⁰⁵

The third and final part of De Quincey's exposition in Blackwood's was less penetrating in its analysis, and more concerned with displaying the writer's literary gifts. The article is full of classical tags, recondite allusions and jocular images. A final quotation, drawing attention to the ambiguity of that favourite term of economists, 'use', may serve to typify the special qualities that De Quincey brought to the discussion of political economy. In previous analyses of value theory, he observed,

nothing has done more to mislead than the equivoque which lurks in the word "use." There are two distinct senses covered by this word. Apply the prismatic glass of some other language, Latin suppose, which is the short process for detecting double meanings, and you discover it to be a pun. Positively a pun, like

105 Blaug, op.cit., p.207.

any wild hog, has been routing in the tulip garden. of Political Economy. The true meaning of use as regards economy is in utendo, value which arises inter utendum, or on contemplating such a purpose utendi gratia. Whereas the meaning, secretly adopted and reasoned upon, is use as opposed to ornament; that is, to express it in Latin, quoad commodum, beneficii gratia. This is the most monstrous of blunders; it leads astray the student upon a quest with which the economist has no possible concern. (p.728)¹⁰⁶

The final parting between De Quincey and Blackwood's came in 1849. As usual, there was a problem over money. On 20 November, John Blackwood wrote to reassure De Quincey that he need no longer fear being arrested for his debt to Messrs. Craig, as the Blackwood brothers had paid on his behalf a total of £89 to the creditors.¹⁰⁷ More pointedly, however, John observed that De Quincey's contribution thereto had been only £4, together with only two articles - 'The English Mail Coach' and 'The Vision of Sudden Death.' Lacking the benefit of hindsight, John Blackwood was more concerned with urging De Quincey to meet his obligations to the firm than with consoling himself on having received two classics of English prose. So ended De Quincey's fraught but fruitful relationship with the house of Blackwood.

106 John Stuart Mill's observation is pertinent here: 'His mind has a natural tendency to drawing distinctions; in doing which he frequently manifests real subtlety, and occasionally that turn for subtleties, which is not the same thing, but which simulates it.' Westminster Review, op.cit., p.321.

107 NLS, Acc.5643, B12, f.226.

CHAPTER SIX

IRELAND AND THE CATHOLIC QUESTION, 1821-1829

TICKLER. At home, Corn-Currency-Catholics.

NORTH. Good Lord deliver us from the three!

Plague - Pestilence, and Famine

- Battle - Murder, and sudden Death,

are nothing to them!

(Noctes, Oct. 1828)

The question of Catholic emancipation was the most divisive issue in British politics during the 1820s. Government policies respecting the Corn Laws and the restriction of paper money also caused contention, not least in the columns of Blackwood's Magazine,¹ but they did not touch so deep and resonant a chord as did the prospect of 'breaking in upon the Constitution of 1688.'² Inextricably bound up with the destiny of the Revolution Settlement was the problem of relations between Britain and Ireland. The Act of Union of 1800 had not been accompanied by the granting of Catholic emancipation, as had been the hope of those Irish Catholics who supported the measure, and the fear of those Protestants, notably many of the Orange lodges, who opposed the union.³ The disappointment

1 See above, Chapter Four.

2 This phrase, used by Peel during his advocacy of the 'Protestant' position, became widely used in 1829 and formed the title of a major article in Blackwood's in April that year.

3 J.C. Beckett, The Making of Modern Ireland, 1603-1923 (1981 ed.), pp.276, 279.

of the Catholics, and the growing realisation by the Protestants that in the union lay their best hope of protection against the native majority, caused a sharpening of the politico-religious cleavage. In the words of a modern authority, 'the claim to national independence, abandoned by the protestants, became almost the distinctive political characteristic of the Roman Catholics; and the age-old connection between political and religious affiliations became stronger than ever.'⁴

The clearest mark of the inferior position of the Irish Catholics, after the various relief measures during the final quarter of the eighteenth century, was the effective exclusion of Catholics from becoming members of parliament or holding high civil or military office. Not only did this present an obstacle to the pursuit of a political career - a problem which might trouble a Catholic lawyer or journalist, but was unlikely to concern the millions of Irish Roman Catholic peasantry - but it thereby deprived those who professed to speak for the native majority of a proper forum for the articulation of Irish grievances. Without the advocacy of Irish Catholic members of parliament, what hope was there of an alleviation of the burden of tithes, of a reform of the top-heavy Anglican Establishment, of a restriction upon rack-renting or the granting of greater security to tenants? Still less was there any hope of an end to the parliamentary union which guaranteed that the Irish Catholic majority would remain under Protestant rule. It was when this point came to be grasped by sufficient numbers of the peasantry, under

⁴ Beckett, p.288.

the active encouragement of their priests, that Catholic emancipation became, from 1824, not simply a matter of debate within the political nation, but a pressing question of public order. Just as one side clung to the Protestant constitution as the symbol of the prosperity and security that Britain had enjoyed since 1688, so, to the other side, Catholic emancipation became the symbol of the prospective liberation of Ireland from the age-old grievances of religious, legal and economic oppression.

Indeed, it was the counter-assertion that Catholic emancipation was a symbolic, rather than a real, remedy for Ireland's problems that formed one of the principal contentions of opponents of the measure. The case was argued with particular cogency by Peel, in a debate on 9 May 1817 upon Grattan's motion for a committee of the whole House to consider Catholic relief. Peel's arguments⁵ are worth re-stating, both as an indication of the reasons for resistance to Catholic emancipation, and because it was the memory of speeches such as this that made Peel's 'apostasy' in 1829 so shocking to the political writers in Blackwood's Magazine.

Peel's case was founded upon the intractable nature of the political and religious cleavage between Britain and Ireland. The conceding of Catholic emancipation would not, therefore, cure such a deep-seated problem. To accompany the concession by 'securities', such as the provision for an English veto upon unacceptable papal

5 N. Gash, Mr. Secretary Peel (1961), pp.205-9, provides a full summary, on which the next paragraph is based.

appointments to the Irish hierarchy, or the payment of priests' stipends from public funds, would irritate the Catholic Church, without reassuring its Protestant antagonists. There was no logical reason to believe that the subversion of the Protestant constitution of Church and State, a system which had served Britain so well, would lead to any better administration of Ireland. On the contrary, it would further destabilise the situation. Remaining grievances - tithes, the Anglican Establishment and the like - would be thrown into sharper focus. The campaign would move on to them. 'We are told that we cannot stop where we are; I answer that we are more likely to stop where we are, than we shall be if we advance to the point to which we are invited.' Emancipation was irrelevant to the problems of the peasantry. It would, however, bring new constitutional problems. If the office of Chief Secretary, for example, remained debarred to Catholics, then Catholic emancipation would not genuinely have been achieved. If, on the other hand, it were open to a Catholic, then this could embarrass the Protestant monarch. 'In all this I see nothing that can lead to harmony - nothing that can constitute a final and satisfactory settlement - nothing but a wild and irreconcilable contradiction of principles.'

Alongside the complexity of the problem, as expounded by Peel, there were additional reasons for resisting the Catholic claims. The monarch was opposed to it: George III inflexibly, George IV emotionally, the Duke of York (who,

until 1827, stood next in line) belligerently. There was a clear majority against the proposal in the House of Lords; and the House of Commons, like the Cabinets of the 1820s, fluctuated around the point of even division. As for the general public, the modern authority on this question is in no doubt that 'most of the inhabitants of Great Britain were opposed to civil equality for Catholics, as they had been for over 200 years.'⁶ It is not surprising, therefore, that throughout the period of Lord Liverpool's premiership, the question was left 'open' within the government. That, in practice, meant that, lacking governmental momentum, Catholic relief could not be enacted. Indeed, it was their confidence in Liverpool as a premier who would not allow the measure to succeed, that helped to keep the unyieldingly Protestant Tories loyal to his ministry, despite their qualms over commercial and foreign policies.⁷

Only two years after Liverpool's retirement, however, Catholic emancipation was brought forward as a government measure, and was duly enacted. That accomplished fact, together with a century and a half of ever-increasing tolerance (or indifference) with regard to matters of religion,⁸ has tended to cast opponents of the measure as obscurantists, conducting a futile rearguard action against the march of progress. Although G.I.T. Machin's standard work deals thoroughly and fairly with this

6 G.I.T. Machin, The Catholic Question in English Politics, 1820 to 1830 (1964) p.5.

7 W.R. Brock, op.cit., p.39.

8 (Outside the troubled land of Ulster, where matters which here are academic can still inflame sectarian passions.)

contentious subject, it can be suggested that the case against concession was capable of a more complete and emphatic exposition than it receives therein. Machin states as the two central tenets of the anti-catholic case, first, the belief in the inviolability of the Revolution Settlement, and second, the fear of a revival of papal pretensions. He has little trouble in finding counter-arguments to knock these down. Anglican exclusionism, it was argued by pro-catholics, was not fundamental to the constitution. The Penal Code had been progressively relaxed, and Protestant Dissenters had benefited from annual Indemnity Acts. The papal threat, moreover, was a thing of the past. The Test Act of 1678 had been a panic measure after the 'Popish Plot', and had no relevance to the changed circumstances of the nineteenth century. 'Thus,' Machin observes, 'the anti-catholics had the worst of the arguments concerning the past and the present.'⁹ And if they could point with some force to the future, when concession was shown not to have settled the Irish problem, that was because their own obstructionism had prevented the granting of relief in an amicable atmosphere.

There is much cogency in Machin's presentation of the issues. Nonetheless, if he had included a discussion of the debate conducted in periodicals, he might have encountered a wider range of arguments on the anti-catholic side. A vitriolic extract against Peel, the 'apostate', from the Birmingham Monthly Argus, 1 March 1829, is Machin's only substantial quotation of periodical opinion. He uses

9 Machin, op.cit., p.18.

periodicals - that is, newspapers, for the views of magazines and reviews are not discussed - as a source of information about the extra-parliamentary campaign, rather than as an arena of debate upon the question. It is not surprising, therefore, that he should characterise M.T. Sadler, MP, as 'one of the few talented anti-catholics.'¹⁰ Had he spent more time with Blackwood's and the Quarterly, rather than with provincial newspapers, he might perhaps have found some exponents of the anti-catholic case worthy to mention alongside Sadler.

D.G.S. Simes does provide, in his unpublished thesis, a more complete discussion of the anti-catholic position, indicating the views of Southey, Sir Robert Inglis, and others.¹¹ Geoffrey Best has published what remains the most effective statement of the Protestant standpoint, although his article does not pursue the debate into periodicals, relying instead upon eighteenth-century constitutional writings, contemporary diaries and correspondence, and parliamentary debates.¹² Best devotes only passing attention to the Irish dimension of the problem. A closer parallel to the present exercise is an article by Scott Bennett.¹³ As a specialist in the history of periodicals, Bennett deals with the Quarterly Review with a knowledge of its inner workings. His concentration upon the few months after the County Clare by-election, however, prevents him from giving a proper consideration to the

10 Machin, op.cit., p.151.

11 Simes, thesis, op.cit., pp.101-113.

12 G. Best, 'The Protestant Constitution and its Supporters,' T.R.H.S., 5th ser. viii (1958), pp.105-127.

13 'Catholic Emancipation, the Quarterly Review, and Britain's Constitutional Revolution,' Victorian Studies XII, 3 (March 1969), pp.283-304.

anti-concessionary case as it had been deployed over a period of years. He is thus too quick to dismiss what he has not discussed, as in this comment upon Peel's conversion:

But a great deal of nonsense was and had been talked about Emancipation. Indeed, Robert Peel's position was dramatically complicated by the fact that some of this nonsense had been his own and he had now to disavow it. (p.300)

What this 'nonsense' was is not specified. Perhaps it was of the kind put forward in Peel's speech of 1817, discussed earlier in this chapter. If so, it can only be remarked that it did not appear to contemporary observers, foes as well as friends, to be nonsensical. Although much ink has already been spilt on this question - and, if the judgment of the Duke of Wellington was correct, much blood might also have been spilt, but for the concession in 1829 - there remains a place for an extended discussion of the anti-catholic case, as it was deployed in one of the principal Tory periodicals of the period. The purpose of what follows is not to argue that the ultra-Tories were 'right' in their obduracy, or that Wellington and Peel were 'wrong' in their change of policy. Rather, it is intended to balance the historical record by giving a more complete, and a more sympathetic, exposition of the anti-concessionary case, set in the wider context of general views about the Irish problem, than has generally been provided.

Blackwood's Magazine was particularly well placed to engage in informed debate about Irish affairs, from the standpoint of the Protestant ascendancy. William Maginn, who first contributed to the Magazine from the Minerva Rooms, Cork, was invited to join the regular staff early in 1820. His extensive range included discussion of Irish problems. Three Anglican clergymen, all connected with Ireland, argued the Protestant case from a knowledge of Irish conditions: George Croly, Horatio Townsend and Samuel O'Sullivan. Croly's belligerent Protestantism has already been discussed.¹⁴ Horatio Townsend, writing from Cork, was an acquaintance of Maginn. William Blackwood characterised him to David Robinson:

I enclose a letter which I think will gratify you. The writer is the Rev. H. Townsend, an excellent friend of mine, whose articles in the Mag. have commonly been signed Senex. He is a man upwards of 70 and in very bad health, but has all the fervour and enthusiasm of a young man.¹⁵

Samuel O'Sullivan, one of the Magazine's ablest Irish writers, won admiring comment from a still more able compatriot, William Johnston. Praising the excellence of an O'Sullivan article, about Dublin University, Johnston observed to Blackwood that 'the writer, whoever he be, is a sound and clever fellow.'¹⁶ Johnston himself displayed in his discussion of Ireland's problems his own attractive blend of urbanity and wide sympathy. His position during the crisis of 1828-9 was particularly interesting, and will

¹⁴ See above, p. 64.

¹⁵ 22 Nov. 1828, NLS, Acc.5643, B8, f.93.

¹⁶ 3 Aug. 1829, NLS, MS4025, f.36.

receive close attention. Above and beyond this capable team of Irish writers came the Magazine's principal political writer from 1824 to 1831, David Robinson. Although anything but Irish, Robinson brought to his extensive discussions of Irish affairs his usual qualities of sound knowledge, uncompromising assurance and combative vigour. Although the readership of the Magazine was predominantly English and Scottish, in roughly equal proportions, there was an Irish sale, amounting to about 500 copies in 1828.¹⁷ It can be safely assumed that most of these subscribers belonged to one or other arm of the Protestant ascendancy, and that, extrapolating from the proportion of Irish clergymen-contributors, a good many were connected with the Anglican Establishment.

During its early years, Blackwood's remained quiet on the subject of Catholic emancipation, remarking, indeed, upon its own silence, in the course of a review of a pamphlet about Irish education in August 1820.¹⁸ As a Presbyterian, William Blackwood had no particular reason to campaign for the Anglican Establishment, although he was undoubtedly committed to the Protestant constitution. At first he was ready to leave the columns of his Magazine open for debate. In April 1821, when the progress of Plunket's relief bill brought the subject into prominence, Blackwood wrote to Croly to ascertain his position.

We have had nothing yet on the Catholic question.
Is it a subject in which you feel a deep interest?
We would wish to leave the Magazine open to both

17 Blackwood to Johnston, 18 Dec. 1828, NLS, Acc.5643, B8, f.146.

18 Maga, Aug. 1820, p.545.

sides, as there is so much to be said both for and against it.¹⁹

Learning from Croly that he was 'a strong Anti-Catholic,' and had already expressed his sentiments elsewhere, Blackwood replied, less cautiously: 'I wish much you had first given your views on the Catholic, or I should rather say the Popish question in the Mag.'²⁰

When, at last, the question was opened in the Magazine, the tone was retrained. In an article about the King's visit to Ireland, the opportunity was taken to deny being opposed to Roman Catholics as such, but to maintain that Catholic emancipation could not be ventured upon until Roman Catholics abandoned their antipathy towards the Established Church. When that happened, and the sooner the better, emancipation would be acceptable.²¹ The open policy continued during 1822, with an interesting exchange of views between 'a Protestant Layman' and 'a Catholic Layman', each of whom was given space for two articles, amounting to the same length on either side. 'Christopher North' introduced the discussion from a position of neutrality, declining to take sides on 'this most nice and delicate question.'²² The debate, at this stage, was couched in the traditional terms of alleged Catholic dogmatism on the one side, as against unfair discrimination in civil rights on religious grounds, on the other. The Irish dimension was not prominent. Even Croly, when he entered the arena in 1823, did so from a more moderate position

19 NLS, Acc.5643, B1, f.273.

20 14 April 1821, NLS, Acc.5643, B1, f.275.

21 Maga, Sept. 1821, pp.224-8. The writer was Maginn.

22 Maga, March 1822, p.367.

than in his private correspondence. Noting that the Whigs had ceased their dalliance with Catholic emancipation, seeing nothing in it for themselves, Croly saw this as good news for Roman Catholics.

In the hands of administration they will have their due weight, and the Roman Catholic may rely on obtaining every privilege that is not inconsistent with the general safety of the constitution.²³

Later in the article, however, Croly betrayed an unease about increasing proselytism by the Catholic Church.

The Irish dimension began to receive sustained attention from the end of 1823. Two lengthy articles, entitled 'The Irishman,' I and II, appeared in November 1823 and January 1824. They were mainly the work of Horatio Townsend, assisted by Maginn, who wrote the introduction to capture the appropriate Blackwood's style. The writer professed to be one 'Gabriel South.' The first article consisted of a review of two publications about Ireland, one a pamphlet by the earl of Blessington, the other a more substantial work by J.O'Driscoll. The former was speedily despatched with the remark that 'his Lordship would have been better employed in cultivating his Irish estate, and improving his tenantry, than in writing political rhapsodies in London.'²⁴ As for O'Driscoll's book, which was 'brought out under the patronage of a great Whig nobleman, a vast Irish absentee proprietor,' it was likened to a second-rate comet, 'for it contains an ill-defined nucleus of meaning, enveloped in a halo of verbiage

23 Maga, 'The Tory, no II,' Aug. 1823, p.186.

24 Maga, Nov. 1823, p.535.

encumbering what it is unable to adorn.²⁵ The first 'Irishman' article continued in this vein of destructive criticism, a constructive exposition of Ireland's problems being delayed until the second piece. Townsend's article in January 1824 provided a foretaste of much of the Magazine's subsequent discussion of the Irish question. He perceived the central problem as being economic. The Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars had brought prosperity to an agrarian economy like Ireland's - prosperity that was really circumstantial, but began to seem natural and enduring, because of the unusual length of the wars. Wartime demand and a paper inflation had caused a rush to take leases on terms which became difficult to sustain, with the return of peace and the slump in agricultural prices. The Irish peasants had suffered a rude awakening.

To see the produce of that industry which so lately, sufficed to answer all demands, and left a surplus, not only for subsistence, but for enjoyment, either unsaleable, or to be disposed of for less than a third of its pristine value, appeared to them as strange and unaccountable as it was cruel and disastrous. Had the demands of their several creditors diminished in due proportion, and had the reduction of rents kept pace with the reduction of prices, though they might have been puzzled by the cause, they would have been little injured by the effect; their nominal rather than their real property would have suffered. But this was by no means the case. The middle-man, or land-jobber, in order to maintain himself, and make good his engagements to the head landlord, was obliged to exact his rent from the occupier; and to do this frequently had recourse, not merely to the produce of the land, but to the sale of his tenant's stock and moveables, a measure which wholly ruined the one, and eventually injured the other. To anticipate this result, the tenant, conscious of his inability to make up the rent which he knew would be required, removed all his effects a little before pay-day, to some distant part of the country, and as the people mutually assisted each other in these schemes, they were generally

25 Ibid.

unsuccessful. Thus commenced a sort of straggling warfare between landlords and tenants,the consequences of which were, the dissolution of that friendship and confidence which should subsist between them. (p.5)

The problem, Townsend later observed, had been aggravated by overpopulation, on which he accepted the Malthusian analysis (p.13). Here, then, in an economy ill-adjusted to the post-war situation, with an overcrowded tenantry resisting rent-demands which they lacked the means to pay, lay the explanation for the troubled state of Ireland. To drag in political questions was thus to introduce a dangerous irrelevance.

If ministerial negligence and imbecility, so loudly trumpeted by statesmen out of place, or the rejection of the Roman Catholics' last claim, so vehemently dinned into our ears by demagogues wanting power, be the true cause, how did it come to pass, that neither the one nor the other offered any obstruction to the rapid growth of Irish prosperity during the continental war? Simply, because her prosperity hinged upon circumstances different from either. (p.8)

Townsend's analysis, however, was too dependent upon the fluctuating circumstances of the war and post-war periods to be entirely satisfactory. Moreover, his reference to the 'dissolution' of the mutual trust between landlord and tenant implied that there had been such a trust in the first place, an assumption that was difficult to credit. A more thoroughgoing analysis was needed, and it was provided by David Robinson, in a series of forceful articles during 1824. The more partisan tone of Blackwood's, from this point, can be explained partly by the involvement of the combative Robinson, and partly by the more pressing situation in Ireland, now that the Catholic Association was becoming a mass-movement,²⁷ sustained by the Catholic rent.

Robinson had already given a foretaste of his attitude in his first article for the Magazine in January 1824, when, writing as 'Sampson Standfast,' he had urged the Tories to stand up for the Orangemen. His first extended discussion of the Irish question came in March, when, under the title of 'Ireland,' and in his regular nom-de-guerre, 'Y.Y.Y.,' Robinson set out what remained the essentials of his case throughout the next five years.

Robinson opened by observing that 'Ireland is almost invariably spoken of as though the whole people were wretched and criminal,' (p.269), whereas in fact the only class requiring relief and reformation was the peasantry. He then offered a series of remedies. First, reduce rents; second, eliminate the 'jobbers' - the middle men who engaged in sub-letting; third, without explicitly advocating the extension of the English Poor Laws to Ireland, Robinson did draw attention to the advantages of the English system, in that it brought a proper surveillance, removed an incitement to theft, and discouraged begging. A fourth suggestion was that the consolidation of holdings should be facilitated, to encourage enterprising farming; fifth, landlords should spend more time upon their estates, and devote more attention to their improvement; and sixth, tithes should be commuted, to make them less provocative without depriving the Church of its rights: the landowners should offer to purchase tithe-rights from the Church at a fair price, thereby removing the chief ground of the animosity

of the Catholic peasantry towards the Establishment. A seventh proposal, arising out of the perceived problem of overpopulation, was that there should be state-assistance for emigration.

This set of specific, fair-minded proposals reveals Robinson at his best. Leaving aside the vexed question of how likely it was that there could have been agreement upon such measures as rent-reduction and consolidation of holdings,²⁸ it can be contended that the implementation of a programme such as Robinson put forward would have done much to bring stability and prosperity to rural Ireland. The more provocative side of Robinson's diagnosis came in the second half of his article. The Roman Catholic Church, he argued, had failed the Irish peasantry, leaving them sunk in ignorance and depravity. The Church of Rome knew that if it allowed Catholics free access to the Scriptures and other educational works, and relaxed 'its system of espionage and tyranny,' and if it permitted easier relations with Protestants, for example through intermarriage, then its hold over the Catholic populace would be broken. Therefore, concluded Robinson, the answer was to carry the principles of religious toleration and liberty of conscience further than any Whig or Radical:

We would carry them to the Irish peasant; he should be permitted to read the Scriptures, sound expositions of Christianity, and all works whatever, not prohibited by law; and he should be permitted to enter any church or chapel, and to hear any minister

28 'The practice of a lessee sub-letting a property was prohibited in 1826, but even before that date landlords were beginning to attempt to end the middleman system and consolidate small holdings into larger farms - a process which necessarily involved the eviction of many tenants of the poorest class.' R.D.C. Black, Economic Thought and the Irish Question, 1817-1870 (1960), p. 6.

whatever without being subjected to interrogatories, and what amounts to a heavy penal punishment, or to any restraint of any kind. (p.289)

Protestant clergy should be encouraged to proselytise amongst the Irish Catholic peasantry. The best preachers should be put into the front line of the fray. Alongside this spiritual offensive, there should be a political reform, namely to withdraw the franchise from the smaller peasant-occupiers, removing in the process one cause of the fragmentation of holdings (for the purpose of multiplying franchises). Catholic emancipation would not solve the problems of Ireland; it would simply make the Roman Church even stronger and more able to perpetuate its baneful influence.

Away then with this disgusting clamour against the Established Church and its clergy, Orangemen and Protestantism; and this vile cant concerning conciliation, Catholic disabilities, and Catholicism! ... and let nothing be said or done respecting Ireland, that is not meant for the good of Ireland.
(p.294)

Robinson continued his onslaught in May and November 1824, giving particular emphasis to the need to win the battle for the minds and souls of the Irish peasantry.²⁹ His assertion, towards the close of the November article, that 'the State has a vital interest in converting the people of Ireland to Protestantism' (p.504, all in italics), may be dismissed as absurdly unrealistic. If, however, such a work of conversion really was out of the question, it may reasonably be asked what hope there was of such a narrow reform as Catholic emancipation achieving that harmony between the two islands that all men of good will desired?

29 'The Instruction of the Irish Peasantry', May 1824, pp.495-508; 'The Bible and the Roman Catholics of Ireland,' Nov., pp.491-504.

By the closing months of 1824, with the ever-expanding scale of the Catholic Association, anxiety amongst anti-concessionary Protestants was becoming acute. Prompted by the Duke of York, and by his own unease, George IV wrote to Peel on 19 November, expressing his anxiety that Ireland was getting out of hand, and threatening that if stability was not restored he would no longer allow Catholic emancipation to remain an 'open' question in Cabinet.³⁰ That anxiety was reflected in Blackwood's, first in a fierce attack on the Catholic Association by Maginn (in the guise of 'Tickler'), in the December number, and then in a heavily ironical recipe for mismanagement of English and Irish affairs, by David Robinson, in January 1825.³¹ These pieces were only the prelude to a vociferous campaign in the Magazine during the progress of Burdett's Catholic relief bill, the success of which in the Commons brought Peel to the point of resignation. David Robinson's article, 'The Roman Catholic Church of Ireland,'³² contained some of his best writing (in his discourse upon moral and physical government, discussed in Chapter Three, above), and some of his worst, provoked by what proved to be the most acute crisis for the Protestant cause during Liverpool's premiership. The closing stages of Robinson's article contain column after column of near-hysterical

30 Brock, op.cit., p.262.

31 'State Counsel, by the Statesmen of Cockaigne.' pp.34-44.

32 Maga, March 1825, pp.255-278.

abuse directed at the Irish Catholic priesthood. Except as evidence of the passions roused, this part of the article is best forgotten.

Although the political articles of Blackwood's were now consistently directed against Catholic emancipation, the format of the Noctes allowed some scope for the continuance of the open debate that had once characterised the more serious side of the Magazine. The discussion in the Noctes for May 1825 revealed that 'North,' the alleged editor of Blackwood's, could at least recognise the pragmatic case for concession.³³

TICKLER... I thought you had been rather Pro-Catholic yourself, North.

NORTH. Why, Tickler, there are two or three words to that. I hate Catholicism, sir. I consider it as a base and degrading superstition.... But when you come to talk of me, Tickler, why, I fairly own that there are many things to be taken into view ere one determines what ought to be done about the Irish and English Catholics, as matters now stand. (p.618)

North went on to argue that, as the relaxation of the penal statutes in Ireland had allowed the Catholic population to grow in numbers and in confidence, it was now too late to turn back the clock. So much concession had been made already, that it was reasonable to consider granting a little more. Tickler and Odoherly protested that rather than go further down the wrong road, it would be better to turn back. North then proposed that they should drop 'the unpleasant subject.' The July number, written after the emancipation bill had come to grief in the House of Lords contained two articles heaping further

33 The piece was the work of Wilson and Maginn, and, with Wilson taking the part of North, may well have reflected their respective positions.

abuse on the priests.

The general election of 1826 called forth further strong expressions of anti-catholicism from Croly and Robinson. Croly, typically, began with polemical history and ended with dire prophecy.³⁴ England was depicted as the battleground between Protestantism and Popery, and on that battlefield there must be no shirking:

...if we relax our vigilance - if, in an affected liberality and criminal indifference, we suffer Popery once to pollute the British constitution, we must be prepared to encounter a succession of evils, that may slake, perhaps extinguish, the strength, honour, and supremacy of England for ever. She has been invested with the high office of defending the True Religion; the oracles of God have been committed to her hands... (p.441)

The final notion, of a sacred trust, can also be found in the thoughts of the ultra-Tory Duke of Newcastle, with whom Croly had some contact.³⁵ According to John Golby,³⁶ Newcastle 'was convinced that England and its church held a position of trust with God as the Jews did of old.'

David Robinson devoted much of his September and October articles to his usual, and, by now, rather tedious, abuse of the Catholic Church and the Catholic Association,³⁷ but his October article did contain at least one interesting point. After criticising the administration of the Lord Lieutenant, the Marquess of Wellesley, Robinson observed that the Act of Union made Ireland an integral part of the United Kingdom. 'Naturally enough' the separate legislature was abolished, but 'unnaturally enough'

34 'Declaration of the Catholic Bishops, the Vicars Apostolic, and their Coadjutors in Great Britain', Maga, Sept. 1826, pp.429-442.

35 See above, Chapter Three, p.66, n.27.

36 J. Golby, 'A Great Electioneer and his Motives: the Fourth Duke of Newcastle', H.J. VIII, 2 (1965), pp.201-218.

37 'The Romish Priesthood, and the Elections in Ireland.'

the separate executive was retained. This was an undesirable arrangement.

We therefore believe, that in proportion as the Irish government acts as a separate one - excludes the interference of the home one - and governs Ireland as a distinct country having distinct interests - in the same proportion it is the parent of mighty evils. (p.528)

A modern authority, J.C. Beckett, has made the same point,³⁸ and it continues to be made, in some circles, with regard to the residual problem of Ulster.

The main development in the Magazine's general coverage of the Catholic question during 1827 was the closer attention given to political matters, both in Britain and in Ireland. The Protestant constitution was deemed to have more chance of survival if there were fewer voters in Ireland and fewer close boroughs in England.³⁹ The Irish side of the argument was handled by Horatio Townsend in two articles, in January and July. In the first,⁴⁰ Townsend produced an interesting analysis of the political situation in Ireland, in which he identified, not two parties, but five: two of them Protestant, three Roman Catholic. His analysis can be tabulated:

(i) Protestant (1): in favour of the existing settlement.

(ii) Protestant (2): willing to accept (misguidedly) Catholic emancipation.

...37(continued) Sept. 1826, pp.505-514; 'The Irish Government,' Oct., pp.527-541.

38 Beckett, op.cit., p.287.

39 David Robinson blamed the members for the close boroughs for the readiness of the House of Commons to keep debating the Catholic claims. 'The Catholic Question,' May 1827, pp.575-596.

40 'What will become of Poor Ireland?', Jan. pp.61-73.

(iii) Roman Catholic (1): 'the clerical squadron.'

(iv) Roman Catholic (2): the Catholic Association

(v) Roman Catholic (3): 'the Romanum Vulgus of Ireland.'

Townsend argued that, although the three Catholic elements were united at present, they were fundamentally different and would clash in future. The first and second would struggle for ascendancy over the third, which would not be as docile as they imagined. If, on the other hand, the Irish landlords did their duty and lived more amongst the people - requiring only reasonable rents and acting more generously - the people would follow them. Such a happy paternal vision did not divert Townsend from proposing, in his July article,⁴¹ a more immediate measure to recover political ground: the disfranchisement of the lower levels of forty-shilling freeholders. After a farcical account of what happened when freeholders were being registered, 'Senex' advocated that the county franchise should be reserved to freeholders and long leaseholders of land worth forty shillings by medieval valuation, that is, in modern terms, at least £20.⁴²

During the period 1824-7, therefore, Blackwood's moved from a position of moderation and neutrality to one of fierce and persistent opposition towards the Catholic claims. Beside this negative stance, however, there was a positive side to the Magazine's discussion of Ireland's

41 'The Irish forty-shilling Freeholders', pp.53-59.

42 The price, to the Irish freeholders, of the concession of emancipation in 1829 was the raising of the county franchise to £10.

problems. The same writers who dismissed so scornfully the political aspirations of Irish Catholics, could address themselves with more sympathy to Ireland's social and economic ills, and they were joined by writers such as John Galt and William Johnston, who were always happier with constructive discourse. A balanced picture of the Magazine's Irish coverage requires attention to the positive side, as well as the negative.

In a thoughtful article on 'English and Irish Land-Letting,' in June 1825, David Robinson developed the analysis of Irish agrarian problems that he had first set out in March 1824. He urged the need for landlords to spend part of each year on their estates, in order to see at first hand the condition of their tenantry, to communicate with them and to exert some influence over their character. He was far from recommending, however, that Irish landlords should cease to spend time in Britain, where they would benefit from studying the example of their English equivalents. Robinson then elaborated on the deleterious consequences of sub-letting, before moving on to a new point, that agricultural poverty prevented the growth of village tradesmen, who could otherwise have provided employment to draw off some of the surplus population on the land. As for the suggestion that the English Poor Laws should be introduced into Ireland,

Friendly as we are to them, we still cannot but know, that the Irish village is not yet in a fit state for their full operation. We, however, wish them to be immediately established there, for the benefit of the aged and impotent only. This would familiarize the

people with their nature and working, and their operation might be extended as circumstances might permit. (p.699)

Before concluding his piece with the usual diatribe against the priests, Robinson directed a final shot against the agrarian middle-men.

The middle-men should be annihilated, and the rents which they exact should be left in the pockets of the cultivators. Capital never can be increased or preserved by these cultivators until this is done; without this it will be idle to speak of creating good-sized farms, and a yeomanry. A large part of the unnecessary inhabitants should be taken off by emigration, and in this the government should be a principal agent. (p.699)

When the Whig political-economist, J.R. McCulloch, gave evidence later that month to a Select Committee of the House of Commons on the State of Ireland, Robinson noted, with 'prodigious amazement,' that McCulloch repeated some of the main points of the June article, notably about sub-letting and emigration. Not that Robinson claimed that these views - still less McCulloch's - were original. Where McCulloch was original, however - in arguing that absenteeism did no economic harm to Ireland - he was wrong.⁴³ Robinson also differed from McCulloch over the role of education in improving Irish society. Whereas McCulloch wanted schools to teach economic principles, Robinson wanted the children of the peasantry to receive moral guidance - a revealing divergence.

There was divergence within Blackwood's itself about the extent to which emigration should be encouraged as a remedy for Ireland's ills, with the Irish writers lacking

⁴³ 'Mr. McCulloch's Irish Evidence,' Maga, Jan. 1826, pp.55-76. Even economists closer to McCulloch, e.g. Nassau Senior and Poulett Scrope, found this assertion of McCulloch's hard to swallow. Black, op.cit., pp.74-77.

Robinson's enthusiasm for urging that people should quit their native land.⁴⁴ In any case, as Peel had regretfully noted when Chief Secretary for Ireland, emigration in this period was mainly from the relatively prosperous north of Ireland, rather than from the abjectly-poor south and west, and bound for the United States rather than Canada.⁴⁵

Not all the discussion in Blackwood's dwelt upon the darker side. To have done so would, in any case, have undermined the justification for the union. John Wilson gave an extended review, and a warm welcome, to an optimistic pamphlet on 'The Real State of Ireland in 1827.'⁴⁶ Wilson agreed with the writer that the alleged degradation and misery of the Irish was overdone, and that the risk of a general insurrection was overstated. The Irish climate was milder than ours, there was plenty of fertile land, and the peasantry were better dressed than they used to be. Wilson dealt, in typically bantering tone, with an accusation, commonly made by Scotsmen, that the Irish were filthy.

For our own parts, we are free to confess, that we should rather sleep alone than with a pig, - but if the pig had no sty, while upon her depended the existence of ourselves, our wife and small family of children, - then we should feel ourselves called upon to do as it is said they do in Ireland, alike by parental and conjugal affection. A pig can make very little perceptible difference in a bed already occupied by a man and his wife, say seven offspring, and perhaps a young travelling Priest.⁴⁷

44 c.f. Maga, April 1827, pp.377-391 (Robinson) and Feb.1828, pp.191-4 (Croly).

45 Gash, op.cit., p.194.

46 And thereby recruited the author, William Johnston. (See above, Chapter Five.) R.D.C. Black's breathtaking bibliography does not appear to include this work.

47 Maga, July 1827, p.20.

Given direct access to the Magazine, Johnston took the opportunity to reiterate the argument of his pamphlet, that good hearts and fertile land could be found in Ireland, and that the people could be managed by a union of kindness with firmness. Property-owning Catholics would draw back from leading the populace in a war to obtain Catholic emancipation. And, making what he claimed was a new point in the debate - a point certainly new to Blackwood's - Johnston regretted that the claims of English Catholics were disregarded amidst the furore over Ireland. Yet English Catholics were much more respectable and deserved more consideration by virtue of their good behaviour.⁴⁸

Another point urged by Johnston, the need to put Irish labourers to work on land reclamation, brought him close to the ideas of John Galt, whose contributions to the Magazine could always be relied upon for their moderation and commercial sense. Galt argued that Irish agriculture needed capital for productive investment, which meant, at the outset, that money must be advanced from the public purse.⁴⁹ It would be money well spent if it reduced some of the expenditure on maintaining law and order, and if it attracted other capital investment. Peel had some sympathy with such ideas, authorising large sums for the construction of roads and canals, both as Chief Secretary and as Home Secretary.⁵⁰ Peel, however, was reluctant to consider a really big programme of public investment, for

48 'Brief Remarks on a Late Long Debate in the House of Commons', July 1828, pp.87-92.

49 'Why is not Ireland what it ought to be?', Aug. 1827, pp.237-239.

50 Gash, op.cit., p.512.

reasons which are well summarised by his biographer.

In the face of the prevailing administrative tradition, the economical restrictions imposed on government by public opinion, and the untrustworthiness of local Irish officials, it would in fact have been virtually impossible for a large programme of public works for Ireland to be accepted at that time.⁵¹

No matter how sincerely the Blackwood's writers applied their minds to devising solutions for Ireland's social and economic ills, the question of Catholic emancipation would not go away. The return of Wellington and Peel to office in 1828 did not obviate the need to remain vigilant in the defence of the Protestant constitution. Lord Eldon, who was revered in the columns of Blackwood's, was left out of the new Ministry, and in the spring the advocates of liberalising the constitution were encouraged by the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. There was not, of course, the same animus in Blackwood's towards the Protestant Dissenters as towards the Roman Catholics. A Magazine with a Presbyterian publisher, and with two Low Churchmen - Croly and Robinson - for its principal political writers, could be expected to evince some kindred feeling for non-Anglican Protestants. Robinson, indeed, had given them somewhat grudging praise in an article on 'The Church of England and the Dissenters,' in October, 1824.

We are not among those who could witness with pleasure the total annihilation of the Dissenters. We do not agree with them in doctrine; we dislike some of their

51 Ibid, p.226. Wellington was even less enthusiastic, replying to an applicant for a reclamation project: 'These are subjects more properly for the consideration of individuals or of private societies than for government, and here I leave them.' Quoted in Black, op.cit., p.179.

conduct; but, nevertheless, believing, as we are taught to believe, that the creeds of many of them, in essential points, will lead to Heaven, we think they have their uses in more ways than are dreamed of; and that, so long as they are kept within a certain limit, with regard to power and numbers, they produce far more rational benefits than evils. (p.395)

Dissenting ministers, Robinson went on, kept the clergy of the Established Church up to scratch. Dissenters helped to disseminate 'genuine Bible religion,' which was a healthy obstacle to priestcraft of the Irish type. The Dissenters, as a political interest, added to the plurality of society, which accorded with Edmund Burke's theory of liberty through diversity. Nor was it true that Dissenters could simply be labelled 'Whigs.' Methodists were 'moderate Tories', and they formed the largest single Dissenting body.

Whatever the merits of Dissenters, however, a concession to them in the context of the campaign for Catholic emancipation could only set a dangerous precedent. Lord Eldon saw this plainly enough.

As the bill is constructed, it operates not merely for Protestant Dissenters, but, unless the language of it can be materially altered in the Lords' house, it appears to me to be equally favourable to Roman Catholics, Deists, Infidels, Turks, Atheists. How the Bishops can have overlooked its extensive and deplorable effects, is to me the most strange thing possible.⁵²

The potential effects would also appear to have been overlooked by the Blackwood's writers, or perhaps the relatively smooth passage of the bill did not leave them

52 Letter to Lady Bankes, 12 April 1828, quoted in H. Twiss, The Public and Private Life of Lord Chancellor Eldon, 3 vols (1844), III, 38.

time to mount an offensive.⁵³ The April number is silent on the question, and only belatedly did William Johnston bring the matter into consideration. Reviewing the parliamentary session at its close,⁵⁴ he lamented the ease with which the Ministry had yielded up 'an ancient bulwark of our constitution.' 'I cannot see,' he continued, 'with what consistency men can advocate the yielding up of every thing without security to dissenters, and deny every thing, with or without security, to Roman Catholics.' Agreed, the Dissenters did not pose an equal political threat, but the weakening of the principle of the Established Church in one instance made it harder to defend in another.⁵⁵ It is interesting to observe that this point was made by a contributor who showed more indulgence than his fellow Blackwood's writers towards English Catholics, and towards propertied Irish Catholics. In an undated letter to Blackwood, Johnston expressed himself more forcibly.

Papists are better Tories than the d-d Unitarians and unbelievers who would smash down our Establishments, if the cold hearted villains could.⁵⁶

53 The comparative lack of opposition at the time is noted by G.I.T. Machin in his article, 'Resistance to Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, 1828,' H.J., 22, 1 (1979), pp.115-139.

54 'Close of the London Season,' Maga, Sept. 1828, pp.326-334.

55 Modern authorities agree. Both Gash and Machin call the easy success of the measure a 'portent.'

56 NLS, MS4720, f.185. c.f. the comment of J.C. Beckett (op.cit., p.288), concerning the failure to grant emancipation in 1801: 'The Roman Catholic upper classes were naturally disposed to support authority and property: their admission to full political rights would have enabled them to use their influence more effectively in favour of the established order.'

The decision of Daniel O'Connell to contest the county Clare by-election, which proved the conclusive tactical move in the emancipation struggle, caused Johnston to lament the poor treatment of Vesey Fitzgerald. Writing, from London, to Blackwood on the first day of the poll, Johnston was sceptical of the O'Connellites' chances of victory in Clare. He proved a better judge, however, in his next point:

Nonetheless I hope Dux Wellington will settle the Catholic question some way. Give them what is fair & reasonable, and then say, "devil another taste you shall have [of] honey, and if you dare to be noisy and troublesome over what you've got, we'll see whether we can't try a new tune with you & try what punishment will do."⁵⁷

Writing in the Magazine, however, after O'Connell had won the by-election, Johnston took a more inflexible position, as did his brother Edward, who contributed an article from County Clare itself.⁵⁸ The editorial link explained that the two pieces were by different authors, one written 'with the heat and lively indignation natural to one writing from the scene of such actions,' the other being 'from a London correspondent.' There was in fact little to choose between Edward's vitriolic piece and an uncharacteristically belligerent contribution from William. The brothers agreed that the cause of emancipation ought to be retarded, not advanced, by the happenings in Clare. Edward pointed out that if O'Connell succeeded with this tactic, he would repeat it to campaign against Church property in Ireland

57 30 June 1828, NLS, MS4022, f.30.

58 'The Clare Election', Maga, Aug. 1828, pp.219-223 by Edward Johnston, pp.223-225 by William.

and against the union itself. Concessions, when made, 'should be the free gift of our bounty', not granted under threat. William thought that the Clare election would convince English public opinion that there was no way of appeasing the agitators.

Wellington and Peel, of course, drew a different conclusion, and they had drawn it by the time that these articles had appeared,⁵⁹ even though six months were to elapse before their change of policy became public knowledge. Peel, in his Memoirs, made a good point against those who urged 'no surrender' from a position where they did not have to bear the consequences.

"Concede nothing to agitation" is the ready cry of those who are not responsible - the vigour of whose decisions is often proportionate to their own personal immunity from danger, and to their imperfect knowledge of the true state of affairs.⁶⁰

Nonetheless, in the failure of Peel and Wellington (because of their delicate situation with the King) to prepare the public mind for the decision to concede emancipation, it was neither surprising nor reprehensible that a consistent opponent of concession, like Blackwood's Magazine, should continue to argue its established case. That case received its fullest, most powerful and most uncompromising exposition by David Robinson in the October number of the Magazine.⁶¹ It was with sorrow and

59 Gash, op.cit., p.528; Machin, op.cit., p.123.

60 Memoirs by the Right Honourable Sir Robert Peel, (ed. Mahon and Cardwell), Part 1, The Roman Catholic Question. 1828-9. (1856), p.116.

61 'Ireland and the Catholic Question', pp.409-440, (i.e. the length of two full 'sheets', or twice the normal allocation for an article.)

reluctance that the writer took up once again a question that was rendered painful 'by its staleness and various personal matters.' Necessity, however, required that the question should receive detailed discussion. We were now seeing the 'appalling fruits' of the new system of so-called conciliation - a system which had meant that, in the interests of a seeming even-handedness, loyal Protestant societies were treated on the same terms as subversive Catholic societies. Indeed, the Protestants had suffered more, because when prohibition orders were issued, they had obeyed them, whereas the Catholic associations had circumvented them. Conciliation was taken as a sign of weakness, making the Catholics more insistent than ever, even to the extent of ejecting from his parliamentary seat a member of the Cabinet (Vesey Fitzgerald) who was known to be favourable to their claims, in order to intensify the pressure upon the government.

As for the argument that Catholics were merely struggling for their 'rights', Robinson drew a distinction between individual rights, where Catholics already received the same treatment as Protestants, and certain public trusts, where a different situation entailed.

Public functionaries have to act, not for the individual, but for the society... It is essential, on the score of every thing which can be called right, that the society should have the ability to exclude all men from its offices, who, in its judgment, would, from incompetency or dangerous principle, pervert official power into the means of working its own injury. (p.414)

Most Protestants, as well as Catholics, were excluded, on ground of lack of property, from being electors: indeed the franchise was more accessible to Irish Catholic free-

holders than to English voters. Against that, Catholics were excluded from a small number of public offices. To say that such religious tests were improper and irrelevant would be to suggest 'that religion is a mere matter of abstract belief, having no effect on the political conduct of men', a patent fallacy. It was precisely because of the way that Catholics had behaved when they did hold the highest offices, including the throne, that they had subsequently been excluded. Such exclusion continued to be justified because Catholics denied to the Crown its full sovereign authority under the constitution. They gave their allegiance in religious matters to the Pope, and the conduct of the Irish bishops and priests with regard to the Catholic Association demonstrated how wide this 'religious' allegiance extended. To the suggestion that the involvement of the Catholic clergy in the Catholic Association was only directed towards the removal of religious disabilities, Robinson countered with the argument that the same involvement could subsequently be applied to overthrow the Church of Ireland or to repeal the union. He did not suggest that the discord in Ireland was fomented by the Pope: 'we will acquit his Holiness': the point was that the divided allegiance of the Catholics exposed them to manipulation by an authority exercised in his name. Anglicans accepted the authority of the government to decide, directly or indirectly, upon clerical appointments and general religious discipline. Catholics were not prepared to do so. Hence, if emancipation were granted, Catholics would be unduly advantaged.

While the Catholic minister or legislator will have the same power as the Protestant one to legislate for the Established Church, and to originate or support any measure in Parliament calculated to accomplish its ruin; the Protestant minister or legislator will be prohibited from legislating for the Catholic Church, or supporting any measure that can affect it. (p.418)

Denying, then, the Catholics' claim to emancipation as of right, Robinson turned to the argument from expediency. Far from putting an end to political strife in Ireland, emancipation would exacerbate it. Contests would be between Protestant and Catholic, with the priests active on the side of the latter. (Robinson did not here face the point that county Clare portended that prospect in any case, and with potentially greater aggravation.) If emancipation were accompanied by securities, the O'Connellite agitation would continue until they were removed. In any case, the securities were unlikely to be effective. There was not much point in giving the government the right to pay the clergy, if it was denied that of selection and control. Raising the freehold electoral qualification to £10 would affect Protestants as well as Catholics, and the Catholics who retained the vote would continue to be loyal to their priests. These, and other possible securities, could in any case be voted off the statute book once there were Catholic MPs who could form an alliance with 'the low Whigs, Radicals, and liberal Tories.'⁶²

In turning to the second stage of his case - namely, what, short of emancipation, could be done to tranquillise Ireland? - Robinson reiterated points which he had made in earlier articles, and which have been discussed above. They

62 (It will be recalled that in February 1835, by the Lichfield House Compact, a tactical alliance was forged between the Whigs (including former Canningites), Radicals and O'Connellites.)

can be re-stated in summary form.

1. Stop governing Ireland as a separate country.
2. Protect and promote the Established Church in Ireland.
3. Enforce obedience to the laws.
4. Disfranchise the 'fictitious freeholders.'
5. (A new point). Protestant landowners should eject "refractory" Catholic tenants and replace them by Protestants.

If such an authoritarian and provocative programme as Robinson here put forward really was the only alternative to concession, it becomes easier to understand why Wellington and Peel took the course they did. Robinson was aware of the rumours: 'now it is asserted that they mean to remove the disabilities': but he preferred to dismiss such talk as 'a foul libel.' 'Ministers may change their principles like other men,' he conceded, 'but they should do it in mode and time, that it may not utterly disarm and throw out of the political balance the mass of the community which raised them to office.' (p.439) Here was what became the nub of the ultra-Tory case against Wellington and Peel in 1829 - not merely the matter of concession, but the manner. At this stage, however, the battle had not yet been lost, and Robinson appealed to all sections of the community to rally round the Protestant constitution. He derived 'inexpressible pleasure' from the formation of the Brunswick Clubs, a pleasure enhanced by the fact that 'they have nothing to do with men in power.' The hope was that Wellington and Peel would stand firm. If, however, they offered concession,

then even they must be 'inflexibly, and, to the last, opposed.' (p.440)

Readers of this article, whose minds have been formed a century and more after the question of Catholic emancipation was laid to rest, will, in all probability, be repelled by its harshness of tone and its unyielding standpoint. Alike on grounds of civil tolerance and of expediency, given what is now known about the administration's fears concerning the reliability of Irish members of the civilian and military services should large scale disturbances ensue, the natural inclination is to turn, perhaps with some impatience, away from Robinson's die-hard position. Yet even the most secular and pragmatic of late twentieth-century readers must surely concede the great force and debating skill with which Robinson deployed his case. Vague assumptions and half-baked assurances in the concessionist case were brought under Robinson's penetrating scrutiny and found wanting. He may have been defending a doomed position, but he did so with intelligence, with consistency and with that facility for concise and pungent reasoning which made him one of the outstanding controversialists in the periodicals of the day.

Robinson's October article attracted the notice of both friends and foes. Bishop Beresford of Kilmore requested permission to print a thousand copies of the article for gratuitous circulation, with due acknowledgement to Blackwood's.⁶³ The Morning Chronicle, a Whig newspaper

63 Letter from Wm. Curry & Co., Dublin, to Wm. Blackwood, 1 Nov. 1828, NLS, MS4021, f.147.

which supported Catholic emancipation, quoted extensively from the closing stages of Robinson's article, which it described as a 'violent tirade.'⁶⁴ One one point, at least, the Morning Chronicle's editorial would have secured Robinson's bitter agreement:

One consequence results from the mystery under which the Duke of Wellington shrouds himself, that it is impossible to tell what Journals are Ministerial and what are not. For anything we know to the contrary, we ourselves may be Ministerial at present. We observe, at all events, that the measures of his Grace's Administration during the past Session are bitterly attacked by certain Tory Journals, while many of them have received our approbation.

This open confusion in politics and the press was accompanied by internal differences of opinion within the offices of some of the major periodicals. The problem was acute at the Quarterly Review, where J.G. Lockhart, temporarily deprived of the services of the pro-catholic J.W. Croker, submitted to pressure from Southey to allow the latter to write a strongly anti-concessionist article in the October number.⁶⁵ The internal doubts at the Quarterly were more serious than any recorded within Blackwood's, but in William Johnston the Magazine had one major contributor who both saw the way in which things were moving, and had come to accept that the time for die-hard resistance was past. Johnston's articles in the closing months of 1828 and in the early part of 1829 took the form

64 Morning Chronicle, 1 Oct. 1828.

65 This, at least, was Lockhart's version when justifying the firing-off of 'Southey's great mortar,' both at the time to Sir Walter Scott and, many years later, to Croker. The full story, however, is more complicated. See below, Appendix VIII.

of a series, entitled 'Ireland as it is,' in which he urged his usual paternalistic formula of combining consideration with firmness in dealing with Ireland's problems. The government was urged to suppress the Catholic Association, landowners were censured for neglecting their estates, and the need to encourage entrepreneurial qualities amongst Irishmen was emphasised. Meanwhile, in his correspondence with William Blackwood, Johnston was endeavouring to steer the publisher away from adopting a too intransigent position over Catholic emancipation.

I advise great caution about politics just now -
I would not have written the politics of the last
Noctes.⁶⁶

Johnston added that it would be better to settle something with the Irish Catholics before they could embarrass Britain in a future war with France or America.

Blackwood, however, was unrepentant.

I am surprized at your not liking the politics of the Noctes, for they are quite in accordance with the tone and spirit of all that has appeared in Maga. I fear you are giving way, and not continuing to hold in all its points the good old Tory uncompromising faith. Don't let us falter or fear what O'Connell and his gang can do, for whatever state the country may be plunged into, I shall hope there is as much energy and principle in the great mass as will overcome any difficulty.⁶⁷

66 29 Nov. 1828, NLS, MS4022, f.46. (Johnston could have been referring to a brief discussion in the November Noctes, in which 'North' gave his approval to the Brunswick Clubs, as a defensive measure against the Catholic Association, but is more likely to have meant a more directly political discussion in the December Noctes, which should have just reached him. Therein, 'North' dismissed 'sickening' rumours about an intended concession by the government, with the argument that Wellington would remain true to his word that nothing would be done for the Catholics while the Irish agitation continued. Maga, Dec. 1828, Pt.I, p.700 - the work of John Wilson.)

67 2 Dec. 1828, NLS Acc.5643 B8, f.120.

Even when Johnston sent in a piece to be ascribed to 'Phelim McGillicuddy', in order to distance it from the main views of the Magazine, this proved unacceptable to Blackwood. In rejecting the article, Blackwood set out his own position.

The course which Maga has pursued with regard to the Popish Question has been a plain and straight forward one, and any paltering at this time of day would only expose us to ridicule and contempt. What we have throughout asserted is that Popery is and must continue to be always the same, a degrading superstition which when it has the power is hostile to liberty both civil and religious. That there are many, very many good Tories among the Catholics, who hate and detest the Radicals, Atheists and Republicans as much as we do, I have not the smallest doubts, but I have no wish for such support... 68

Wellington's intentions, Blackwood continued, were not yet precisely known. When they were, the Duke would give his reasons, and Blackwood's would consider them 'calmly and rationally.' The Magazine would remain open to a reasoned letter from a correspondent taking a different view from itself. Four days later, the publisher wrote to David Robinson to explain why he had cut some lines from Robinson's article on Irish government. They were excised because

We should not appear to dwell even upon the possibility of the Duke of Wellington changing his opinions, as this would be giving some credence to the lies which the Papists & Whigs have been so busy circulating for some months past. No one at present knows what the Duke's intentions are, therefore we should say as little as possible till he declares them. 69

Even with Blackwood's cautious deletions, Robinson's long

68 18 Dec. 1828, loc.cit., f.146.

69 22 Dec. 1828, loc.cit., f.158.

and uncompromising article ended with the assertion that the Duke of Wellington could not now change his opinion 'without being guilty of such apostacy as scarcely any Minister ever exhibited.'⁷⁰ Croly, as usual, adopted the most belligerent language of all, in ~~the~~ form of a letter from 'A Protestant,' in the same number.⁷¹ Wellington's attempt to carry Catholic emancipation would overthrow not one, but 'ten Ministries,' and the Duke must know

that there are thousands, and hundreds of thousands, of high-principled and loyal-hearted men within the borders of the realm, who would meet the most stern extremities before a Papist foot should pollute the floor of Parliament; and, knowing all this, the Duke of Wellington will honour and obey the command of the country. (p.70)

Where Croly resorted to threats, Samuel O'Sullivan preferred to put his trust in the Duke. Writing in the February number, published just before the news broke, O'Sullivan depicted Wellington as 'too right-hearted a British soldier' to yield to the agitators.

The question with him should simply be, "Is that to be yielded to violence which would not be conceded to calm deliberation?" There he should make his stand; that should be his Torres Vedras in Parliament.⁷²

On the day after this number of the Magazine appeared, William Johnston wrote to Blackwood with an intimation of the news that Blackwood and the other contributors had been alternately dreading and dismissing.⁷³

Private and Confidential
My Dear Sir

You know that for some time back my letters

70 'On what General Principles ought Ireland to be Governed?', Jan. 1829, pp.40-64.

71 'Observations on the Duke of Newcastle's Letter', pp.67-71.

72 'Marquis of Anglesea', Feb.1829, pp.215-221.

73 Peel had just confided his intentions to Lord Lowther, Johnston's employer, Gash, op.cit., p.556.

have been leading you to expect changes, which from the share that Political circumstances have in the prosperity of your Magazine, cannot be unimportant to you.

You have in no whit followed the hints I gave - As the time is fast approaching when "things will out" whatever they may be, and as I have mentioned my intention of writing politics for you when Parliament meets - I should be glad to know what line Maga would take upon the Supposition, that the King's Speech on Thursday next, will announce the intention of the Government to take into consideration the penal laws at present in force against the Roman Catholics with a view to their removal.⁷⁴

This carefully-worded hint, from someone close to government circles, only three days before the King's Speech was delivered, gives an indication of the degree of secrecy surrounding the Ministry's intentions.⁷⁵ This lack of communication, however much it was imposed by circumstances, and the decision of Peel to take the lead in carrying emancipation through the Commons, after his long record of opposition to the measure,⁷⁶ together explain the sense of outrage felt by ultra-Tory politicians and periodicals. The Duke of Newcastle had received confirmation of his worst fears only when he arrived in London on the night before the King's Speech. 'I learn to my horror, indignation and disgust,' he wrote in his diary, 'that my suspicions have been all along well founded and that the Duke of Wellington is actually going to bring in a bill to remove almost all disabilities from the Papists.'⁷⁷ William Blackwood resolved to stand firm, replying to

74 2 Feb. 1829, NLS, MS4025, f.24.

75 The same point is made by Machin, op.cit., pp.161-2, and by Simes, thesis, p.379.

76 Gash, op.cit., pp.546-7, 594-5, gives a cogent presentation of the reasons why Peel decided to remain in office.

77 4 Feb. 1829. Newcastle MSS, Ne2F3, f.98.

William Johnston's premonitory letter, after the news was out:

It is I think absolutely necessary that the Magazine should keep the same consistent course with regard to the Catholic Question that it has held all along. It would never do like Mr. Peel to declare that our opinions were unchanged, and at the same [time] approve of Emancipation.⁷⁸

To act otherwise, thought Blackwood, would forfeit public confidence in the independent character of the Magazine. That, however, was no reason for resorting to 'violent language or abuse.' Blackwood anticipated that Johnston might not wish to discuss current politics for the moment, but hoped that he would continue to write for the Magazine. The publisher emphasised that Johnston would never be expected to write against his own conscience. William Johnston replied by return of post, giving the latest information, 'although I should not myself be willing to throw it into the shape of an argument against a measure which I most sincerely believe to be essential to the solidity and greatness of the Empire.'⁷⁹ He concurred with the publisher's stated policy, that the Magazine should not resort to angry declamation, but should remain consistent.

I am perfectly aware that the Protestant cause is not without strong points which may be powerfully handled by an able man, and it would undoubtedly be more consistent and becoming that the Magazine should die upon the question, like the Chevalier Bayard, who expired with an expression of dignified pity for his conqueror.

78 11 Feb. 1829, NLS, Acc.5643, B8, f.198.

79 14 Feb. 1829, MS4025, f.26.

The task of giving the Magazine's response was entrusted to David Robinson, certainly a warrior sans peur, but not the man to succumb with chivalrous phrases. Robinson did, indeed, restrain himself sufficiently to adopt the device of irony, rather than resorting to outright denunciation, in the opening ten pages of his article.⁸⁰ It was a device which neither brought out his best qualities nor served to express his true feelings.⁸¹ At length Robinson threw aside the mask: 'We abandon irony; grief, disgust, and indignation, now compel us to speak in a different manner.' Wellington and Peel were now openly condemned for having taken office on false pretences. The weight of personal abuse fell upon Peel, whose claim to remain committed to the Protestant cause, even when he was taking the lead in bringing forward emancipation as a cabinet measure, was brutally dismissed: 'In the whole history of apostacy and tergiversation, this stands, and will for ever stand, unequalled.' (p.282) Robinson challenged Peel's claim that an anti-emancipation Ministry could not be formed. It could be, Robinson maintained, under a patriotic nobleman, assisted by virtuous members of the Commons. Such a Ministry would commence with the support of the House of Lords and of the country, and would soon win the confidence of the Commons.

80 'The Assembling of Parliament,' March 1829, pp.271-287.

81 William Johnston professed to find the irony 'extremely clever,' perhaps not wanting to estrange himself any further from the Magazine. Letter to Blackwood, 7 March 1829, NLS, MS4025, f.28.

The weight of practical political opinion was against Robinson's view at the time, however, as the weight of historical opinion has been since.⁸² For all his force in arguing against concession, Robinson was on much weaker ground when he came to identify those in whom he would confide his political trust.

Leaders are not wanting. The venerable, illustrious and spotless Lord Eldon unfurls the holy banner, and invokes it [the country] by all its worships to rush into the conflict. The Duke of Newcastle, Lord Winchelsea, and a splendid host of its titled and virtuous sons, in the spirit of old English independence and honour, conjure it to fly to the defence of its Throne and Altar. (p.287)

A banner clutched by a retired Lord Chancellor, who was shortly to enter his eightieth year, was hardly a realistic counterweight to the collective resolve of Wellington, Peel, Lyndhurst, Bathurst, Goulburn and Herries to desist from their opposition to Catholic emancipation.

Robinson's more impassioned censure of Peel than of Wellington was duplicated in the same issue by De Quincey, in his first political article for the Magazine.⁸³ The Duke had disappointed the general hopes in his firmness and sagacity, but he had 'violated no engagements.' He had stated in the previous session that he would do something for the Catholics when this was reconcilable with public safety, and as Prime Minister he felt an obligation to be a conciliator.

Excuses then there are, and palliations, many and great, on the side of the Duke of Wellington. But for Mr. Peel, bound - if every man were bound - by

82 'A government of resistance was out of the question...' Gash, op.cit., p.595. Catholic emancipation was 'quite simply, an act of practical politics,' Machin, op.cit.p.194.

83 'The Duke of Wellington and Mr. Peel,' March 1829, pp.294-302.

ties irrevocable, and of religious sanctity, to the great cause which he has deserted; it is our sincere belief, that he is the object of a more unmitigated abhorrence than can have attended any political renegade in any history... (p.295)

De Quincey's explanation for Peel's 'apostasy' was that he had seen the way in which the Duke was moving towards emancipation and wished to keep his place in the cabinet. The County Clare by-election was therefore used by Peel as a pretext for abandoning his previous opposition to emancipation. This allegation was, of course, unfounded and unfair, but it indicates the kind of abuse to which Peel was subjected. The comments of the Rev. G.S. Faber shed a revealing light on the double standard adopted amongst ultra-Tories:

The Duke is quite as bad as his Colleague: but still one cannot forget Waterloo., There is this difference between the Premier and the Secretary. The conduct of the latter is a kind of petty larceny rascality - while the former characteristically enacts the bold and unflinching Macheath.⁸⁴

Waterloo, social snobbery - and the bitter memory of Peel's articulate advocacy of the Protestant cause - these were the real reasons for heaping upon Peel the obloquy which, if it had to be bestowed, should have been equally visited upon Wellington.

All that remained to the ultra-Tories after the King's Speech was the faint hope that the House of Lords might stand firm, and, in so doing, might stiffen the doubts of George IV.

84 Faber to the Bishop of Salisbury, 23 June 1829, Burgess MSS, quoted in Simes, thesis, p.383. (Simes transcribes the last word as 'Macbeath', but the highwayman-hero of the Beggar's Opera seems a more likely character-part than the 'infirm of purpose' Scottish thane.)

Blackwood sent a copy of the March number of his Magazine to the Duke of Cumberland, drawing attention to the articles by Robinson and De Quincey, and complimenting his royal highness upon his 'seasonable' appearance in the House of Lords.⁸⁵ Cumberland's pressure upon his brother, and George IV's own qualms about the Oath of Supremacy, did lead to a rift between the King and his Ministers, to the point where they verbally resigned on the afternoon of 4 March, but the breach was quickly healed. Thereafter, the passage of Catholic emancipation was assured, and there was a forlorn ring about David Robinson's evocation of a phrase of Burke's, in his final appeal to the monarch to do his duty.

Let him speak with the honest boldness and lofty independence of the English gentleman, and the swords will leap from the scabbards which will save the constitution! 86

Towards the end of his article, Robinson indicated that, despite the rhetoric of the earlier passage, a recourse to bloodshed would be wrong. There was little likelihood, in any case, that the diffuse resentment of the anti-catholic side of English opinion could have been converted into any outright defiance of the new policy. The risk of bloodshed in Ireland, should emancipation not be conceded, seemed, to informed observers, to be more pressing. J.G. Lockhart made this point in a letter to Blackwood, before going on

85 23 Feb. 1829, NLS, Acc.5643, B8, f.214. Receipt of the Magazine was acknowledged, on gilt-edged paper, from St. James's Palace, on 2 March. NLS, MS4024, f.139.

86 'The "Breaking in upon the Constitution of 1688",' Maga April 1829, pp.503-524.

to deal with the political situation.

I think we are on the very brink of a civil convulsion & honestly believe that the story told here by the Ministers & not to be told in Parlt., is true. viz. that they were driven, both they and the King, by the discovery that the Catholic Soldiery had been formed into Masonic clubs... and paid the rent, & were resolved to go over - some whole regiments, as regiments.

Peels beastly & cowardly behaviour is worthy of all abuse - He, be sure, had ratted in heart long before. The Duke yielded to a stern conviction of necessity & duty.

Will the old Tories re-unite, as he hopes, when this bill is carried? If they do, I think we may hold on some time longer: if they do not, comes a break-up of the gov. for certain, & God knows what behind. I hope the D. will sacrifice the weaver & get rid of him at least & quam premium.⁸⁷

William Johnston was also exercised about the future political situation. On 18 April he wrote to Blackwood:

Do you mean to go, like the Standard, into "opposition" generally? I am afraid the domestic politics of the country, and the effects of the withdrawal of the small notes, will give but too much foundation for complaint, but the only effect of even a successful opposition now, would be to put the Whigs & Huskisson into power.⁸⁸

This perceptive advice, combined with the realisation that Catholic emancipation was an accomplished fact, may have inclined William Blackwood towards a partial restoration of the more open stance of the Magazine prior to 1824. After silence on the subject in the May number, the June issue contained an interesting piece by Samuel O'Sullivan, entitled 'Colloquies in Ireland Respecting recent Measures.' The article took the form of a discussion about Catholic

87 20 (?30) March 1829, NLS, MS4025, f.66. (Lockhart's contempt for 'ratting' should be compared with his other professions, when writing to pro-catholics: see above note 65, and Appendix VIII; the Latin expression at the end would read better as quam primum.)

88 NLS, MS4025, f.32

emancipation between three characters, none of whom had wanted the measure, but each reacting differently to the fait accompli. The first speaker, a comfortable citizen, was of an optimistic temperament, but was perturbed by the gloomy prophecies of the second speaker, who was cast in the mould of David Robinson. The third speaker was blessed with a philosophic disposition and viewed events with a longer perspective. This device allowed varied constructions to be placed upon the Ministry's conduct by persons in broad harmony on general principles. Thus, while Peel was denounced by the second speaker, the third defended him as regards the sincerity, although not necessarily the sagacity, of his conduct. Again, while both these speakers were worried about the fate of the Established Church, the pessimist remained preoccupied with the threat from Popery, whereas the philosopher saw the main threat as coming from radicalism. At the end of the dialogue, the solid citizen was pondering the security of his property, the pessimist had become more meditative, and the philosophic friend retained his knowing equanimity and trust in Providence.

Peel continued to be roughly handled in the Noctes,⁸⁹ but at least 'North' was able to resume his pragmatic stance. He defended the king's acceptance of the Ministry's advice that concession was necessary to avert civil war in Ireland. When the mention of civil war caused his cronies to cry 'Pish!' and 'Stuff!', North retorted: 'Aye, gentlemen, pish! and stuff!' are very fine arguments with us when over our

89 The Noctes for June 1829, written by Lockhart and Maginn, contained a particularly unpleasant section in which the characters vied with one another in composing abusive verses about Peel: pp.795-6.

toddy,... but they would not sound well at the council-board of a great nation.'⁹⁰

David Robinson, while continuing to oppose the Wellington Ministry over the whole range of its policies, had sufficient fairness and political acumen to see that prolonged recriminations over Peel's conduct served no useful purpose. Discussing rumours that the Protestant Tories were willing to reunite with Wellington if the Duke dismissed Peel, Robinson found such talk discreditable. The Tories (as Robinson called them: 'ultra-Tories' would be nearer the mark) were better off without either Peel or Wellington, but it was quite unjust to single out Peel for blame. Peel had been far more vilified in the press, yet had refrained from instituting prosecutions, whereas Wellington and Lyndhurst had done so. Peel's restraint in this respect was 'manly,' and Robinson resolved to persecute him no longer.

We have lately thought him, in some degree, a victim: he shall not outdo us in forbearance; and pressing indeed must the necessity be, which shall ever induce us again to say a syllable against him.⁹¹

The course of Blackwood's Magazine throughout this long and troubled episode had been consistent, and pursued without fear of ministerial disfavour, or hope of favour. Not depending upon government patronage, William Blackwood could remain true to his principles, and to the sentiments

90 Ibid., p.800.

91 'Public Affairs,' Maga, Oct. 1829, pp.711-716.

of his subscribers - a combination of integrity and self-interest which he was well capable of perceiving. Writing to his son William, on 12 April 1829, Blackwood informed him:

The Catholic Question, you will see by the paper, is carried, but completely against the voice of the great majority of the people: therefore, though on this point we will be opposed to the Duke of Wellington, it will not harm us, but, on the contrary, be as much in our favour as when we were opposed to the Ministry of Mr. Canning.⁹²

The Blackwood's position thus made sense in terms of consolidating the reputation of the Magazine as an independent journal of opinion. Whether it made sense in the wider, and ultimately more important, sphere of contributing to the public debate on a contentious issue, is a much harder question to resolve. There was much to admire in the positive remedies put forward in the Magazine for curing Ireland's social and economic ills. There was, at least, an intellectual cogency in the case deployed again and again, especially by David Robinson, that 'the breaking in upon the Constitution of 1688' would neither solve the real problems of Ireland nor put an end to Irish agitation. Politically, however, the conversion of the 'Protestants' in Wellington's Ministry left the die-hard Tories in both Houses without the basis for a viable government. Even if, through a rearguard action in the Lords and with the King, an anti-concessionary Ministry had come to office, it would have been faced with a situation in Ireland from which the foremost soldier of the

92 NLS, Acc.5643, B7, f.559. Also quoted in Annals, II, 88-9.

age had drawn back. In that situation, Wellington's realism and Peel's sense of public duty were more appropriate than a rigid adherence to personal consistency. The management of the change of course, however, was not well conducted. Six months of secrecy, a failure to initiate the process of realigning public opinion, a failure to give a timely word to Tory journals, these were not the best preparations for the announcement which came in February 1829. The measure was carried, but at the cost of opening a rift with those very Tories who had put their hopes in Wellington and Peel as the Ministers most likely to hold the line against further encroachments by Whigs and Canningites. It was indeed the most cruel of ironies that through that rift the long years of Tory ascendancy came to an end. Wellington himself pronounced the epitaph:

My government was broken down by the Roman Catholic question. The Tories separated from me, and it is useless here to recite the circumstances which prevented their reunion. The Whigs and Radicals and Canningites would not support us [in 1830], and combined with the Tories against us in order to break us down.⁹³

93 Letter to General Sir J. Malcolm, 5 June 1831, Despatches, Correspondence and Memoranda, VII, April 1830 to Oct. 1831, (1878), p.460.

CHAPTER SEVENPARLIAMENTARY REFORM, 1829-1832

A primary purpose of the discussions of Blackwood's opinion in this study has been to redress the historical balance. It has been suggested that, in particular, the Blackwood's critique of the economic policies of Tory governments during the 1820s, and the case made in the Magazine against the concession of Catholic emancipation as a means of alleviating the problems of Ireland, have not received the full and fair exposition which they deserve. There are, however, two ways of redressing a balance. It can be achieved by placing more weight on one side of the scales, as has been the object of previous chapters. It can also be achieved by lightening an overweighted side, which is the intention of the present chapter. Briefly, it will be argued that the contributions of one Blackwood's writer, David Robinson, in favour of some measure of parliamentary reform, have been overemphasised, to the extent of concealing the prevailing tendency in the Magazine towards opposing any substantial enactment of parliamentary reform during the period 1829-32.

The identification of Robinson's articles with the single voice of Blackwood's Magazine, and the emphasis upon that voice as characteristic of ultra-Tory attitudes towards

Reform,¹ have been the product of the work of D.C. Moore.² The slightly cumbersome insertion of 'product of' is deliberate, in that it can be claimed, in fairness to Professor Moore, that his case has perhaps been overstated, both by exponents of it and by his critics. Moore himself performed a valuable historical service in directing attention to the views of Blackwood's during the two years immediately prior to the first reading of the Reform Bill. The first and (for the present purpose, at least) most useful of his series of articles contains several references to Blackwood's, particularly to David Robinson's important contribution, 'The Reform of the House of Commons,' in April 1830. Moore concluded his article by noting the 'similarity of intent' between the provisions of the Reform Act relating to the counties and 'the earlier suggestions of the Marquis of Blandford and articles in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine.'³ This observation has become well known. It is less common, however, to see Moore's immediately succeeding sentence quoted: 'This is not to suggest that the committee which drew up the ministerial plan took their cue from the Tories.' Moore might perhaps have seen greater attention paid to his reservation if he

1 Throughout the present chapter, the word 'Reform' denotes specifically the reform of parliament.

2 See especially 'The Other Face of Reform,' Victorian Studies, V (1961), pp.7-34. Professor Moore developed his interpretation in 'Concession or Cure: The Sociological Premises of the First Reform Act,' Historical Journal, IX, 1 (1966), pp.39-59. He defended his position against the criticisms of E.P. Hennock in Victorian Studies, XIV(1971), pp.321-7 (Hennock), pp.328-337 (Moore).

3 Moore, 'Other Face', op.cit., p.33.

had not pushed his case further, and less convincingly, in 'Concession or Cure.'⁴ In the hands of exponents of his views, he has suffered, like other - and greater - historians from the paraphrases of less original minds. G.A. Cahill, for example, in a volume belonging to a widely-used series,⁵ renders the Moore thesis somewhat heavy handedly.

Revisionists have noted that most of the provisions of the Whig Reform Bill were anticipated by the ultra-Tory Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine in a series of three articles published between August 1829 and February 1831. These articles reveal that to the ultra-Tories the reform of the House of Commons was a means to an end, the preservation of the status quo, the continuance of the landed interests in power, and the maintenance of the Corn Laws; that the ultra-Tories were opposed to both the Wellington ministry and to the close borough interests; and that the ultra-Tories split with the Wellington-Peel ministry on the issue of Catholic emancipation, whose passage was attributed to Wellington's traffic with the close borough interests.⁶

This version contains a dangerous mixture of common knowledge (such as the impact of Catholic emancipation), loose statements, and exaggeration. The word 'series' implies a tighter connection between Robinson's three articles than was in fact the case: they occur at numbers 71, 79 and 88 in the full sequence of Robinson's work for the Magazine. No justification is advanced for singling out these three pieces and ignoring the views of other Blackwood's writers, views which were in general much more dubious about any good being likely to come from Reform. To depict Robinson as advocating Reform as a means to the end of preserving the

4 Moore complains of misrepresentation, in his reply to Hennock, op.cit., p.335.

5 G.A. Cahill, The Great Reform Bill of 1832: Liberal or Conservative? (1969), Problems in European Civilisation series.

6 Ibid. p.xi.

status quo seriously misconstrues Robinson's deep unhappiness with things as they were, as manifested in a whole series of articles from 1825. More fundamentally, it is an unwarrantable extension to treat Robinson's articles as encompassing the views of 'the ultra-Tories.' Robinson expressed, with his accustomed vigour and independence of mind, one strand of ultra-Tory thinking. There were other strands, with which the opinions of other Blackwood's contributors accorded more closely.

Professor Moore moved on, in 'Concession or Cure,' to extrapolate from what the government did a hypothesis about the intentions of 'the ministers' (usually undifferentiated), and in particular suggesting a wish to restore 'the cohesion of those local hierarchical communities through which traditional social discipline had been exerted.'⁷ In so doing, he entered territory at some remove from the present study, and, in the process, attracted crossfire from Hennock, Milton-Smith and Professor Cannon.⁸ Given such a formidable battery, there is no need here for the discharge of a flintlock on the subject of Moore's construction of the Whigs' intentions. Instead, attention will be concentrated upon the view from the 'right' (if that convenient, but hazardous, designation may be allowed).

The recognition that the ultra-Tories played an important role in precipitating the situation from which

7 Moore, op.cit., p.46.

8 J. Milton-Smith, 'Earl Grey's Cabinet and the Objects of Parliamentary Reform,' Historical Journal, XV,1(1972), esp.pp.57-66. John Cannon, Parliamentary Reform 1640-1832 (1973), pp.246-250.

the Reform Bill emerged pre-dates Moore's first article by a number of years. If any one historian has to be given the credit, the best candidate would be A. Aspinall, who combined a deep knowledge of the period 1827-32 with an extensive scrutiny of the political role of the press in the years from Pitt to Peel.⁹ Aspinall noted that ultra-Tory anxieties over the Protestant constitution and the state of agriculture led Sir Edward Knatchbull to favour a measure of Reform, and the Marquess of Blandford to advocate a bold scheme.¹⁰ Aspinall did not, however, allow these striking individuals to distract him from assessing the quantitative evidence. He pointed out that 106 ultra-Tories voted against the Reform Bill on the decisive night of 22 March, while only 28 voted in favour, with six not voting.¹¹ Whilst it may be true that some of the hostile votes might have been won over by a more moderate scheme, these figures sound a note of caution against an over-simple association of the ultra-Tories with Reform. A more critical view of the behaviour of the ultra-Tories in 1830 than that offered by Moore can be found in an important essay by Norman Gash.¹² The comparison between Wellington and Polignac drawn by the ultra-Tory Standard is described as

9 Aspinall, Politics and the Press, 1780-1850 (1949); Three Early Nineteenth Century Diaries (1952).

10 Three Diaries, p.xxviii.

11 Ibid. p.xxix.

12 'English Reform and French Revolution in the General Election of 1830,' in R. Pares and A.J.P. Taylor, eds., Essays Presented to Sir Lewis Namier (1956).

being in 'the worst journalistic style', and Sir Richard Vyvyan is characterised as 'one of the more unbalanced of the ultra-Tory county members.' A more sympathetic treatment of Vyvyan can be found in the work of B.T. Bradfield,¹³ and a fair summary of the Standard's position on Reform can be found as far back as 1914, in J.R.M. Butler's pioneering study of the Reform Bill crisis.¹⁴ The particular achievements of Simes, in his doctoral thesis, have been to explore the activities of the ultra-Tory peers in 1829-30, and to scrutinise the strength of the ultras in the Commons in 1829-31.¹⁵

Despite the varying attention which the ultra-Tories have received a close study has yet to be made of the views expressed in what was, with the Standard, their principal medium of periodical opinion, Blackwood's Magazine. Michael Brock, in the most widely accepted modern account of the Reform Bill crisis,¹⁶ cites Blackwood's more often than both the Standard and the Quarterly combined. He deserves credit for not confining his attention to the eye-catching contributions of David Robinson. Articles by William Johnston, De Quincey and Archibald Alison have also been used. None of these three writers, however, is named, either in the text or in references. There is

13 'Sir Richard Vyvyan and the Country Gentlemen, 1830-1834,' EHR LXXIII, 329 (Oct.1968), pp.729-743; an article derived from Bradfield's doctoral Thesis.

14 The Passing of the Great Reform Bill, (1914, repr.1964) pp.62-3. (Can there be any parallel for Butler's feat in writing the preface to the new impression of his book after the lapse of half a century?)

15 Simes, thesis, ch.3 passim.

16 The Great Reform Act (1973).

no attempt to explore the position of Blackwood's from within, or to suggest that there were divergences of opinion. The normal citation in the text takes the form of 'a writer in Blackwood's,' or simply 'Blackwood's.' Given the extensive range of sources used by Brock, and the great thoroughness with which he examines the conduct of those who played the decisive parts in the battle over the Bill, it would be both parochial and churlish to sound any note of complaint about his handling of Blackwood's. It is merely suggested that a job remains to be done, which Brock did not have the time or the space to tackle. The task, it should now be apparent, is to produce a balanced and complete account of the political discussions within the Magazine during the period 1829-32. Nuances of opinion, even outright contradictions, need to be identified; and the process requires to be elucidated whereby David Robinson's sympathetic references to Reform became submerged in a rising tide of hostility towards the Bill. It is with some relief that the sage advice of Professor Cannon can now be adopted: 'In the face of so formidable a barrage of scholarship, the wisest course is to revert to the original texts.'¹⁷

Discussions in Blackwood's on the subject of Reform during 1829 recall the variations of opinion in the Magazine in earlier years of the decade. The question had already attracted the furiously hostile rhetoric of Croly in 1821, the cautiously-worded distinction between moderate and radical Reform made by J.G. Lockhart in 1822, and the

17 Cannon, op.cit., p.8 (referring to contrasting interpretations of the Putney debates.)

acknowledgment by John Galt in 1824 that there was a need for gradual improvement of our institutions.¹⁸ As early as June 1826, and again in November 1827, David Robinson¹⁹ had anticipated the argument which the Marquess of Blandford put forward on 2 June 1829, when unsuccessfully moving a motion against the decayed boroughs. Blandford argued, like Robinson before him, that the close-borough members were the vehicle for carrying legislation against the will of traditional English opinion. The enactment of Catholic emancipation, Blandford argued, had not only proved that point, but brought with it the threat of the acquisition of close boroughs by Roman Catholics.

A month before Blandford's motion, the subject of Reform had been re-opened in Blackwood's by the Rev. Edward Edwards.²⁰ Although envisaging the problem solely in terms of what should be done with delinquent boroughs, Edwards was at least prepared to contemplate alterations to the franchise in those specific cases. The best means of reformation, he argued, would be to increase the proportion of freeholders among the constituents. Holders of burgage tenures were unreliable, whereas freeholders, by virtue of the nature of their property-holding rather than through innate superiority of character, were more dependable. Freeholders bore a heavier real burden of taxation than the

18 See above, Chapter Four, pp.106-8.

19 Ibid. pp.134 and 145.

20 'Case of East Retford', May 1829, pp.664-675. Edwards also contributed economic articles to the Quarterly Review.

owners of floating capital, who could pass on their tax-load as higher prices to the customer. Anticipating what became the policy for the county franchise in the Reform Bill, Edwards suggested that delinquent boroughs could be improved by a transfusion of other kinds of property-holder as well as freeholders:

We are willing that on every available opportunity the elective franchise should be taken from those who possess the right of voting by any species of base tenure, and extended to the whole body of the owners of freehold, copyhold, or long leasehold property, within the district. (p.675).

Edwards derived comfort from the fact that, although the distribution of seats seemed to favour the holders of personal capital as against the owners of real property, the acquisition of borough seats by landed proprietors had preserved the balance of the constitution. (p.668). He thus anticipated a point made by a reader and admirer of Blackwood's, S.T. Coleridge, in his On the Constitution of the Church and State, published in 1830.²¹

If the viewpoint expressed by Edwards has to be given an affiliation, that of the 'country party' would seem to be most appropriate. The same could be said of David Robinson's first sustained discussion of Reform, in August 1829.²² Robinson began with typical bluntness in asserting that there was a need for a new Ministry and a new House of Commons. A dissolution of parliament, however, would yield small benefit unless there was a change of personnel, and that raised the question of parliamentary reform. Robinson

21 Coleridge, op.cit., p.21.

22 'A Dissolution of Parliament', pp.251-9.

then recalled his earlier argument that if the close borough members combined to put the independent members in a minority, then the system must be changed. A favourite argument of apologists of close boroughs was brusquely dismissed:

The close boroughs, instead of being used to bring into Parliament men of talent and virtue, are used to bring into it mere mercenaries who possess neither. (p.253)

Those who had previously opposed parliamentary reform had done so to prevent changes which had nonetheless been carried through, so that particular argument had lost its point. Robinson was not advocating Reform for its own sake. He would, he said, have been happy to see the kind of House restored which had existed prior to the last five or six years, with a divided and balanced borough interest.

'But this must be done, or the question must be carried.' (p.254) Even under the existing system, much might be done. The old party of the country gentlemen must be resurrected. This meant that they must recover their hold on the county representation, which they had surrendered, 'to a few factious, or profligate Peers.' Peers of a better type, such as the Duke of Newcastle, were commended for bringing in men of the calibre of M.T. Sadler. Similarly, 'the leading men in cities and boroughs' could take care in selecting representatives of the right character.

A third contribution to the Magazine's discussions of Reform in 1829 came from John Galt.²³ As in his 1824 article, Galt urged the need for colonial representation in the imperial parliament. He added an interesting new

23 'Thoughts on the Times,' Oct. 1829, pp.640-643.

suggestion, that franchises in counties and open boroughs should become purchasable in the same way that, on entering one of the livery companies of the city of London, a fee was paid. While Galt saw this suggestion as perfectly consistent with the propertied basis of the franchise, it denoted a very different conception of property from that expressed by Edward Edwards earlier in the year.

Although these discussions of Reform are of interest, it would be creating a false impression of the priorities of the Magazine in 1829 and the early months of 1830 to omit reference to what was in fact the dominant concern of Blackwood's at this time: social and economic distress. Such concern antedated the granting of Catholic emancipation by several years, exonerating Blackwood's, at least, from the suspicions of Wellington and his colleagues, as voiced by Mrs. Arbuthnot, that 'nine tenths of the cry [about distress] has been made by the Brunswickers out of spite upon the Catholic question.'²⁴ To provide a full survey of all the Blackwood's articles on the subject in 1829-30 would be to deprive the present chapter of coherence and momentum. Conveniently, one of the best, and most representative, of those articles has already been discussed.²⁵ Another article which would amply repay scrutiny was David Robinson's powerful lamentation upon 'The Condition of the Empire.'²⁶ Robinson was particularly forceful in attacking the remedies proposed by advocates of cheap government: cutting the poor rates, reducing prices and therefore wages,

24 Quoted in Brock, op.cit., p.69.

25 William Johnston's 'The State and Prospects of the Country.' See above, Chapter Five, pp.152-8.

26 Maga, July 1829, pp.97-119.

practising frugality. Instead, he advocated the restoration of greater protection to our agriculture, manufactures and shipping; the reprieve of the suppression of the small notes hitherto circulated by country banks; the encouragement of more emigration to, and greater investment in, the colonies, accompanied by protected entry of their produce into the British market. Further, he advocated a reduction of taxes on consumption²⁷ by £12 million per annum, to increase domestic trading activity; and, as a means of easing the shock to the exchequer, a property tax of £10 million per annum, to be reduced periodically, should be imposed for twelve years.²⁸ In this part of his scheme, Robinson strikingly anticipated what Peel (with a different overall objective) was to put into effect in his great budget of 1842. Robinson's successors readily welcomed in the Magazine Peel's decision to reimpose the income tax.²⁹

The Blackwood's onslaught upon the economic policies of successive Tory governments continued, during the latter part of 1829 and the early months of 1830, to be spearheaded by Robinson and Johnston, each of whom was given room to deploy his case in a series.³⁰ Robinson's series constituted an important exposition of his economic ideas.³¹ Thereafter, more strictly political concerns became uppermost,

27 (Sugar, tea, tobacco and soap.)

28 July 1829, p.117.

29 See below, Chapter Nine, p.373.

30 'Political Economy', 4 parts, Robinson; 'Domestic Policy,' 3 parts, Johnston.

31 See the analysis by Rashid, op.cit., pp.260-268.

especially with the publication in April 1830 of a major article by David Robinson on the subject of Reform.³²

D.C. Moore provides a brief précis in 'The Other Face of Reform,' pp.21-2, and refers to it in a note in 'Concession or Cure,' p.47. Michael Brock also provides a short précis, on pp.78-9, crediting Robinson in his reference, the only occasion in which a Blackwood's writer is named in his book. Despite - perhaps because of - this attention, full consideration of the article is necessary here, to bring out the full range and complexity of Robinson's position on Reform.

Robinson opened by observing that the House of Commons was assailed from all sides, both by those who explicitly called for its radical reform, and by those who implicitly required radical change by their criticisms of its lack of intellect and integrity. Was the right response, then, to carry out a radical change in the construction of the House? Robinson was not so sure. The old system had, after all, worked well until recent years. The representatives of the popular constituencies,³³ moreover, were in his opinion amongst the most dangerous and demagogic members of the House. 'Such members are not a whit superior to the rotten borough ones in consistency and integrity.' (p.641) Thus, changing how the House was chosen would be 'a very inadequate remedy.' (p.642) The real problem was that the country was saddled with a Ministry that was prepared to sacrifice integrity and

32 'The Reform of the House of Commons' pp.640-658.

33 e.g. Westminster and Southwark.

principle in order to retain office, confronted by a titular Opposition that was failing in its duty to provide constructive opposition. What independent and upright power, then, existed capable of compelling both Ministry and Opposition to meet their constitutional obligations? Not the House of Lords, which was incapable of acting on its own, and not, sadly, the Crown.

If the King were always what he ought to be, he might constitute the power... But alas! the wise and virtuous King forms the exception to the rule. The personal interests of the Sovereign, and the circumstances in which he is placed, are calculated to make him use his gigantic influence on the side of evil. (p.646)

The country at large took its opinion from Ministry and Opposition and, in any case, was emasculated by the Septennial Act. The only answer, therefore, was the building of an independent party in the House of Commons. To be effective, such a party needed leaders who did not wish either to hold office or to originate legislation. The party should be both impartial and strong, holding the balance in numbers between Ministry and Opposition.

Given this diagnosis and proposed remedy, Robinson now turned his attention to the means of accomplishing it. The franchise must be confined 'in the majority to intelligent, patriotic, and upright voters,' and be distributed in a way that protected distinctive interests. A major problem was the cost to the candidate of participating in an election. In practice, all but the very rich or very improvident were excluded. Constituencies were invaded by 'adventurers' who recouped their election costs by place-seeking, while independently-minded men who spurned place-seeking lost out.

Thus, a more comprehensive and beneficial reform than abolishing the rotten boroughs would be to reduce the cost of elections. Robinson made three practical suggestions: first, to provide several polling-places rather one often distant place of poll; second, to prohibit organised canvassing, which was 'a fruitful source of expense and bribery.' (p.653); and third, to oblige freemen 'out-voters' to vote only in the place where they happened to reside. As well as seeking to facilitate candidatures from the middling orders, Robinson favoured increasing their weight in the borough electorates by granting the franchise to 'the occupiers of houses and warehouses of more than a certain rent.' (p.654)

As for the close boroughs, Robinson distinguished between different kinds, for which he had specific proposals. Rotten boroughs were often so because of the paucity of electors, therefore the number of constituents should be increased or the seat transferred. The problem with pocket boroughs really derived from the blurring of principles between Ministry and Opposition, not from the existence of such boroughs per se. They were a means of maintaining party cohesion and bringing forward men of talent and some, at least, should be retained. Where the larger towns were concerned, Robinson somewhat grudgingly conceded that there was room for some extension of representation.

The great manufacturing towns ought to have members to attend to their local interests, and if twelve or twenty were added to the House of Commons on account of this, we cannot see that it would make any difference to the general interests of the country.

But we dissent wholly from the doctrine that the manufacturing interests have not sufficient influence in Parliament. (p.657)

Robinson justified this last contention by arguing that whereas the agricultural members voted according to the various aristocratic political interests to which they belonged, thus largely cancelling each other out, the manufacturing and trading members tended to vote en bloc against agriculture. He concluded his article with an appeal to the 'Old Tories' to cast aside internal dissensions, 'separate themselves from the foolish party clamour touching taxes,' propose sound plans of relief, and reinforce themselves with talent. In so doing, they would create in the House 'a legitimate and beneficial Opposition.' (p.657)

Robinson's article can be firmly placed in the 'country party' tradition.³⁴ There is the long-standing concern to find a check upon the executive; the suspicion of those who selfishly cling to, or aspire after, office; the desire for a constituency large enough not to be bribed and corrupted, but small enough to be secured upon property and education. Representation is seen in terms of interests, with agriculture firmly at the head. The best candidates are envisaged as coming from the middling orders of society, and their prospects are thought more likely to prosper from reducing electoral costs than from any large-scale changes in the franchise or the distribution of seats. Nonetheless, Robinson was prepared to contemplate

34 See H.T. Dickinson, Liberty and Property. Political Ideology in Eighteenth-Century Britain (1977) esp.pp.102-3.

the suppression of some close boroughs, the addition of twelve or twenty members to the great manufacturing towns, and the enfranchisement of middle-class townsmen. With due allowance for Robinson's more limited scale, here, in embryo, was the scheme which Lord John Russell laid before the House of Commons almost a year later. A few weeks before Robinson's article appeared, Russell had been defeated in the House when moving a very moderate proposal to give two seats each to Leeds, Manchester and Birmingham.

The much more drastic scheme of the Marquess of Blandford received short shrift from the 'Silent Member' (William Mudford), when discussed in the May number of Blackwood's. Blandford and the Duke of Richmond were warmly commended for advocating an inquiry into the distress of the country, and there was praise for the spirit behind Blandford's Reform speech, but as for the content, it was

just such a piece of imaginative legislation as might be expected from any man who sat down in his library, with a sheet of foolscap before him, to make a House of Commons of his own, with a sublime disregard of every other House of Commons that ever existed. (p.731)

The rejection by the Commons of the Jewish relief bill gave the Magazine's writers an opportunity to score a debating-point and, perhaps, to reveal worthier qualities. The 'Silent Member' scorned the hypocrisy of the House in general, and of Peel in particular, in resisting a proposal which not one petition had opposed, after having carried Catholic emancipation in the teeth of hostile petitions from every part of the country.

We have built a bridge broad enough to allow the passage of seven or eight millions of Catholics and Unitarians into the citadel of the constitution, and

we refuse to make it a few inches wider to accommodate thirty thousand Jews!³⁵

David Robinson made a similar point in his political article,³⁶ and William Johnston added his opinion in a letter to Blackwood.

The Jews affair was a disgraceful one for Government - The truth is they can't get those who were vexed about their desertion on the Catholic question to support them in any exclusion for Religion's sake - I heard a man say who never voted against Government in his life - "They let in the Papists, and after that, if Lucifer himself was knocking at the door, with a brace of horns on his head, each as big as the mace, By Jasus, I would not vote to keep him out."³⁷

During the summer months of 1830, David Robinson's recognition of the need for some measure of Reform held the field as the Magazine's standpoint. His July article was unequivocal on the subject.,

With regard to Parliamentary Reform, the Wellington party has annihilated every valid plea on which it could be resisted. It has completely changed the question, in both character and circumstances. That which was an unnecessary innovation, opposed by the better part of the community, has been rendered by it a needful remedy, which the community at large desires. It would be idle to deny that public feeling is in favour of reform - we mean such as would be cautious, gradual, and practical; and it would be equally idle to attempt to prove that it is in error. (p.89)

This article appeared in the number which would have been in the hands of Blackwood's readers during the general election. The news of the king's death came after the Magazine was in type, and the first results of the election were known before the August number came out.

35 Maga, July 1830, p.51.

36 'Parties', loc.cit., p.89.

37 10 April 1830, NLS, MS4027, f.244.

The Magazine thus lacked the opportunity to make a direct pronouncement about the election, but its general political tone was at least consistent with the shift that was perceived in county constituencies, away from the Ministry and towards some measure of Reform.³⁸ In the second number for August, David Robinson indulged in a jaundiced characterisation of unreformed electioneering, combining the seriousness of his April article with something of the humour which Dickens was to extract from 'Eatanswill'. It was no wonder, he concluded, that such a bad House of Commons came from such a way of proceeding. His tone now became more shrill:

Remedy! - yes, for the sake of human nature, let it be granted! Reform - Radical Reform! - yes, for the salvation of our beloved country, let it be no longer delayed. (p.309)

Robinson, of course, went on to explain that by Reform he still meant the kind of reform which concentrated, not on the close boroughs, but on the quality of the electors.

The same number in which this article appeared contained the fifty-first Noctes, written by Wilson and Lockhart. The characters of North and Tickler became the mouthpieces for a discussion which must have gone through the minds of many Tories after the 1830 election.

NORTH. And I confess, I, for one, think the Tories, after all that has come and gone, ought to close with the Duke, rather than, by rejecting him, give the Whigs a grand chance of empire - for God knows how many years...

TICKLER. On the contrary, North, it has long been my opinion, that the only chance the Tories have of reuniting into their old structure of steadfastness, lies in the natural consequences to be expected from a Whig reign of some decent duration... (pp.409-10)

38 Cannon, op.cit., p.198; Brock, op.cit., p.87.

Tickler then speculated on the possibility of a coalition between 'the high Tories and the high Whigs', headed by Newcastle and Grey respectively, which could eject Wellington and take office. The new government might include Richmond, Chandos, Vyvyan, Inglis, Lowther, Wetherell and Sadler from one side, and Graham, Howick and Brougham from the other. Fanciful though this assemblage was,³⁹ it was not all that more motley than the combination of Grey Whigs, Lansdowne Whigs, ex-Canningites, and Richmond, which took office four months later. Tickler also suggested a programme for his new Ministry: a modest and gradual introduction of parliamentary reform, the enactment of poor laws for Ireland, an alteration of currency policy, and the ending of disadvantageous cases of free trade. Such measures would rapidly begin to undo the harm wrought by 'a pigheaded dragoon, destitute of the simplest elements of any human science but his professional one.' (p.414) This characterisation, in a Tory periodical, of the Tory premier and victor of Waterloo, is some measure of the disenchantment felt by Blackwood's towards Wellington's Ministry. Tickler's speech drew 'long-continued tumultuous applause' from the habitués of Ambrose's tavern.

The discussion between the characters in the Noctes about what good might come from a period of office for the Whigs was continued by David Robinson in the September number.

39 Perhaps the word 'fanciful' is unduly harsh. Late in October 1830, the ultra-Tories discussed the possibility of coalescing with Grey, a move to which Newcastle and Richmond were favourable, but to which Mansfield and Knatchbull were opposed. Simes thesis, p.473.

Robinson argued that to be in perpetual opposition was politically unhealthy. It condemned the Whigs to the defects of inexperience and irresponsibility. Yet in their ranks were to be found able men.

Earl Grey, in natural talent, has no superior in Parliament; if he had studied real life as much as party doctrines, and had laboured as zealously for public interests as for those of party, he would have no superior in it in any respect. Sir J. Graham has powers equal to any thing.... (p.536)

Coming after Tickler's abuse of Wellington, this politeness towards the Whig leaders was all the more striking. It was rendered even more so when, in the November issue, De Quincey perpetrated a further piece of insolence towards the duke, whom he described as an 'old withered pantaloons.' (p.721) This proved too much for William Johnston, who wrote to Blackwood to complain:

... the thing is ridiculously at variance with what every one knows. He may be a bad minister but he is no "Pantaloons," and as for imbecility of body, believe me who see him frequently, he is as active in body as you or I.⁴⁰

A fortnight after this letter was written, Wellington's beleaguered Ministry finally came to an end, brought down in part by the votes of dissident Tories. The duke's downfall was accelerated by his notorious 'perfection' speech of 2 November. If that speech was intended to reassure the Tories that Wellington and Peel did not intend to 'rat' on Reform as they had done on Catholic emancipation,⁴¹ the intention might have been acceptable - although hardly

40 1 Nov. 1830, NLS, MS4027, f.253.

41 De Quincey voiced such rumours in the October number of Blackwood's, (p.717), and they were repeated in various newspapers: the Morning Chronicle, the Globe and the Courier: Brock, op.cit., p.113.

to those who shared David Robinson's views - but the intemperate wording certainly was not. De Quincey, in the December number, berated the duke's 'precipitate and juvenile declaration of unconditional hostility to Reform.' (p.980) He went on:

As to the favour of the ultra-tories, (to propitiate whom he is said to have made this declaration) that was worth gaining. But certainly they would have been satisfied with the hostility - without asking for the public declaration of hostility - which, by making him an object of public indignation, must in that degree have made him less serviceable to their views. For ourselves, we are no enemies to every kind of reform, but to that only in any eminent and uncompromising degree which would go to weaken or abolish the power of the aristocracy in influencing the composition of the House of Commons. (p.980)

William Johnston, in the same number, joined De Quincey in lamenting Wellington's 'incautious and unnecessary declaration respecting reform.' (p.985) Explaining the downfall of the administration, Johnston maintained that the duke dug his own grave, first by dividing his party in carrying Catholic emancipation, then by entering the new session 'with the same mindless men who were his colleagues in the last,' (p.984), and then by three tactical errors: the declaration against Reform, the abandonment of the king's visit to the City of London, and the mismanagement of the Civil List proposals. Johnston concluded his analysis by observing that he had more satisfaction than regret in the fall of the Ministry,

because I hope that the Tory party, though, for the present, out of power, will once more have fair play - that no official necessities will drown or dilute their energy - and that the political battle will once more be fairly fought on the floors of the Houses of Parliament. (p.987)

These initial reactions to the fall of Wellington's Ministry were echoed in the thoughts of leading ultra-Tory politicians. M.T. Sadler's reasons for helping to turn out the duke were summarised by his biographer thus:

The Administration had committed one grand error in yielding to a demand which principle contemned, and only a supposed expediency counselled. They now fell into a still greater; in refusing a claim to which no principle was opposed, and which a real and genuine expediency prescribed. They had earned their ruin by a want of steadiness; they were now to complete that ruin by an exhibition of irrational tenacity.⁴²

The Duke of Newcastle, whilst no friend to Reform, also took initial pleasure in the government's fall, but his satisfaction proved to be short-lived, as he recalled in 1832:

I must confess that I for one was blind enough to hail its overthrow with satisfaction. I looked at its passing of the Test and Popish Bills with severe mortification and displeasure, and I then believed that its successors were men influenced and guided by those motives only which should ever govern British statesmen. Alas! I have lived to see and to lament my misplaced confidence.⁴³

Although he did not swing so violently between exultation and lamentation as Newcastle, David Robinson did share Newcastle's opinion in November that the new government was a change for the better. Discussing with Blackwood what the Magazine's political line would now be, Robinson maintained that if the old measures were continued, then they must continue to be opposed; but even this situation would be an improvement on the previous one:

⁴² Seeley, op.cit., p.228.

⁴³ An Address to all Classes and Conditions of Englishmen by the Duke of Newcastle (1832) p.17.

With the same policy, the Grey Ministry will I think be far preferable to the Wellington one; it will be more obedient to public feeling, and a much more effective opposition can be made against it amidst the community. I think the Liberals both at home and abroad will be much less mischievous in office than out of it; and that a turn of office will be beneficial in rendering them innoxious. It is essential to induce the Tories to get new heads; no man can wish to see the Duke and Peel in office again as leaders...⁴⁴

The prospects of the new Ministry were viewed in more cynical, and less respectful, terms by one of the outgoing ministers, Lord Ellenborough.

My fear is that the Whigs will not be able to form a Government. It is of much importance to the country that their incompetence should be exhibited, and the fallacy of the grounds upon which they have been attempting to obtain popular favour. We shall never be strong until it is proved they cannot form a Government. Again, I say my fear is they will be unable to take the first step.⁴⁵

A month later, the short-sighted and patronising character of estimates such as this had already begun to dawn on some ultra-Tories, as J.G. Lockhart pointed out to William Blackwood:

Thus we are brought to the brink of a crisis by the act of the ultra Tories in turning out the Duke. Of this there can be no doubt: he feels it, and they, I believe, repent it almost to a man. They did not foresee the terrible risks of this reform as a Cabinet proposition. They gratified their just resentment at the deep hazard of everything. Such is my view of the case, such is Southey's, such is Sadler's, such is Lord Chandos's. We are among the breakers; let us see how much we can save.⁴⁶

William Johnston's anxiety was that the Whigs would be unable to control the situation which had attended their

⁴⁴ 29 Nov. 1830, NLS, MS4028, f.203.

⁴⁵ Edward Law, Lord Ellenborough, (ed. Lord Colchester), A Political Diary 1828-1830, 2v(1881)II, 440-441: entry for 19 Nov. 1830.

⁴⁶ 28 Dec. 1830, quoted in Annals II, 247.

advent to office. Writing to William Blackwood, he pointed to the dangers that lay ahead:

It is quite true that common sense points out reform in some points, but the misfortune is that the same temper of the people which has made the necessity of reform more obvious, has also made it more dangerous. They will not be content with as much as would be useful - they must have more, and upset all.⁴⁷

Amidst this welter of conflicting sentiment and political regrouping, William Blackwood was confronted with the problem of establishing a clear line for his Magazine. He gave his appraisal of the situation in a letter to David Robinson, written on Christmas Day.

We must also do what is possible to gain the ear of some influential portion of the community. This is the difficulty just now when parties are all so broken up and destroyed by the base conduct of the Duke and Peel... Maga by keeping straight forward and steadfast in defence of the good old cause, has a weight and influence with the country which no other periodical possesses.⁴⁸

Robinson replied directly, giving a response that was perfectly consistent with the theme of his political articles during 1830, but which was already becoming too narrowly confined to a particular segment of Tory thinking to provide the solid base of sympathetic readers on which the Magazine depended for its circulation and survival.

I shall do all in my power to support Maga in the good cause, and my decided conviction is that this cause is now identified with reform. I think the only hope of the Tories - the real ones I mean - lies in reform.⁴⁹

Robinson justified this contention by arguing that the existing system gave too much power to the lower orders,

⁴⁷ 27 Nov. 1830, NLS, MS4027, f.256.

⁴⁸ 25 Dec. 1830, NLS, Acc.5643, B9, f.97.

⁴⁹ 30 Dec. 1830, NLS, MS4028, f.207.

who 'will generally be disaffected Liberals.' In his view, the 1830 election was 'about as bad as universal suffrage could have made it.' To make such a claim of the 1830 election was carrying originality of mind to the point of perversity. It would not be fair to make too much of a remark in a private letter, written at a season of the year not conducive to clear thought.⁵⁰ What a political writer of Robinson's calibre should have been able to recognise, however, was that, for traditionalist Tories (whether they be labelled 'ultras,' 'Brunswickers,' or 'country party'), the situation after November 1830 was profoundly different from what it had been before. It was one thing to abuse the Tory leadership and call for parliamentary reform, when the government was in the hands of Wellington and Peel, who, if they could have brought themselves to perform another volte-face, would have confined themselves to a modest measure. It was quite another thing to have the Tories out (for the first time in the history of the Magazine), the Whigs in and the country being stirred by an increasingly vociferous clamour for Reform.⁵¹ In the changed situation, as Lockhart had shrewdly observed, the ultras began to taste the bitterness, rather than the sweetness, of revenge, and began to return, however uneasily and resentfully, to the fold. For all his magnificent services to the political reputation of the

50 In his December article, Robinson did make the point that urban freeholders were multiplying in the counties and, he claimed, lower-class voters were overtaking middle-class ones in the boroughs. (p.909, note).

51 This was also the time of the 'Swing' riots. The London office of the Magazine received a 'Swing' letter in December. See photocopy overleaf.

Copy of a Letter from Captain "Swing."
addressed to Mr Capell
(bookseller
Strand)

Head Quarters

Dec^r. 3 - 1830 -

Sir,
I have just been reading an article in Blackwood's Magazine entitled a "History of a French Artizan". The object of the writer who is not a Frenchman is quite obvious, but this wretched melo-drame will with its sister be laughed to scorn by my countrymen, whom I should heartily despise if I thought them likely to be frightened by such a bugbear. The man who would free his country must not sit down like cunning lawney to try conclusions. As to a revolution causing the people to starve, can it, I ask, render the condition of the working classes worse than at present? Rejoice at the appearance of the article in question, because it shows that the base aristocracy are beginning to squeak; and well they may, for their hour is nigh. Woe to the mighty! The horny finger of the peasant will soon deep grasp those necks now encircled with muslin & "fine linen".

Yours

Swing



Editor of Blackwood's Magazine

Magazine, David Robinson was not the man to echo this shift in Traditionalist Tory sentiment. In the next number of the Magazine, such a man did appear, and although for a while Robinson maintained his position with vigour, and a vein of unrepentant ultra-Toryism still ran in other articles, the tone of the Magazine began to change. There was less iconoclasm, less raillery at the expense of Tory politicians, more abuse of the Whigs and more recourse to a pessimistic reading of the present through the darker parallels of history. The year 1831 was indeed a turning-point in the political career of Blackwood's Magazine: it was the year that marked the decline and departure of David Robinson and the advent of Archibald Alison.⁵²

The January number, which contained Alison's first political article for the Magazine, provides a good illustration (now that the Wellesley Index has drawn aside the curtain of anonymity) of the wealth of talent upon which William Blackwood could draw, in both the literary and the political departments of his periodical. There were contributions from both Alison and Robinson, as well as from John Wilson, De Quincey, William Johnston, Samuel Warren (a successful novelist, in his day) and Michael Scott (a writer of entertaining sea-stories). Among the political contributors, Alison concentrated upon the 1830 revolution

52 Alison's qualities as a political contributor are discussed in the next chapter. It must suffice, here, to state that he now began to supplement his successful legal career with two kinds of work for the house of Blackwood: as a regular political contributor to the Magazine, and as the author of a multi-volume and - in its day - highly successful History of Europe, published by William Blackwood and Sons.

in France, Johnston upon the failure of the House of Lords to confront the problem of distress, and Robinson upon the authoritarian tendencies of the new professional police and stipendiary magistrates. Only at the end of his article did Robinson revert briefly to parliamentary politics, with the remark that the Whig government was, in his opinion, 'the best amidst the bad, and more trustworthy than any other party.' (p.104) The main political comment came in an end-piece by John Wilson, 'L'Envoy', voicing Blackwood's unrepentant farewell to the Wellington Ministry. He was equally unrepentant about the amount of political content in the Magazine:

"There is too much politics in Blackwood" - mutters some numskull. No. There has been too little - but there shall be more. All the most sacred blessings of freemen are now at stake - in danger of being beaten down by bestial feet. That many-mouthed Monster, the Swinish Multitude, erects its bristles, and grunts fiercely in the sty, pretending to be the People. The People indeed!

.... The first of February shall see a Double Number of Two Hundred and Eighty victorious Pages - one half of which shall be devoted to Liberty, and one half to Literature. (pp.141-2)

A double number duly appeared, enabling an extended discussion of Reform. More important, a major battle was fought in the columns of the Magazine between David Robinson, with his reiterated sympathies for Reform, and the other contributors, with Alison emerging at their head. De Quincey now chose to emphasise, not his previously stated readiness to accept some measure of Reform, but his deep suspicions of any Reform measure likely to be enacted at such an excited time.⁵³ He conceded that Lord Grey did

53 'The Present Cabinet in Relation to the Times.' Feb. 1831, I, pp.143-156.

not wish for the abolition of the borough influence of the aristocracy: Grey's record proved that he was a champion of his 'order.' But, De Quincey wondered, did Lord Grey understand the total tendency of Reform? People talked as though Reform would simply reflect more fully the opinion of the 'middle classes', yet that was 'a vague and most latitudinarian term,' covering widely-differing social groups.⁵⁴ The franchise might be extended to volatile elements beneath the more respectable members of the middle classes, and if so, the character of the House of Commons would change.

The present constitution of that body secures a very preponderating infusion of the high-bred courtesies and the sobriety of demeanour which distinguish British gentlemen. But, on its new model, adjusted to a democratic standard of plain-speaking and ferocious insolence, these temperaments and restraints would disappear; the very rules of the House would bend to the altered spirit of the members; and a Kentucky violence, and savage license of tongue, would mark the character of debate. (p.149)

De Quincey's argument was that of the slippery slope. Change by stages leads to still greater changes which seemed beyond serious expectation at the outset. Indeed, that process was already in evidence:

Not many years are gone... when such was the credit of reformers, that if, by accident, a person of that description called at the house of a gentleman, his butler failed not to count the spoons upon his departure. Now we all see him sitting on the Treasury bench... (p.150)

Archibald Alison used the second of his series of articles 'On the late French Revolution' to point a moral for domestic politics. Those who argued for concession to

54 Professor McCord makes precisely this point in 'Some Difficulties of Parliamentary Reform', Historical Journal, x, 4 (1967), pp.376-390.

the people in periods of political excitement failed to make a crucial distinction between two great objects of popular ambition. The first, a love of freedom, that is, 'of immunity from restriction, oppression, or injury,' was a healthy sentiment towards which concession could rightly be made. The second was the democratic ambition, 'the desire on the part of the lower orders of exercising the power of sovereignty, of usurping the government of the state.' (p.175) It was the second tendency that was now so alarmingly apparent. Typically, Alison derived a parallel from the first French Revolution as an argument against concession in his own day. Just as Necker's measures brought about a revolution which he neither desired nor anticipated, so concessions by the Whig government could produce an uncontrollable situation in Britain. Alison then took up a point which, in his interpretation of it, reveals what a truly unflinching mind had been recruited to the ranks of Blackwood's contributors.

The Duke of Wellington's declaration against Reform in the House of Lords has been more the subject of obloquy than any statement by a minister in the recollection of any man living... We are proud to take the lead in dissenting from the clamour; and in recording the assertion on February 1, 1831, that, situated as the country was, assailed by domestic incendiaries, and convulsed by foreign revolutionary example, it was the wisest statement that could then have been made by a Prime Minister. (p.182)

To turn from this blinkered assertion to David Robinson's article in the same number (still, indeed, in the same part of the two-part issue) provides as striking a contrast today as it must have done to any perceptive reader of

Blackwood's at the time. Robinson's piece was simply entitled 'Reform' (pp.235-254), but it constituted one of the most important of all his disquisitions upon the subject. The opening words revealed Robinson to be in closer touch with political reality than was Alison.

It would now be very unprofitable to enquire whether the House of Commons ought to be reformed; the die is cast; Reform is resolved on by both the Ministry and the Country, therefore the question for beneficial discussion is - what change ought to be adopted? (p.235)

Robinson explained that his purpose was less to propose a plan than to throw light upon the existing system and to scrutinise certain reformers' proposals. Typically, Robinson found himself opposed to the conventional wisdom, which thought in terms of transferring the franchise from corrupt boroughs to other places. He argued that the right belonged to the place, not to the individuals who exercised it. The misdeeds of the latter should not therefore ensue in disfranchising future electors in that place. Corruption could also be found in open boroughs, so if corruption was the chief consideration then they too should lose their representation: Liverpool as much as Evesham. Yet there would be public disadvantage if Liverpool were to be unrepresented. It followed that there were more important considerations. Robinson then listed five major evils in existing practices:

1. The trafficking in borough seats by venal patrons.
2. The disadvantages experienced by candidates who
lacked either personal wealth or party connexion.
3. The lack of effective influence by the middle classes

in open boroughs.

4. The undue influence of distant voters in such boroughs.

5. Large-scale bribery in open boroughs.

The defence of this defective system rested upon two assertions: first, it worked well in practice; and second, reform must necessarily produce revolution. Robinson rejected both these claims. The first was 'really the odious doctrine - the end sanctifies the means', and in any case it simply was not true, as the carrying of Catholic emancipation and the failure to relieve distress both proved. The second claim was 'not only groundless but ridiculous.' The consequences of Reform would depend upon the type of Reform enacted, and the ministers had promised caution, reflecting the feelings of the majority of the legislature. The real need was to restore a proper weight to the landed interest, as properly defined, which was wider than the merely aristocratic interest. To this end, Robinson offered a set of proposals that were truly prophetic in quality:

1. Let the large towns have members, but restrict their inhabitants from voting in the counties.
2. Divide the counties into two parts, each with two members.
3. Give the vote to copyholders and, indeed, to all occupiers of land worth £20 per annum and upwards.
4. Reduce the expenses of elections, but without removing them entirely, so that candidates remained men of substance.

5. The borough franchise should not in future be acquired merely by becoming a freeman through birth or apprenticeship. It should be restricted to resident burgesses with a respectable property qualification.
6. Some of the larger scot and lot boroughs should be spared, as a ventilation for the sentiments of the rabble and a location for their spokesmen. (pp.244-7)

Except for the non-implementation of the last proposal (a shortcoming that was to attract criticism from radicals and Tories alike), there is a remarkable similarity between these proposals and what may be termed the positive side of the Reform Bill - as distinct from the negative side, the assault on the close boroughs. Robinson had conceded earlier in his article that some of these would go, but he looked to them as a means of achieving party viability, particularly for the Opposition, if their even distribution could somehow be accomplished. It could, in any case, be argued that even in this part of his analysis Robinson was not far removed from the actual working of the post-1831 system, as distinct from the apparently more radical upheaval that seemed to be threatened when Lord John Russell began to read out the long lists in Schedules A and B.⁵⁵ Robinson's general principle was, he maintained, a reassertion of the principle behind the existing system, namely that 'each interest and class must be duly represented.'

55 See N. Gash, Politics in the Age of Peel (1953; 2nd ed. 1977).

Thus, the priority was to produce a House of Commons with the best composition for the general good, not to conform to some theory of individual right. (p.247) Lord John Russell could hardly have expressed it better.

By now, Robinson's was becoming an increasingly isolated voice within the Magazine. William Johnston, in a contribution to the second part of the February double-number,⁵⁶ showed that he had retreated to the position occupied by Edward Edwards in 1829, when Reform was envisaged simply in terms of delinquent boroughs.

If reform is to be accomplished peaceably, it must be done gradually, taking up the worst cases as they arise, or perhaps seeking them out. A sudden and general reform in a matter of such high national importance as the representation of the people in Parliament, is revolution; and if it were done without popular tumult, and general terror, and consequent misery, it would be a miracle. (p.334)

Robinson also had an article in this part, and he used it to turn a favourite argument of Alison and De Quincey around to his own standpoint. The French revolution of 1830, as he saw it, was occasioned by the attempt of a minority party to cling on to office when opposed by more powerful forces. By giving office to the Whigs, who were more attuned to the dominant forces of the moment, we had averted revolution in Britain - for the time being, at least.⁵⁷ Robinson proceeded to rub more salt in some Tory wounds by summoning the Pitt tradition to his side.

Reform, in the better sense of the word, will be called a Tory question, by at least the Pitt Tories. Earl Grey, Sir J. Graham, and the Duke of Richmond, make a nearer approach to the policy of Pitt, than

56 'Parliamentary Sayings and Doings, no.II,' pp.329-341.

57 'Parties,' pp.346-360.

the Duke of Wellington, Sir. R. Peel, or any other member of the late Cabinet. (p.346)

Robinson, however, was far from offering uncritical adulation of the Whig Ministry. It gave evidence of disunity, inconsistency, arrogance and - in some individual instances - of mediocrity, and Lord Grey had proved a disappointment in his inattention to the problem of distress. Robinson had only contempt for 'the childish, silly, guilty cry of Retrenchment and Economy, kept up by Ministers...' (p.353) But that did not lead him into supporting any other political body. The Tories were too divided to be called a party: there were those who followed Peel, those who were obsessed with currency policy (in diametrical opposition to Peel) and those who subscribed to neither allegiance. Once again, Robinson had deployed a powerful attacking case, but, as in his onslaught upon Wellington and Peel at the time of Catholic emancipation, his argument petered out - if judged on the basis of political realities - when it came to suggesting a positive alternative. He concluded his article with an impassioned appeal to the great landowners - 'the Lonsdales and Northumberlands, the Hertfords and Rutlands' - to face up to their responsibilities, display the 'sterling sense of the Barons of old' and 'form a paternal government.' (p.360) This desperate - even pitiable - conclusion is simply one more grain in the scale of that prevailing historical interpretation which derives profound relief from the fact that England's affairs in 1831-2 were in the hands of the Whigs.

The March number of the Magazine saw a counter-attack from Alison, with the usual analogy that in 1831, as in 1789, concession would lead to extremism. Wellington's declaration against Reform was again defended, with the explanation for his downfall being ascribed, by Alison, to the rifts of 1827 and 1829 and the political excitement generated in England by the French revolution of 1830.⁵⁸ The article became more interesting towards the end when Alison showed that he, too, was capable of turning one of the stock arguments used by the opposing side around to his position. Where reformers argued that socio-economic changes had made Reform necessary, Alison maintained that it was precisely to counteract the effects of such changes - the millions in the urban working classes, the Irish immigrants, the democratic press - that the 'bulwarks' of the unreformed electoral system would have to be retained.⁵⁹

Robinson began to sense that he was losing political ground in the Magazine. When Russell had unveiled the government's scheme in the Commons, Robinson set to work on a short paper on the plan 'much of which I approve of,' he informed Blackwood, 'although I dissent from part of it.'⁶⁰ He now acknowledged his altered situation:

From what your late numbers have contained against reform, I am writing in the character of a correspondent, and to this character I shall confine myself in what I may contribute further to your publication.

58 'On the French Revolution, and Parliamentary Reform, No.III', pp.429-446.

59 Not that this point was a new one. It can be found, for instance, in Coleridge, Church and State, published in the previous year, where Coleridge had listed the new forces as 'roads, canals, machinery, the press, the periodical and daily press, the might of public opinion, the consequent increasing desire of popularity among public men and functionaries of every description..' *op.cit.* . . p.21.

60 8 March 1831, NLS, MS4031, f.50.

In a later letter, however, (undated, but probably written in early April), Robinson told Blackwood that he was greatly altering the article and would content himself 'with merely shewing the errors and deficiencies of the plan.'⁶¹ When the article eventually appeared in the May number (discussed below), it did contain a series of critical comments about the Bill, but it did not 'merely' criticise.

Where Robinson, and presumably the more attentive readers, perceived a hardening of the Magazine's opposition to Reform, the Edinburgh populace had a simpler guide to the anti-Reform views of the Blackwood family, in their failure to illuminate when the second reading was carried. Alexander Blackwood wrote to his father, then in London, to describe the consequences:

... the mob made three or four different attacks upon our shutters on Monday night and tried to force them with large stones and had I not taken the precaution of getting boards nailed outside of the glass over the door we would have had an immense deal of damage done for they tried to tear away the boards and throw in torches. The windows in the drawing room were all smashed, and nobody offered to interrupt the mob. My Aunt Jessie (?) was in an awful fright and abused me furiously next mng. for my obstinacy in not illuminating. Their house was illuminated, but in spite of that they had a great many windows broken, but she gives me the blame for that.⁶²

The Magazine showed a greater tolerance for differences of opinion upon Reform than did the Edinburgh mob. The April number contained an article from a self-styled 'Liberal Whig' (J.H. Merivale), who had contributed three pieces under that appellation in 1819-20. Merivale argued

⁶¹ loc.cit., f.73.

⁶² 30 March 1831, NLS, MS4029, f.66.

the case for moderate Reform, on conventional Whig lines. William Johnston, in the same issue, gave a gallery correspondent's portrayal of the crucial debate, interwoven with increasingly hostile comments about the revolutionary tendencies of the Bill. It was also significant that in the Noctes for April, North and Tickler united in praising Peel's speech against the Bill. Tickler observed that 'Much indeed might be forgiven in the past conduct of a statesman, who had the courage so to speak at such a crisis.' (p.711)

The Magazine for May 1831 constituted the major forum in which the Blackwood's political writers debated the merits and demerits of the Reform Bill. The number opened with something close to an editorial - not in the Magazine's usual character - written, with unwonted seriousness, by John Wilson.⁶³ For fifteen years, he claimed, Blackwood's had been consistent in its principles. Parliamentary reform, however, was a matter upon which there could be differences among conscientious men.

Not a few, and these not inconsiderable, differences in opinion exist among Ourselves; and as they have been, so they will be expressed in Maga, without subjecting her to any reproach. (p.725)

Many enlightened men were against Reform on principle, including the author of a series of articles in the Magazine (viz. Alison). Many enlightened men acknowledged that there were defects in the representation, but were

63 'Reformers and Anti-Reformers - A Word to the Wise from Old Christopher,' pp.721-731 (faulty pagination, actually occupying 15 pages of text.)

opposed to Reform at that time, because of the ominous European situation, (according with De Quincey's position). Many, again, believed that the time for reform had come, but abhorred the Ministry's proposals; (abhorrence would be overstating Robinson's criticisms, but this third attitude was closest to his position). 'North' would have been happy to be numbered in the third category, had Reform been in the hands of the Tory party, but it was then in disarray. The party could begin to repair its position by giving more support to the Tory press - to the Standard, the Morning Post, and John Bull.

The main feature of William Johnston's article was the warm praise given to Sir Richard Vyvyan's speech against the Bill. Vyvyan's arguments, as expressed by Johnston, were closely in accord with the criticisms put forward in Blackwood's by Alison, De Quincey and Johnston himself. Alison's article, the fifth in his series 'On Parliamentary Reform and the French Revolution,' was subsequently reprinted in a three-volume collection of his essays.⁶⁴ There it was joined with the eighth and ninth articles in the series⁶⁵ and substantially re-worked to produce a single essay, incorporating points from all three articles, but in a different order. This essay can be considered here as Alison's definitive statement on the Reform Bill. (Pagination is from the book version).

Alison began his essay by painting a halcyon picture of

64 Essays. Political, Historical and Miscellaneous 3 vols (1850), I, 'The Reform Bill.'

65 Published in Maga in Aug. and Sept. 1831.

England between 1815 and 1830, despite the baneful effects of an enlarged National Debt, diminished prices (because of currency policies), and 'the incessant immigration of Irish.' Why, therefore, should the national prosperity be jeopardised by plunging into Reform? The Bill itself was at fault for several major reasons: 'its being based on a uniform system of representation; the overwhelming preponderance which it gives to numbers over property; the undue majority which it confers on the inhabitants of towns over those of the country; and the total absence of any means of representation for our colonial possessions.'

(p.15) Alison amplified this last contention by pointing out that at present members of the colonial interest could purchase close boroughs - a form of virtual representation. Alison extolled the mixed and varied nature of the representation, which allowed access to all interests, according to the kind of seat involved. This led him into a passage of Burkean eloquence:

No human wisdom could have framed such a system. Its utility could not have been anticipated, a priori. Its irregularity would have displeased a theoretical statesman. It is just for this reason that it has been so durable, because it was not formed on abstract principle, but on practical experience. (p.17)

To enfranchise the £10 householders would be to hand over electoral power to 'the most democratic, and, at the same time, the most venal class in existence.' (p.22) At periods of excitement there would be no holding the frenzy of democratic ambition:

Stimulated by the revolutionary press, urged by suffering and insane constituents, the tribunes of the people, sent forward by the boroughs, would

successively abolish the corn laws, the church, the funds, and every interest which promised the prospect of spoliation in this great and complicated empire. (p.24)

Alison next turned to the argument that Reform would serve as a recruiting-device for reinforcing the bastions of respectability against the mob. He flatly contradicted this claim. Reform would merely lead to further surrenders once the present scheme was seen to be incapable of delivering all the blessings anticipated from it. From what became, in Peel's hands, the argument of the 'open door,' Alison moved naturally to the argument of the 'thin end of the wedge.' If the £10 householder franchise was conceded then why not £5? Why not £1? Why not universal suffrage? As ever with Alison, history was pressed into service to resist present change. He gave a lengthy catalogue of mistaken decisions taken in response to popular clamour, from the banishment of Aristides onwards.

Examples of this sort lead the thoughtful to distrust public opinion, on all occasions when it is violently excited. Education cannot give intellect. Newspapers will not extinguish passion. The great majority of the public are now as incapable of judging on political subjects as they were in the days of Aristides. Printing has extended to the whole people the passions of a mob; it has not given them a larger share of intellect. (p.46)

Alison then embarked upon an apocalyptic vision of the future, reminiscent of Croly at his most ominous. The first effect of the passing of the Reform Bill would be the repeal of the Corn Laws.⁶⁶ Agricultural prices would then

66 So the September article claimed, (p.436); in the later book version, however, this obviously over-sudden prediction was softened to 'One of the first effects...' (p.51). The rest of the scenario of September 1831, however, was still deemed worthy of repetition in the book version of 1850.

fall severely, bringing down other prices and therefore wages. The government's revenue-yield would therefore fall to a point at which the secularisation of the tithes still would not compensate, so the interest on government funds would be cut. Public credit would therefore be lost, leading to commercial collapse, national bankruptcy and inability to pay the poor-rates. The democratic legislature would then turn to the sequestration of property to escape from the financial crisis. Out of the chaos would come 'a Caesar, a Cromwell, a Napoleon' to establish a military despotism. (p.69 - September article p.447). In his September article, Alison added the reassuring comment: 'In the preceding view, melancholy and overcharged as it may appear to many, we have yet carefully omitted the darker, but not improbable parts of the picture...' We can but be grateful for such restraint.

It is something of a relief to turn from Alison's rhetorical tirade to David Robinson's more closely-reasoned piece in the May number. Robinson, consistently with his letter to Blackwood of 8 March, now distanced himself from the prevailing position in the Magazine by writing as 'An English Freeholder.'⁶⁷ His opening showed that he stood by his previous convictions:

From divers reasons, I am a reformer. I am one of those who think that, for a considerable time, the House of Commons has been destitute of public confidence, and has managed public affairs in a most pernicious manner. (p.783)

67 'The Ministry's Plan of Reform,' pp.783-801. (The piece is headed 'To the Editor of Blackwood's Magazine', as if it were from an extraneous correspondent. It was Robinson's 91st article for the Magazine.

After making his usual allegation about the increase in the numbers of a lower class of electors in the existing system, Robinson argued that postponing Reform would simply exacerbate tensions between the mass of the population and the House of Commons. Next came a direct hit at Alison's views.

When I am assured that reform will create democratic rulers and revolution, I am constrained to enquire what the refusal of it will create. The Duke of Wellington confesses that his Ministry was principally expelled from office by this question; and matters are now far worse than they were when it fell. (p.784)

Opponents of Reform would be the losers by a dissolution,⁶⁸ and it would be misguided to attempt to delay the inevitable passage of Reform. That did not mean, however, that the system which would be brought in by the Bill would be an improvement upon the old one - quite the contrary. The Whigs' scheme (as Alison also complained) marked a shift towards uniformity and the diminution of the representation of various interests, notably banking and the colonial trade. The removal of small boroughs closed an avenue to talent and obstructed the formation of an Opposition front bench. As a remedy, Robinson suggested that an independent body, such as the judges, should allow the party leaders on both sides to have the disposal of twenty seats apiece, to be allocated to candidates of prominent political standing.(p.794). Another criticism of the Bill (and here too Robinson agreed with Alison) was that its franchise provisions dealt much less generously with

68 The dissolution of parliament had not occurred when Robinson sent his article; it was, however, known to John Wilson when he wrote his opening article.

tenant farmers than with borough householders.⁶⁹ Robinson, however, was still prepared to give credit where it was due:

After having spoken thus of the errors and defects of the plan, it is my duty to say that I warmly approve of a large portion of it... I concur in its principle in so far as it is to abolish rotten boroughs, and vicious nomination, and prevent aristocratic control of the House of Commons; but I can go no farther, and I contend that this was all the honest part of the reformers called for. (p.800)

The ensuing general election vindicated Robinson's prediction of the outcome of a dissolution, as he observed in a letter to Blackwood, while the returns were coming in.

The fear of it made me extremely anxious that the Tories should bend as far as possible on reform and produce a distinct plan of their own. They acted in Parliament with their wonted folly, and they are in a fair way of being turned out of every open place in England.⁷⁰

William Johnston wrote to Blackwood in similar vein from Cumberland, where things were going badly for Lord Lowther: 'Nevertheless - the Tories deserve it all.'⁷¹ A fortnight later, however, Johnston could see some grounds for hope:

....with 270 and spirit exertion and good humour - we Tories may float still. However there are many dreadfully afraid, and even sober calculating men, as little liable to panic, as the milestones along the road, talk of the propriety of collecting their property together and going to America.⁷²

Alison's response to the Tory losses in the election,

69 A disparity that was later to be reduced by the Chandos clause.

70 2 May 1831, NLS, MS4031, f.54. It was in this letter that Robinson identified Peel as the best man to retrieve the fortunes of the Tory party: quoted above, Chapter Three, p.99.

71 6 May 1831, NLS, MS4030, f.27.

72 20 May 1831, loc.cit., f.31.

in his June article, possessed an ingenuity born of desperation. The very success of the reformers, he argued, in the English elections, proved that there was no need for Reform. If, moreover, the reformers had gained so much without Reform, what would they go on to achieve with it? John Wilson, equally gloomy, lamented that Blackwood's was doomed to be in perpetual opposition - a far cry from those palmy early days when 'Maga was the most ministerial of monthlies.'⁷³ David Robinson's views at this time did not reach the columns of the Magazine, partly because they were delayed by two house-removals within a month, and partly because William Blackwood found those views unacceptable. The publisher informed his contributor that, while Robinson was free to write his own ideas, Blackwood likewise should have liberty to judge the effects which the inclusion of a conflicting article in the Magazine might have at such a time.⁷⁴

Blackwood found William Johnston's sentiments in closer accord with his own. Johnston's 'Whig-hater' article in June blamed misuse of the king's name for deluding county freeholders into voting for the Whigs, and this in turn derived from the reformers' more effective use of the press. Tory party leaders were rebuked for their neglect of the press, and Tory magnates for their inattention to the gentry and freeholders of their counties. (p.1013) These opinions struck home, if Johnston's sources of information were reliable:

73 'The Lord Advocate on Reform,' June 1831, p.983.

74 25 May 1831, NLS, Acc.5643, B9, f.179.

It has so happened that the shortness of the Whig Hater letter has caused it to be more read and talked about among our Tory people than if it had been a more elaborate production. The Magazine was ordered especially to the Duke of Wellington's at Walmer.⁷⁵

Johnston added that he had been assured by a member of the house-party that Blackwood's scolding of the Tories was greatly approved. Such approval, however, did not ensue in any positive action, as Johnston continued to lament in further letters in August and September. Peel, although capable of delivering powerful speeches against the Bill, lacked the appetite for a war of attrition.⁷⁶ Croker had the necessary aggression, but, in Johnston's estimation, had flaws also.

He has the black drop of Irishism in him - his ability is dashed with cunning, and he is not the same to a man behind his back and before his face.⁷⁷

Blackwood readily agreed:

Your views with respect to our party are exactly my own. There is a want of concert and vigour and leaders, and in short everything that is wanted for this great emergency... J.W.C. (Croker) justified everything that all who knew him thoroughly expected of him in his splendid answer to Macaulay. He is a man infinitely superior to Peel in knowledge, talent and power, but how unfortunate it is that he does not possess that personal weight and character that is required for a leader.⁷⁸

Meanwhile the case against the Reform Bill continued to be argued spiritedly in the Magazine. Alison's July article, although not favoured with a subsequent reprinting in his Essays, was more pointed and less rhetorical than

- 75 Johnston to Blackwood, 8 June 1831, NLS, MS4030, f.32.
- 76 N. Gash, Sir Robert Peel (1972), p.20.
- 77 Johnston to Blackwood, 19 Sept. 1831, NLS, MS4030, f.40.
- 78 28 Sept. 1831, NLS, Acc.5643, B9, f.240.

his other pieces of the summer. He even took over some of David Robinson's arguments about the inadequacies of the existing pattern of representation. The article ended with a list of general principles upon which the House of Lords could make a stand:

1. Existing rights to return MPs should not be taken away without either 'a full equivalent or proved delinquency,' even if this principle meant adding 100 seats to the House.
2. Occupiers (presumably in boroughs) should, to receive the franchise, be proprietors, not merely tenants, of their houses.
4. Urban freeholders should be kept out of the county elections.
5. If the close boroughs were abolished, the possession of funded movable property should become an entitlement to the franchise.
6. If indirect colonial representation was lost, direct representation should be instituted. (p.33)

This more reasoned article prompted a request to Blackwood from Messrs. Roake and Varty, of the Strand, for permission to undertake a cheap reprint. Several gentlemen had approached them to that effect, wishing to see the arguments circulated among 'the middling and lower classes of society.'⁷⁹

Alison resumed his more apocalyptic tone in August,

⁷⁹ 20 Sept. 1831, NLS, MS4031, f.39.

September and October, and with De Quincey in equally dramatic vein,⁸⁰ calmer voices in the Magazine were in danger of being drowned. Samuel O'Sullivan contributed one of his colloquies in August, reviving the technique he had used with Catholic emancipation.⁸¹ David Robinson, now in the guise of a 'Bystander,' contributed only a tangential piece in September, criticising Sir Henry Parnell's financial views. What proved to be his final article for the Magazine appeared in November: 'Citizen Kings.'⁸² Here Robinson expressed his anxiety that the pressure to carry the Reform Bill was threatening to turn the monarch into a 'Citizen King' and the House of Lords (should there be a creation of peers to overcome resistance) into a merely dependent part of the legislature. Robinson attested his faith in the securing of civil freedom through constitutional balance. It was an appropriate doctrine with which to conclude his contributions to the Magazine.

Only in Blackwood's could such a piece be directly followed by an article entitled 'An Authentic Report of a Dialogue which took place between His Excellency the Marquis of Anglesea, and the Ghost of his Leg, which was amputated upon the Plains of Waterloo.' In this flight of fancy, by Samuel O'Sullivan, Anglesea was upbraided by his severed limb, rather in the way that Scrooge was rebuked by Marley's ghost, and urged to mend his ways.

80 De Quincey's August article, 'On the Approaching Revolution in Great Britain, and its Proximate Consequences,' opened with the words, 'Fuit Ilium!' (p.313).

81 See above, Chapter Six, pp.246-7.

82 Once again, from a 'Bystander.' The details of Robinson's final rift with Blackwood are given in Chapter Three, pp.99-100.

Anglesea's offence was to have supported the Reform Bill, where once he had been the doughty opponent of revolutionary France. The message of Archibald Alison's spate of articles was thus neatly encapsulated in a dialogue:

ANGLESEA... I support the Reform Bill, because I consider it the only means of averting revolution.
 LEG. Then you do not consider it a good "per se", but only that it will prevent a greater evil?
 ANG. Just so.
 LEG. And how will it prevent it?
 ANG. By satisfying the wishes of the people.
 LEG. Are you sure that, by passing the present bill, they will be satisfied? Has the popular appetite ever yet been appeased by just such concessions as may be extorted from the fears of the privileged orders? Does it not grow by what it feeds on?.... (p.716).

The first number of the Magazine for 1832 underlined the completeness of Alison's triumph, now that Robinson had departed. Alison was given space for three political articles⁸³ - a far cry from the light and shade which had so creditably characterised the Magazine's discussions during the first half of 1831. It should, however, be at once conceded that what attracts the approval of a modern student of political opinion, seeking varied and intelligent discourse, might have appeared to many of Blackwood's Tory readers at the time to have been a bewildering discordance. To such readers, the unambiguous position of the fully-fledged Alison period must have removed their confusion, although their worries about the future would not have been eased.

83 The first of these articles, 'Remote Causes of the Reform Passion,' stands somewhat apart from Alison's critiques of the Reform Bill. It has been reserved for special scrutiny in the next chapter.

In February (or, more precisely, at the time when the February number was being written), the most contentious question was the threatened royal creation of peers, should the House of Lords once more reject the Bill. Alison's article, 'A Creation of Peers,'⁸⁴ opposed the idea with arguments drawn from history and from constitutional theory. He claimed that the only precedent for such a 'stretch' (i.e. creating a batch of peers to carry through a specific political objective) was the creation of a dozen peers by Queen Anne, with the aim of obtaining a majority against the Duke of Marlborough. Thus our two greatest generals were to be the victims of a stretching of the royal prerogative. The implications for constitutional theory led Alison back to Paley and Blackstone. As Paley had observed, the balance of the constitution had been kept in the eighteenth century by the combining of the Crown with the House of Lords, when the popular spirit became strong in the House of Commons. But now there was a new alliance: Crown and Commons versus Lords. Thus, Alison concluded, the constitution was to be pierced to the heart in a way that Montesquieu and Blackstone deemed impossible. It could be argued against Alison that if the elected House was incapable of determining the mode of its own election, then the much-vaunted balance was awry in a different way from that which he postulated. The main argument against him, however, belonged not to constitutional theory but to political realism. His rallying-cry that the

84 Feb. 1832, pp.386-405.

Lords should defy this constitutional innovation by throwing out the Bill and addressing the king to remove the Ministry still causes one to shudder, even though it was accompanied by the significant concession that the peers should simultaneously declare their readiness 'to entertain a project of Reform founded on rational principles.' (p.401)

The atmosphere of crisis, and Alison's die-hard advocacy, combined to bring John Wilson more firmly behind the Duke of Wellington. Surveying the manner in which the Whigs had re-emerged from political oblivion, Wilson asked what had brought this about.

Fools and knaves say, the cry for Reform. The Duke of Wellington, it is asserted, destroyed himself by the declaration that there should be nothing of the sort as long as he was Minister. Not so.⁸⁵

Wilson then re-stated the case which Alison had made as soon as he began writing for the Magazine - Wellington was defeated by a combination of his various political opponents, including the 'True Tories.' Although not prepared to retract what had been the Magazine's position at the time,⁸⁶ Wilson was now prepared to rally behind the duke.

The true Tories overthrew that government, and in doing so, they did right; for how could they support the men who had "broken in upon the Constitution," and audaciously deceived the nation? Having done justice to themselves, and punished the delinquents, they are now willing to forgive, and, as far as may be, to forget; meanwhile mauling the miserable Ministry that now constitute the misgovernment. (p.435)

85 'Present Balance of Parties in the State,' March 1832, pp.425-447.

86 On this point Alison too would not budge from his stated position: in the July number he again condemned the ultra-Tory action in helping to bring down Wellington as 'unpardonable.' (p.67)

The passing of the second reading of the Bill in the House of Lords naturally provoked accusations of feebleness from Blackwood's. The main article upon the subject⁸⁷ was written by William Johnston, but included additional material from Alison⁸⁸ - evidence that their opinions were in close harmony. Johnston's hand can be detected in that part of the article which criticised the waverers for yielding to the threat of a creation, a threat about which he remained sceptical:

If the Irishman's reply to the footpad, "Fire away, and be damned to you," had been made to the Premier, when he talked of gazetting Peers, it would have been found, as it was by the Hibernian, that the threatened pistol was only a painted stick.
(p.854)

Such journalistic insouciance calls to mind the blustering talk in Ambrose's Tavern at the time of Catholic emancipation, and Christopher North's sharp reminder to his cronies of the difference between convivial bravado and public responsibility.⁸⁹ William Blackwood, however, shared the die-hard position of his contributors. When an early indication appeared of what the waverers meant to do, he had written to Johnston:

I fear much all is over. The Rats whether lay or clerical ought to be consigned to eternal infamy. It is cheering however to see that the Members of the House of Commons have continued so firm. If the Lords were only to act as consistently the Ministry and their Bill would all go to the devil in a twinkling and the good sense of the country would soon put down all those fools and knaves who have kept it in such a ferment.⁹⁰

87 'The Reform Debate in the Lords,' May 1832, pp.848-856.

88 Wellesley III, revisions, entry 1061.

89 See above, Chapter Six, pp.247-8.

90 26 March 1832, NLS, Acc.5643, B9, f.391.

The failure of the Tories to form a government in May (an episode occurring between issues of the Magazine, and not therefore amenable to direct comment), was a further disappointment. Writing to Blackwood with the news, on the day that Wellington advised the king to recall Grey, Johnston lamented the weakness which lay behind this reluctance to take office and fight a general election.

They say, damn them, that they haven't the money to fight the various places... They are beaten this time again by the newspapers and still they remain either blind, or too lazy, or too fond of their money to do what is necessary in this regard. Activity, skill, and the expenditure of a hundred thousand pounds, would write and publish the Whigs out of power in six months, but they won't do this.⁹¹

Anger and frustration gave way to despair. The Magazine for June 1832, published a few days before the Bill went to its third reading in the Lords, contained no article on current domestic politics. The final surrender, and the cold demeanour of Tory leaders towards Tory journalists, provoked William Johnston to exclaim:

By Heaven I am almost a revolutionist myself through sheer vexation, and saving some two or three, I could hear of the blowing up of the Parliament with as little emotion as if I were Guy Faux.⁹²

The final verdict of the Magazine upon the Reform Bill crisis was pronounced, appropriately enough, by Archibald Alison.⁹³ He began by pronouncing a eulogy over the body of the ancient constitution.

Within the tapestried chamber which still recounts the destruction of the Spanish Armada; under the roof which covered the hall of William Rufus; close

91 15 May 1832, NLS, MS4033, f.175.

92 Johnston to Blackwood, 18 June 1832, loc.cit., f.180.

93 'The Fall of the Constitution,' July 1832, pp.55-75.

to the sacred walls which yet contain the bones of Edward the Confessor; on the spot where Alfred established a thousand years ago, the foundation of the monarchy, the triumphant destroyer has stood, and a peal of exultation broke forth from the Demons of wickedness on earth and in hell, at the fall of the noblest monument of wisdom, the firmest bulwark of virtue, that the blessing of God ever bestowed upon a suffering world. (p.55)

An explanation followed, in the usual terms, of how this calamity had come to pass. On one important point, at least, Alison showed that he was capable of moving from rhetoric to realism. He argued that, given the pledge to the Whigs which the king, 'from his unsuspecting temper,' had granted, the Tories were right to refuse to take office in May. In office, the Tories would have been obliged to carry a measure which they had resolutely opposed.

It would have been Catholic Emancipation over again, on a far greater scale, and a far more momentous question. It was the most fortunate circumstance that has occurred, both to them and to England, in these disastrous days, that they had magnanimity and wisdom enough to reject power on such conditions. (p.73)

Alison's point has cogency. Displaced, defeated, and demoralised the Tories of 1832 may have been, but at least they did not inflict upon themselves the fresh wound of another 'betrayal'. It is true that Peel's refusal, on these very grounds, to support the duke in forming a government did lead to a period of estrangement between the two men. Personal coolness, however, was at least preferable to the flaming animosities which had existed in 1829-30 between the Tory leadership and a substantial section of the party. The old wound of 1829 could gain more time to heal, and the process of re-establishing the party in the reformed era could begin.

CHAPTER EIGHT

ARCHIBALD ALISON AND ALFRED MALLALIEU

Archibald Alison is perhaps more widely remembered from a brief - and disguised - reference in Coningsby than from any direct usage of his own voluminous writings.

Finally, Mr. Rigby impressed on Coningsby to read the Quarterly Review with great attention; and to make himself master of Mr. Wordy's History of the late War, in twenty volumes, a capital work, which proves that Providence was on the side of the Tories.¹

The dubbing of Alison as 'Mr. Wordy' was one of Disraeli's most unerring shafts. Alison's History of Europe would have earned him that soubriquet on its own, to say nothing of the other books, pamphlets and articles that flowed from his inexhaustible pen. Yet Alison's importance to Blackwood's Magazine, during the twenty years that followed his first political article in January 1831, renders him too central to the present study to be summarily dismissed by an epithet. Alison was the political mainstay of Blackwood's throughout the second half of the period covered here. In these years, the Magazine took its political character from him more than from any other single contributor. He contributed more than one hundred political articles by August 1846,² and a further 33 thereafter, together with another sixty

1 B. Disraeli, Coningsby; or the New Generation (1844), Bk. III, ch.2.

2 Counting separately those articles that formed items in a series - Alison's fondness for the series format: 'On Parliamentary Reform and the French Revolution', in 13 parts; 'Progress of Social Disorganization,' in 4 parts: helped to give him a regular platform in the Magazine.

pieces on other subjects: literature, history, art and biography. Alison's role in the political department of Blackwood's has been noted by R.B. McDowell in his valuable study of British Conservatism. McDowell characterises him, aptly, as 'an industrious, self-assured and verbose Scottish lawyer with strong opinions on a variety of topics.'³ F.W. Fetter describes Alison, rather more severely, as 'primarily a historian, and a historian who indulged in the most dogmatic and repetitious generalisations...'⁴

These brief, and largely uncomplimentary, characterisations apart, the main source for Alison is Alison himself. He left behind the manuscript of an autobiography, which his daughter-in-law edited, with assistance from the publishers, Wm. Blackwood and Sons, who brought it out in two weighty volumes in 1883.⁵ Alison himself edited a three-volume set of his essays, mostly first published in Blackwood's, which appeared in 1850. The entry in DNB, by Sir Leslie Stephen, relied heavily, but not always with complete precision, upon Alison's autobiography. Alison's correspondence in the Blackwood Papers is only occasionally illuminating, generally taking the form of brief notelets, acknowledging receipt of payments or returning thanks for approbation of his articles. Given the substantial nature of published autobiographical material on Alison, and the

3 McDowell, op.cit., p.17.

4 Fetter, J.P.E., p.92.

5 Sir Archibald Alison, Bart.^t DCL, Some Account of my Life and Writings. An Autobiography, 2 Vols (1883).
(Cited below as Autobiography.)

relative infertility of the manuscript material, no useful purpose would be served by embarking here upon a biographical study of the kind that was given earlier to his main predecessor, David Robinson, whose personal obscurity in the printed sources was compensated by the full and self-revelatory character of his correspondence with William Blackwood. Instead, after a brief summary of Alison's career other than as a contributor to Blackwood's, this part-chapter will be devoted to a scrutiny of Alison's qualities as a political writer.

Born on 29 December 1792, at his father's parsonage in Kenley, Shropshire, Archibald Alison came to Edinburgh in 1800 when his father was appointed to the Episcopalian chapel in the Cowgate. After attending Edinburgh University, he was called to the Bar in December 1814. This, together with his father's acquaintanceships,⁶ brought him into the company of the Whig literati of Edinburgh - Jeffrey,

6 The Rev. Archibald Alison enjoyed some repute both for his sermons and for his writings on matters of taste. He helped to initiate his son into the later stages of the Scottish Enlightenment, reading Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations with him in 1807, after which young Archibald enrolled in the classes of Dugald Stewart and John Playfair (during the winter of 1808-9). Alison senior appears to have had a good deal in common with the Rev. Sydney Smith, who wrote to Francis Jeffrey in 1806 that, 'Archy Alison is a charming fellow, his courtesy and affability like the loaves and fishes might easily be divided among 5,000 of his countrymen and many fragments left; he is an excellent man and improves by drink.' Quoted in Alan Bell, Sydney Smith, A Biography (1980, paperback ed. 1982), p.45. Henry Cockburn was very appreciative of the elder Alison as a preacher, and as a theorist of taste. (Karl Miller, Cockburn's Millenium, 1975, p.162).

Cockburn, Macvey Napier, and others. Although he eventually withdrew from their circle, finding it to be too much of an exclusive coterie, Alison acknowledged that such drawing-together was largely in reaction to the Tories' restrictiveness in the bestowing of legal patronage. Thus the Bar was Whig, while the Bench was Tory. Alison at this stage could see faults on both sides, and found companionship in a third sphere:

The unintellectual pride of the aristocratic Tories, the supercilious arrogance of the exclusive Whigs, produced a knot of young men in Edinburgh, who, though strongly attached to Conservative principles, associated little with either of these circles, but formed a society of their own, characterised by the usual marks of such legal associations.⁷

By that, Alison meant that they were clever, witty, and prone to tell anecdotes about the judges. He thus came into the company of John Hope, later Solicitor-General, J.G. Lockhart, and, occasionally, John Wilson. Here too he found cause for discomfort, the conversation being too narrowly professional, and, 'as usual in such fraternities, the stimulus of excessive potations or coarse conversations was somewhat too liberally applied.'⁸

Alison's relatively uncommitted position in these years, 1817-19, can be seen in his offering an article to the Edinburgh Review, on Irish poverty (rejected), and his contribution of several pieces on foreign travel and Scottish subjects to the newly-founded Blackwood's Magazine.⁹ In the early 1820s he became more firmly attached to the

⁷ Autobiography, I, 133.

⁸ Ibid. p.134.

⁹ Strout, Bib., p.139, lists the titles.

Tory side. Political conviction may well have been enhanced by an awareness that this offered a more open route to the legal service of the crown. In 1823 he obtained the post of advocate-depute, one of the other contenders being J.G. Lockhart. This brought the immediate function of preparing indictments and prosecuting criminals, and held the future prospect of the solicitor-generalship.

Alison's prospects of a politico-legal career, however, were jeopardised by the fall of the Tories in November 1830. The Scottish crown counsel resigned, and the blow was accentuated for Alison by the failure of two solicitors' firms which had provided him with lucrative work. The combined effect ¹⁰ was to reduce his income by over £1,000 per annum. Here was the decisive impetus which caused Alison thereafter to build a double career as lawyer and author. Having begun to write a history of Europe, during the legal vacations, he now offered it to Blackwood, together with a series of articles for the Magazine, comparing the first French Revolution with that of 1830. Indeed, he made the publisher a threefold offer: to send an article every month, to complete the first two volumes of his history, and to write a work on the criminal law.¹¹ And - being Alison - that is precisely what he did, in little more than two years.¹² His new additional career

10 This is the sense of the Autobiography, I, 295, which is not precisely rendered in DNB.

11 19 Nov. 1830, NLS, MS4027, f.13.

12 The subsequent progress of the History of Europe is discussed in Appendix IX 'The reception of Alison's History.'

was safely launched, as he recalled, with satisfaction, in his autobiography:

The laborious lawyer has been converted into the successful author; the cramped political partisan into the independent social thinker; the life emoluments of office into an early competence derived from honest exertion. (I, 298)

Alison did not neglect the legal side, however. During the first general election after the 1832 Reform Act, he was retained by Lord Aberdeen for attending to the Conservative interest in the registration court for Aberdeenshire. The fall of Melbourne's Ministry in November 1834 brought the prospect of a renewal of Alison's politico-legal career, with the chance of a nomination to the post of Solicitor-General. At the same time, however, Alison was presented with a more definite and more enduring alternative, to serve as Sheriff of Lanarkshire, and he chose security, moving to Glasgow in 1835, where he remained for the rest of his life. His appointment prompted a 'flattering letter' from Sir Robert Peel, which Alison acknowledged with thanks for Peel's compliments about his literary works.¹³ He promised the Prime Minister that the third and fourth volumes of his History would soon be on their way to him, adding that 'it will be to me a source of the highest satisfaction, if it can contribute, in the smallest degree, to the spread among thinking men of those moderate Conservative principles, on which your Administration is founded.'

¹³ 22 Dec. 1834, Peel Papers, B.M. Add. MS40407, f.57.

In addition to his regular judicial business, Alison had the responsibility for preserving the public peace. He distinguished himself by his firmness in dealing with intimidation and disorderliness by striking textile workers in 1837-38 and by miners in 1842-43. Amongst other public successes, Alison must have derived particular pleasure from defeating Macaulay for the lord rectorship of Marischal College, Aberdeen, in 1845, and Palmerston for the equivalent office at Glasgow University in 1851. Sir Robert Peel's election to the latter position, in November 1836, had brought him into closer contact with Alison in his capacity as Sheriff of Lanarkshire. Alison helped to arrange a public dinner in Peel's honour, where he was to deliver one of his most important speeches.¹⁴ Offering Peel hospitality at his home, Alison described himself as having devoted the best years of his life 'to the furtherance of Conservative principles from historical deduction.'¹⁵ Shortly before the 1837 general election, Alison wrote to Peel about the political position in the west of Scotland, and in 1842 he again proved useful, in sending a report detailing deposits into Glasgow savings banks, as evidence of working-class prosperity during Peel's first year of office.¹⁶ Such official and political services, alongside his eminence as an historian, brought Alison public honours in 1852. He received a baronetcy

14 Gash, Peel, pp.154-5; C.S. Parker, Sir Robert Peel from his Private Papers, 3 vols (1899) II, 327-8.

15 19 Nov. 1836, Peel Papers, 40422, f.190.

16 loc.cit., 40423, ff.331-3, and 40500, ff.151-2.

from Lord Derby's government, and an honorary DCL from Oxford University. Also honoured at the same university ceremony were Bulwer Lytton, W.E. Aytoun and Samuel Warren - all regular contributors to Blackwood's.¹⁷

Twenty-one years had elapsed since Alison's debut as a political writer in the Magazine. His thirteen articles in the series 'On Parliamentary Reform and the French Revolution' established him as the Magazine's principal political contributor.¹⁸ His appraisal of this series in his autobiography showed that he was not entirely lacking in self-criticism, given that the series was written at a time of heightened political passions.

I find, as may well be imagined, that it contains much exaggeration, frequent repetition, and some anticipations that have not been yet realised. But I do not find that the anticipations have been disproved by the event; the time only of their accomplishment was sometimes stated to be earlier than it has turned out.¹⁹

Alison's forceful contributions made a considerable impact. William Blackwood wrote to his son in India about the 'great interest' which they had aroused.²⁰ One admiring reader was Coleridge, who wrote to Blackwood on 26 May 1832 to express his appreciation:

If ever I was delighted with what, at the same moment, I felt as a gross flattery, it was on the Belief entertained by several of my friends that the 13 articles on Reform, the French Revolution, etc., had been contributed by me; and if perfect identity of sentiment, principle, and faith and feeling could

17 Autobiography, II, 49.

18 See above, Chapter Seven.

19 Autobiography, I, 305.

20 9 Feb. 1833, quoted in Annals, II, 108.

excuse the mistake, it might stand within the conditions of a Pardon. But at no period of my life could I have produced such a union of the Popular and the Profound.²¹

Clearly the authorship of the series was a matter of some speculation, giving amusement to Alison and his wife:

'Mr. Croker was frequently named; I was never thought of.'²²

The best-known modern appraisal of the series sees it as 'a perfect example of the political application of the history of the French Revolution by a man who was neither a politician nor a professor but a professional historian,'²³ a description of Alison that was, at this stage, correct only in anticipation. Alison's new profession in 1831 was that of a periodical writer, for which he received, in that year, a total of £195 from William Blackwood.²⁴ Acknowledging his final payment for the year, Alison indicated how he regarded this work:

In returning you my best thanks for your liberal and munificent conduct, I beg to assure you that tho' I do not pretend as a professional man to be able to afford to devote my time without remuneration to any object: yet my principal object in the papers which you have given a place in your miscellany has been the discharge of a public duty: and my best and most acceptable reward, the high and gratifying approbation with which your kindness has honoured them.²⁵

At the moment when this letter was written, the thirteenth, and last, article in the series was in the press, ready for publication in the January number. That same number

21 Griggs, op.cit., VI, 912.

22 Autobiography, I, 333.

23 Hedva Ben-Israel, English Historians of the French Revolution, (1968) p.100.

24 NLS, MS4029, ff.15, 21 and 16.

25 24 Dec. 1831, loc.cit., f.26.

contained two other articles by Alison: one on the state of public feeling in Scotland, and one on 'Remote Causes of the Reform Passion.' The latter²⁶ has been chosen for special attention here, by virtue of its wide-ranging character. It provides an illuminating insight into the deeper springs of Alison's thought, to be followed by the identification of recurrent themes derived from a survey of his other articles between 1832 and 1846.

The article opens with a cogent critique of what has come to be called the 'Cleopatra's nose' theory of history. To the common mind, great events appeared to have turned upon chance occurrences: Louis XIV's tottering kingdom was saved by the recall of Marlborough, which resulted from the ousting of his wife from royal favour by Mrs. Masham; Napoleon's decisive step to power came with his victory at Marengo, which turned on a cavalry charge by Kellerman; and Napoleon's downfall at Waterloo came after the Old Guard had been repulsed by a flanking charge of the 10th hussars under Sir Hussey Vivian. The real explanation, argued Alison, was that these were but 'the last link in a chain of causes,' only achieving their impact because the ground had been prepared by earlier, cumulative developments. He now adapted this historical argument to explain how Britain had come to be gripped by the 'Reform mania.' The central question was how it had come about that a cabinet could be formed, of men with the requisite rank and ability, and with the vociferous support

26 Maga, Jan. 1832, pp.1-18.

of a people hitherto renowned for its loyalty to tradition, in undertaking such a drastic and ruinous measure as the Reform Bill? In expanding upon the historic reverence of the English people for the old institutions and the old ways, Alison quoted Turgot, and went on to give an outline of English history that relied heavily upon the theory of the ancient constitution. To explain the current deviation (as he saw it), Alison began with a quotation from 'the ablest and most philosophical of living historians,' Guizot, to the effect that Christianity had derived its enduring influence from its working upon the human heart, rather than in seeking to prescribe regulations for the forms of government. This brought him to the crux of his argument:

It is the counterpart of the truth contained in these eloquent words that we are now destined to witness. As the fetters which Christianity imposed upon the selfish and malignant passions of the human heart is the real cause of the freedom, intelligence, and superiority of modern Europe; so it is in the abandonment of its precepts, the disregard of its injunctions, the contempt for its restraints, that the remote cause of the present distracted state of society is to be found. (p.5)

Making an analogy with ancient Rome (as he was to do in many future articles), Alison noted how Cicero attributed Roman success to superior piety. Conversely, when vice became stronger than virtue, democratic passions were excited, and selfishness paved the way for tyranny. Alison now made one of his favourite distinctions:

The real love of freedom is as distinct from the passion for democratic power, as the virtuous attachment of marriage, which "peoples heaven," is from the intemperate excesses of lust, which finds inmates for hell. (p.6)

As personal excesses led to individual ruin, so, under Providence, an erring community would reap the consequences

of its folly. Quotations from Tacitus and Suetonius about Roman degeneracy led Alison to the Roman maxim which he quoted as, 'Quos Deus vult perdere, prior dementat.' (p.8) To this minor inaccuracy (he ought to have used the adverbial prius, rather than the adjectival prior) Alison added the questionable gloss that, 'It is not that the Almighty blinds those whom he has doomed to destruction, but that he has doomed to destruction those who are blinded by their passions.'

Just as conservative conviction and Christian piety were two inseparable strands in Alison's own thinking, so he identified in his opponents a common link between democracy and infidelity:

The horrors of the first French Revolution were ushered in by the scepticism of Voltaire and the dreams of Rousseau, which, flowing through the souls of the people, sapped the foundations alike of private virtue and public institutions. The second Revolution sprung from the irreligion, which, like a leprosy, still overspreads the fair realms of France....(p.9)

The failure of the French to achieve a stable constitution, despite the painful lessons of experience, was easier to comprehend, thought Alison, 'when it is considered that two-thirds of the educated youth of France are irreligious, and one-half of all the children in Paris bastards.' (p.9) It would be interesting to know whether this last claim was numbered amongst the exaggerations which Alison observed on re-scrutinising his early political writings in later years. He would not, however, have found anything to regret in the former assertion for it was a lifetime conviction that education, without religion, was more likely to do harm than good.

From such a reading of events, it was obvious why the bishops who had voted against the Reform Bill were the especial objects of popular indignation: 'Nominally vented on the individuals who opposed their ambition, the fury of democracy was really directed against the faith which condemned their vices...' (p.9) Further instances of the conjunction of true freedom with piety, and of democracy with infidelity, were now given, with Sparta (Leonidas), Thebes (Epaminondas), Switzerland (William Tell), Scotland (Bruce) and the seventeenth-century Puritans in the former (admired) category, and the democracies of Athens, Florence, Ghent and Genoa in the latter, where, for all their splendid moments, there was 'no uniform progress or permanent freedom.' (p.10) This sweeping historical survey was reinforced from Scripture, with a quotation from St. Paul: 'I see well, O Athenians, that you spend your lives in seeing and hearing something new.' Alison then drove home his main argument:

The desire for innovation - the contempt for whatever is ancient, or established, or venerable - the incessant craving for novelty and excitation, are the earliest symptoms of that corruption of public thought which leads first to the strife of civil dissension, and then to the dissolution of private manners. For fifteen years past, this fatal passion has been incessantly spreading among us. (p.11)

It was the fondness for novelty that led the rising generation to prefer Byron and Moore to Milton and Pope; 'the ephemeral trash of modern novels' to the great histories of Hume, Robertson and Gibbon; 'the crude theories of Ricardo, and the rash paradoxes of McCulloch' to 'the cautious wisdom of Adam Smith, or the learned sagacity of

Hume.'(p.11) In the heat of his indignation, Alison did not even spare Sir Walter Scott, whose genius he warmly praised here, as in later articles,²⁷ but whose prolific ability had served 'to deprave the public taste.'

New novels, of heart-stirring interest, are now looked for as regularly as rolls for the breakfast table: and while his numerous imitators have failed in rivalling his transcendent genius, they have too faithfully kept up the appetite for novelty, which his unrivalled powers created in the public mind.(p.11)

Alison's new calling did not escape indictment:

The extraordinary prevalence of magazines and reviews, and the immeasurable increase of the daily press, in this age of fleeting literary talent, is another proof of the restless and unsettled disposition which forms so striking a feature in the temper of the times.
(p.11)

He lamented that in order to capture the attention of 'a fickle and inconstant public,' a periodical writer had to adopt more vehement language, and resort to greater extravagance. (One wonders if he was consciously practising what he preached.) Reviews escaped lightly, however, compared with the scathing denunciation which followed of the irresponsible and provocative daily press. Interestingly, he quoted at length here from Cobbett - and not as an illustration of what he meant, but as an independent critic, 'who will not be suspected of leaning unduly to the conservative side.'(p.12) Cobbett received further approving

27 In an essay on Chateaubriand (Maga, Aug. 1832, pp.217-233), Alison opened with a glowing tribute to Scott, perhaps intended to erase the partial criticism in the January article. Scott was praised for having 'done more than any man alive to elevate their [i.e. the people's] real character; to fill their mind with the noble sentiments which dignify alike the cottage and the palace...' (p.219)

citation for his riposte to Brougham, when the Whig worthy expressed the hope that he would see the time 'when every poor man in the country will be able to read Bacon.'

"It would be much more to the purpose", says Cobbett, "if he could give every poor man in the country the means of eating bacon." Practical sagacity never gave a better reproof to theoretical and perilous delusion. (p.13)

In moving on to an indictment of the Whigs, Alison used an argument that could have been turned against him, had any opponent possessed the stamina to read thus far in such an unrelenting barrage. He claimed that long exclusion from office, like similar misfortunes, such as the exile of the French émigrés, caused the victims to turn in upon themselves, refusing to learn from passing events, but rather clinging to sectarian dogmas. If that was the case, it could have been countered that a period of office should be salutary for the Whigs, and thereby for the country. A double broadside against Whig insidiousness and the Tory complacency that had given it scope brought Alison to his peroration. For all the stridency of his lamentation, he ended with the hope that 'if fatal measures can be retarded a little longer,' the tide of innovation would begin to recede. It was encouraging to see 'the reaction of genius and wisdom, against violence and ignorance,' and to see the reinvigoration of conservatism amongst the young men at Oxford and Cambridge. Suffering and misrule had brought their antidote, and in so doing, had pointed 'to the wisdom which finally governs the world.' (p.18)

It would be superficial - and perhaps unfair - to label

this one article as 'typical' of Alison, when there are a hundred other political pieces (between 1831 and 1846) to be taken into account. There was more to Alison than has been shown here, as will be demonstrated below and in the next chapter. Nevertheless, much of the essential Alison is here present. There is the prevalence of assertion over reasoned discourse. The reader is not so much brought to see the writer's viewpoint as confronted with it, and is either carried along in a forceful tide of conviction, or turns away in distaste. The phrase 'preaching to the converted' comes inescapably to mind. Of the other five writers particularly discussed in this study, Croly bears the closest similarities: Croly the professional preacher, Alison the son of a preacher. Both men viewed the world as taking its course under Providence; both were fond of classical quotations; both derived lessons from the Bible and history, although Alison stood out with the range of his historical examples; both were genuinely attached to liberty, but for them liberty depended (as it had done for Edmund Burke) upon a proper restraint on the passions of the 'swinish multitude.' Where Alison excelled - not only Croly, but all the other Blackwood's political writers, except perhaps De Quincey - was in the breadth of his reading and the facility with which he could call up testimony from past and present to support his case. Alison the advocate, returning home from the law-court, could bring to the bar of opinion, in his Blackwood's articles, a crowd of witnesses, ranging, in this piece alone, from Cicero to

Guizot, from Tacitus to Turgot, from Cobbett to St. Paul.

Throughout the years 1832-5 the steady flow of political articles from Alison continued, averaging at least one per month. From 1836, however, there was a reduction in the total output, combined with a partial shift towards historical and literary subjects, although articles on political, social and economic questions remained in the majority in every year until 1842. During 1842 and 1843, Alison only contributed one article to the Magazine, on the question of copyright, rallying somewhat in 1844 with six items, four of them socio-economic, before transforming himself into a more regular, but non-political, contributor in 1845-6. Thereafter he resumed the pattern of the late 1830s, 33 of the 46 articles in his closing years being on political, social and economic subjects. Alison explained this evolution in his autobiography, attributing the shift away from regular political articles to the pressure of completing his History, the propriety of withdrawing from political controversy when his official duties brought him into contact with opposing parties, and the desire to carve a more enduring niche by re-publishing some of his articles in volume-form, where an interleaving of belles lettres was deemed appropriate. The third explanation is convincing, but the first and second raise doubts. The biggest fall in his political contributions came after his History was completed, in June 1842.. (The work of revising and re-editing did continue, but that was well within the scope of Alison's formidable energies.) The cloak of anonymity protected his

official position, and, if there was a problem in this department, it was as great in general election years such as 1837 and 1841, when he contributed four and three articles, respectively, on political or economic questions, as in 1842, 1843 and 1845, when he published none. It may be suggested, therefore, that there was an additional reason for Alison's period of silence.

Alison's friendly contact with Peel continued until at least January 1842, when Peel wrote to him with further praise of his History, 'to which I frequently refer with great satisfaction and interest.'²⁸ Such appreciation must have inhibited Alison from attacking Peel's policies, yet their tendency made it increasingly difficult for him to write in their favour. The outcome was a troubled silence, until Alison finally took the offensive on a question that particularly worried him: the currency. It was one of his most long-standing convictions that great harm had been done to the economy by an over-restriction of note-issue, and an over-reliance on metallic currency. These were policies with which Peel had been associated since 1819. Matters came to a head with the article on the currency which Alison submitted in January 1845. The Blackwood brothers were still unwilling to depart from their policy of loyal support to the Conservative leadership.²⁹ An awkward situation arose, with Alexander Blackwood repeatedly returning the piece and requiring further excisions, particularly of statistical data which Alison deemed essential to the full force of his argument. Alison protested that,

28 20 Jan. 1842, Peel Papers, 40500, f.158.

29 See below, Chapter Nine.

'I shall not however again engage in any subject of political economy.'³⁰ The news that the article had finally been postponed provoked a last defence from Alison, who insisted that 'It sufficiently indicates our opinion on the contraction of the currency without running Sir Robert harder than the majority of your readers would approve, or diving into abstruse and subtle points which they could not understand.'³¹ Alexander, who confided to his brother John that the article 'was merely a repetition of his old things,' went to Glasgow to see Alison, who was 'very easily pacified.'³² It is true that Alison's subsequent letters resumed their friendly tone, and he wrote a heartfelt letter of condolence when he heard of Alexander's death in March. The fact remains, however, that Alison remained silent on current politics from then until near the end of Peel's Ministry.³³ Even the one such contribution which he did make was historical in construction: 'The Fall of Rome; its Causes at work in the British Empire,' (June 1846):

30 19 Jan. 1845, NLS, MS4073, f.9 (Also quoted in Annals, II, 214).

31 22 Jan. loc.cit., f.11.

32 8 Feb. loc.cit., f.155. Alison's feelings were further assuaged when the Blackwood firm agreed to publish the article as a separate pamphlet, at the request of the Industry Protection Society, which agreed to take a certain number of copies. 26 and 31 May, 1845, loc.cit., ff.38 and 40.'

33 In January 1846, two representatives of the Agricultural Protection Society, Newdegate and O'Brien, asked John Blackwood whether Alison (who had provided them with a pamphlet in defence of the Corn Laws, in 1844) would take a seat in parliament, 'if brought in free of expense at once.' Blackwood replied that it was incompatible with Alison's official position. John to Robert Blackwood, 26 Jan. 1846, NLS, MS4077, f.288, also quoted in Annals, II, 381.

an essay about which John Blackwood felt 'great unwillingness' to put it first in the June contents³⁴ - it was placed in the middle. Alison had to agree to the deletion of two paragraphs of concluding observations, and worse was to follow. His article on the fall of Peel's Ministry was rejected, for reasons which Alison attributed to the divisive legacy of Peel's leadership of the party, rather than to any real disagreement with his publisher:

I knew that Blackwood's private opinion coincided with what I had advanced in my essay; I could ascribe his refusal to insert it, therefore, to no other cause but a wish not to inflame a schism already sufficiently serious. The fact that such feelings predominated with the editor of the most stanch and intrepid Conservative publication in existence, afforded but a melancholy prognostication as to the future destinies of the country.³⁵

Alison's relative silence during most of the years of Peel's Ministry did at least leave an opening for other political contributors to come forward,³⁶ allowing a beneficial diversity of tone in the political writing. Alison's own style also evolved, moving away from the often hectoring, apocalyptic effusions of 1831-2, in favour of a more confident assumption that a Conservative recovery was in progress. It was also noticeable that he began to support his rhetoric by statistical data. For example, an article on Britain's diminished superiority over her maritime rivals, since the Navigation Acts were relaxed, was accompanied by ten tables of statistics.³⁷ The

34 John to Robert Blackwood, 11 May 1846, MS4077, f.312.

35 Autobiography, I, 551. The article was not wholly lost. It formed the basis of Alison's obituary on Peel, Maga, Sept. 1850, pp.354-372.

36 Discussed in Chapter Nine, below.

37 Maga, May 1834, pp.675-690.

distinctive characteristics of an Alison article lay in other directions, however, and it is to an identification of these that we now turn, to conclude this assessment.

The most enduring conviction was that we learn from history - or rather, we ought to do so, for, as Alison lamented in the first paragraph of his first political article,

It is a melancholy fact, verified by every day's observation, that the experience of the past is totally lost both upon individuals and nations. A few persons, indeed, who have attended to the history of former errors, are aware of the consequences to which they invariably lead... But, upon the great mass of mankind, the young, the active, and the ambitious, such examples are wholly thrown away.³⁸

Although still under forty, active and ambitious, Alison clearly numbered himself among the enlightened 'few persons' rather than the heedless 'great mass.' His articles are peppered with lessons drawn from history, particularly the history of revolutions.³⁹ Economic history was another fruitful sphere, especially where the supply of money was concerned, causing F.W. Fetter to dub him 'a Toynbee of monetary history.'⁴⁰ Alison was in no doubt that the historian's function extended to prediction, which his subject equipped him well to undertake:

History is not an old almanac, but the faithful mirror of the future reflected in the images of the past...⁴¹

38 Maga, Jan. 1831, p.36.

39 See, for example, the passage in Oct. 1831, p.611, beginning, 'Revolutions are never formidable when they are conducted merely by the poorest class...' (Hedva Ben-Israel, op.cit., p.100, gives an excellent summary of such lessons.)

40 Fetter, J.P.E., p.94.

41 Maga, Aug. 1834, p.246. (For a practical demonstration, see 'Municipal and Corporate Revolution,' Maga, June 1835, pp.964-977.)

Another, more painful, way in which we could learn was by suffering the consequences of our own folly. In the Preface to his Essays, written when so many of the movements against which he had fought appeared to be prevailing, Alison derived solace from the thought that, 'Suffering is the great Mentor of Nature to show us when we have gone astray...' Painful experience was likely to be the best teacher of fallen man. In this matter Alison was prepared to criticise his admired father:

His defect as a theologian and observer of mankind was an undue estimate of human nature - the fatal error of the age in which he lived - the error of the warm-hearted and benevolent in every age.⁴²

Here, it may be suggested, one finds the essential point of cleavage between the liberal and the conservative. The younger Alison believed in the essential constancy of human nature, as Hume had done before him, and it was a constancy of the bad as much as of the good:

There is nothing new in the moral world under the sun, because the changing theatre of human events exhibits in different ages, under every different combination of social affairs, the certain operation of the same passions, desires, and vices.⁴³

In his own way, however, Alison subscribed to a belief in progress, accruing from the lessons of experience, when erring man went his own way and incurred the consequences; or, as Alison put it, citing his favourite biblical quotation, '"Ephraim is joined to his idols; let him alone."

⁴² Autobiography, I, 44.

⁴³ Maga, Jan. 1837, p.77 (c.f. the well-known passage in Hume's Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding.)

That is the system of nature.'⁴⁴

Another hallmark of an Alison article was the frequency of his citation of authors whom he admired. This was evident in the sample-article discussed above, and a survey of his full range reinforces this point.⁴⁵ He thus provided a helpful guide to the historian of ideas, seeking to discover the sources which informed the mind of a nineteenth-century conservative. Alison's preferred reading may be grouped into two main categories: eighteenth-century British historical and constitutional writers, and contemporary French writers. In the former category, honourable mention was made of Paley, Blackstone, Hume and Burke. The favourite, however, was undoubtedly Gibbon, whose Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire was described by Alison as 'the greatest monument of historical industry and ability that exists in the world.'⁴⁶ It is clear from his autobiography that he began and ended his History of Europe in conscious imitation of Gibbon. Ever a shrewd judge, William Blackwood remarked that his early style was too 'Gibbonish.'⁴⁷ Needless to say, it was Gibbon's range, grandeur and penetrating depiction of the weaknesses of human nature that appealed to Alison, not his scepticism or levity in dealing with early Christianity.

Alison's readiness to cite French writers of his own

44 Autobiography, II, 363.

45 For detailed references, see Appendix X, 'Authors admired by Archibald Alison.'

46 Maga, Aug. 1838, p.145.

47 Autobiography, I, 303.

day was a striking characteristic, given the deep suspicions which Blackwood's political contributors - and not least, Alison himself - held towards France as the prime source of European instability.⁴⁸ For Alison, such writers were beacons amidst the mists and vapours of republican irresponsibility. He devoted not merely passing references, but whole articles, to the praises of Chateaubriand, Guizot, Mme de Stael and Alexis de Tocqueville. In this way he performed an educative function equivalent to that accomplished by other Blackwood's contributors, notably Lockhart and De Quincey, in acquainting British readers with the merits of German writers.

As for English writers of his own day, Alison was less admiring. In an interesting article on 'The Copyright Question,'⁴⁹ he offered one explanation for what he regarded as the frivolous and ephemeral character of so much contemporary English writing. The duration of copyright, he argued, was so short (at that time 28 years, or the author's lifetime, whichever was the longer) that a writer could not look to his descendants enjoying the fruits of his labours when their enduring merits came to be perceived. Great minds, claimed Alison, act more upon the next generation than upon their own, with which they are generally at variance. It would encourage them to persevere with their salutary work if, as well as doing their duty, they had the reassurance that their families would reap

48 The 'foreign policy' of Blackwood's is discussed in Chapter Nine.

49 Maga, Jan. 1842, pp.107-121.

the benefit. The element of special pleading here is obvious, the article being written in the year that Alison completed his History. This line of argument may, however, have contributed to the acceptance by parliament of an extended copyright period, in the Copyright Act of 1842, although the chief credit went to a persuasive speech by Macaulay.

It was not uncommon for Blackwood's writers to refer back to their own (anonymous) articles, in sustaining their arguments. Alison, however, went further, citing not only his anonymous self,⁵⁰ but the distinguished historian, Mr. Alison,⁵¹ and the worthy Sheriff of Lanarkshire.⁵² The most choice example occurred in his article on 'Practical Working of Trades' Unions' (March 1838), when he quoted at length from the address of the Sheriff of Lanarkshire at the close of the Glasgow winter assizes, on the subject of the lawlessness and intimidation which arose from the idleness and destitution occasioned by the 17-week cotton spinners' strike of 1837. The article continued:

When we first read this appalling statement, we entertained some doubts of its accuracy in some of the statistical details given, they so much exceeded any thing that, in this comparatively tranquil district, could have been conceived, and we own we were inclined to suppose that the imagination of Mr. Alison, naturally inclined to gloom, and charged with the horrors of the French Revolution, had exaggerated the evils so prominently brought under his notice; but subsequent investigations have produced the conviction that the statement of the Sheriff,

50 e.g. Maga Jan. 1837, p.71; Sept. 1839, p.302.

51 e.g. Maga Sept. 1839, p.303; Nov.1840, p.564; March 1844, p.391.

52 e.g. Maga Dec. 1839, pp.752-766.

so far from being exaggerated, falls short of the truth. (p.292)

How fitting that Sheriff Alison should be acquitted of exaggeration by his anonymous self!⁵³

One of Alison's most generalised statements of his political theory occurs in his autobiography (II, 362), where he depicts the 'democratic fervour' and the forces of conservatism as two naturally-associated forces, analagous to the centrifugal and the centripetal forces in the planetary system.

What the centripetal force, the impulse of gravitation, is to the heavenly bodies, the instincts of property, that is the forces of Conservatism, are to the moral world; and nations, albeit ever in motion, are by the opposite action of these two forces for ever retained in their orbits, as certainly as the planets are in their path through the heavens.

It will be recalled that precisely this analogy had been used in Blackwood's by De Quincey, in September 1830, to explain the role of Whigs and Tories in the English constitution. This notion of opposing but interrelated forces, or principles, links Alison and De Quincey with Burke ('conservation and correction') and Coleridge ('permanence and progression'), and would appear to be an integral element in conservative political theory. An eloquent statement of it occurred in one of Alison's most wide-ranging articles, 'The Future', in January 1836.⁵⁴

53 Writing to Blackwood about this forthcoming article, on 31 Jan. 1838, Alison observed: 'I originally thought of writing it in your Journal with my name, but I think it needless to do that now, as I can quote from my speech at the close of the Circuit the facts material to the argument...' NLS, MS4046, f.9.

54 In the interests of economy of space, and consistency of treatment with the other main contributors, this article cannot receive detailed discussion here. It is, however, well worthy of attention.

- What gave Rome the empire of the world, and brought the venerable ensigns bearing the words, "Senatus populusque Romanus," to the wall of Antoninus and the foot of the Atlas, the waters of the Euphrates and the Atlantic Ocean? Democratic vigour. Democratic vigour, be it observed, duly coerced by Patrician power; the insatiable ambition of successive consuls, guided by the wisdom of the senate; ... What has spread the British dominions over the habitable globe...? Democratic ambition; democratic ambition, restrained and regulated at home by an adequate weight of aristocratic power; a government which, guided by the stability of the patrician, but invigorated by the activity of the plebeian race, steadily advanced in conquest, renown, and moral ascendancy.... (p.105)

A characteristic theme of Alison's articles was the conviction that more harm than good had been done by the expansion of secular education, unaccompanied by an equivalent commitment to the inculcation of religious and moral principles. One vivid protestation must stand for Alison's reiterated scepticism about the so-called 'march of mind':

It is not by being told about the caves at Elephanta, and the size of the Pyramids; the Upas Tree, and the Falls of Niagara; the diameter of the Earth, and the satellites of Jupiter; the architecture of Athens, and the Cathedral of York; the battle of Hastings, and the height of the Andes, that the labouring poor are to be taught the regulation of their passions, the subjugation of their wicked propensities, or the means of withstanding the innumerable sensual temptations by which they are surrounded. They may amuse an hour, but they will not improve a life; they may interest the imagination, they will not correct the heart.⁵⁵

Despite his doubts about what good would come from extending the kind of education favoured by utilitarian reformers, Alison was far from being blind to the role of

55 'Progress of Social Disorganization. No.I: The Schoolmaster,' Feb. 1834, pp.228-248. See also Sept.1835, p.393; Jan. 1836, p.100; Feb.1839 pp.275-6.

government in alleviating social problems. Here he could draw upon his experience as sheriff, and upon his sincerely paternalistic concern for the victims of economic hardship. He records in his autobiography the surprise of trades-union representatives when, on his being questioned by Lord Ashley at the Select Committee on Combinations, he strongly advocated an upper limit of ten hours to the working day.⁵⁶ A similar conjunction of stern discipline and practical reform characterised his handling of social questions in the Magazine. In September 1839, for example, after some harsh words about the drunkenness and improvidence of Glasgow operatives, he went on to recommend a set of social reforms: improved working-conditions; church extension; heavier duties on spirits, but none on such basic items as soap and paper; encouragement of savings and insurance; and alleviation of the new Poor Law.⁵⁷ In November 1841, Alison carried his argument further, maintaining that while Adam Smith's non-interference principle was sound as regards the augmentation of national wealth, it was not so serviceable for the relief of national misery or the elevation of national character. The scale of problems in industrial areas was such that neither private benevolence nor local legislation could cope unaided by the involvement of a wider system of government.⁵⁸ It was perhaps an awareness of the social concern of their long-

⁵⁶ Autobiography, I, 408.

⁵⁷ 'The Chartists and Universal Suffrage', pp.289-303.

⁵⁸ 'Social and Moral Condition of the Manufacturing Districts of Scotland,' pp.659-673.

serving sheriff, together with the conventional pressures to do honour to a local notable, that caused so many working-people to line the route from Alison's Glasgow home, when his coffin was taken to the North British railway station (for burial in Edinburgh), in May 1867. The obituary in Blackwood's understandably remarked upon the respect paid from such a quarter to 'the most unbending Conservative in Great Britain.'⁵⁹

Alfred Mallalieu

A remarkable document is to be found in the Aberdeen Papers, in the British Library.⁶⁰ It sets out, in nineteen sides of closely-written quarto sheets, the claims of Alfred Mallalieu 'to the consideration of H.M. Government.' Dated 4 August 1844, the statement is accompanied by a letter from Mallalieu to Lord Aberdeen, on 6 August, giving a briefer version of his case for receiving some public appointment.⁶¹ In the letter, Mallalieu adduces his 'habitual discussion for many years, as a public writer of some repute, of all public questions, and especially of those bearing on foreign policy, and on commercial, financial and statistical science and legislation.' He points out that he has not been an 'importunate place or favour hunter,' but has acted public spiritedly, at the sacrifice of his own property. In offering his claims to the consideration of Aberdeen and Peel, he emphasises that he does not wish his case to be

59 July 1867, p.128. (The author was E.B. Hamley.)

60 Add. MS43243, ff.125-134.

61 Ibid., ff.123-4.

referred to Treasury officials, preferring to deal with the principals. Aberdeen's response was tardy and discouraging, and he reported Peel as having 'no previous knowledge' of the episode in 1831-2 which formed the crux of Mallalieu's case.⁶² A fortnight before the end of Peel's Ministry, Mallalieu renewed his application, this time asking Aberdeen to bring it before the Duke of Wellington.⁶³ He had been particularly stung by Peel's reported remark, which he challenged with a claim that, could it be substantiated, would oblige the established version of the political history of the period to be rewritten.

And I may be pardoned for telling Sir Robert that, when the history of those times comes to be written, the truth will not be told if it be not stated that I was virtually the re-founder of the party under its present title of Conservative, and not Sir Robert as assumed. His was doubtless the greater work of construction on the foundations I laid.

That Mallalieu had a good conceit of himself is already obvious. Was he, though, a deluded megalomaniac in making such a claim, or - granted at once its exaggerated nature- did it have any validity? This problem needs to be addressed if Mallalieu's work for Blackwood's Magazine is to be placed in the context of his wider career.

Alfred Mallalieu was born in Lancashire, in 1790. At the time of his applications to Lord Aberdeen he still possessed a small family property near Peel Fold, the ancestral home of the Prime Minister's family (which added

62 16 Sept. 1845, 43244, ff.348-9.

63 17 June 1846, 43246, ff. 189-194.

to Mallalieu's sense of neglect, in his letter of June 1846). He explained in his long Statement that he had been 'brought up in a manufacturing and mercantile capacity' but had preferred not to pursue it. In a well-informed article on 'The Cotton Manufacture,' in Blackwood's for March 1836, Mallalieu refers to Mr. Jonathan Mallalieu of Manchester, 'a merchant then largely concerned in the exportation of yarn, who was also known before as the chief of an extensive spinning-establishment.' (p.410) As the context of the reference was c.1800, it may be suggested that Jonathan Mallalieu was perhaps Alfred's father or uncle. Although not attracted to manufacturing industry, Alfred Mallalieu did gain practical experience of commerce, before becoming a professional writer thereon. He spent the year 1821-2 in Cuba.⁶⁴ Returning to England he became secretary to the Constitutional Association, in the latter part of 1822.⁶⁵ He resigned in protest against the association's policy of press-prosecutions, and became attached to two South American legations, first for Peru and then for Chile.

The turning-point in Mallalieu's life came in 1830. He had crossed over to France, intending to start a long European tour, but the outbreak of the July Revolution caused him to stay. He described his experiences for the Morning Post, thus beginning his contact with the press.

64 Statement of 4 Aug. 1844. In an article in Blackwood's, in Feb. 1837, p.158, he showed a personal knowledge of Havana.

65 Thus serving the body from which David Robinson had recently been dismissed. See above, Chapter Three, p.75.

He also became friendly with the British ambassador, Lord Stuart de Rothesay, who was to give him valuable support in Conservative circles. Discussions with another British resident in Paris, George Ivens, who ran the foreign news department of The Times and contributed to the Gazette de France, gave Mallalieu the idea of returning to England, in May 1831, to seek the establishing of a newspaper capable of rivalling The Times. It was this project which he came to regard as constituting his special claim to reimbursement from the leaders of the Conservative party.

In the aftermath of Wellington's downfall, some of the more politically active Tories became belatedly aware of the need to recruit support in the periodical press. A small committee of ex-Ministers was set up to manage the press, and early consideration was given to the idea of establishing a Tory morning paper with resources commensurate with those possessed by The Times.⁶⁶ Terms could not be agreed with Baldwin, the proprietor of the Standard (an evening paper), so it seemed that the Tories would have to settle for working through an established morning paper, the Morning Post. It was at this point that Alfred Mallalieu arrived on the scene, not as the bearer of a new idea, for it was already under discussion, but as someone eager to keep it on the agenda. Shortly after his arrival, according to his Statement, he drew up a Memoir 'on the means and appliances for establishing a Conservative press.' He suggested that Conservative newspapers should be established

66 A. Aspinall, Politics and the Press, op.cit., p.330.

in the provinces, supported by local subscriptions, to be supplemented, if necessary, from a central fund. That fund might also pay the salaries of centrally-selected editors. Also, a great morning newspaper should be established, 'to gain the confidence and the sympathies of the middle classes.'⁶⁷ The Memoir was presented, in Mallalieu's narrative, by Lord Aberdeen to the Duke of Wellington, who approved of its recommendations. This version, however, does not accord with information to be found in the appendices to A. Aspinall's Politics and the Press, (p.468).⁶⁸ There part of a letter is quoted, sent to the Duke of Wellington by Viscount Mahon and dated 25 September 1831:

I transmit to your Grace a memorial which I have received from Mr. Mallalieu on the peculiar importance of a new paper at the present crisis. I was very sorry to learn from Mr. Gleig while I was in London, that (probably on account of the Dorsetshire election) some difficulty had arisen on the necessary funds. If this opportunity be lost, it may be difficult to find another as favourable...

Apart from the discrepancy about the name of the transmitter of Mallalieu's Memoir, the letter is significant in two other ways. First, it casts doubt upon how soon Mallalieu composed his Memoir after his return from France; and second, it introduces the name of Gleig. The Rev. G.R. Gleig was both a friend of Wellington and a regular contributor to Blackwood's. As early as April 1831 (that is, while Mallalieu was still in France) Gleig had written

⁶⁷ Wording comes from the 1844 Statement.

⁶⁸ The account given in the present chapter is based upon a correlation of five sources: the Aberdeen Papers, the text of Aspinall's Politics and the Press, appendices thereto, the preface to Aspinall's Three Diaries, and Wellington, Despatches, op.cit., VII, 568-572.

to Wellington, urging the need to found Tory newspapers in the provinces, and volunteering to write leading articles for such Tory journals as could be recruited in Kent, during the crisis over the Reform Bill.⁶⁹ Proposals strikingly similar to those in Mallalieu's Memoir were also made by Thomas Baker of Southampton, in a letter to Wellington on 19 October 1831.⁷⁰ Mallalieu thus appears to have been one (doubtless strident) voice in a chorus, rather than a solitary prophet.

Mallalieu's memory was also at fault in blaming the diversion of party funds to support Lord Ashley in the Dorset by-election for the party's failure to finance his acquisition of the Public Ledger newspaper. At that stage in the proceedings (Sept.-Oct. 1831) his project was to take over, not the Public Ledger, but the Morning Herald, as a letter from Mallalieu to Aberdeen at the time confirms.⁷¹ As the prospects of acquiring the Morning Herald began to fade, however, the less successful Public Ledger was canvassed by Mahon and Gleig.⁷² The Duke continued to be dubious about raising party funds for either proposition, not seeing a clear limit to the expenses that might be involved, but he did regard Mallalieu as an honest man.⁷³ Mallalieu's commitment does indeed appear genuine enough, enhanced by a not unworthy desire to be the editor of a London morning newspaper. In late November, the scheme of using Baldwin's expertise to found a new morning paper was briefly revived, with Lord Lowther taking an active part in the negotiations.⁷⁴

69 Aspinall, Three Diaries, pp.lix-lx.

70 Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p.469.

71 19 Oct. 1831, *ibid.* pp.470-1.

72 *Ibid.*, p.472, letter from Mahon to Wellington, 25 Oct. 1831.

73 Wellington to Gleig, 23 Oct. 1831, Despatches, VII, 568.

74 Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p.335. (Lowther's involvement prompts the recollection of his association with another Blackwood's writer, William Johnston).

Once again the likely costs proved too great, so the way was left clear for Mallalieu to negotiate for an interest in the ailing Public Ledger.

As early as December 1831, Mallalieu was presenting himself as having 'succeeded in securing the established morning journal, the Public Ledgerfor the service of the Conservative interest,' provided that a 'moderate sum' was forthcoming from party supporters to supplement his own resources.⁷⁵ Lord Lowther, however, was doubtful whether the Public Ledger was worth the expenditure of the sums sought by Mallalieu, nor did he see much chance of their being obtained.

One of the worst signs of the times is that none of our old literary Tory supporters will risk any part of their capital in a Tory morning newspaper. They have no confidence in such a scheme, and think the Tories a declining party. Then, the Tories themselves run away directly a subscription is proposed to guarantee Baldwin or any other person against loss, in undertaking such a paper.⁷⁶

Mallalieu, however, persevered, and on 18 June 1832 he wrote to tell Lord Aberdeen that he had finally acquired the Public Ledger, on a 21-year lease in which he held the controlling share.⁷⁷ He had also secured an equal share in the British Traveller, an evening paper. His plans were to re-title and enlarge the Public Ledger (it became the Guardian and Public Ledger), to which end he had secured a subscription of nearly £2,000 'from several high spirited and distinguished noblemen.' That, however, would not suffice, so Aberdeen was invited to ask Wellington for a

75 Extracts from a letter from Mallalieu to Mrs. J. Westmorland, reported by her to Duke of Wellington, 28 Dec.1831, *ibid.*, p.473.

76 Lord Lowther to Lord Lonsdale, 5 Jan.1832, quoted in Politics and the Press, p.334.

77 Aberdeen Papers, 43236, ff.96-98.

further £1,000 from party funds. Mallalieu rejected the 'narrow minded' view that such help for his newspaper would be prejudicial to other Tory journals, the Albion⁷⁸ and the Morning Post. For the time being, however, Mallalieu had to be content with the £1,950 which had been raised by subscription.

Parallel with his efforts to invigorate the Tory press, Mallalieu was also giving thought to matters of party organisation. He claimed in his 1844 Statement that at the end of 1831 he wrote a Memoir to Lord Stuart de Rothesay, who forwarded it to the Duke of Wellington, in which he advocated the creation of a central association to unite the party and to provide a reference library of books and periodicals. This was indeed the time that plans were afoot from which the Carlton Club came into being early in 1832. It is unlikely that the notion of a central association owed anything in particular to Mallalieu, but the idea of a reference library was more characteristic of him. He claimed in his 1844 Statement to have managed the literary and library department, gratis, during its first year of operation. A more firmly identifiable contribution of Mallalieu to the party's organizational thinking was the letter which he wrote to Lord Aberdeen on 3 July 1832, and which Aberdeen passed on to Herries.⁷⁹ Although a summary of this is to be found in a relatively accessible work, it merits repeating here, as it constitutes the strongest single argument for attaching some (albeit guarded) credence to Mallalieu's grandiloquent claim of June 1846.

78 Of which William Johnston had become editor in November 1831.

79 Herries MSS, cited in Aspinall, Three Diaries, pp.xliv-xlv

Mallalieu argued that the Reform Act had created a new situation, in which new electioneering tactics would have to be adopted, especially in the towns. In time, landed members of parliament would find their predominance challenged 'by the superior shrewdness, tact, intelligence and untiring activity of the trading representatives.' It was therefore important to ensure the careful selection and support of candidates to challenge the Radicals in provincial cities. To that end, a committee of 24 should be established in London (perhaps under the chairmanship of Herries), consisting of 12 members of parliament and 12 representatives of commercial, shipping and manufacturing interests. In that way aristocratic and middle-class members of the party would be drawn more closely together in the common struggle. Although Mallalieu's notion of the central management of candidates was too advanced to be acceptable in 1832, his identifying of electoral organization and the reaching-out to the middle classes as the two keys to the re-establishing of the party did indeed foreshadow the achievements of Peelite Conservatism.⁸⁰

Mallalieu's direct concern, however, remained the Guardian and Public Ledger. On 3 March 1833 he wrote, as the editor, to Wellington to give an account of his stewardship.⁸¹ Lacking the capital to equip the paper on a scale to rival The Times (which, as he reminded Wellington,

80 It adds some force to Mallalieu's claims of originality that F.R. Bonham's proposal in May 1835 of the creation of a small standing election committee is described by Professor Gash as 'something of a novelty'. N. Gash, 'The Organization of the Conservative Party 1832-1846, Part II: The Electoral Organization', Parliamentary History, 2 (1983), p.132.

81 Politics and the Press, pp.476-7.

he had estimated would cost £10,000, spread across three years, or £5,000, accepting some inferiority in foreign intelligence), he had made the best of the £2,000 actually available. Although the Guardian's circulation had increased, its losses in the second half of 1832 had amounted to £1,300, and a further loss of £800 had been incurred by the British Traveller. Mallalieu and two other partners (performing between them the functions of editor, sub-editor and book-keeper), had first reduced their weekly salaries of seven guineas per week by a third, and then refrained from taking any payment. At this critical juncture, when there were some signs that the paper was approaching viability, he appealed for further funds. Financial collapse was averted by the sale of the British Traveller to the Albion, and by the raising of £1,300 through a public subscription sponsored by Lord Stuart de Rothesay.⁸² Rival Tory papers, however, were receiving more direct support, notably the Morning Post, where W.M. Praed was active.⁸³ A favourable mention of the Guardian in an article (by Alison) in Blackwood's, in November 1833 (p.800), may have been some consolation, but the problems of cash-flow could not be overcome. On 29 April 1834, Mallalieu finally disposed of his interest in the Guardian and Public Ledger, selling it back to the parties from whom he had purchased it, who then re-sold it

82 1844 Statement.

83 Praed, however, like William Johnston, complained about the lack of real commitment to the press by the party's leaders. Three Diaries, p.lxi, and see above, Chapter Five.

to some of the proprietors of the True Sun.⁸⁴ Mallalieu's exhaustion was as much physical as financial. He informed William Blackwood that his working-hours for the past two years had never been less than 2 PM to 6 AM.⁸⁵

A fortnight before he left his newspaper, Mallalieu had completed his first article for Blackwood's Magazine. The way in which he records this in his 1844 Statement is a further instance of his overblown manner of depicting his work. Having already been writing for Blackwood's before he disposed of the Guardian, Mallalieu claimed, he now 'redoubled' his exertions for 'that great periodical.' It would appear that Blackwood had first contacted Mallalieu at the end of 1833, on the advice of the future Lord Dalhousie.⁸⁶ Mallalieu's article on 'The Corn Law Question', published in the Magazine for May 1834 (Part II), was his only article for William Blackwood. The benefits arising from his recruitment were thus reserved for the period of the brothers, although here, as in the other five cases already discussed in this study, it was the shrewd judgment of William Blackwood that brought the decisive approach.

During the period 1835-43, Alfred Mallalieu was a real asset to Blackwood's Magazine. He contributed twenty articles, specialising in question of foreign affairs, tariff policies and industrial matters. His work was markedly, and beneficially, different in character from much of the regular political coverage in the Magazine in this period undertaken by Alison, Croly and others. Where they

84 Mallalieu to Wm. Blackwood, 6 May 1834, NLS, MS4039, f.144.

85 Ibid.

86 As recalled by Mallalieu in a letter to John Blackwood, 9 Feb. 1850, NLS, MS4090, f.59. (James Ramsay, as he then was, would have been aged only 21 in 1833.)

relied for much of the time⁸⁷ upon standard political rhetoric, and upon well-rehearsed abuse of the Whigs and praise of the Conservatives, Mallalieu based his arguments upon assiduously-procured evidence from an extensive range of sources. Naturally he was not reticent in pointing out to the Blackwood brothers his special merits.

My opinion is, and I act upon it, that it is of no use to you, whatever profit it may be to me, to send you reasonings founded upon newspaper news and the common on dits. I could write you ten articles a month in that style with less trouble than the one I send you. Facts - and facts unknown to others are what tend to the advantage of Maga, and my reputation, or what is more to the point - my own satisfaction - for out of the high circle of politics I am little known - and I have no ambition to be known....⁸⁸

The boast was not an idle one. Mallalieu's articles contain numerous instances of pertinent information derived from remote places or other periods of time, giving his work both breadth and depth of coverage. In discussing 'The Canada Question', for example, in the Magazine for June 1835,⁸⁹ he traced the current troubles back to defects in the Act of 1791. Mallalieu observed that those defects were pointed out at the time by Mr. Lymburner, the joint-agent of the British settlers in Quebec, in a remonstrance which he delivered at the bar of the House of Commons on 23 March 1791. The article included quotations from the remonstrance, and Mallalieu added in a footnote (p.913)

- 87 Alison's greater recourse to statistical evidence, in this period, has already been noted, above p.324.
 88 15 Dec. 1835, NLS, MS4041, f.56. Quoted in Annals, II, 201-2.
 89 Mallalieu delayed sending the article until he had seen the newly returned aide of the Governor, and a two-man deputation which had also just arrived from Canada. Letters to Alex. Blackwood, 11 and 12 May, 1835, NLS, MS4041, ff.38 and 40.

that Lyburner was still alive, having recently celebrated his 89th birthday. A similar citation of recondite sources can be seen in Mallalieu's handling of the 'War with China and the Opium Question,' in the Magazine for March 1840. (pp.368-384) He provided figures relating to the opium trade, derived from the Chinese Repository, gave extracts from the 'Proclamation to Foreigners,' by Imperial Commissioner Lin, on 18 March 1839, and quoted from a little-known Chinese treatise about the effects of opium.⁹⁰ Given his background, it was to be expected that Mallalieu should be especially well-informed about South America. He appeared equally au fait, however, with the working of the Zollverein (Jan.1836, pp.49-79) and the development of the Russian economy (Feb. 1836, pp.145-155, duplicated pagination). The state of the money market was another special interest, as he pointed out to Peel in December 1842, on sending the Prime Minister two copies of the Morning Herald, carrying his financial articles. Mallalieu told Peel he was sorry that he had not begun this practice sooner, his information being 'obtained from sources of my own, which I can venture to assert, because I am assured of the fact, has [sic] not been possessed to so late a date and in so complete a form at the Board of Trade.'⁹¹

90 c.f. De Quincey's article in June (pp.717-738), where the strength lay not, as one might have expected, in any disquisition about opium, but in the appreciation of De Quincey's powers of syllogistic reasoning and his grasp of Ricardian economics.

91 Peel Papers, 40521, f.48. In fairness to Mallalieu, it should be noted that his discussion in Blackwood's of what should be the proper role of the Bank of England, ('Whig-Radical Prosperity', Feb. 1837, pp.145-162) has been praised by F.W. Fetter as being 'incisive and well balanced', and carrying suggestions that were 'prophetic' in character. Fetter, J.P.E., p.98.

Mallalieu's most impressive set of articles, in terms of the wealth of information displayed, appeared in the Magazine for 1843. He published five substantial pieces, each carrying the initial title 'Commercial Policy', followed by the qualifying indication 'Spain' (May), 'Russia' (June), 'in Europe' (August), 'Ships, Colonies and Commerce', I and II (Sept. and Nov.). Together they provide a good indication of the merits which he brought to the Magazine.⁹² The article for May is also useful in giving a glimpse of the master at work. He explained that he derived his evidence from continental books and pamphlets: 'Of these, as of brochures, filletas, and journals, we have various specimens now on our library table.' (p.677)

Most characteristic was Mallalieu's fondness for providing tables of statistics. These must have been heavy going for some of the Magazine's readers, and they cost him much effort too. In his third letter to William Blackwood he mentioned the trouble to which he had gone in his article on the Corn Laws, sorting out contradictory statistical details in parliamentary documents.⁹³ A year later, he reminded the brothers of the extra work entailed by his approach.

Statistical articles as you are aware require time and reflexion. It is easier to write a dozen pages of purely composition matter than one of figures.⁹⁴

It should not be assumed, however, that Mallalieu's writing was of the dry, factual kind which one might have expected

92 Limitations of space prevent the inclusion here of an extended case-study. Mallalieu's contributions, particularly on foreign affairs and social questions, will, however, be discussed in the next chapter.

93 12 April 1834, NLS MS4039, f.142.

94 2 Feb. 1835, MS4041, f.36.

from such a paragon of precision. On the contrary, he strove after 'fine' writing, resorting to irony, drollery and a rich range of metaphors. In the most important political article which he wrote for Blackwood's,⁹⁵ he opened by comparing the gathering social revolution with an Alpine avalanche descending upon a happy valley. Then he depicted the 'destructives' as pyromaniacs heaping faggots onto a burning house. Then he switched to a medical metaphor, seeing the craving for change as a distemper spreading through the body politic. And all this was in his first column! Mallalieu was similarly generous with his use of foreign words and phrases. The first sentence of his first article contained French words in four places (as part of a gastronomic metaphor), and there were two further French phrases and two in Latin on the first page.⁹⁶ The tone of Mallalieu's writing was very much that of a 'superior' person, addressing a discriminating readership in a world otherwise composed of fools and knaves.

Like Archibald Alison, he exploited his anonymity to corroborate his arguments with references to his work in other places - which for Mallalieu meant his proliferating newspaper articles. Between 1837 and 1840 he wrote financial articles for The Times, and then moved on to the Morning Herald and the Courier. He also wrote leaders for various provincial newspapers, in Newcastle (the Newcastle Journal, 1836 - 42), Devonport, Stockport and Merthyr.⁹⁷

95 'The Whigs - the Radicals - the Middle Classes - and the People', April 1837, pp.553-572, discussed below, Chapter Nine.

96 Mallalieu excelled himself in an article in Jan. 1836, where, on one page (p.50) he resorted to phrases in French, Spanish, Italian and Latin.

97 1844 Statement - substantially confirmed by his correspondence with the Blackwood brothers.

It is likely that he did likewise for the Manchester Courier, as he used its office as a temporary address in 1835. Such connexions help to explain his praise, in a Blackwood's article in February 1837, for 'our able and uncompromising fellow-labourer, the Newcastle Journal', (p.148), and 'that cautious but most ably conducted journal, the Manchester Courier', (p.152). It would also appear that Mallalieu did part-time work at the Foreign Office. Explaining his delay in completing an article, he told the Blackwood brothers that 'I am forced to be at the Foreign Office to-day being my day - and having a packet from St. Petersburg requiring attention and answer besides.'⁹⁸ As the forthcoming article was on 'Commercial Policy: Russia,' one may detect another avenue of Mallalieu's specialist information.

Not being a victim of false modesty, Mallalieu was not afraid to rebuke the Blackwood brothers if they failed to derive full benefit from their prize asset. An article which he prepared on the subject of the Spanish loan, in 1835, was not accepted, and the loss was the Magazine's.

You will have seen the panic here in the Spanish loan market. I regret more than ever that I did not prevail upon you to insert the article I once wrote - remodelled - in last number. It would have taken prodigiously, and as everything has happened almost exactly in accordance, Maga would have sustained a reputation for second sight.⁹⁹

The brothers were also at fault in complaining about a late article on current politics. Such articles, Mallalieu asserted, had to be up to the minute, but if the brothers

98 16 May 1843, NLS, MS4066, f.249.

99 16 June 1835, MS4041, f.44.

could not accommodate them, he would 'drop politics excepting on occasions where the scene or the action are such as to make the question of time of no importance.'¹⁰⁰ Although paid at the Magazine's regular rate of around 12 guineas per sheet, Mallalieu's penchant for long articles brought him higher earnings than more concise contributors. In 1836, for example, one of his most productive years for Blackwood's, his five articles brought him a total of £97.10.0.¹⁰¹ As Mallalieu's journalistic activities proliferated, however, he became less dependent upon Blackwood's - and less dependable. Alexander Blackwood informed Robert in 1840 that Mallalieu was 'not to be at all depended upon' for a political article, being so busy at the Courier and the Morning Herald.¹⁰² His connexion with The Times had ended by then, although there was to be a sorry aftermath.¹⁰³

Mallalieu's last article for the Magazine was published in November 1843, although he retained some contact with the Blackwood firm thereafter. Writing to John Blackwood in

100 11 April 1837, MS4045, f.26. Mallalieu complained again about the restrictive effects of the Magazine's printing deadline, 12 April 1838, MS4047, f.25.

101 Blackwood's Contributor's Book (at offices of Wm. Blackwood and Sons). The five articles occupied 106 pages.

102 8 May 1840, NLS, MS4050, f.119.

103 Out of respect for Mallalieu's dignity, and in order to keep the main text within bounds, this episode has been relegated to an appendix. See Appendix XI, 'Mallalieu and the Bow St. affair.'

1850 about what proved to be an abortive scheme to assume the direction of the Hampshire Guardian, Mallalieu attributed the cessation of his Blackwood's work to problems occasioned by the prolonged illness of his wife.¹⁰⁴ In 1856 he referred to his having recently given up the editorship of a Parisian magazine.¹⁰⁵ On 10 January 1863 his long and busy life came to an end.

The temptation to prick Mallalieu's pomposity is hard to resist. Yet there was substance behind the self-congratulation, and some excuse for the self-pity. Aberdeen declined even to bring Mallalieu's importunate claim of June 1846 before the Duke of Wellington, provoking Mallalieu to refer in a letter to Blackwood a month later to 'a miserable aristocratic set of Tory skinflints.'¹⁰⁶ In that same letter, he urged the adoption of 'a Liberal position' in the Magazine.

Go hard for education in the right sense - for governmental reform - law reforming - ... As Corn Laws and Sugar Laws are settled, there is no old economical or territorial question in the way now.

Although this advice was hardly appropriate for Blackwood's Magazine, Mallalieu's programme identified what were to be three of the main preoccupations of Gladstone's first Ministry. Had he lived long enough, perhaps he would have taken the credit, not only for founding the Conservative party, but for inventing Gladstonian Liberalism as well.

104 9 Feb. 1850, NLS, MS4090, f.59.

105 18 Oct. 1856, MS4118, f.185.

106 29 July 1846, MS4075, f.238 (wrongly filed in 1845).

CHAPTER NINE

CONSERVATISM UNDER PEEL,

1832-1846

In the aftermath of the 1832 Reform Act, the conductors of Blackwood's Magazine were placed in a similar dilemma to those ultra-Tories who, having fretted over the policies of successive Tory governments towards tariffs, currency and the Corn Laws, and having rebelled over Catholic emancipation, were then reduced to gloomy retrospection of the outcome of their defiance: a Whig government, an alarmingly bold measure of parliamentary reform, and a disastrous Tory performance in successive general elections. To maintain an unforgiving posture towards Wellington and Peel, in such circumstances, might bring the inner satisfaction of fidelity to principle. It would not, however, serve to repair or retrieve the situation. Bereft of leaders of front-bench calibre, the ultra-Tories ultimately had to swallow their pride and rally behind the politicians most capable of challenging the Whigs and frustrating the Radicals. David Robinson had perceived this as early as May 1831, when he told William Blackwood that Peel was the best man to retrieve 'the fallen fortunes of his party.'¹ Robinson's departure at the end of that year deprived him of the opportunity to develop that line of

1 Letter quoted more fully in Chapter Three, above, p.99.

argument in the columns of Blackwood's, but it did not take long for other contributors to align the Magazine behind the Conservative strategy of Peel, rather than becoming the forlorn voice of a die-hard ultra-Toryism. Indeed, the principal political contributor to Blackwood's, Archibald Alison, had adumbrated before the end of 1832 what were to become the policies and tactics of the Conservatives during the rest of the decade.

The Magazine's tone of constructive realism was first set by its senior writer, John Wilson, in March 1832, when he depicted the 'true Tories' as being willing 'to forgive, and, as far as may be, to forget' the delinquencies of 1829.² By the time of this article, the word 'Conservative' had already entered the columns of the Magazine. Having been coined (or, at least, brought into political currency) by the Quarterly Review in January 1830, 'Conservative' became the preferred word to indicate a reluctance to embark on further innovation, combined with an acceptance that the clock could not be turned back. For all his impassioned rhetoric against parliamentary reform, it was still appropriate that Archibald Alison should familiarise the readers of Blackwood's with the new term, given that he was to bear the principal burden of expounding to them what a Conservative strategy entailed.³

Alison commenced his new role in the same number of

2 Maga, p.435, quoted more fully in Chapter Seven, above, p.301.

3 For an early use of 'Conservative' in Blackwood's see Alison's article in January 1832, p.115, where he refers to 'the fortresses of the Conservative Party.'

the Magazine, July 1832, in which he pronounced his valediction upon the old constitution. In the 'Duties of the Conservative Party', Alison identified various threatened interests to which the party could appeal in the forthcoming election: the agricultural interest, worried by the prospect of the repeal of the Corn Laws, the manufacturing interest, threatened with the loss of the West Indian market through the prospective sudden emancipation of the slaves, and the trading interest, troubled about the security of the Funds. He put his main point with unusual conciseness: 'It is to this trading class that the Conservative party must now rally themselves.' (p.141) Alison advised the party to give more attention to influencing public opinion, to organise subscriptions for bearing the cost of fighting elections, and to dissuade Conservatives from patronising tradesmen of contrary politics. He renewed his plea about public opinion in his September article, observing that while Conservatives had a good record in the higher reaches of periodical journalism - the Quarterly and Blackwood's - they had 'weakly and blindly neglected the daily and weekly press.'⁴ His sentiments were echoed in October by William Johnston, although Johnston preferred to retain the old political terminology. The 'especial business of the Tories' was held to be the diffusion of the right kind of reading-matter, especially in all forms of the

4 'Prospects of Britain under the New Constitution', Maga, p.356.

periodical press.⁵

Having the appropriate medium, however, would have availed little without preaching the right message. Here, too, Alison was prominent. In an article in the August number, addressed to the 'Future Electors of Great Britain', he laid down the principle that was to determine the Magazine's political line for the remainder of the decade.

By Conservative Members, we do not mean men of any particular party; we do not mean Tories in opposition to Whigs - we mean those, of whatever party, who will uphold the remaining institutions of the country; who will protect our liberties equally against regal oppression₆ and popular violation; who will shield all classes, of whatever rank, from outrage, spoliation, or intimidation.... (p.265)

Specifically, Alison urged support for all those who would uphold the Church of England, charitable endowments, the Funds, and the Corn Laws. In identifying - or, at this early stage, anticipating - the growing desire of middle-class voters for stability and the security of property, Alison showed himself to be well-attuned to Peel's future strategy. His advice in his November article was entirely appropriate.

The Conservatives can no longer rest on the close boroughs, or Parliamentary influence; they must stand on the support of the middling ranks of society, or they will speedily perish. While the Whigs and Revolutionists incessantly appeal to their passions, let the Conservatives guard their interests,

5 Johnston, 'On Affairs in General', Maga, Oct. 1832, pt. II, 692.

6 (Presumably a reference to William IV's readiness to create peers to ensure the passing of the Reform Bill.)

and conciliate their affections; let them bind them to their cause by endearing bonds of experienced kindness; let rank and elegance give that flattering encouragement to patriotic conduct which is ever so powerful when coming from such a quarter.....⁷

Two years before the Tamworth Manifesto, therefore, many of its salient features had been anticipated in Alison's articles for Blackwood's Magazine. It would be expecting too much of human nature, however, to imagine that the spirit which had animated ultra-Toryism, within the columns of the Magazine and in the wider political arena, simply underwent a Damascene conversion in the blinding light of the reformed era. The Tory party was subjected to internal stresses during the closing months of 1832 and much of 1833, with the more unyielding elements chafing under Peel's circumspect conduct and seeking to confront the Whigs over currency, the malt tax and the reform (not merely the possible appropriation) of the revenues of the Irish Church.⁸ The dialogue format of the Noctes Ambrosianae allowed Blackwood's to articulate these inner tensions, without negating the political line developed in Alison's articles. The Noctes of September and October 1832 were both the work of J.G. Lockhart, who was temperamentally well-placed to express both sides of a contentious question.⁹ Lockhart introduced a character from his own periodical, the Quarterly Review, a Captain Basil Hall, to upbraid 'North' and 'Tickler' for their misguided involvement in 1830 in

7 'The Working of the Bill', p.839.

8 Aspinall, *Three Diaries*, pp.xlii-xliv; Bradfield, *op.cit.*, p.739.

9 See below, Appendix VIII, for another illustration.

that brutal combination between your Ultra-Tories - God forgive ye! - and the Whigs. O ye old sinners, do you think I've forgot your trumpeting of Grey and Brougham just before that epoch - your constant sneering at Peel, and your savage abuse of the immortal Duke himself? (p.388)

North's chastened response was that their actions had seemed right at the time, while Tickler took the more trenchant view that the ultra-Tories were closer to the feelings of Tories in the country 'than the big wigs you speak of as the only efficient chiefs the times afford us.' (p.389)

Faced with Hall's point that he could not seriously imagine the formation of a mainly ultra-Tory government, Tickler conceded that, for all their praiseworthy principles and qualities, the ultras could not make 'the real working pith of an administration.' Nor, however, could the others do without them. What was needed, therefore, was an attempt 'towards some decent amalgamation of the two.'

Continuing this theme in the October Noctes, this time with Francis Jeffrey, formerly of the Edinburgh Review, as the extraneous voice, Lockhart has North expressing his hopes for the outcome of negotiations between 'Tories Ultra and the Tories Moderate.' When the Whig Jeffrey observes, 'the Ultras don't like Peel - that's the hitch - that will be our salvation', North rejoinders:

Why, the Ultras, not being idiots, can probably see just as well as you Whigs and Radicals have already done, that there is but one man fitted by talents, acquirements, station and temper, to lead our troops. with perfect certainty of success. (p.723)

Although the thrust of the argument in both Noctes was towards reunification, the friendly tone with regard to the ultra-Tories led to some disagreement about the stance of Blackwood's. William Johnston, guessing correctly about

the authorship, wrote to Blackwood that the Standard had chosen to interpret the September Noctes as a strong commitment to ultra-Toryism.¹⁰ Johnston maintained, rightly, that the purpose was to heal, rather than widen the breach, and wrote again to express his pleasure 'that my unstandardising the **N**octes is all right and fair in your eyes.'¹¹

The government's attempts to reform the revenues of the Anglican Church in Ireland, although provoking disharmony between Peel's policy of opposing appropriation but accepting the principle of redistribution, and the policy of Tory zealots, especially in the Lords, of opposing any interference, nonetheless helped to rally defenders of the Church - and of property rights - in a common cause. This question was indeed to be the crucial issue within the parliamentary arena for the next five years. More than any other matter of legislation, it provided the litmus-test to distinguish Conservatives from their opponents.¹² As the most important recruit to the Conservative ranks, Lord Stanley, was later to observe to J.W. Croker, it was undoubted 'that the Whig Governments fell, and the Conservative party was formed upon questions affecting the maintenance of the Established Church, and the integrity of the institutions of the Country, the House of Lords included.'¹³ The bulk of the political articles

10 14 Sept. 1832, NLS, MS4033, f.184.

11 18 Oct. 1832, loc.cit., f.190.

12 Gash, in Butler, op.cit., p.75; Stewart, op.cit., p.98.

13 Letter in 1847, quoted in Blake, op.cit., p.34.

in Blackwood's during the 1830s were on that very theme. Defence of the Church in Ireland was strenuously undertaken by Alison, Croly and O'Sullivan, reiterating many of the arguments deployed in the 1820s against Catholic emancipation.¹⁴

Divisions within the government on this question helped to precipitate the fall of Melbourne's Ministry and the sudden accession to office of Sir Robert Peel. The Tamworth Manifesto was readily welcomed in Blackwood's. In the number for January 1835, John Wilson expressed his approval in the Noctes, and J.H. Merivale in his 'Letter from a Liberal Whig.' Reinforced by Samuel O'Sullivan in February, they concurred in reiterating Alison's theme that there was no middle way between the Conservatives and the 'Destructives.' Peel's rapprochement with the ultra-Tories, symbolised by the inclusion of Knatchbull in the cabinet, together with a dawning sense of political realism, made it easier for most ultra-Tories to rally behind the new Conservative government. Alexander Baring informed Goulburn, in December 1834, 'Even my Essex ultra Tories talk of continuing reforms', given the requirements of the reformed electorate.¹⁵

What may fairly be called the 'Alisonian position' in Blackwood's was thus securely established. One ingredient was lacking, however, as significant as the dog that did

14 See, for example, articles in April and May 1833, August 1835, and February 1836; and c.f. Chapter Six, above.

15 Quoted in R.W. Davis, 'Toryism to Tamworth: The Triumph of Reform, 1827-1835,' Albion, 12, no.2 (Summer, 1980), 132-146 (p.145).

not bark was to be for Sherlock Holmes. There had been, as yet, no substantial personal endorsement of Peel. Conservative policies and strategies were discussed in general terms, rather than as a loyal adherence to Peel's leadership. It is true that Peel was not strictly leader of the party until he became Prime Minister, but his central importance ought reasonably to have attracted more than some remarks in the Noctes and a few passing references in the political articles. Perhaps time had to elapse before the 'apostate' of 1829 could be personally commended by the writers in Blackwood's to their readers. By March 1835, that time had come, and the work of final reconciliation was undertaken by John Wilson, signing his long article 'C.N.', to give it the status of an editorial. Wilson pointed out that only once had Blackwood's expressed disapproval of Peel - over Catholic emancipation - and on that he had been forgiven. Although his tenure of office was uncertain, Peel could be expected to concern himself with law reform, where his record of achievement was unrivalled, and with tariff reform, where he 'has long shown himself a perfect master' of free trade principles. It was to be hoped that he would work for real reciprocity. Although his currency policy had been mistaken, 'he erred with Ricardo.' The article expressed 'readiness to see the reasonable claims of Dissenters granted, within the context of upholding the Church. If the Whigs and Radicals did recover office, Conservative principles would still eventually prevail, and in the meantime the Conservatives,

under Peel and Wellington, would not offer a factious opposition.

Except for the friendlier personal tone towards Peel, this article was perfectly consistent with the main political line of Blackwood's since 1832. While being explicable in terms of general policy, however, the article may also have been prompted by an additional consideration. On 3 February - the month in which Wilson's article was written (in readiness for the March number) - Alexander Blackwood wrote to Peel, enclosing a copy of a letter to Lord Ellenborough as President of the Board of Control, and asking Peel to use his influence with Ellenborough to secure an appointment in India for Alexander's brother Thomas. Alexander assured Peel of the gratitude of the Blackwood family should the request for patronage be granted.¹⁶ The letter to Ellenborough emphasised the late William Blackwood's services to literature and to the inculcation of 'Conservative principles', and suggested a cadetship in India as a possible career for young Thomas. Peel replied promptly on 7 February, enclosing a copy of a note to Ellenborough, which 'will prove to you that I did not neglect the communication which I received from you.'¹⁷ Peel's government fell before anything could be done about Thomas Blackwood, but the reply was sufficiently encouraging to prompt Alexander and Robert into organising a manifestation of support in

¹⁶ Peel Papers, BM Add. MS40413, f.57.

¹⁷ loc.cit., f.61. (The letter sent is in the Blackwood Papers, NLS, MS4937, f.69.)

Edinburgh for the outgoing Ministry. A public meeting was convened, and a respectful address was drawn up.¹⁸

The period from 1835 to 1841 witnessed the steady advance of the Conservative party towards a secure tenure of office. John Gladstone, father of the 'rising hope', and active in Edinburgh Conservative politics, wrote to the Blackwood brothers on 25 April 1835 while en route to London, giving instructions as to where his copy of the Magazine should be sent. He predicted that the return of the enfeebled Whigs would ultimately be beneficial to the Conservatives, for it would 'eventually lead to a strong, broad Conservative Government being established.'¹⁹ That steady assurance marked the bulk of the Blackwood's political articles in these years. One important feature of the Conservative recovery was the attention given to matters of electoral organization, and, as usual, Alison was in the forefront of those who charted the Conservative course. In a strong article on the 'Change of Ministry', in May 1835, Alison advised the Conservatives to continue building up their support in the press and to concentrate on registration, purging the electoral rolls of unqualified Radicals, and ensuring that persons of sound principles were duly registered. He put his main message in a sentence entirely in capital letters: 'IT IS IN THE REGISTRATION COURTS THAT THE BATTLE OF THE CONSTITUTION IS TO BE FOUGHT AND WON.' (p.813) Registration was the matter that was

18 Although seemingly unaware of the circumstances, and confused about the date, Mrs. Oliphant provides the raw material for the Edinburgh manifestation. Annals, II, 251-2.

19 NLS, MS4040, f.260.

exercising F.R. Bonham at precisely this time,²⁰ two years before Peel gave such work his memorable public endorsement, with the slogan, 'Register, Register, Register.'

Another important organisational development was the formation of Conservative associations. Alison devoted one of his best articles to that subject, in July 1835.²¹ Noting a 'general convergence,' and a 'gradual approximation', towards Conservatism, (he objected to using the word 'reaction', which had a French ring about it), Alison pondered how to translate this evolution into the winning of control in the House of Commons. Some sound advice followed about how to make best use of the periodical press. That, however, was a gradual process, and one that, however well-presented were the arguments, would be confronted by substantial pockets of invincible prejudice. A more direct form of attack was therefore to form a network of Conservative associations arranged in a three-tier structure, from parish and ward sub-committees, up to county and large borough committees and thence to central committees in each capital. Conservative politicians were urged to 'accede at once to any measures of real improvement, no matter though they may trench on some exclusive privileges.' (p.15) If aristocrats were to display kindly manners towards the middle classes, they would often achieve far more thereby than through argument

20 See, for instance, the letter from Bonham to Peel on 6 May, in Peel Papers, Add. MS40420, ff.137-140.

21 Maga, pp.1-16.

or money. 'Such manners, on the part of the Aristocracy, are enjoined alike by Christian charity, worldly prudence, and old English example.' (p.16)²²

The recruitment of Alfred Mallalieu brought to the Magazine a forceful advocate of the Alisonian line - indeed Mallalieu had anticipated Alison's strategy towards public opinion and electoral organization, before he joined Blackwood's.²³ In August 1835, Mallalieu wrote to Alexander Blackwood about a dinner which he had attended of the Manchester Operative Conservative Association.²⁴

About 300 operatives sat down, and the enthusiasm in the cause I never saw surpassed. They did not drink "Blackwood" this year as they did last, which mustified me not a littel! They said it was an oversight of the toastmaster.

Mallalieu regretted not having room to discuss the condition of working people in cotton manufacturing in his article thereon in March 1836. 'Its tone,' he informed Blackwood, 'would have been popular, which is what when with our opinions we earn, we should never lose sight or omit to make the most of.'²⁵ Mallalieu went on to express more forcibly what Alison had maintained in his article of July 1835.

The old party-ground is slipping fast from under us, and it is necessary to accommodate ourselves partially to new tastes, circumstances, and classes, as Sir Robert Peel politically does, without, however,

22 Compare the themes of Peel's speeches, 1835-7, as summarised by Gash, in Butler, op.cit., p.71.

23 See above, Chapter Eight.

24 NLS, MS4041, f.50. For the growth of operative Conservative associations see Stewart, op.cit., p.167, where it is observed that journals like Blackwood's were to be found in the reading-rooms of such associations.

25 17 Feb. 1836, NLS, MS4043, f.108. Also quoted in Annals, II, 203-4.

losing sight of old friends and principles, which for many years to come must always be our mainstay. Still we must be blind, indeed, not to see that power has changed hands, and surely we of the Conservative middle classes are fully as well able and well entitled to wield it as our fellows of the Whig Radical stamp. The worst is the Aristocracy, with customary infatuation, will not open their eyes, but persist to believe that we labour for them alone, when in fact and with cause we are preparing hereafter to take part in the Government with them.

Mallalieu's caveat about 'old friends and principles' prompts the observation here that, alongside the articles which have received attention in the present chapter, there were many others which performed the function, less interesting to a modern student but probably more exciting for the Magazine's more committed readers, of abusing those Whigs who had chosen to cling to an unholy alliance with Radicals and O'Connellites, rather than to follow the example of Graham and Stanley.²⁶ This negative onslaught also paid dividends, for amongst the more respectable electors there was considerable unease about the Whigs' connexions with Daniel O'Connell and militant Dissent.²⁷

In the Magazine for April 1837, Mallalieu made his most forceful contribution to the discussion of domestic politics in Blackwood's. His article, 'The Whigs - the Radicals - the Middle Classes - and the People', (pp.553-572) opened with three vividly contrasting metaphors in the first column,²⁸ followed by a fourth on the same page, likening current feverish over-trading to an ominous meteor. Then

26 See Maga Oct. 1835, p.503; Dec. 1835, pp.715-30; June 1836, p.841; Sept. 1836, p.307; March 1837, pp.301-311; etc.

27 D. Close, 'The Rise of the Conservatives in the Age of Reform', BIHR, xlv, 111 (May 1972), p.96.

28 Described in Chapter Eight, above, p.347.

came a fifth, in the third column, envisaging a ship tossed in stormy seas, with the steersmen (viz. the Whig ministers) incapable of riding out the storm. Other helmsmen were available, however:

With stout hearts and skilled hands at the helm, the good ship might yet ride out the raging storm and right herself, with timbers sound in the main, and, albeit damaged in rigging, still able to make headway under easy sail, sporting her royals, and flying her glorious union-jack. (p.554)

A bleak characterisation of leading figures on the Whig side followed: Melbourne was an effete premier, Lord John Russell a cunning timeserver, and Joseph Hume combined obtuseness of intellect with matchless effrontery and grasping rapacity.²⁹ This stock abuse, reminiscent of Croly, or of the more negative side of Alison, gave place to another Alisonian theme, argued from a different angle. Mallalieu drew a parallel between the ad hoc alliance of the Girondins and the Mountain in the French Revolution and that of the Whigs and Radicals in his own day. For Mallalieu, however, the French forerunners were worthy of citation for their clear intellectual superiority to their English equivalents. He placed on the one side, Vergniaud, Brissot, and Condorcet; Barrère, Robespierre and St. Just; and, to compare with them (in sequence), Glenelg, Lord John Russell, and Spring Rice; Buller, Hume and Roebuck. The lesson from this interesting historical exercise was that if the former, abler individuals were unable to prevent the drift into

29 One wonders whether E.E. Kellett's reference, in G.M. Young, op.cit., II, 75, to 'the mild Mallalieu' was occasioned by anything more than an opportunity for alliteration.

sanguinary anarchy, how much less likely were our mediocrities to halt a similar drift in England. A useful debating-point followed. The Conservatives, as inherently law-abiding people, had accepted the Reform Act, whereas

The only conspirators hitherto declared against the Reform Bill are to be found among its authors and abettors; the only propositions to change or subvert it have emanated from those who most loudly demanded, and most solemnly accepted it, as satisfaction in full of all demands. (p.559)

The working classes had turned against the Act, disappointed that the voice which they had under the old system - 'anomalous, complex, and corrupt in parts as it was' - had been drowned by the ten pounders. The Radicals' cry for the ballot, Mallalieu claimed, was really intended to protect the ten pounders from popular pressure, when voting. The proof that Whigs and Radicals were not genuinely at one with the people was to be seen in their enactment of 'that barefaced imposture miscalled the Poor Law Amendment Act', which was designed to please the ten pounders.³⁰

Writing to Robert Blackwood a few days after this article appeared, Mallalieu claimed that Peel had used its very words in a speech of his own, without acknowledgment, and in particular had borrowed his point about the only enemies of the Reform Act being the Reformers themselves.³¹ Caution is always necessary in dealing with Mallalieu's high estimate of his own importance, but some supporting - though not **con**clusive - evidence is to be found in Hansard.³² In

30 Mallalieu's strictures on the Whigs' record in factory and pauper legislation are discussed below, in the short section dealing with the 'Condition of England' question.

31 11 April 1837, NLS, MS4045, f.26.

32 Parl. Deb. 3rd. Ser. XXXVII, April 1837.

his speech, Peel did observe that he 'had not heard one single attack made either upon the principle or the details of the Parliamentary Reform Act, except from the hon. Gentlemen who sat on the Ministerial side of the House.' (1097) And in his peroration, Peel resorted to a nautical metaphor that recalled Mallalieu's words, quoted above:

If the crew choose to abandon the noble vessel amidst the breakers, I do not believe she is yet so unmanageable that she cannot be saved, or that the country will not lend its cheerful support to those who would make an effort to save her, and conduct her and all the precious interests with which she is freighted, into a tranquil and secure haven. (1110)

A metaphor beloved of politicians, and a debating-point which had precedents in Peel's earlier speeches,³³ do not together prove Mallalieu's contention. Peel did, however, read Blackwood's articles on occasion, and the coincidences of time and phraseology are at least sufficient for this to be left an open question. That a more definite verdict cannot be reached is an illustration of the difficulty of proving that a particular article in a periodical was the direct source of a particular argument by a politician. To establish the climate of debate is generally the best that a modern student of opinion can accomplish.

From the time of the general election of 1837, Archibald Alison's political contributions to the Magazine became less regular. It is a measure of his value to Blackwood's that two political contributors were needed to fill the gap. The positive side of Alison was sustained by Charles Neaves, and the negative side by Macleod Wylie.

33 For example, on 24 Feb. 1834. (I owe this reference to the kindness of Professor Gash).

Like Alison, Neaves was a lawyer who rose to become a sheriff.³⁴ Like John Wilson, another lawyer, Neaves was a facile composer of songs and poems, often in a satirical vein. It is his weightier political articles, however, that will receive attention here. Macleod Wylie entered with gusto into the 'prosecution' side of Alison's work, rivalling Croly in his ready abuse of Whigs and O'Connellites. It was left to Croly (writing in association with George Moir, who also collaborated with Neaves, on occasion) to deliver the Magazine's bleak verdict on the deceased William IV:

Disgusted with faction, he suffered himself to be the prey of faction; convinced of the hazards of his throne, he left it at the mercy of an Administration whom he despised, and with innumerable proofs of the loyalty of the empire, he shrank from putting himself at its head, and resisting the clamours of a political rabble. Thus he made his reign a blank....³⁵

Expectations in Blackwood's of the new monarch were little better. Victoria's Whig proclivities were hinted at, when the advice was proffered that

she must be the Queen of a nation, not a party. She must forget what German quarterings she may reckon in her escutcheon, or from what remote fount of Gothic chivalry her blood may be drawn.³⁶

A similar want of reverence was shown by Alfred Mallalieu in discussing the Whigs' handling of the civil list, where economies were made in pensions to balance a larger grant to the monarch:

34 After the period covered by this study, Neaves rose still higher, being appointed solicitor-general for Scotland during Lord Derby's first Ministry, in 1852, and becoming a judge in 1853. DNB.

35 'What have the Ministry done?' Jan. 1838, p.114.

36 Idem.

The result of the Whig civil list was, that a Queen is a more costly article than a King - the civil list of virgin royalty being indubitably the largest. To save all the difference, the Whigs have gone to work on the pension list; by dint of candle-ends and cheese-parings, squeezing out of poor widows, helpless orphans, and aged and retired servants of the public or of royalty, the balance is to be struck somehow, and the extra-reginal trappings paid for without charge to the nation by a little timely starvation of the luckless aged, who have lived to an untimely length of days, or the orphans who were born in an untimely hour, upon the new Poor-law system.³⁷

This sardonic tone gave place to a more serious expression of disquiet during the 'Bedchamber Crisis' of May 1839. That brief episode occurred at precisely the time when the Magazine's political articles needed to be completed, ready for publication on 1 June, thus enabling Blackwood's to provide both topical coverage and a considered verdict. The account of the crisis, jointly undertaken by Neaves and Moir, avoided blaming Victoria herself, reserving its censure for the Whig Ministers, who had hardened the Queen's response to the 'honourable and high-minded' stance of Sir Robert Peel.

By no one, however, we believe will his conduct be so fully appreciated as by that Sovereign herself, when a little time and reflection shall have broken the spell that evil influences have, for a while, cast around her.³⁸

This revival of the eighteenth-century concept of 'the king in toils' was reinforced in Alison's warning to the Whigs, in the same number:

...let them never forget that faction and intrigue are transient, but the durable interest of the monarchy are permanent; that maturer years and more

37 'Court and Cabinet Gossip of a new Reign', April 1838, p.517.

38 'The Late Political Events', June 1839, p.726.

enlarged experience will enlighten the mind of
our youthful Sovereign...³⁹

Two years later, Alison could at last hail the imminent downfall of the Whigs. The general election of 1841 meant 'that the ancient, independent spirit of the British empire is speedily about to triumph over the combined efforts of courtly adulation and Ministerial corruption.'⁴⁰ Croly echoed this theme in the same number, urging the electors to reject the Whigs, who, 'with the most unusual confidence of the throne, and the keenest alliance with the most daring portion of the people, after a ten years' trial, have fallen on their knees' to await the verdict of the country.⁴¹ That verdict soon enabled Blackwood's to resume the friendly tone towards the monarch that had characterised its columns during the years of Tory government under George IV.

A bumper to our gracious Queen! - We hail the happy day
That clears from her refulgent crown the party stain away;
No sovereign of a narrow sect, she shines with equal ray
On all who, by her people's choice, are sent to aid
her sway.⁴²

The formation of Peel's Ministry gave the Blackwood's political writers the opportunity to offer advice. George Moir directed his words to Peel's followers:

The lesson of honesty and high principle they do not require to be taught; but the lesson of unity of action, of subordination to their great leader, of merging all minor differences in the maintenance of those grand principles in which all are agreed - this lesson they have but too often forgotten, and of this they cannot

39 'Whig Decline and Degradation,' p.808.

40 'The Whig Dissolution,' July 1841, p.1.

41 'Ten Years of the Whigs,' p.93.

42 'A Conservative Song,' Nov. 1841, p.658.

be too often reminded.⁴³

A copy of this number, which also contained an article by Charles Neaves supporting Lord Aberdeen's position in the controversy within the Scottish Kirk, was sent to Peel by Alexander Blackwood, at the moment of publication.⁴⁴

On the same day, John Blackwood, in London, wrote to inform Robert Blackwood that 'old Delane'⁴⁵ liked the political article very much, but did not think The Times could make use of it, as it was indistinguishable from the paper's own political line.⁴⁶ This was a far cry from the gulf between the two periodicals in 1829-32. The lessons drawn from those years by the conductors of Blackwood's, and the increasing disappointment with the Whigs felt thereafter by the conductors of The Times, had brought them together onto the middle ground of Peelite Conservatism.

Blackwood's, however, was not simply a Peelite organ, any more than the parliamentary Conservative party was entirely imbued with the Peelite vision. As Gash has pointed out, it was a 'hybrid' party that won power in 1841: had it been homogeneous, it would have been more united in spirit, but that spiritual unity would have belonged to a party out of office.⁴⁷ It is important also to remember that it was in the old centres of Tory strength - the agricultural counties and the smaller boroughs - that the Conservatives had done best in 1841. For all the persuasiveness of

43 'A Glance at the Elections,' Aug. 1841, p.239.

44 Peel Papers, Add. MS40485, f.337.

45 (This could be either a casual reference to his friend, J.T. Delane, or to Delane's father, the financial manager of The Times.)

46 NLS, MS4054, f.134.

47 Gash, Peel, pp.236-7.

Peel's message, Conservatives won only 13 of the 45 major manufacturing seats in 1841- the same figure as in 1835.⁴⁸ The interests traditionally associated with Toryism: agriculture and the Anglican Church: thus continued to provide the underpinning to the Conservative majority. Peel would neglect those interests at his peril. Hence it was not surprising that other Blackwood's writers in 1841, notably Alison, emphasised that loyalty to the party's principles and interests was not a matter for the rank and file alone.⁴⁹

The decline and eventual defeat of the Whigs brought a new political agenda. Constitutional questions, notably the position of the Church in Ireland and the authority of the House of Lords when resisting uncongenial legislation, gave place to fiscal and social problems. The Whigs had failed to balance their budgets; trade was depressed; serious minds became preoccupied with what Carlyle called 'the Condition of England Question.'⁵⁰ With traditional institutions no longer apparently at risk from the Ministerial side, there was less call for the kind of articles that Croly, Wylie and (in his negative vein) Alison could turn out at merest glimpse of democratic tendencies, or the slightest whiff of incense. Political articles in Blackwood's

48 Stewart, op.cit., p.160.

49 'Lessons from the Past' (Alison), 'Sir Robert Peel's Position' (De Quincey), Sept. 1841; 'Prospects under the Peel Ministry' (Neaves), Oct. 1841.

50 (The social views of Blackwood's will be briefly discussed in a later section of this chapter.)

became fewer, generally taking the form of a single, comprehensive review of the government's policies, in each six-monthly volume, accompanied by more specific articles when the Chartists, O'Connellites and Anti-Corn Law Leaguers⁵¹ were being particularly obtrusive.

The new pattern was set by De Quincey in April 1842, with his article on 'Sir Robert Peel's Policy.' The tone was loyal and dutiful, but one part of Peel's great budgetary and fiscal programme provoked unease. The modifications to the Corn Laws were of so restricted a character as to be 'practically inert or limited.' Why then had Peel bothered? The answer, to De Quincey, was simple: it was the pressure of agitation, working within 'the moveable and the insurrectionary part of the public mind.' (p.539) For the new income tax, however, De Quincey had a much readier welcome.

With how much cheerfulness should we have received the second great measure of Sir Robert Peel - so large, so bold, and so sincere - had we been able to forget the popular coercion which dictates the first! (p.540)

The income tax represented the only instance that De Quincey had ever encountered of a scheme of taxation being received with general and spontaneous applause. The 'moral courage' which it displayed was commended by Charles Neaves in his August article. (p.146) Croly, writing to Blackwood on 18 March, took a different view:

I am totally opposed to the very idea of an Income Tax - which really seems to have been put into Peel's head to ruin him.⁵²

51 (The Magazine's theoretical defence of the Corn Laws will be examined in the final section of this chapter.)
52 NLS MS4060, f.168.

Croly added, however, that Blackwood could delete anything in his article which was thought too strong. His next published piece⁵³ contained no reference to the income tax, so it may be assumed that the policy of loyalty and discretion prevailed.

The review of the 'Session of Parliament' by Charles Neaves, in the August number, constitutes one of the best political articles in Blackwood's during Peel's premiership.⁵⁴ Neaves moved swiftly to a crucial point:

The policy of the present Conservative Ministry is to be judged of in reference to the position in which they are placed. They are called on to govern the country on Conservative principles, through the medium of a Parliament elected under the Reform Bill. These few words are full of meaning; they involve a bitter but wholesome truth, and remind us of the difficult and delicate task imposed upon our rulers. (p.144)

Given this consideration, the measures of the government were soundly conceived. The 'downward progress of the national finances' had been halted, and the income tax brought the further benefit (in conjunction with the lightening of indirect taxes on necessities) of reducing the relative tax-burden of the poorer classes. It was thus a measure of class-reconciliation. The new tariff was a 'probable remedy for the signal depression of trade', and it was to be hoped that the reform of the Corn Law would have the effect of making it more securely defensible. Neaves therefore felt entitled to rally support behind the government.

Believing... that the different measures which have been brought forward, have been honestly, impartially, and skilfully managed, we can have no sympathy with the small portion of the Conservative

53 'Things of the Day, III', April 1842.

54 Maga, Aug. 1842, pp.143-153.

party who seem to have been desirous of producing a split in the camp. We are no friends of schism either in church or state. (p.148)

Neaves himself showed skilful management in the way that he steered his article through the rocks and shoals of conflicting loyalties. Conservative agricultural members were praised for combining an honest articulation of their anxieties with a continued general support of the Ministry.⁵⁵ Likewise, the government deserved admiration for standing firm by a policy of holding the balance between different interests.

The Magazine's political standpoint in 1843 adhered to the position laid down by Neaves and De Quincey in the previous year. Circumstances were therefore favourable for a renewed application to Peel, on behalf of Thomas Blackwood. Explaining how the prospects of a cadetship faded with the fall of the 1834-5 Ministry, Alexander informed Peel that young Thomas had gone to India in a mercantile capacity. Things had not gone well for him, and he had returned to Britain to make a fresh start. The new suggestion, therefore, was that Thomas might be found a place in the customs service, for example 'as Collector of Customs at one of the small ports.'⁵⁶ Peel replied promptly and encouragingly, but with nothing tangible.⁵⁷ Alexander resumed the friendly correspondence in December, sending Peel an early copy of the Magazine for January 1844 and directing his attention to the main political article, which he proudly described as 'a very bold and masterly exposition

55 Dr. Stewart points out that only nine Conservatives voted against the revised sliding scale, but that there were 'murmurs of discontent' amongst the agriculturalists. Op.cit., pp.182-3.

56 1 April 1843, Peel Papers, Add. MS40527, ff.3-4.

57 3 April 1843, loc.cit., f.5.

of the present state of public affairs with reference to your Government and the principles upon which it has been conducted.'⁵⁸ On the back of the letter was a courteous note of acknowledgment from Peel, stating his intention to read the article at an early opportunity. While these mutual courtesies were being exchanged, however, John Blackwood was writing to his brothers in less polite terms about the subject of the article.

I hope the political paper is all right. Peel is certainly a slippery hand; but if he is to support Protective measures, he can only do so by our party placing confidence in him and supporting him. If he goes out, what will become of our party? The poor support of the Agricultural party is the very thing to drive a trimmer (as he probably is) to the other side for assistance.⁵⁹

The article which occasioned this correspondence was by Samuel Warren,⁶⁰ who supplemented his serialised fiction in the Magazine by occasional political contributions. Warren's theme was intended to rally confidence behind the government. He gave an encouraging survey of revenue replenished, trade revived, peace restored, public confidence preserved, and Ireland in 'stern repose.' This led into praise of Peel's outstanding leadership of the Conservative party since 1832. Extracts from Peel's speech to the Tamworth electors, on 18 June 1841, (when Peel, in the presence of voters with agrarian interests, chose to emphasise the importance of agriculture) were quoted by Warren to demonstrate how Peel's consistency could be depended upon. An admiring review of the government's

58 Peel Papers, Add. MS40537, f.276.

59 20 Dec. (1843), quoted in Annals, II, 356.

60 'Position and Prospects of the Government,' Jan. 1844, pp.103-132.

measures since 1841 (measures which Warren, following Neaves, reminded his readers belonged to the era of a reformed Commons) brought Warren to a rhetorical question about the Corn Laws.

Have the Government hitherto yielded to the clamour with which they have been assailed, and departed from the principle of affording efficient protection to the agriculture of the country? Not a hair's breadth; nor will they. (p.117)

After a verbal onslaught on the Anti-Corn Law League, Warren then warned the Conservative party about 'the want of union and energy' now apparent. His advice was 'ORGANIZE! ORGANIZE! ORGANIZE!' Practical suggestions followed of a kind long ago advocated by Archibald Alison. Finally, Warren concluded his long article (considerably longer, indeed, than the whole of the present chapter) with some words of encouragement for the government:

If the Ministers remain firm in their determination - and who doubts it? - to support the agricultural interests of the country, and persevere in their present vigorous policy towards Ireland, the Government is impregnable... (p.132)

In the opinion of John Blackwood, writing to his brother Robert on 3 February, Warren's article had struck the right note, as the author, with his accustomed self-esteem, readily assumed.

I was very glad indeed to see Peel so distinct about the Corn Laws - Warren would amuse you not a little in his secret heart in attributing all these Agricultural Meetings to his Article, if not Peel's present firmness as well - The advice to organize was at the very least certainly a most fortunate coincidence.⁶¹

Warren's article, however, came at the beginning of

a year in which the precarious unity of the Conservative party began to crack. The government experienced backbench revolts on the ten hours and the sugar questions. Although Peel was able, by rearguard actions, to make his views prevail, these disputes 'exacerbated^{the} strained relationship which existed between Peel and some of his followers.'⁶²

The sense of strain was not readily apparent in the columns of the Magazine, at least in part because the political articles were aimed away from internal dissensions towards the safer ground of attacking Leaguers, O'Connellites and French socialists. The letters of John Blackwood to his brothers, however, reveal the private disenchantment behind the Magazine's public restraint.

I do not like Peel's speech at all last night it is so hard and unconciliatory if he goes on long this way he will break the party to bits. I should not wonder to see him throw over the Corn Laws altogether...⁶³

A month later, John passed on to Alexander the uncharitable sentiments of J.G. Lockhart.

He thinks Peel is determined to conserve his place if nothing else, & that it is Gladstone who does most of the Free Trade mischief.⁶⁴

Although Alexander was less ready than John to speak ill of Peel, by February 1845 he too was expressing his unease.

I do not however like the look of matters & it is most difficult to know what course to steer with the Magazine. Even Peel's reply to Macaulay about the

62 Stewart, op.cit., p.187. (Dr. Stewart here expresses his view more cautiously than in his article on 'The Ten Hours and Sugar Crises of 1844.' HJ, xii,1(1969), 35-57, which was challenged by D.R. Fisher in HJ, xviii,2(1975), 279-302.

63 18 June 1844, NLS MS4069, f.130. Also quoted in Annals, II, 369.

64 15 July, loc.cit., f.151.

Scotch Banking Question is trimming & shuffling & I do not know what he means to do yet. It has excited great disgust here. Alison sees the difficulty & the bad policy of attacking one's own friends, but it is most injurious to the Magazine our not speaking out.⁶⁵

John Blackwood replied to his brother directly, expressing similar anxieties.

I take very much the view that you do about Politics. I should not wonder to see Peel bring on this session worse measures than Lord John Russell could have attempted. It is a most puzzling business for the Magazine but the only plan if he goes on will I think be to attack him.⁶⁶

Thus the brothers braced themselves to throw off the self-imposed restraint which they had maintained towards Peel's unwelcome evolution during 1844-5.⁶⁷ The moment of defiance - a defiance muted and dignified in comparison with the vitriolic abuse of 1829-30 - came over the Maynooth grant. For Blackwood's to make its stand here was entirely proper, both in terms of the consistent viewpoint of the Magazine from its inception, and on the larger ground of Peel's adoption of a policy that was hard to reconcile

65 Alex. to John, 8 Feb. 1845, NLS, MS4073, f.155.

66 10 Feb. loc.cit., f.208.

67 On 5 March 1844 Alex. Blackwood had once more tried to enlist Peel's support in a matter of patronage for one of his younger brothers. This time the request was on behalf of James, who was applying for a vacant collectorship in the Court of Session. Peel Papers, Add. MS40541, f.57. The direct request from James was made to Sir James Graham (copy sent to Peel, f.59) and referred to James Blackwood's service as principal agent for the Conservative party in Roxburghshire. The application appears to have been unsuccessful. The Blackwood brothers' disappointment with Peel may therefore have extended beyond the political sphere.

with the traditional priorities of the Conservative party.⁶⁸ The task of challenging the Maynooth proposal was entrusted to De Quincey, in the May number (pp.647-656).

De Quincey's sonorous prose struck a note of appropriate gravity in commencing his protest.

It is due to the character of this Journal, unflinching in its Conservative politics through one entire stormy generation, that, in any great crisis of public interest, or in any fervent strife of public opinion, it should utter its voice strongly; under the shape of a protest and a parting testimony to the truth, where the case practically may be hopeless; under the shape of a hearty effort, co-operating with other efforts, where the case is not hopeless.

De Quincey eschewed raking-up again the old controversy of 1829. Catholic emancipation could not be undone, and, in peaceable times, it was capable of being accommodated within the political system. 'But this Maynooth endowment tends to other results.' By that, De Quincey meant papal ascendancy and the severance of Ireland from the British empire. In opposing the scheme, he acknowledged being part of a confederacy.

Some of us think it a high duty of the state to endow and favour that form of Christianity which the predominant opinion (as collected in the total empire) pronounces the true one. This is our own creed... (p.648)

Others on the anti-Maynooth side, however, 'are permanent protesters against all state endowments of any one particular church.' The supporters of the Maynooth grant made much of this disagreement, but De Quincey brushed it

68 Gash observes that, 'Of all Peel's measures, the Maynooth bill had come nearest to a repudiation of the classic constitutional doctrines, the defence of Church and State, on which the Conservative party had been built up in the thirties....' Peel p.477.

aside. Both elements in the confederacy were united in defence of their common Protestantism. Another debating point to be disposed of was that the grant had been begun by 'our party' in 1796. All that was being proposed, it was said, was to increase the amount, which was hardly a matter of principle. De Quincey's response epitomised his fondness for the subtleties of argument. A quantitative change, he maintained, can become a qualitative one. We know the legal maxim: de minimis non curat lex: but when the amount becomes greater, then the law does become involved, (for example, when a payment for services rendered becomes a 'bribe.')

Also, as well as trebling the sum involved, the plan was to convert it from an annually renewable grant into a permanent endowment. Then there was the question of motive. Burke, who suggested the first grant, patriotically wished to help a church in abject poverty at a time when the contagion of Revolutionary France was spreading, (St. Omer having fallen under French control). Peel's motives were different, and here De Quincey made, in the **gentlest** terms, the first adverse personal comment on Peel to appear in Blackwood's since he became Prime Minister in 1841:

Sir Robert Peel's are the motives of a compromiser between adverse interests, whose heart, though honourable as regards intentions, does not prompt him to give a preponderating weight to either side, however opposed in principle. (p.651)

De Quincey's next point was one that was capable of being used by either side, depending on the assessment of whether an enlarged grant would intensify or abate the existing

character of the seminary: Maynooth was a nest of O'Connellites. Finally there was the wider dimension. Although the Roman Catholic Church in Europe had been shorn of some of its temporalities 'it is certain that the vigour and vitality of Popery, in modes more appropriate to a spiritual power, are reviving.' (p.654) The Maynooth grant would give further encouragement to the Vatican. It would also inflame the still unhealed religious wounds of Ireland.

Where, in the time of David Robinson, this article would have been the first salvo of an unrelenting barrage, in this more restrained era for the Magazine De Quincey's article stood alone. There was no further discussion of current politics in Blackwood's until the final article in the last number for 1845. The way in which Blackwood's had been reduced to silence was a matter for comment in the Morning Post on 3 November. After a rather cumbersome attempt at 'fine writing', the writer of the piece made his meaning more plain:

Does our ancient Ebony understand the allusion?
We think too partially of our time-honoured
acquaintance, to suspect him of intending to play
Liberal on our hands. He may be in the predicament
of many well-meaning folks, who look upon Peel as
the pis-aller of a Tory party, and having nothing to
praise, are reluctant to risk the imaginary
alternative.

At this stage in the chapter, with Blackwood's languishing in its predicament, it is appropriate to pause and consider two other areas of the Magazine's coverage, running parallel with the party-political discussions, but

not convenient to be incorporated with them: foreign affairs and the 'Condition of England' question.⁶⁹

During the 1830s the articles in Blackwood's on foreign affairs were in such close harmony with each other that it would not be inappropriate to use the phrase 'the foreign policy' of the Magazine. Whether the writer was William Johnston, George Croly, Archibald Alison or Alfred Mallalieu, the policy was consistent.⁷⁰ By interfering on the side of Belgian independence, Britain had alienated one old ally, Holland; while Palmerston's support for Dom Pedro in Portugal, against Dom Miguel, was an unwarrantable intrusion into the affairs of another old ally. These involvements had the further disadvantage of serving the interests of our old enemy, France, which was now (in Alison's words) the 'Throne of the Barricades.' Alison and Mallalieu continued to see eye to eye in their discussions of foreign affairs during 1836 and 1837, lamenting British involvement in Spain against Don Carlos, warning about the Russian menace, and regretting that the opportunity to cement good relations with the Germans had

69 These two sections can only receive brief treatment here, for the negative reason of not wishing to exceed the prescribed word-limit, and for the positive reason of wishing to maintain the momentum of the chapter. It may reasonably be assumed that anyone who has penetrated thus far in the present study will be able to follow up articles mentioned here as worthy of further attention.

70 Taking one example from each writer, in the order listed above, see 'On Affairs in General', Oct. 1832, II, pp.684-692; 'The Portuguese War,' Jan. 1833, pp.1-25; 'The First Session of the Reformed Parliament', Nov. 1833, pp.776-804, (esp. p.779); 'Foreign Policy...' Jan. 1836, pp.49-79.

been neglected.⁷¹ The Germans, as a people, had praiseworthy qualities, but the rapid economic advance of the Prussian state needed careful watching. It was appropriate for friendly mention of the German people to be made in Blackwood's, which had played an important part in introducing the British reading-public to German literature and philosophy. Such views, in any case, were not eccentric. Peel's biographer has noted that he, 'like many of his countrymen in those pre-Bismarckian days, was something of a Germanophile.'⁷² The Magazine's spirited defence of Don Carlos was more distinctively 'Blackwoodian.'⁷³ Mallalieu sounded a note of caution in his correspondence,⁷³ but his articles, like Alison's and Croly's⁷⁴ agreed in deploring the part played by Britain against Don Carlos. For a kindred spirit in parliament, one may cite Lord John Manners, who not only spoke in defence of Don Carlos but sought financial support as well.⁷⁵

71 For Mallalieu's views, see his two articles on 'Foreign Policy and Foreign Commerce', Jan. and Feb. 1836, pp. 49-79 and pp.145-155; and, especially, 'Foreign Policy; Spain Carlist, Christino, and Constitutional', Oct. 1836, pp.561-578. For Alison, see 'Foreign Results of Democratic Ascendancy in France and England', May 1836, pp.655-668, and 'The Spanish Contest', May 1837, pp.573-599.

72 Gash, Peel, p.290.

73 Letter quoted in Annals, II, 204.

74 For Croly, see 'The British Legion', Aug.1837, pp.169-178.

75 McDowell, op.cit., p.37. (To anyone brought up in the Palmerstonian-Liberal tradition of British foreign policy, Blackwood's lack of sympathy for the two young queens in Portugal and Spain might seem positively immoral. It is fitting, therefore, to quote a modern historian's remark about the parents of the two queens, that 'Their level of ability and purity of motive, however, as with the other protagonists was extraordinarily low...'
D.R. Ward, Foreign Affairs 1815-1865 (1972), p.91).

In 1840-41, however, this broad unanimity in Blackwood's about foreign affairs gave place to some interesting differences of opinion concerning two problems: the extent of the Russian menace and the reliability of Louis Philippe. Ever a source of independent thinking, De Quincey came to the defence of Russia in his article on 'Foreign Politics' in October 1840. He complained that 'the British press is under a "craze" - a strong maniacal delusion with regard to Russia.' (p.546) The Czar was branded as the special enemy of Great Britain, but without any real proof of his malign intentions.

The result of this "craze" is likely enough to be, that we shall absolutely force Russia to become our enemy by the rancorous pertinacity with which we suppose her to be such. (p.546)

It is not, perhaps, entirely fanciful to see in this view an anticipation of the circumstances in which the Crimean War broke out. Alison and Croly continued unrepentant, however, each reaffirming the Russian menace in the next number of the Magazine.⁷⁶ Croly, as usual, ran no risk of understating his case, accusing Russia of 'a desperate and unquenchable ambition which palpably aims at the sovereignty of the world...' (p.619) De Quincey found an ally, however, in another contributor, H. Longueville Jones, who, in an article on 'England, France, Germany and Russia', in the Magazine for January 1841, maintained that the menace of the Czar had been exaggerated. As Jones saw it,

there is infinitely more good-will towards England among the Germans and the Russians, than among the French or any other people of southern Europe. (p.105)

76 'Ten Years of Whig Government' (Alison), pp.563-577;
'The Caucasian War' (Croly), pp.619-633.

The French were indeed the nearest, and the greatest, problem. De Quincey and H.L. Jones agreed in emphasising the French threat at this time.⁷⁷ Alison and Croly were at least prepared to speak well of Louis Philippe, whom Croly thought might well be 'the only rational man in his dominions.'⁷⁸ Both regarded him as a wise and peaceable monarch, striving to ~~re~~strain republican bellicosity. H.L. Jones, however, pointed out that Louis Philippe's position was that of a 'usurper', clinging insecurely to a pacific policy that would be abandoned if the warmongering elements recovered power. Where Jones depicted the French monarch as being peaceable from self-interest, John McNeill, in the same number,⁷⁹ was more generous in his praise, describing Louis Philippe as 'one of the most prudent as he is one of the ablest of sovereigns.' (p.127) Arnout O'Donnel, the Magazine's principal writer on French affairs, came slightly closer to the views of Jones rather than of McNeill. For all Louis Philippe's prudence and skill, his priority was his own survival, even if that meant yielding to belllicose tendencies that were uncongenial to him. He had something of the character of 'a crowned Talleyrand.'⁸⁰ Louis Philippe did at least survive long enough for his ejection to occur outside the period of this study.

It would require a separate chapter (which the severely limited space remaining does not allow) to do justice to

77 (The Mehemet Ali crisis.)

78 'Louis Philippe', Nov. 1840, pp.587-594.

79 'M. Thiers's Foreign Policy,' Jan.1841, pp.127-140.

80 'France versus England', April 1841, pp.457-475.

the discussions in Blackwood's about the 'Condition of England' question and its political manifestation, Chartism. For good or ill, the present chapter has concentrated upon the arena of parliamentary politics, in order to permit the drawing of sound conclusions about 'the politics of Blackwood's.' The Magazine's strongly-worded articles about the harshness of the new Poor Law, the abuses of child labour in factories, the need for the propertied classes to show a greater paternal concern for the lower orders, and the threat to stability and property if they neglected their duties, do not lend themselves to the kind of condensed and allusive treatment that has enabled the 'foreign policy' of Blackwood's to be summarised in less than one thousand words. Too much would be lost in the way of reflecting the tone, as well as the general argument, of the various pieces.⁸¹ Instead of attempting a comprehensive survey, therefore, this section will be confined to one case-study, followed by references to other Blackwood's articles especially worthy of attention, and ending with a demonstration of the diversity of form and attitude to be found in the Magazine's response to social problems.

The first half of Alfred Mallalieu's forceful article, 'The Whigs - the Radicals - the Middle Classes - and the People' (April 1837), has already been discussed earlier in this chapter. After making his point about the

81 It is tempting to circumvent the problem by simply endorsing the article by Professor Roberts, 'The Social Conscience of Tory Periodicals', Victorian Periodicals Newsletter, X, 3 (Sept. 1977), 154-169. Despite its admirable breadth of scope, however, its treatment of Tory paternalism in general, and of Blackwood's writers in particular, leaves room for some modification, which may perhaps be accomplished in another place.

'conspirators' against the Reform Act (which he claimed was re-used by Peel), Mallalieu went on to contrast the Whig and Tory records in social reform. He gave an admiring mention to Tory factory-reformers such as Sir Robert Peel (the elder), M.T. Sadler, Nathaniel Gould and Lord Ashley. The Whigs and the philosophical radicals, having obstructed such praiseworthy endeavours, had passed measures which were narrow in scope and divisive in character.⁸²

What Mallalieu dubbed the 'Poor-Law Abolition Bill' was another product of co-operation between the Whigs and radical-utilitarians. 'Why? Because the poor have no votes, and rate-payers have.' (Mallalieu's point cut both ways: there were plenty of Conservative ratepayers, and the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act incurred little opposition at the time either from Conservatives in parliament or from writers in Blackwood's.) Mallalieu paid tribute to the courage and humanity of John Walter, MP for Berkshire, (and proprietor of The Times) in speaking out against the cruelty of the new system. The response of Lord John Russell to such strictures was, thought Mallalieu, very revealing: Russell enumerated places where the poor rates had been substantially reduced. Even at that level, however, Russell could be challenged. What about the labour absorbed by revived economic activity? Building developments, railway construction and agricultural investment had played their part in reducing pauperism, alongside the 'atrocious'

82 Mallalieu was thus entitled to add to his list of 'credits' a share in the invention of the Tory interpretation of the history of social reform, which has been subjected to critical scrutiny by David Roberts in the American Historical Review **LXIII**, 2 (1958) and by Jennifer Hart in Past and Present, 31 (1965).

workhouse system. Mallalieu protested against the inhumanity of a system that deliberately kept a pauper husband apart from his wife and children, and that insisted upon utter destitution as a prior condition of relief. It was a matter of regret to him that Conservative politicians had stained their reputation by abetting the new Poor Law. The masses had put aside their capability of taking what they needed, in return for the recognition of their right to relief. If that right were to be repudiated, then the 'rash innovators' would have to take the consequences. (Here Mallalieu, ever ready to blame others for stealing his ideas, was himself making a point that had been used to great effect by Cobbett in his 'Letter to Parson Malthus.')

Although the middle classes were courted and favoured by the Whigs and utilitarians, those same middle classes would be the first target of the popular vengeance provoked by the new policies.

Savings in wages, by the slow immolation of factory children, and of rates, by the decimating consequences of workhouse incarceration and workhouse starvation diet, will be found cheerless and unfructifying economy, when corn ricks are blazing, cotton mills are fired, and the masses, manufacturing and agricultural, with their Jack Cades and Wat Tylers at their head, are in open insurrection. (p.571)

Mallalieu's highly-coloured language did at least evoke the sense of injustice that was to emanate in 'physical force' Chartism. He made his prediction even more specific when, perceiving that the industrial boom was turning into a slump, he foresaw mass protests occurring in Lancashire (p.572) Writing from Manchester to Robert Blackwood on 11 May 1837, Mallalieu justifiably prided himself on his

foresight, with popular protests against the new Poor Law occurring in Lancashire and Yorkshire.⁸³

Other discussions of the 'Condition of England' question in Blackwood's before and during the Chartist years, can only be indicated by a set of references.⁸⁴ The humanitarian, paternalistic tone of these pieces, however, was not echoed in the articles of Croly and De Quincey. The latter described Chartism, bluntly, as

neither more nor less than Jacobinism; and Jacobinism is as old as poverty. Ever since there was something to be coveted, there has been somebody to covet.⁸⁵

Croly was similarly dismissive of the principle of statutory poor relief (which De Quincey, like all other Blackwood's writers in this period, did accept.)

We are not enamoured of the present Poor Law, nor shall we ever be enamoured of any... A Poor Law is a direct contradiction to the principle, that a man should be a provident animal.⁸⁶

83 NSL, MS4045, f.28

84 See especially, 'The Factory System' (John Wilson), April 1833, I, 419-450; 'The Cotton Manufacture, and the Factory System' (Mallalieu), July 1836, pp.100-121; 'The Ministry and the People, the Workhouse System, The Factory System, and the Ten Hours Bill' (Mallalieu), June 1837, pp.836-854; 'Discontents of the Working Classes' (Charles Neaves), April 1838, pp.421-436; 'The League's Revenge', and 'Revolt of the workers: the employer and the employed' (both by Robert Sowler), Oct. & Nov. 1842, pp.542-550, 642-653. (Sowler's articles were the most impressive expositions of the paternalist ideal to appear in Blackwood's since the time of William Johnston.)

85 'Hints for the Hustings,' Sept. 1840, p.312.

86 'Things of the Day, III', April 1842, p.520.

Croly considered that a small fund of about £10,000 per annum would meet cases of genuine, unforeseeable hardship, as distinct from distress arising from improvidence or the selfish action of employers. Such comfortable assurance was far removed from the emotionally overcharged poetry of Elizabeth Barrett's 'The Cry of the Children', which was published in the number for August 1843. A final form of Blackwood's reponse to social problems, alongside the paternalism of Mallalieu and Sowler, the pungency of Croly and De Quincey, and the poetry of Elizabeth Barrett, was, as ever, parody. At the end of a serious discussion of the ideas of the French socialists (November 1844, pp.588-600), W.H. Smith embarked on a piece of role-reversal at the expense of earnest social investigators. Noting how often the writers of reports were lawyers, he wondered what a commission of agricultural labourers might make of the working-conditions of a conveyancer.

They make their way through obscure labyrinths into a room not quite so dark, it must be allowed, not quite so *dirty* as the interior of a coal-mine, and there they find an unhappy man who, they are given to understand, sits in that gloomy apartment, in a state of solitary confinement, from nine o'clock in the morning till six or seven in the evening. They learn that, for several months in the year, this man never sees the sun; that in the cheerful season when the plough is going through the earth, or the sickle is glittering in the corn, and the winds are blowing the great clouds along the sky, this pale prisoner is condemned to pore over title-deeds which secure the "quiet enjoyment" of the land to others; and if they imitate the oratory of their superiors, they will remark upon the strange injustice, that he should be bound down a slave to musty papers, which give to others those pastures from which he never reaps a single blade of grass, and which he is not even permitted to behold. These commissioners would certainly be tempted to address a report to Parliament

full of melancholy representations, and ending with the recommendation to shake out such unhappy tenants into the fields.

The Magazine's six-month period of silence on current politics, after the Maynooth article, was finally broken in December 1845, when rumours had begun to circulate of a threat to the interest that, along with the Protestant Church, all the Blackwood's political writers held most dear: agricultural protection. The threat was not new, of course, although it was about to recur in an acute form. For twenty years Blackwood's writers had deployed their arguments in defence of the Corn Laws. Some of those arguments have already been indicated. Taking the case as stated to the end of 1831, it may be presented in summary form:⁸⁷

- i. An internal monopoly is justifiable, so long as there is reasonable internal competition.
- ii. Cheapness is not the summum bonum.
- iii. Agricultural labourers received lower wages than manufacturing workers, and so needed protecting.
- iv. Traders who would profit from free trade were only a minority of the community; the prosperity of our agriculture concerned the majority.
- v. The different interests were, in any case, mutually interdependent: if the mercantile and manufacturing classes bought foreign corn, they would reduce the purchasing-power of domestic

87 The weight of argument was sustained by David Robinson and, to a lesser extent, William Johnston. The points summarised here can be found more fully expressed in Chapters Four and Five, above.

agricultural consumers.

- vi. The importation of foreign grain would lead to the de-cultivation of marginal land at home, and thus to greater - and more hazardous - dependence on foreigners.
- vii. Real wealth was derived from the produce of the soil and the labour bestowed thereon rather than from the apparent profits of trade.⁸⁸

During the period 1832-44, the Blackwood's case was mainly deployed by Alison, Mallalieu and De Quincey. Naturally most of the Robinson-Johnston points were reiterated, particularly the mutual interdependence and national security arguments. Taking these as read (although they might have weighed more with newer readers of the Magazine, or readers whose memories of arguments did not range as easily across twenty years as the present exercise makes possible) a further table of points may now be provided, this time with references to author and date.

a. Mercantile and manufacturing interests were deluded in thinking that grain-exporting countries like Russia, Prussia and the U.S.A. would take commensurate amounts of our goods if we opened our doors to their grain. (Mallalieu, May 1834, pt.II)⁸⁹

b. The significance of bread prices in raising wages,

88 It is interesting to compare this list with the points summarised by Barry Gordon, Economic Doctrine and Tory Liberalism, 1824-1830 (1979) pp.61-2. Gordon derives his points from the arguments of Redesdale, Lauderdale, Stanhope, Western, and other advocates of agricultural protection in the Corn Law debates of 1827-28. The overlap is considerable, as one might expect.

89 Note Mallalieu's intentional turning of the argument to the mercantile side, in place of Johnston's Physiocratic emphasis. As Mallalieu observed, p.794, 'It has been too much the fashion, on our side of the question, to consider it as one exclusively agricultural....'

and of the Corn Laws in increasing bread prices, had been over-rated. (De Quincey, Feb. 1839)

c. Ricardian rent-theory, the orthodoxy of the repealers, did not apply to Britain in isolation. Just as the recourse to more and more marginal land pushed up rents and prices in England, so, if our demand were transferred abroad - to Poland - there would be a similar push towards the marginal land, with a similar effect on rents and prices. Thus prices would tend towards an equilibrium, removing the claimed advantages of repeal. (De Quincey, *ibid.*)⁹⁰

d. The purchase of foreign corn would be a drain on our gold currency. (Alison, April 1840.)⁹¹

e. The real object of the repeal activists was to reduce wages. (Alison, De Quincey, repeatedly.)

f. The Corn Laws were designed to produce, as nearly as practicable, an equilibrium in domestic cultivation. Although the home yield fluctuated with good and bad seasons, home acreage could remain fairly constant, thanks to the protecting of the farmers' prices through the operation of the sliding-scale. (De Quincey, Oct. 1843.)⁹²

g. There was an important socio-political case for

90 (De Quincey did not necessarily subscribe to this analysis. It was one prong of a 'Morton's fork' argument, the other being that foreign prices would remain cheap, thus undercutting home agriculture.)

91 Huskisson had disposed of this point long ago. He observed that if large quantities of foreign grain only came in during emergencies (*viz.* bad home harvests, produced by - unpredictable - bad weather) then they would have to be paid for in specie, rather than through normal commercial intercourse.

92 The free-trade counterpoint to this was that, whatever the equilibrium of acreage, the population was anything but stable. How were the myriads of extra mouths to be fed?

sustaining the well-being of 'the noble yeomanry.' (De Quincey, *ibid.*)

h. Free-trade theory fails to take into account national differences and the strength of the instinct for self-preservation. Straightforward treaties of commerce are preferable to unilateral concessions on our part, based on pious hopes that other countries will remove the protection of their own nascent industries. (Alison, Feb. 1844.)

Comparing the post-1832 case with that of the Robinson-Johnston period, it is significant that arguments depicting agriculture as the most important economic interest, the prosperity of which concerned the majority of the community, are partially replaced by arguments designed to appeal to mercantile and manufacturing interests. This shift of emphasis can be attributed to the changed situation produced by a combination of industrial growth, population redistribution and parliamentary reform. When the whole Blackwood's world-picture is taken into account, however, it is clear that the Magazine's writers retained their allegiance to the traditional structure of landed society and the territorial constitution. Some of De Quincey's points, in particular, do bear the character of an argumentum ad hominem, rather than deriving from true sympathy with the position addressed. One can therefore see the force of F.W. Fetter's claim that the 'theoretical niceties' of the Blackwood's writers (which, Fetter allows, did contain 'some acute theoretical criticism of free trade')

were 'just debating points to defend a position that had been taken primarily on grounds of political and social policy.'⁹³ Nonetheless, Fetter's verdict that 'the theoretical case against the repeal of the Corn Laws was never put together in Blackwood's in an organised way'⁹⁴ seems unduly harsh. Granted the schematic manner in which that case has been presented here, it may still be maintained that the articles of David Robinson in the earlier period, or of De Quincey in the later, when taken as a set, do constitute a well-reasoned defence of agricultural protection.

Whatever the theoretical merits of the protectionist case, events from November 1845 were moving towards its practical destruction. The Blackwood's position during the final crisis was mainly expressed by two writers: Charles Neaves and, the brightest new recruit to the Magazine in the 1840s, W.E. Aytoun.⁹⁵ In the closing article of the December number, Aytoun (with Henry Stephens) discussed current anxieties about the potato crop. One solution might be to allow maize to enter duty free - 'if not as food for people, it would feed horses, pigs or poultry' - and such a concession would not interfere with the Corn Laws.(p.774)⁹⁶ The shortfall in the potato crop would increase the demand for grain, thus pushing up the price- but that was not the

93 Fetter, J.P.E., p.99.

94 Idem.

95 Lawyer, poet and scholar, Aytoun was, very appropriately, to become John Wilson's son-in-law in 1849.

96 This article must have been written by mid-November, to be ready for printing. It was in early November that, with Peel's authorisation, a large order was placed through the house of Baring for maize and meal to be purchased in the U.S.A. 'The Baring purchase was carried out with great speed and secrecy. Nothing came out in the press until the food ships arrived in Cork at the end of January.' Gash, Peel, p.543.

same thing as a scarcity of grain per se. On the contrary, had repeal taken place a few years ago, there would have been decultivation of marginal land and therefore less home-produced grain to draw upon at this difficult time. Bad seasons tended to affect the Continent at the same time as Britain, so the safest policy was to keep as much of our own land in cultivation as possible.

The timing of the major events was awkward for Blackwood's monthly publication-date. The December article, appearing just before the sensational (and erroneous) disclosure in The Times that Peel's cabinet had decided upon repeal, must have appeared out of touch in its reluctance even to heed rumours of suspension. Similarly, the January article, by Neaves, was dealing in terms of 'sincere and solemn regret' with the resignation of Peel's Ministry when, on 21 December, with most of the article probably in type, Peel had resumed office. Neaves added a final paragraph, noting that the threat of a Whig Ministry was receding and advising 'our friends' to be firm, yet prudent, and 'to hope and believe the best of their leaders and party.' (p.128)

Hoping and believing the best was advice that could no longer be accepted by John Blackwood, once he had heard Peel declare in the Commons, during the debate on the Address on 22 January, that he could no longer defend the Corn Laws. Writing to his brother Robert on the next day, John gave a bitter eye-witness account of the occasion.

No doubt Peel's speech was a most able and eloquent one, but the impression it leaves upon me is intense dislike and disgust to him. The worst part to my

mind was the way in which he talked of the potato disease: it was the regular "snuffled in Joseph Surface tone".⁹⁷

Disgusted though he was with Peel, John Blackwood was no blind admirer of the Protectionists. He went on in this letter to observe that, 'Nothing could more completely prove the prostration of the Conservative and Agricultural party than such a swab as Disraeli being the first to rise from among them on such a grand occasion.' John's letters are sprinkled with adverse remarks about the mental limitations of the Agriculturists. In January 1842 he was stung by slow sales of the Book of the Farm to exclaim, 'These stupid pock-puddings of English farmers almost deserve to have their Corn Laws repealed.'⁹⁸ Although representatives of the Agricultural Protection Society frequently visited the London office of the Blackwood firm, and John visited their premises on occasion, the brothers would not tolerate interference in the policy of the Magazine. During the troubles over Alison's rejected article on the currency, in 1845,⁹⁹ Alexander Blackwood complained to John that, 'These Agricultural Protection Society people have been writing to Alison on the subject, & it is a thing that must be stopped, O'Brien & these fellows interfering with articles that are to be in the Magazine.'¹⁰⁰ O'Brien, however, was clearly regarded by John Blackwood as being of

97 NLS, MS4077, f.236. Also quoted, with minor inaccuracies, in Annals, II, 379-80.

98 NLS, MS4059, f.28. Also quoted in Annals, II, 335.

99 See above, Chapter Eight, p323, and note 33.

100 8 Feb. 1845, NLS, MS4073, f.155.

a higher calibre than most of the Agriculturists for whom he spoke. John remarked of him that he was 'reckoned a clever man although a Young Englander.'¹⁰¹ Writing to Robert on 28 January 1846, he passed on O'Brien's prediction about Peel's prospects.

O'Brien is very confident that a Government under Sir Robert Peel will not last long; that even his immediate supporters are disheartened; and as for the bull-headed Wodehouse section of the Agriculturists, they would much rather have Lord John Russell, even after Peel may have got his measure through.¹⁰²

On the day that this letter was written, Robert Blackwood wrote to John (in reply to a letter of 26 January)¹⁰³ giving the view from Edinburgh.

It is very satisfactory that you should have seen the Protection men and I am satisfied from their line that the game is up so far as they are concerned but I doubt if Peel's Ministry will be able to stand. There can be no doubt that we must uphold the present system and make the best of a bad bargain.¹⁰⁴

The article on 'Ministerial Measures,' by W.E. Aytoun in the March number, was consistent with Robert Blackwood's sentiments. Aytoun stated that Blackwood's had defended the protective principle for many years, and 'we can see no substantial reason for departing from our deliberate views, and assenting to the abandonment of a system which truth and justice have alike compelled us to uphold.' (p.374)

101 19 March 1844, NLS, MS4069, f.71. (Note the 'although'.)

102 NLS, MS4077, f.290. Also quoted in Annals, II, 382.
Wodehouse was indeed to be one of 'the hard knot of revengeful Tory members' who brought down Peel on 25 June 1846. (Gash, Peel, p.602). Their vindictive action was not supported by the Magazine. Maga, Aug. 1846, p.256.

103 Quoted in Annals, II, 381-2.

104 NLS, MS4078, f.11.

The Magazine, however, could take a philosophical view, simply protesting against the change. Conservative members of parliament, Aytoun observed, were placed in a more invidious position. Have they to submit to conversion without conviction, which means hypocrisy?

Can it be that the Premier, who talks so largely about his own wounded feelings, can make no allowance for the sorrow, or even the indignation of those who are now restrained by a sense of paramount duty from following him any further? (p.375)¹⁰⁵

After giving one of the best summaries of the anti-repeal case to be found in Blackwood's Magazine (pp.377-82), Aytoun went on to conclude that the abolition of the Corn Laws would not at that moment help the Irish. They simply could not afford to buy foreign corn. He - and the whole country - would have applauded an Order in Council to introduce maize flour into Ireland to meet the necessities of the time (as, indeed, Aytoun had recommended in his December article). Why had relief been delayed and complicated by bringing in the whole repeal question? A permanent national interest had been threatened, when what was needed was concentration upon a temporary exigency.

After a crassly insensitive piece by J.D. Brady in May,¹⁰⁶ and one of Alison's historical excursions in June,¹⁰⁷ it was left to Aytoun in August to deliver the Magazine's

¹⁰⁵ Making all due allowance for the difficulty of Peel's position, and conceding indeed the rightness of what he did, one can still see the force of Aytoun's point. In Peel's letter to the electors of Tamworth, in July 1847, a year after the breaking-up of the Conservative party, he still found it difficult to extend his feelings of pity from himself to his ~~one~~time supporters: 'I felt it to be my duty to incur the painful sacrifices which the acting upon that conviction must inevitably entail.' Peel, Memoirs, p.106.

¹⁰⁶ 'Ireland - Its Condition..' pp.572-603, (see especially pp.599-602).

¹⁰⁷ 'The Fall of Rome. Its causes at work in the British Empire', pp.692-718.

verdict on the outgoing Ministry.¹⁰⁸

Perhaps no minister of this country ever owed more to party than Sir Robert Peel; and yet, without the excuse of strong necessity, he has not only abandoned that party, but placed it in a false position. (p.255)

Aytoun meant that Peel's action had led to Conservative protectionists voting against the Ministry, in faith to their stated views at the 1841 general election. The point was a fair one, but it could be inverted. Perhaps no party, up to 1846, had ever owed more to a leader than the Conservatives did to Sir Robert Peel; yet at the time of his greatest necessity they had refused to stand by him. It is of the essence of tragedy that the participants are locked into their fate. The rift of 1846 was a tragedy for Peel, for his party, and for Blackwood's Magazine. Having staunchly championed the strategy by which the defeated and demoralised Tories of 1832 had become the victorious Conservative party of 1841, and the strong and successful government of 1841-5, Blackwood's was impelled by older, and deeper, loyalties to unfurl, more in sorrow than in anger, the banner of defiance. Maynooth and the abandonment of agricultural protection were measures that the conductors of the Magazine, for all their desire to be loyal to the leaders of their party, could not endure in silence.

108 'The Late and the Present Ministry', pp.249-260. (One of the rare non-attributed listings in Wellesley I - item 2580 - the article is given a queried attribution to Aytoun in the Addenda, citing Strout, Bib., p.200. Strout's attribution, on internal grounds, can now be supported by citing a letter from Aytoun to Robert Blackwood, in July 1846, NLS, MS4077, f.184. Aytoun writes of having trouble with an article. 'It is just like writing observations "on the present state & prospects of Chaos"... A "chapter of John Bull" would have been a far better experiment.' Aytoun was referring to George Moir's allegory of political history during the Reform Bill crisis.)

CHAPTER TEN

CONCLUSION

Blackwood's Magazine was a monthly miscellany in which anonymous political writers discussed current questions from a Tory stance. This much is common knowledge. Behind the apparent simplicity of the opening statement, however, there are problems to be resolved. Did publication in a monthly magazine give rise to political discussion of a different character from that to be found in a daily or quarterly journal? Why was the practice of anonymity so generally maintained in respect of the political articles? Was the Magazine's stance consistently 'Tory', and what, indeed, does such a label convey? It is to these questions that the concluding chapter of this study is addressed.

There is no doubt that monthly publication could pose problems for political writers on occasion. Alfred Mallalieu complained repeatedly to the Blackwood brothers that the requirements of meeting the printing deadline prevented him from giving up-to-the-minute discussion. It was often a matter of chance whether the decisive phase in a political question occurred within or outside the time when the political writers were completing their articles. (For Blackwood's this would usually be the second week of each month.) The Magazine was, for instance, fortunately placed as regards the 'Bedchamber Crisis', but awkwardly circumstanced during the crisis of Peel's Ministry in

December 1845. Nevertheless, in an era when instantaneous news-coverage, and almost equally instantaneous comment thereon, were not yet taken for granted, the monthly journal was still well placed to combine the topicality of the newspaper with the mature reflection of the quarterly review. Daily newspapers - which were as much the norm in London as weekly papers were in the provinces - could pose deadline problems for their political writers that were more insistent, and more incessant, than any faced by a Blackwood's writer. As the former editor of the Guardian and Public Ledger, Mallalieu must have appreciated that fact. Conversely, the contributors to the Quarterly or the Edinburgh could find that they had only one opportunity - and that might be two or three months later - to deal with a major occurrence that had bestirred the political nation. The County Clare by-election was one example (discussed in Appendix VIII). Pressures to bring out the Quarterly Review at dates somewhat closer to the high points of a political crisis (notably during the struggle over the Reform Bill), may have occasioned the frequent departures from a strict three-monthly cycle of publication.¹ What the readers of

1 The Quarterly appeared in the following months during 1828-33:

1828 Jan.	March		July	Oct.	
1829 Jan.		April	July		Nov.
1830 Jan.	March		May	Oct.	
1831 Jan. Feb.		April	July		Nov.
1832 Jan.	March		July	Oct.	Dec.
1833		April	July	Oct.	

(Thus 5 numbers in 1831 and 1832; only 3 numbers in 1833.)

the Quarterly gained in topicality, however, they lost in the unpredictability of the advent of their journal.

Naturally the frequency of publication influenced the form of political communication. Topicality would have ranked below breadth of illustration and depth of reflection in the priorities of a monthly or a quarterly, although unfortunate timing could still mar a well-reasoned piece. For a daily newspaper a different order of priorities operated. The classic statement of the functions of a newspaper was given in The Times on 6 February 1852.

The first duty of the press is to obtain the earliest and most correct intelligence of the events of the time, and instantly, by disclosing them, to make them the common property of the nation... The press lives by disclosures; ... it is daily and for ever appealing to the enlightened force of public opinion - anticipating, if possible, the march of events...

Words such as 'earliest', 'instantly', 'disclosures', 'daily' and 'for ever', serve to distinguish the priorities of the newspaper from those of the monthly or quarterly periodical. There was, of course, common ground between the newspaper's editorial column and the monthly magazine's current political article. After all, several of the Blackwood's writers mainly studied here had also served - or went on to serve - as leader writers in the daily press. Yet even in these two allied fields there were differences. Sixteen pages of close print in a magazine allowed scope for far more elaboration of argument than a single column in a newspaper. The technique in the latter case was akin to the old proverb that 'constant dripping will wear away a stone.' Day after day during the progress of a contentious

episode, the leader writer could hammer away at a few salient points. He endeavoured to make his views prevail by simplification, reiteration, and even attrition. A monthly commentator had fewer opportunities to drive home his views, but more scope when his time came. He could afford to devote more space to setting up the opposing case, before knocking it down. He could fasten upon points of detail which would have appeared disproportionate in a leader-column. He could cite precedents and established authorities, refer to previous articles which regular readers would have retained, and deploy his case across a series.

Political writing in a periodical was thus more satisfying, in many ways, than daily journalism. It was also, in this period, more prestigious. When John Murray and Benjamin Disraeli were seeking to lure J.G. Lockhart away from Blackwood's to edit a projected Tory newspaper (the Representative), Lockhart required to be convinced that he was not demeaning himself. To be a salaried editor, confined to the daily drudgery of an editorial chair, was not perhaps quite the thing for a gentleman. Disraeli deployed all his verbal resources to assuage Lockhart's unease. He urged Murray to impress upon Lockhart that 'he is coming to London, not to be an Editor of a Newspaper, but the Director-General of an immense organ, and at the head of a band of high-bred gentlemen and important interests.'² Such terminological devices failed to overcome Lockhart's doubts. He emerged from the negotiations with the prize of

² Disraeli to Murray, Sept. 1825, quoted in Monypenny, *op.cit.*, I, 65.

the editorship of the Quarterly, accompanied by the obligation to contribute to the new paper and 'by all other means consistent with his rank in life to promote the sale and character' of the projected work. Given the brief, fraught and expensive existence of the Representative, Lockhart had handled the matter with his usual deftness.

It was a moot point, however, even within the Blackwood's circle, whether political writing in a monthly was an entirely admirable profession. Archibald Alison repeatedly made disparaging remarks about the 'temporary literature' of which he was such a fertile source. Everyone engaged in periodical literature, he alleged,

is aware that he writes an article for a magazine or review in a totally different style from what he does any writing intended for durable existence. If we turn to the political articles in any periodical ten or fifteen years old, what a multitude of facts do we find distorted, of theories disproved by the result, of anticipations which have proved fallacious, of hopes which have terminated only in disappointment? This is no reproach to the writers. It is the necessary result of literary and philosophical talent keenly and energetically applied to the interests of the hour. It is in the cool shade of retirement, and by men detached from the contests of the world, that truth in social and moral affairs is really to be discovered....³

With all due respect for Alison's experience, one must take issue with him here. It was not in 'the cool shade of retirement', but in the heat of the day, that Edmund Burke wrote his Reflections on the Revolution in France. It was in periodicals that Thomas Carlyle published his 'Signs of the Times', and David Robinson his demolition of the Malthusian case for ending public assistance to the able-bodied

3 'The Copyright Question', Maga, Jan. 1842, p.114.

poor. Even Alison himself, at his best, wrote articles of enduring worth about the proper strategy for Conservatism in the reformed era. Obviously much political writing in magazines was perishable in character - and deserved to perish. Weighty tomes written in the cool shade, however, might also fall dead-born from the press. Contributing to a periodical - at bottom a commercial venture that required to satisfy its subscribers if it was to survive - could give a writer a lively sense of his audience. In so doing, his work was as likely to be enhanced as it was to be debased. The thoughts of William Hazlitt, writing in the Edinburgh Review, were as complacent as Alison's were disparaging, but they merit quotation as a means of balancing the picture.

Literary immortality is now let on short leases, and the modern author must be contented to succeed by rotation. A scholar of the olden time had resources, had consolations to support him under many privations and disadvantages. A light (that light which penetrates the most clouded skies) cheered him in his lonely cell, in the most obscure retirement: and, with the eye of faith, he could see the meanness of his garb exchanged for the wings of the Shining Ones, and the wedding-garment of the Spouse... We exist in the bustle of the world, and cannot escape from the notice of our contemporaries. We must please to live, and therefore should live to please. We must look to the public for support. Instead of solemn testimonies from the learned, we require the smiles of the fair and the polite... Therefore, let Reviews flourish - let Magazines increase and multiply - let the Daily and Weekly Newspapers live for ever!⁴

Alison was in more constructive vein when he applied his experience and common sense to analysing the process by which

4 'The Periodical Press', Edinburgh Review, May 1823, p.358.

ideas were disseminated. A passage in his Blackwood's article on 'Conservative Associations' (July 1835, p.6) deserves to be better known.

The great works of the master spirits of the age, which are addressed in the first instance to men of education and thought only, are not in the end lost even upon the lower orders of society. They sink gradually down; they spread to persons who write for a more extended sphere, or in a more ephemeral form; and in the course of a few years they make their appearance even in the journals and fleeting publications which appear for a minute, and then sink for ever. It is thus, more than by any publications avowedly and expressly destined for their instruction, that the great change in the public mind is to be effected. The people are jealous, and naturally so, of what they see is expressly intended for their instruction. It is not by the principles which the rich propagate in penny tracts, but by those which they read themselves, that the people judge of what they really believe to be true.

Even if the validity of Alison's distinction between ephemeral and enduring writing be granted, it remained the case that within the former field the magazine was especially well equipped to prevail over rival forms of ephemeral publication. The pamphlet was handicapped by the lack of a regular pattern of distribution and by its dependence solely upon the appeal of its subject. William Gifford, editor of the Quarterly, noting with satisfaction the 6,000 circulation, and much greater readership, of his review in 1812, observed:

I know of no pamphlet that would sell 100; besides pamphlets are thrown aside. Reviews are permanent, and the variety of their contents attracts those who never dream of opening a pamphlet.⁵

Whilst understating the sales-potential of pamphlets, Gifford was right about the appeal afforded by the variety of a periodical's contents - a view echoed

5 Quoted in Fetter, Economica, op.cit., p.426.

by J.G. Lockhart in Peter's Letters.⁶ That point may now be sharpened by arguing that variety and flexibility were even more characteristic of magazines than of reviews. Although reviews did contain free-standing political articles, the most common item in their contents was indeed a review of some recently published book - or perhaps of the republished work of an earlier writer (for example, Macaulay's essays on 'Milton' and 'Machiavelli' in the Edinburgh Review). Such reviews often became merely the starting points from which the writer indulged in a disquisition of his choice. The format could still be inhibiting, however, as De Quincey remarked in the Edinburgh Saturday Post for 1 December 1827.

It is melancholy to see an old tiger of a reviewer grinding his teeth and lashing his tail, at a man whom he longs to tear limb from limb, but can find no pretence for getting at him, because the fellow has not written a book.⁷

Besides flexibility of approach, the magazine scored over the review in being able to adopt a richer variety of tone. Gravity of demeanour characterised the Quarterly, the Westminster and (in time) the Edinburgh. Even the most sober of readers could sometimes find the going heavy. The wife of Henry Thornton wrote to Hannah More: 'Do you read the Quarterly Review? It has a tendency toward dullness.' As F.W. Fetter rightly remarks, 'No one ever said that about Blackwood's.'⁸ A vivid picture of how at least one devotee approached the pleasurable task of reading

6 Quoted above, Chapter Two, pp.18-19.

7 Reprinted in Tave, op.cit., p.213.

8 Fetter, Economica, op.cit., p.427 (source of quotation also).

Blackwood's was provided by a reviewer in the ultra-Tory Morning Journal on 2 March 1829. After quoting from a political article (actually De Quincey's first for the Magazine), the reviewer continues:

With a very justifiable impatience we glance through the pages that come between this article and the Noctes, No.41, only stayed for a moment in our rapid progress by some beautiful verses from the pen of Delta, and just reading the headings of the other papers, promising ourselves, however, a rich treat hereafter in the perusal of 'The First and Last Crime', 'The Chapter on Church-yards', 'The Two Emilies', and 'The Man Mountain.' At page 371 we draw our chair a little closer to the fire, look carefully round our room to feel assured that nothing is likely to break in upon our next half-hour's enjoyment, and begin 'The Noctes Ambrosianae.'

The Noctes were indeed one of the principal attractions of Blackwood's Magazine. They provided on occasion (as several quotations in the present study have shown) an additional medium of political comment. Literary reviewing could also reinforce the Magazine's political bias (as in the castigation of Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt). William Maginn, however, (hardly an untainted source) maintained that Blackwood's compared favourably with Whig 'literary scavengers' in keeping politics out of literary criticism. Where the latter fraternity had abused Tory writers such as Wordsworth, Southey, Coleridge and Sir Walter Scott, the reviewers in Blackwood's had dealt with Byron, Shelley and Moore on their literary merits.⁹ Although it was plainly tendentious, Maginn's claim had some substance. While Byron and Shelley incurred the full ferocity of Blackwood's for their political views, the Magazine did indeed praise their poetic genius. Original poetry in Blackwood's was another

⁹ Maga, Aug. 1824, pp.179-183.

vehicle, at times, for political and social comment, whether singing the praises of the 'Yeomanry Cavalry of Manchester' (in recalling 'Peterloo', April 1822, p.474) or lamenting the cruelty to children in factories, in Elizabeth Barrett's impassioned verse. Even travel writing was not immune from political slanting. A piece by William Johnston in August 1828 (pp.184-193) interspersed lyrical descriptions of journeys to the Lake District, Ireland and Bath, with hostile thrusts against the Whigs and Catholic emancipation.

The richness of this political diet was too much for some palates. De Quincey (in the Edinburgh Saturday Post piece quoted above) regretted in December 1827 that 'even Blackwood has been latterly disposed to allow an undue preponderance to politics.' Coleridge thought the same, writing to William Blackwood on that subject, on 20 October 1829:

I see but one rock the Magazine is likely to strike on: the (only however of late) increasing proportion of space allotted to party politics, & political economy By my little volume you will see that I am as little an admirer or convert of Ricardo & McCulloch as your correspondent. But my opinion of the quality of the literary or economical articles forms no part of my objection. It is only the quantity, the relative proportion, & this again only as a subject of apprehension for the future rather than of complaint for the past.¹⁰

The 'little volume' to which Coleridge referred was his forthcoming On the Constitution of the Church and State. That work contains perhaps the most famous tribute to Blackwood's by a reader, in the form of a footnote to the section on the 'Idea of a Christian Church.' Coleridge there referred to the Magazine, 'which, in a deliberate and

conscientious adoption of a very commonplace compliment, I profess to think, as a magazine, and considering the number of years it has kept on the wing - incomparable.'

Although notable readers of Blackwood's are relatively easy to identify, the general readership cannot be established with any real precision. Even their numbers are uncertain. Figures for copies sold have been indicated in the second chapter of this study, but there is no agreed multiplier for converting number of copies into number of readers. William Gifford, at a time when the Quarterly was selling around 6,000, computed its readership as 'at least' 50,000.¹¹ Although the aggregate looks inflated, a factor of eight or nine does not seem too far-fetched. Certainly the copies of a periodical that went to a reading-room or the library of a learned society would be read - if they were as attractive as Blackwood's - by considerably more than eight or nine readers apiece. Those copies that went to country houses or large parsonages would also be likely to be perused by several individuals during the month that they were current. Against these cases, however, there must have been other homes wherein Blackwood's was monopolised by the paterfamilias.¹² The price (2/6d), size (c.136 pages), and general character of Blackwood's all presupposed a comfortably-off, leisured, educated class of readers. They were fairly evenly-divided between Scotland

11 Fetter, Economica, op.cit., pp.425-6.

12 Perhaps the lady of the house might also have gained access. William Johnston, in a remark which to-day would have earned him citation in the women's page of the Guardian, told William Blackwood that a couple of items in the latest number 'don't shew much power - but women - commonplace men & the like - will applaud them more, than much better things.' 7 Dec. 1828, NLS, MS4022, f.40.

and England at first, with the balance tilting more towards England after the first decade. Irish Protestants and, increasingly, overseas subscribers, formed significant minorities of the Magazine's readership. The Scottish origins, readership, and indeed, control, of Blackwood's constituted an additional influence upon its political coverage - as that inveterate English nationalist. David Robinson, had to be reminded, from time to time.

One characteristic of the political (and critical) writing of a monthly miscellany such as Blackwood's which requires to be isolated here for closer discussion is the practice of anonymity. It was highly unusual for a political article in the magazines and reviews of this period to carry the name of its writer. Indeed, anonymity was so carefully preserved that writers contributing to the same journal would sometimes be left in ignorance of the authorship of companion articles. Correspondence in the Blackwood Papers substantiates this point. Sometimes William Blackwood was persuaded to divulge a name to another contributor, but where confidentiality was particularly called for, he exercised all due discretion. The practice had its critics, notably Edward Lytton Bulwer. During his time as editor of the New Monthly Magazine (1831-33), Bulwer wrote a two-volume work entitled England and the English.¹³ In it he condemned anonymous political writing, as well as unsigned literary criticism.

If the political writer ordinarily affixed his name to his lucubration, he would be brought under the

13 Reprinted by the University of Chicago Press (1970), from which edition the quotation is taken, pp.238-9.

wholesome influence of the same public opinion that he affects to influence or to reflect; he would be more consistent in his opinions, and more cautious in examination. Papers would cease to be proverbial for giving easy access to the current slander and the diurnal lie; and the boldness of their tone would not be the less, because it would be also honest. I have said, to make power safe and constitutional, it must be made responsible; but anonymous power is irresponsible power.

Later in the century, these and other considerations were to prevail, and anonymity eventually ceased to be the norm, outside the editorial column of the newspaper.¹⁴ In the period covered by the present study, however, the case for anonymity appeared stronger. One argument was advanced by Bulwer's successor in the editorial chair of the New Monthly, Samuel Carter Hall.

The anonymous, and the mysteriousness attached to the plural unit We, seem best adapted to the chair of criticism. The individual is merged in the court which he represents, and he speaks not in his own name but ex cathedra.¹⁵

In plainer terms, a writer's opinions would carry more weight and authority if they were presented as the voice of the periodical, rather than merely of one individual. It was also argued that anonymity brought a greater sense of esprit de corps to the contributors. The whole was greater than the sum of its parts. Each particular journal had its own distinctive persona, often connected with its political affiliation. A writer joined the appropriate team, and it would have been both distracting and egotistical if he had wanted his particular contribution to the common

14 For an excellent summary of this process, and of the reasons for its occurrence, see Oscar Maurer, Jr, 'Anonymity vs. Signature in Victorian Reviewing', University of Texas Studies in English, XXVII, 1 (June 1948), 1-27.

15 Quoted in Maurer, p.15.

cause to be identified under his own name. The force of this point can be seen in Blackwood's, where the spirit of fraternity was encouraged by the Noctes. It was appropriate that the Noctes should have been frequently the work of several hands. Joint authorship of political pieces also occurred. It was, moreover, significant that when David Robinson, with nearly ninety Blackwood's articles behind him, became distanced from the dominant political line in the Magazine, he discontinued his practice of leaving his work completely unsigned. His final three articles were by 'An English Freeholder' and 'A Bystander.'

An argument for anonymity that weighed particularly heavily with political writers was that their official position (or aspirations thereto) might have been jeopardised by their excursions into controversial politics. Alison, as Sheriff of Lanarkshire, Johnston, as secretary to a government minister, and Croly, as suitor for a living in the gift of the Lord Chancellor, had good reasons for desiring confidentiality. Even someone with no public aspirations, like David Robinson, preferred to have his privacy respected. Had he lived to read it, a passage in The Times editorial of 6 February 1852 would have struck a receptive chord in Robinson. The writer in the public press, the editorial declared,

is not toiling or sacrificing the best years of his life and the best faculties of his nature in the pursuit of personal aggrandizement, for none can either reward or corrupt the obscure course of his labours. Even the triumph of his opinions is not accompanied by the applause of a party or the success of a struggle for patronage and power. Those opinions which he has defended, and, so to speak, created, slip

from him in the moment of their triumph, and take their stand among established truths.

Thanks to the richness of the Blackwood archive, and to the published researches of A.L. Strout and Walter Houghton's team at the Wellesley Index, the personal achievement of anonymous writers like Robinson has begun to be recognised.¹⁶ It is revealing to compare the individual treatment of political writers in the present study with the handling of political discussion in the published work most analogous to it: M.M.H. Thrall's pioneering book, Rebellious Fraser's (1934). The archives of what has been called 'the English Blackwood's' no longer exist. Miriam Thrall (and it is no reflection upon her to say so) thus remained unaware that the political staff of Fraser's included David Robinson. She did, however, succeed in identifying numerous contributors to Fraser's, and it is noteworthy how many of these had belonged - and mostly continued to belong - to the Blackwood's team: Maginn himself, Galt, Gillies, Gleig, Hogg, Lockhart, 'Delta' Moir, Mortimer O'Sullivan and 'Senex' Townshend. Anonymity thus conferred the further advantage of enabling a writer to serve more than one master.

16 The record is not yet complete. Shortly before his death, Walter Houghton wrote to me, asking whether I could identify, on internal evidence, Robinson's authorship of a substantial number of articles in Fraser's Magazine. It is a matter of personal regret that my Blackwood's (and other) preoccupations have delayed the undertaking of this task. Should the present study prove acceptable, Fraser's could then be addressed. For the techniques of attribution on internal grounds, see the article by Mary Ruth Hiller, VPR XII, 3 (Fall 1979), 95-101.

Finally, to address the central question posed by this study: what were the politics of Blackwood's? It is a prevailing, if somewhat dispiriting, characteristic of modern historical scholarship to offer complexity in place of simplicity. The present exercise - regrettably, perhaps, but unsurprisingly - will be no exception. There is no single political label which adequately depicts the affiliation of Blackwood's Magazine throughout the period of this study. The obvious choice would be 'Tory.' Indeed, if Toryism could simply be defined in negative terms, as 'not Whig' or 'not Radical', then Blackwood's might be conveniently pigeonholed as 'Tory.' The most cursory knowledge of the political history of the period between Waterloo and the repeal of the Corn Laws, however, will suffice to show that the word 'Tory' needs to be glossed. The terminology of both contemporaries and historians has included (not always with precision) such expressions as 'high Tory', 'ultra-Tory', 'liberal Tory', 'Canningite Tory', 'Tory-radical', and 'Tory paternalist.' To these may be added 'Pittite', 'country party', and, most crucial semantic change of all, 'Conservative.' To ignore this plethora of political distinctions by merely observing that, 'Blackwood's was Tory, and there's an end to it,' would confer the benefit of bringing this dissertation to a welcome close, before the 'normal' word-limit, the patience of the reader, and the competence of the binder, were alike stretched to breaking-point. Such an escape-route, however, would deserve a repetition of the Edinburgh Review's celebrated rebuke to Wordsworth: 'This will not do.'

The relationship between change and continuity is of the very essence of historical study. Consistently with that, the politics of Blackwood's can be depicted as changing through time as regards nomenclature and affiliation, but as remaining continuously loyal to certain fundamental principles. In this combination of adaptation and basic consistency may be found part of the key to the survival of Blackwood's until December 1980. To compress the changing alignments of Blackwood's to an irreducible minimum, they may be expressed in a four-part scheme:

1. 1817-1824 Ministerial
2. 1825-1831 Ultra-Tory
3. 1832-1844 Conservative
4. 1845-1846 Protectionist

To expand upon, and justify, this labelling, one may begin with 'Ministerial.' This is preferred to 'Tory' because that term had not yet come into full acceptance by those to whom it was applied. Grey, Lansdowne, Russell and Lambton were much readier to style themselves Whigs than most members of Liverpool's cabinet were to style themselves Tory. One finds this reflected in Blackwood's, where (as shown in Chapter Four, pp.117-8) some political contributors objected to the usage of the word Tory, and others emphasised the old Whig antecedents of what had come to be called Toryism in their own day. Reverence for that hallowed Whig year, 1688, was as great in the historical perspectives of Robinson, Croly, De Quincey and Alison as in the recollections of orthodox Whigs. Blackwood's, in this period, was safely immunised against Divine Right theorising

and romantic Jacobitism, by the potent combination of a Presbyterian publisher and Low Church political contributors. It is worth recalling, also, that the columns of Blackwood's were open, on occasion, to a self-styled 'liberal Whig', and even, in 1822, to a 'Catholic layman' arguing the case for emancipation. The division of Tories on this vexed question into 'protestants' and 'catholics' was a further complication of political terminology.

If the term 'Ministerial' were to be rejected as being too institutional to serve as an indicator of political views, the alternative choice, in this first period of Blackwood's, would be 'Pittite.' It was suggested (Chapter Four, p.116) that John Galt espoused Pittite principles, and the same could be claimed of J.G. Lockhart. After reading an article (by his future son-in-law) in the Magazine for November 1818, in which ministers were tried by the measure of Pitt and found wanting, Walter Scott wrote to Mrs. Clephane:

Our principal amusement here is Blackwood's Monthly Magazine which is very clever, very rash, very satirical, and what is rather uncommon now-a-days when such superlatives are going in: very aristocratical and Pittite.¹⁷

If applicable to the first period, however, 'Pittite' would not serve for the second. A combination of liberal economic policies from above, and the agitation of the Catholic Association from below, made it harder for Blackwood's to espouse the legacy of a prime minister who had initiated the relaxation of tariffs and resigned over

17 Grierson, op.cit., V, 247. (Lockhart's article is discussed more fully above, Chapter Three, pp.53-54)

Catholic emancipation. The decisive event, for Blackwood's, was the advent of David Robinson. From 1825, when he mounted his first full offensive, until his estrangement and eventual departure in 1831, Robinson's was the political voice of the Magazine to the near-exclusion of other contributors. In combative vigour, clarity of mind, originality of thought and force of expression, he stood head and shoulders above the other political writers in Blackwood's. Robinson, above all, made the Magazine a serious political organ, which might be rebuked and opposed, but which could not, in his day, be safely ignored by anyone concerned about great public questions.

Robinson's voice was that of an ultra-Tory. For him - and therefore for Blackwood's, as long as he was its principal political writer - there was to be no compromise, whether readily embraced or grudgingly accepted, with 'the spirit of the age', or 'the changed times', or with whatever comforting notion the natural conservative accommodated himself to political and economic change. Robinson epitomised the latter part of G.K. Chesterton's dictum, 'A progressive is always a conservative: he conserves the direction of progress: a reactionary is always a rebel.'¹⁸ Robinson was a rebel. With nothing behind him but his own mental resources, he fought against the liberalising tendencies of the age. True, he tried to align Blackwood's behind acceptance of a substantial measure of parliamentary reform, but even this bold policy was conceived, not to go forward with the likes of Brougham

18 Introduction to 1909 edition of T. Carlyle, Past and Present, p.vi.

and Macaulay, but to go back to the Protestant constitution and protected industry and agriculture which, as he saw it, had been eroded with the compliance of unrepresentative members of parliament. Where Catholic emancipation was concerned, the work of Geoffrey Best and G.I.T. Machin would suggest that a House of Commons more widely representative of English popular feeling would probably have rejected the Catholic claims in 1829. Although the economic questions addressed by the theories of Ricardo and McCulloch did not strike such a resonant chord in the popular psyche, it is reasonable to suggest that the weight of popular feeling was more likely to have inclined towards the old, protective system, at least as regards shipping and manufactures - and probably even as regards agriculture, which remained the largest single sector in the economy. Robinson, therefore, while he may have been 'wrong' when judged by the criteria of the dawning era of secular politics and the international economy, was by no means out of touch with the feelings of many of his contemporaries. He articulated those feelings with intelligence, with honesty, and with admirable vigour of mind. Although conservatively-minded historians have been almost as ready as their liberal colleagues to distance themselves from 'reactionary' Toryism,¹⁹ David Robinson's work for Blackwood's may serve to challenge the assumption that to be reactionary is necessarily to be stupid.

Blackwood's entered its third period, in this analysis,

19 Dr. Derry writes of 'the obtuseness resonant of reaction,' Castlereagh, pp.203-4; Professor Gash asserts that to be a reactionary 'requires an element of stupidity or panic,' Sir Robert Peel, p.xx; Boyd Hilton indulges in the tempting onomatopoeia, 'the backwoods subscribers to Blackwood's', *op.cit.*, p.270.

with its political staff headed by a writer whose impassioned rhetoric against parliamentary reform seemed to presage the maintenance of the most obdurate opposition to any form of change. Yet Archibald Alison was to achieve the alignment of the Magazine behind the Conservative policies and parliamentary tactics of Peel - indeed, to a remarkable degree, he anticipated the strategy of Peel and F.R. Bonham in his articles between July 1832 and July 1834.²⁰ The extensive citation of Alison's views in the two preceding chapters should serve as a corrective to those busy historians who might read Alison's series on 'Parliamentary Reform and the French Revolution' and imagine that they have gained the measure of the whole man.

In the final period (brief in relation to the closing-date of this study, but extending beyond it), the twelve years of loyalty (latterly more outwardly-shown than inwardly-felt) to the Conservative leadership gave place to a reappearance of the old Blackwood's spirit of defiance. The language was more muted, however, the tone more of sorrow than of anger, the stance more passive than vindictive, when compared with the relentless onslaught of 1829-30. It is interesting to note that, in the final article cited in the previous chapter, W.E. Aytoun observed, 'The country party, we believe, will form an effective and a watchful opposition....' In many ways, the attachment to the 'country party' represents the most enduring of Blackwood's

20 David Robinson, with typical penetration and honesty, had been the first Blackwood's writer to abandon the abuse of Peel and to recognise that the future of the party lay with him. How far he pursued that realisation in his Fraser's period is a question dependent upon firm identification of his articles therein.

affiliations. It encompasses many of David Robinson's deepest convictions and, although of wider connotation than merely agricultural protectionism, it helps to explain why the likes of Newdegate and Augustus Stafford O'Brien regarded Messrs Blackwood's London office as a friendly haven. It is less easy to reconcile, however, with William Blackwood's deferential communications to members of Lord Liverpool's cabinet, or with more eleemosynary (though fruitless) correspondence between Blackwood's sons and members of Peel's cabinets.

Through the vicissitudes of Toryism/Conservatism, however, the Magazine stood firmly by certain fundamental loyalties: to the mixed and balanced constitution, allowing due weight to monarchy and aristocracy; to the Protestant Church as by law established in the several kingdoms; to the agricultural interest; to the special character and interests of Scotland. In his foreword to R.L. Hill's Toryism and the People, Keith Feiling observed that, 'The many types which Mr. Hill discovers under the name of 'Tory' seem to suggest that we should not mistake diversity for lack of faith, or substitute labels for a texture of mind.'²¹ For all the diversity of its writers, Blackwood's retained a 'texture of mind.' It was a mind that infused political theory with religious faith; that trusted to order, tradition and experience more than to agitation, innovation and abstract reasoning: that preferred the local to the central, the

21 For a good summary of the way of thinking of a conservative, see the review by Haven Bradford Gow in the Salisbury Review no. 6 (Winter 1984) pp.54-55, of W. Harbour, The Foundations of Conservative Thought (1982).

4 1. 4

moral code to statute law, the national interest to the aspirations of liberal internationalists; that asserted the obligations which lay upon property as vehemently as it upheld property rights. To convey that texture of mind in one word, at the heart of the Blackwood's vision was paternalism. An article in the first political series to appear in the Magazine set the enduring tone.

In our days it is not possible to look around upon the world, and to compare what we see in the style and structure of society with what we know to have been in the times of our fathers, without observing that many great and remarkable changes have taken place. Everywhere, and in every walk of life, it is too evident that the upper orders of society have been tending, more and more, to a separation of themselves from those whom nature, providence, and law, have placed beneath them.

....Men have come to deride and despise a thousand of those means of communication that in former days knit all orders of the people together.

....The spirit of general kindness has not assuredly become extinct; - but we have learned to be too much satisfied with the conscious excellence of that general spirit - and to be too negligent of those minute and laborious services of human concern, by which alone that spirit can be made to operate as a healing and cementing charm over the whole wide-spread and diversified surface of human society. The master has not ceased to care for his servants, but he has become too delicate to shew his care by that cordial and grateful condescension of personal communication that of old made the vassal look up to his lord like a son to his father.²²

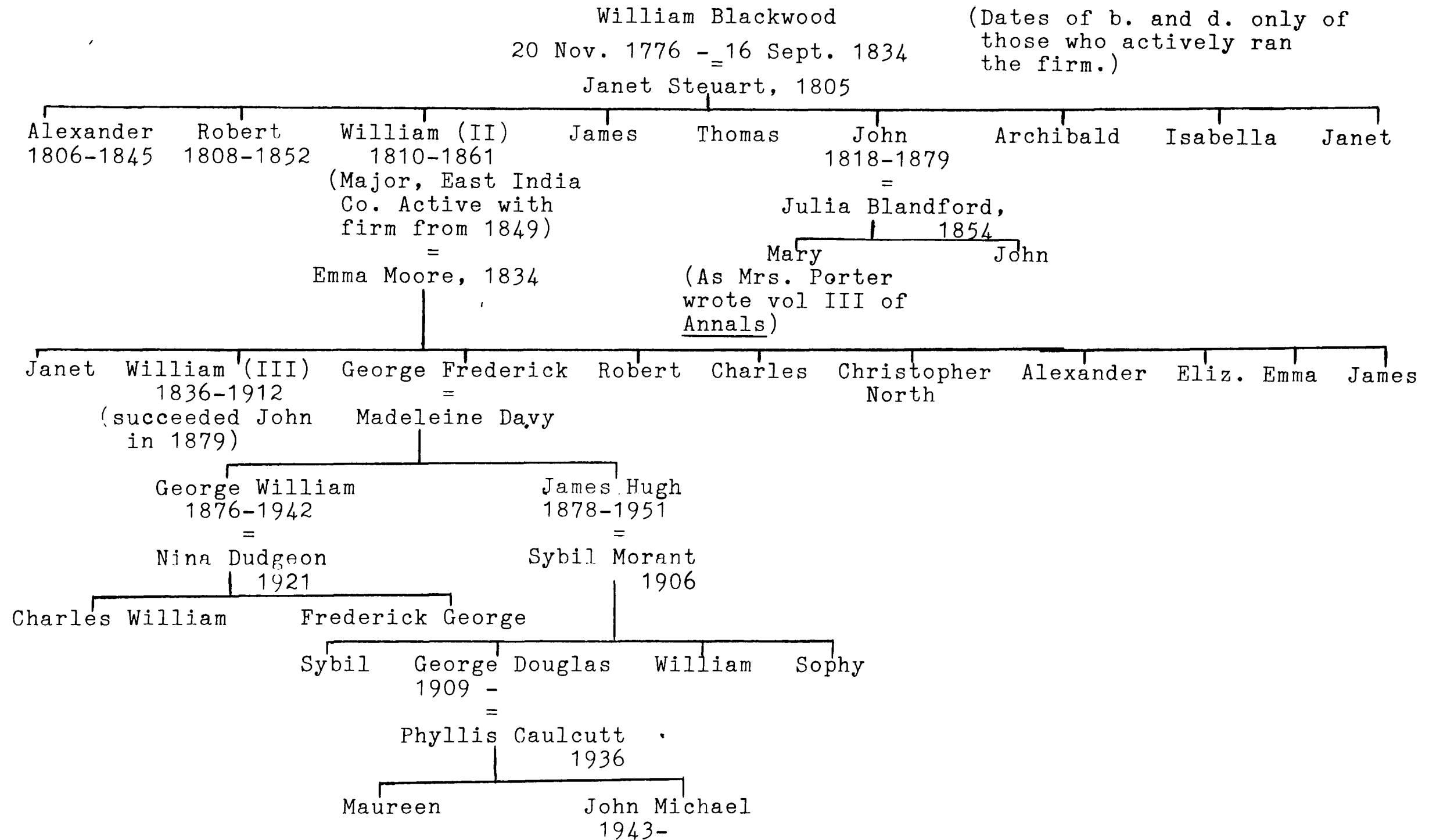
'Personal communication' - even across one and a half centuries, Blackwood's Magazine can still communicate with its modern readers in a tone that remains human, accessible and alive. That tone was set by the writer who, although he was not strictly the editor, did more than any other contributor to form the distinctive personality of the

Magazine: John Wilson. As the fate of Peel's first Ministry hung in the balance, Wilson, signing himself with the initials of the mythical editor, Christopher North, expressed what may serve as a fitting epitaph to Blackwood's, and a final conclusion to this study.²³

It has been very generally acknowledged, even by our bitterest adversaries, that we have been consistent in our political creed. Nor do we know that our consistency has ever been attributed to unworthy motives. True that we have a thousand times been called bigots and fanatics, and the like - but never time-servers, place-seekers, apostates. Unseduced, unterrified, we have held on our course according to our conscience; sometimes and on great questions we have felt it to be our painful duty to dissent from those whom we most honoured; and we then expressed our dissent unequivocally in the language of regret, grief, or indignation. Mistaken, perhaps, we might then have been, but assuredly we were sincere; and we can look back on the past, not only without shame, but with satisfaction - nay, we scruple not to say, with pride.

23 Maga, March 1835, p.431.

BLACKWOOD FAMILY TREE (Based on Tredrey, Appendix V)



Appendix IIKey to volumes and numbers of Blackwood's, 1817-1846The Edinburgh Monthly Magazine

Vol. I nos. I-VI April - Sept. 1817.

Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine

vol II	nos. VII-XII	Oct. 1817 - March 1818
vol III	nos. XIII-XVIII	April 1818 - Sept. 1818
vol IV	nos. XIX-XXIV	Oct. 1818 - March 1819
vol V	nos. XXV-XXX	April 1819 - Sept 1819
vol VI	nos. XXXI-XXXVI	Oct. 1819 - March 1820
vol VII	nos. XXXVII-XLII	April 1820 - Sept. 1820
vol VIII	nos. XLIII-XLVIII	Oct. 1820 - March 1821
vol IX	nos. XLIX-LIII	April 1821 - AUG. 1821*
vol X	nos. LIV-LIX	Aug. 1821 - DEC. 1821**
vol XI	nos. LX-LXV.	Jan. 1822 - June 1822
vol XII	nos. LXVI-LXXI	July 1822 - Dec. 1822

* (5 numbers, to and incl. Aug. Pt.I)

** (from Aug. Pt.II to and incl. Dec. Pt.II)

Thereafter regularly in Jan-June, July-Dec volumes, with 6 numbers per volume, except when double numbers were issued in certain months, which does not affect the volume sequence, but which does advance the number sequence.

Months with double numbers were:

vol XX	nos. CXV, CXVI	Aug. 1826 Pts. I, II
vol XXI	nos. CXXVI, CXXVII	June 1827 Pts. I, II
vol XXII	nos. CXXXVIII, CXXXIX	May 1828 Pts. I, II
vol XXIV	nos. CXLVI, CXLVII	Dec. 1828 Pts. I, II
vol XXVI	nos. CLVI, CLVII	Sept. 1829 Pts. I, II
vol XXVII	nos. CLXII, CLXIII	Feb. 1830 Pts. I, II
vol XXVIII	nos. CLXIX, CLXX	Aug. 1830, Pts. I, II
vol XXIX	nos. CLXXVI, CLXXVII	Feb. 1831 Pts. I, II
vol XXX	nos. CLXXXIII, CLXXXIV	Aug. 1831 Pts. I, II
vol XXXI	nos. CXC, CXCI	Feb. 1832 Pts. I, II
vol XXXII	nos. CXCIX, CC	Oct. 1832 Pts. I, II
vol XXXIII	nos. CCVI, CCVII	April 1833 Pts. I, II
vol XXXIV	nos. CCXIII, CCXIV	Oct. 1833 Pts. I, II
vol XXXV	nos. CCXXI, CCXXII	May 1834 Pts. I, II
vol XXXVII	nos. CCXXXI, CCXXXII	Feb. 1835 Pts. I, II

There were no further double numbers in the period of study (i.e. to Aug. 1846).

Appendix III

Blackwood and Murray, 1818-19

The August 1818 number of Blackwood's Magazine contained an additional name on the title page - that of John Murray, the most distinguished of London publishers. Murray had brought himself into closer contact with his Edinburgh agent by taking a £1,000 share in the Magazine. As well as bringing the prestige of his name as co-publisher, Murray could extend the range of contributors through his influence in the London literary world.¹ Murray had no desire, however, to share in the odium accruing from the Magazine's propensity for personal insolence. Hazlitt was assailed in the August number, the resultant lawsuit being settled in December, at the cost to Blackwood of £100 paid to Hazlitt, plus legal expenses. As the publisher of the Quarterly Review, Murray had his own, more high-minded plans for the Edinburgh publication.

The prominent feature of the Magazine should be literary and scientific news, and most of all the latter, for which your editors appear to have little estimation, and they seem not to be the least aware that this is ten times more interesting to the public than any other class of literature at present ... You have unfortunately too much of the Lake School, for which no interest is felt here. Give us foreign literature, particularly German, and let them create news in all departments.²

In a further letter, Murray again urged the necessity of collecting 'information on passing events'.³ He would

1 A.L. Strout, 'The Authorship of Articles in Blackwood's Magazine, Numbers XVII-XXIV (August 1818-March 1819)', The Library (Sept. 1956), pp. 187-201, lists the articles sent by Murray in this period.

2 Murray to Blackwood, quoted (n.d.) in Annals, I, 159.

3 Quoted in Annals, I, 171.

the most complete triumph to their adversaries, nothing could have been so successfully effective. They have actually given up their names, as the authors of the offences charged upon them, by implication only, in the pamphlet. How they could possibly conceive that the writer of the pamphlet would be such an idiot as to quit his stronghold of concealment, and allow his head to be chopped off by exposure, I am at a loss to conceive ...

I declare to God that had I known what I had so incautiously engaged in, I would not have undertaken what I have done, or have suffered what I have in my feelings and character - which no man had hitherto the slightest cause for assailing - I would not have done so for any sum.⁵

Further provocation came in November, with the appearance of a public letter, signed 'Monitor', rebuking Murray for having associated himself with Blackwood's Magazine.⁶ Then, in December, came the settlement of the Hazlitt libel suit. Uncomplimentary remarks in the Magazine about Murray's friends Sharon Turner and Thomas Moore added to the aggravation.⁷ It was all too much to bear. Early in 1819 he decided to terminate the arrangement. Although there is general agreement that the January number was the last to bear Murray's name,⁸ the copy of the February number in the National Library of Scotland still has Murray named on the title page, and five of the contributions came by way of him. It would therefore seem preferable to date the end of the Murray connexion from March 1819, when Cadell and Davies became the London agents of William Blackwood. Murray recovered his £1,000 by the end of the year and

5 Quoted in S. Smiles, A Publisher and his Friends. Memoir and Correspondence of John Murray. Revised and condensed edition by T. Mackay (1911) p.195. Mrs. Oliphant quotes part of the first paragraph and some of the omitted words, Annals, I, 170.

6 Tracts, op.cit..

7 Smiles, op.cit., p.197.

8 Annals, I, 172; Smiles, op.cit., p.197; Strout, Library, p.187

transferred his Edinburgh agency to Oliver and Boyd.⁹ The latter firm continued to print the Magazine until January 1821, when this task was entrusted to James Ballantyne., The ending of the arrangement between Blackwood and Murray (although the two men continued to correspond on friendly terms) was described in typically cavalier fashion in the Magazine, in October 1820.

Mr. Murray, under whose auspices our magnum opus issued for a few months from Albemarle Street, began to suspect that we might be eclipsing the Quarterly Review. No such eclipse had been foretold; and Mr. Murray, being no great astronomer, was at a loss to know whether, in the darkness that was but too visible, we were eclipsing the Quarterly, or the Quarterly eclipsing us. We accordingly took our pen, and erased his name from our title-page, and he was once more happy. Under our present publishers we carry everything before us in London.¹⁰

9 Smiles, op.cit., p.197.

10 'An Hour's Tete-a-Tete with the Public', (John Wilson), p.83.

Appendix IVDetailed printing-costs for one month : September 1838

	£	s	d
Printing; 9 sheets @ £7-8-0 7500 copies	66	12	-
Corrections & deletions 18-15-Proofs 3-10-6 Extras 2-6-	24	11	6
Cover 2-9-6 Advertiser & contents 1¼ 14-16-	17	5	6
	108	9	-
Paper 143 Rms Demy @ 17/9 for 9 sh. & ¼ conts 126-18-3			
18 Advertiser @ 12/6 11-5-, 4 R6q cover 23/6 5-1-, 16- 6-	143	4	3
Stitching per Young 7-18, in London 14-8	22	1	-
	£ 273	14	3

Source : Publication Ledger, NLS Acc.5644, F2: details
transcribed directly.

Appendix VI

London sales figures, 1841-44

1.	June 1841	:	4360
2.	Aug. 1841	:	4700
3.	Dec. 1841	:	4495
4.	Jan. 1842	:	4474
5.	Feb. 1842	:	4460
6.	Dec. 1843	:	4122
7.	Jan. 1844	:	4128
8.	Feb. 1844	:	4112

Source : letters from John Blackwood in London to
either Robert or Alexander in Edinburgh,
entries numbered as above:

- | | | | |
|-------|---------------|---------------|--------|
| 1. | 11 June 1841, | NLS, MS 4054, | f.112. |
| 2. | 7 Aug. 1841, | " " " | f.154. |
| 3,4,5 | 31 Jan. 1842, | " " 4059, | f.40 |
| 6,7,8 | 8 Feb. 1844, | " " 4069, | f.42. |

State of Statements made up in May 1848
from which Income-Tax Return was made

Stock at 21st March 1845 being Balance
including Amounts due by Patrons 4863 14 10
Deduct.
Mr. A. Blackwoods share 1663 9 11
Less Cash he had withdrawn 4607 6 11 12064 3 7
Cash withdrawn by Mr R Blackwood 4916 8 11 29629 11 3
do Mr. Blackwood 2537 8 7 7453 17 6
22175 13 9
Deduct Estimated value of Copyrights 14814
7361 13 9

Capital at 30th June 1846 11.142
Less do at 21st March 1845 7361 3 9 3780 16 3
Income 1845-6 15 mos 3780 16 3

Capital at 30th June 1847 12911 "
Less do at 30th June 1846 11.142
Income 1846-7 12 mos 1769
Add overestimated Amot of Earnings do 11 10 2
1780 10 2 1780 10 2

Statement of Profits arising from Trade 21st March 1845
to 30th June 1846

Amount of Gross Profits 6219 9 2

Deductions - for

Business Charges during period ^{Edm. Estab. & Co.} ^{Edm. Estab. & Co.}

Salaries to Cho. - Housemen - Porters - Apts 571 332 15 6 913 15 6

Taxes. Police - Infir - Com Good. Army. Poor 30 12 8

" Police - Church - Poor - Const. - Land
Sewer - Tithes 20 10 11 60 3 7

Income Tax 102 1 8 102 1 8

Insurance on Stock 15 7 6 14 5 - 29 12 6

Coals 11 9 2 11 9 2

Gas 15 13 6 1 9 4 17 2 10

Freight. 41 8 4 98 4 11 159 13 3

Gravelier Expenses 26 11 9 26 11 9

Lodging 29 6 4 16 0 2 45 6 6

Packing Paper & Stationery 65 14 10 13 17 11 99 15 9

Postage 97 9 2 97 9 2

Bookbinding - Portuag - Petty disburse 108 6 7 131 10 10 239 11 5 1/2

Rent 35 228 2 10 263 2 10

Annuity paid Mrs Blackwood 383 383 ..

1581 15 6 856 17 5 2438 12 11

Nett. Income

3786 16 3
6219 9 2

Alone given to W. Ross & Co.

Given to W. Ross & Co.

Appendix VIII

J.G. Lockhart and the Catholic Question

Appearing, as it did, in January, March, July and October, the Quarterly Review had only one opportunity to pronounce upon the question of Catholic emancipation between the result of the County Clare by-election and the end of 1828, by which time it could be assumed that Ministers would have made up their minds about the position which they would take in the new session of parliament. The choice of writer to discuss the question in the October number was therefore of the greatest importance to the Quarterly, and to those supporters of the government who attached any weight to public opinion. The task was entrusted to Southey, a firm anti-catholic, and the position adopted was therefore an uncompromising one. Had the opportunity been given to Croker, the Quarterly's other major political writer in the 1820s, a different view would have been taken, both because of Croker's long-standing sympathy with the Catholic claims, and because Croker was more likely than Southey to have discerned which way Ministers were moving. Croker, however, was temporarily estranged from Lockhart, through differences arising when Lockhart had come from Blackwood's to edit the Quarterly.¹ Lockhart, fearing to

1 Scott Bennett, 'Catholic Emancipation, the Quarterly Review, and Britain's Constitutional Revolution.' Victorian Studies, XII, 3 (March 1969), pp.283-304. Bennett cites Myron F. Brightfield, Croker, (1940) pp.184-203; c.f., however, the interpretation of A.L. Strout in his publication of letters from Lockhart to Croker, held in the Wm. L. Clements Library, University of Michigan: TLS 30 Aug. and 13 Sept., 1941, amplified in Notes and Queries 1943-46, passim.

lose Southey's services if he was denied the platform which he demanded, and anxious not to disappoint the bulk of the Quarterly's readership, gave Southey his head. He then felt obliged to justify himself to his pro-catholic father-in-law, Sir Walter Scott.

You will find Southey at this question totis viribus in the Quarterly - which may not please some of our friends but which has pleased the two people I most care about, to wit the King and Knighton. Blanco White is setting up an opposition review and Southey would have left us had I not suffered him to unburthen himself at this time - so in truth I had little choice.²

Writing to Croker, many years later, Lockhart still depicted himself as the victim of circumstance.

Your secession left me to my own poor lights. I did not then understand the nature of official men at all - as I still do very imperfectly - and had you been by us at the decisive moment to interpret the talk of Downing Street in the dialect of Albemarle Street, neither Murray nor I would have allowed Southey to overrule us. Me at least he found Procatholic. In my early days I never had the least inclination to the Anti-catholic side.³

This last assertion should be set against an article published in Blackwood's Magazine in July 1825, only a few months before Lockhart became the colleague of Southey. Entitled 'Mr. Blanco White's Evidence against the Catholics,' the article warmly supported White's standpoint. The writer developed two arguments: first the political disadvantages of allowing Catholic emancipation because Catholics gave their allegiance to an alien and anti-Protestant Church; and second, the moral disadvantages of encouraging the

2 23 Oct. 1828, quoted in Bennett, p.293.

3 26 May 1845, quoted in Strout, NQ Aug. 1945, pp.82-3.

spread of a misguided religious belief.

This is a religion built up for the behoof of priests, propped up on the abject ignorance and superstitions of the vulgar, which it degrades, and advocated, we devoutly believe, by no well-informed and intelligent layman, who at once understands its system thoroughly, and believes in it sincerely.⁴

The authorship of this aggressively anti-catholic piece has been the subject of a series of attributions, all pointing in the same direction, but with varying degrees of certainty. The writer, it can now be claimed beyond reasonable doubt, was J.G. Lockhart.

The original attribution to Lockhart was made by A.L. Strout in his Bibliography.⁵ Strout relied upon internal evidence, and, with his accustomed careful scholarship, added a query. The Wellesley Index, I, entry 215, was more confident, giving an unqueried attribution to Lockhart, and citing a letter from Blackwood to Lockhart on 11 June, congratulating him on 'this' article. Brian Murray⁶, however, restored an element of doubt in seeing that Blackwood refers to four pages of commentary and thirteen of extracts, whereas the Blanco White review contained seven pages of commentary to ten^{of} extracts. Murray then overcame his own doubts by citing a further letter from Blackwood to Lockhart, on 16 June, in which he returns the MS at Lockhart's request, hoping not to lose it and wondering whether Lockhart was satisfied with the terms offered. Murray concluded, 'I think the length of the article ... and Blackwood's tone, can refer to this article only I cannot see Blackwood letting go

4 Maga, July 1825, p.116.

5 Strout, Bib., p.132

6 Brian M. Murray, 'The Authorship of Some Unidentified or Disputed Articles in Blackwood's Magazine', Studies in Scottish Literature, IV (1966-8), p.153.

an article he coveted so much.' Indeed not, but that does not prove that the coveted article related to Blanco White. It is much more likely that Blackwood was referring to what became the first article in the August number of the Magazine: a review of Parry's The Last Days of Lord Byron (a much more distinguished subject than Blanco White) by J.G. Lockhart (Strout's attribution here is beyond doubt) and consisting of just over four pages of introduction, a few brief paragraphs of linking commentary, and thirteen pages of extracts - almost the exact figures mentioned in Blackwood's letter of 11 June. Moreover, with effect from March 1825, the publication date of the Magazine had changed from the twentieth of the month to the first. Given the need to have the Magazine printed and in the hands of distributors by the end of the previous month, it is exceedingly unlikely - indeed virtually out of the question - that Blackwood would be returning a manuscript to its author on the sixteenth of the month, and yet have it back again and printed in the number produced in that month. The corrections appended to the Wellesley Index, III, understandably added a query to the Lockhart attribution. Eight years before the publication of Wellesley III, however, Brian Murray had published a revised version of his attribution, this time at last providing positive proof.⁷ At the end of his letter of 11 June, Blackwood informed Lockhart: 'I have no money today being Saturday, but on Monday I will send you both for this and Blanco Whyte [sic].'⁸

7 Murray, 'More Unidentified or Disputed Articles in Blackwood's Magazine', SSL, IX (1971), p.112.

8 NLS, Acc.5643, B5, f.118.

Although Murray still did not connect the more important article with the review of the life of Byron, he had, in respect of the Blanco White piece, confirmed the attribution which, by different means, had first been made by A.L. Strout. The wheel has thus turned a full circle, now to be at rest.

Lockhart was still maintaining his anti-catholic posture when he wrote to Blackwood in March 1829, censuring Peel's decision to support Catholic emancipation.

Peels beastly and cowardly behaviour is worthy of all abuse - He, be sure, had ratted in heart long before. The Duke yielded to a stern conviction of necessity and duty.⁹

Such censure ill became the writer of the earlier letter to Scott and the later letter to Croker. The charitable explanation for such inconsistency is that Catholic emancipation was such a divisive question within Tory circles that a man in Lockhart's position had to adapt his posture in accordance with circumstance. There is, of course, a harsher view, which would reflect upon Lockhart's integrity. One hesitates to press the point, even when Lockhart himself is no longer able to make it an 'affair of honour'.

9 NLS, MS4025, f.66.

Appendix IX

The reception of Alison's History

Throughout his official career - and his private career as Blackwood's contributor - Archibald Alison regularly concerned himself with his greatest literary project, his History of Europe, covering the period 1789-1815. He completed the original version in ten volumes, in June 1842, but then returned to the work to bring out revised editions, and versions in a different format: a library edition, a stereotyped edition, and an abridged edition for use in schools.¹ The project was highly successful in its day, making a great deal of money for both author and publisher.² The successive volumes were reviewed in the Magazine by Croly - favourably, as one would expect in such a location, but Croly above all must have warmed to the theme of misguided men blundering from democratic delusions to military dictatorship, beneath the stern and all-knowing gaze of Providence. Croly also expressed his approval privately to William Blackwood, at an early stage in the work, which he thought only to be marred by 'Scotticisms.'³

A less friendly reaction was felt by J.W. Croker, whose own similar project was pre-empted by Alison's publication. Croker disposed of his large collection of

1 For details, see DNB.

2 'It was by far the best-selling history of the French Revolution in England and America almost to the end of the century, and was translated into most European and several oriental languages.' Hedva Ben-Israel, English Historians of the French Revolution (1968), p.152.

3 3 May 1833, NLS, MS4035, f.143.

French Revolution materials to the British Museum.⁴ Alison blamed the failure of Croker to review his History in the Quarterly upon Croker's embittered frustration.⁵ This was only part of the truth, however. Croker, like J.S. Mill and Lord Acton, found serious shortcomings in Alison's research method.⁶ As for the lack of a review, this owed as much to the diplomatic tact of the Quarterly's editor, J.G. Lockhart, as it did to Croker's dudgeon:

December 6th, 1843.

Dear Croker,

Alison deserves all anybody can say of his negligence, and also of his coxcombical pomposity and preachification, and worst of all, his affectation of liberalism here and there by way of extenuating to the wicked his really good principles, political and religious. But he is a good old Tory, and a good, honest, amiable man, and he has spent twenty years on this big book, and looks to it (he thinks not in vain) for pecuniary help to a large family. I think, therefore, it would meet your wishes to be gentle to him - and certainly the contrary line would give me personal pain, we being very old acquaintances, and he the sheriff of my county, whom I must meet often whenever I go to Scotland. It occurs to me that you might do him a real kindness by pointing out his blunders; but it might be done in terms of respect and civility, and without any expression of severity mingled with regret. This is, however, if you could speak with general respect of his work - and I fear you could not; and if you could not - why, the article is all alive with interest and can spare a note, however good and however amusing.

Is not he led wrongly by some prior writer or writers who might be shown up with a long whip, without calling the heavy sheriff by name into the ring?

Yours truly,

J.G. LOCKHART⁷

4 Where they were first used by Thomas Carlyle in the preparation of his master-work, although the main sources for this were to be found in the London Library - and in Carlyle's unique imagination.

5 Autobiography I, 317.

6 H. Ben-Israel, op.cit., pp.151-2. The judgment of these contemporary critics appears to have been sound. Alison's History is generally ignored to-day. Indeed, a leading English authority on the French Revolution admitted to me that he had never read it. (September 1983).

7 L.J. Jennings (ed), The Croker Papers (1884), III, 12.

The article mentioned in Lockhart's letter appeared in the Quarterly Review for that month, an essay on the guillotine, reviewing two works by French historians. Croker's article made passing criticisms of Alison's History,⁸ sufficient to prompt Lockhart to mollify John Blackwood (in London) by showing him how he had excised some of the more narrowly personal strictures from Croker's article. He provided evidence that the animus came from Croker alone, by allowing John Blackwood to copy a private letter from Croker to himself, in which Croker devoted four pages to criticisms of points of detail. Croker justified the citation of errors that had been corrected in a later edition by arguing that he had adhered to the first edition, and 'one who has once laboured through Alison can have no temptation to go over it again.'⁹ Croker, variously characterised by John Blackwood in his letters as 'Lucifer' and 'that hound', continued to snipe at Alison in the Quarterly, and Lockhart continued to sneer at Croker when in company with Blackwood. Disraeli's deadly characterisation of Croker as 'Rigby' in Coningsby apparently made Lockhart 'very happy', although, Lockhart informed John, Croker gave no indication that he was conscious of the connection.¹⁰

8 'But we regret to say that Mr. Alison, in copying too implicitly his French models, has fallen into their error, without their patriotic excuse.' Quarterly, Dec. 1843, p.238. See also p.271, note.

9 Copy of Croker's letter to Lockhart, sent by John Blackwood to Alex., 12 Jan. 1844, NLS, MS4069, ff.20-24.

10 John to Robert, 20.May 1844, loc.cit., f.109.

Appendix XAuthors admired by Archibald Alison

Name Month, year and page of Maga citation.
 (Underlining of page references denotes
 that the author cited was the named
 subject of the article.)

British Authors

Blackstone	Feb. (II) 1832, p.399.
Burke	Jan. 1836, p.103; Jan. 1842, p.107.
Coleridge	Jan. 1837, p.79.
Gibbon	Nov. 1835, p.575; Jan. 1837, p.76; Aug. 1838, p.145; Feb. 1840, p.241; July 1841, p.4; Jan. 1842, p.107; March 1844, pp.392-6.
Hume	Nov. 1835, p.574; Jan.1837, p.78; July 1841, p.5.
Dr. Johnson	Feb.(II) 1832, p.401; Jan.1837, p.71.
Paley	Feb.(II) 1832, pp.395-6, 398.
Adam Smith	May 1834, p.687.

French authors

Chateaubriand	Feb.(II) 1832, p.398; March 1832, pp. <u>553-565</u> ; Aug. 1832, pp. <u>217-233</u> ; June 1837, pp. <u>715-726</u> ; Sept. 1849, pp. <u>292-304</u> ; July 1850, pp. <u>33-47</u> .
Guizot	March 1832, p.565; Dec. 1844, pp. <u>786-804</u> .
Montesquieu	Feb.(II) 1832, p.399; Feb.1834, pp.244-5; Oct. 1845, pp. <u>389-407</u> .
Mme de Staël	Jan. 1836, p.102; Jan. 1837, p.89; June 1837, pp. <u>715-726</u> .
A. de Tocqueville	Jan. 1836, pp.102-3; Jan. 1837, pp.80-81; May 1847, pp. <u>525-540</u> .

(Note: these references are not claimed to be exhaustive;
 they merely provide specific instances to support the general
 discussion in Chapter Eight.)

Appendix XIMallalieu and the Bow St. affair

On 9 November 1844 a report appeared in the Police column of The Times.

BOW-STREET - Yesterday, as the night charges were being heard by Mr. Jardine, Inspector Logan informed the magistrate that a gentleman, who gave the name of Arthur Malalieu [sic], and stated that he was the sub-editor of The Times, was taken into custody by a policeman of the F division, and brought to the station, charged with being drunk and incapable of taking care of himself. He was locked up for the night, but was bailed out by a person named Nunn at an early hour, since which time neither the one nor the other had appeared. As the defendant had left a gold watch and a silk umbrella at the station, he imagined that he would be forthcoming in the course of the day. The defendant, however, did not appear to the charge. .

(No person of the name of Malalieu either is now or ever has been employed on The Times newspaper. Editor of The Times.)

John Blackwood, in London, wrote that same day to his brother Robert to expand on the story.¹ Mallalieu had dined with him on the fateful evening, and then left 'to take a glass of grog with a friend.' John concluded that the Police report gave 'the melancholy end of his evening's entertainments,' and thought it was 'a cruel shame of Delane to put it in.' Mallalieu's sense of outrage was even stronger. He wrote to Blackwood on 11 November to denounce The Times paragraph as 'villainous' and largely false.²

The fact is that after writing my article for the Morning Post at Maclean's - of $\frac{3}{4}$ ths of a column, I went and delivered it - as it appeared next morning

1 NLS, MS4069, f.198.

2 MS4071, f.222.

- and subsequently must have fallen down in one of those bilious fainting fits, of which during the last seven years I have had five - two of them in the city office of the Times whilst at work....

In the same place locked up with me, but a little after - was a man of the name of Blyth, formerly of the Parthenon Club₃ - who knew me as then of the Times city office...

Mallalieu blamed the police for informing The Times and for refusing to send for a surgeon. He wrote to The Times to correct the report, his letter appearing on 12 November. Subjoined to his version, however, was another item from the paper's reporter, describing how Mallalieu had returned to Bow St., bringing a friend 'to prove that he was accustomed to fits.' The police inspector, however, maintained that upon this occasion Mallalieu was drunk. Faced with such conflicting evidence, the magistrate decided neither to punish Mallalieu nor to acquit his bail. Mallalieu then said he would indemnify the bail.

This second report produced another rejoinder from Mallalieu (unpublished), denying that he used the word 'fits,' or that he had been drunk. He complained again to Blackwood about the 'ruffians' of The Times.⁴ Meanwhile John Blackwood had been to see Delane's mother. J.T. Delane was away in Oxford, and Blackwood was relieved to learn that he had no part in the 'disgraceful attack on poor Mallalieu,' the editorial control being then in the custody of 'that old beast Walter.'⁵ Later that month, Mallalieu

3 Sometimes used as an address by Mallalieu. John Blackwood and J.T. Delane of The Times dined there on occasion.

4 15 Nov. 1844, NLS, MS4723, f.155.

5 John to Robert Blackwood, 13 Nov. 1844, MS4069, f.199.

wrote again to Blackwood, referring to 'the scoundrel Delane.'⁶ Sending the letter on to Edinburgh, John wrote on the back:

I did not reply to this as I must have hauled him up about Delane. I do not recollect whether he knows D. is a friend of mine.

6 MS4723, f.157.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Manuscripts

National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.
The Blackwood Papers.

The incoming correspondence to the firm in the nineteenth century, amounting to over eighty thousand letters and other MS material, was bequeathed to the NLS by George William Blackwood, who died in 1942. This has now been catalogued, and is listed in a complete volume:

Catalogue of MSS Vol. III, MSS 4001-4940,
Blackwood Papers, 1805-1900.
(H.M.S.O. Edinburgh, 1968)

The main sections used for this study are:

- 4001-4080 Correspondence. (Each number refers to a volume of letters, the volumes proceeding annually, with several volumes per year, wherein letters are listed in alphabetical order of sender. Pagination is by each sheet of letter. There are c.200 sheets per volume.)
- 4892-4894 Contributors' lists (The standard source for attributions, now subsumed in the Wellesley Index)
- 4937-4940 Additional papers (Including letters apparently abstracted from the main archive by Mrs. Oliphant.)

More recently, the outgoing correspondence from the firm, together with financial and other records, was deposited in the NLS, where it is recorded as

- Uncatalogued accessions 5643
(letterbooks and tissue books)
- Uncatalogued accessions 5644
(financial and publication records)
- Uncatalogued accessions 1424A
(family correspondence)
- Acc. 5643 The heaviest use has been made of the letterbooks and tissue books numbered B1-B12, covering the period 1817-49.
- Acc. 5644 All of the following have been consulted:
 - A1-6 Cash books 1826-41.
 - B1-2 Cash ledgers 1834-47
 - D1-4 Account books 1828-44
 - F2 Publication ledger 1838-47
 - H3-5 List of payments for Maga contributions, 1821-24, 1840-45.

Office of Wm. Blackwood & Sons, 162 Leith Walk, Edinburgh.
Blackwood's Magazine Contributor's Book, for no.s 230-482,
Jan. 1835-Dec.1855.

Other MSS consulted:
British Library

Leeds District Archives

Peel Papers
Aberdeen Papers
Canning Papers
(Harewood MSS and Stapleton MSS)

University of Nottingham
Carlisle Record Office
Royal Literary Fund, London

Newcastle of Clumber MSS
Lonsdale Papers
File 1180 (David Robinson)
(Photocopies supplied by RLF)

Printed Correspondence, Diaries, Memoirs and Contemporary
Recollections (Listed in alphabetical order of principal
subject. Works of a miscellaneous character are placed
by name of author.)

Alison, Sir Archibald	<u>Some Account of my Life and Writings. An Autobiography,</u> 2 vols (1883)
Brougham, Henry	<u>The Life and Times of Henry, Lord Brougham, Written by Himself,</u> 3 vols (1871)
(Canning, George)	<u>The Political Life of the Rt. Hon. George Canning, by A.G. Stapleton,</u> 3 vols (1831)
" "	<u>Some Official Correspondence of George Canning, ed. E.J. Stapleton,</u> 2 vols (1887)
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor	<u>Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. E.L. Griggs,</u> vol IV (1959), vols V & VI (1971)
Croker, John Wilson	<u>The Croker Papers. The Correspondence and Diaries of John Wilson Croker,</u> ed. L.J. Jennings, 3 vols (1884)
" "	<u>The Croker Papers, 1808-1857</u> ed. Bernard Pool (1967)
(Croly, George)	<u>A Few Personal Recollections of the late Rev. George Croly,</u> by Richard Herring (1861)
De Quincey, Thomas	<u>Confessions of an English Opium- Eater (and other essays), ed.</u> W. Sharp (Walter Scott Publishing Co., n.d.)
(Eldon, Lord)	<u>The Public and Private Life of Lord Chancellor Eldon, by H. Twiss,</u> 3 vols (1844)
Ellenborough, Lord	<u>A Political Diary 1828-1830</u> by Edward Law, Lord Ellenborough, ed. Lord Colchester, 2 vols (1881)
Gillies, R.P.	<u>Memoirs of a Literary Veteran,</u> 3 vols (1851)
Greville, Charles	<u>The Greville Memoirs, ed. Roger Fulford</u> (1963)
Jerdan, William	<u>Autobiography,</u> 4 vols (1852-53)
Lockhart, J.G.	<u>Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk,</u> 3 vols (1819)
Maginn, W. (text) and Daniel Maclise (drawings)	<u>The Maclise Portrait-Gallery,</u> ed. W. Bates (1883)
(Murray, John)	<u>A Publisher and his Friends. Memoir and Correspondence of John Murray, by Samuel Smiles;</u> condensed ed. by T. Mackay (1911)

Peel, Sir Robert

Memoirs by the Rt. Hon. Sir Robert Peel, Published by the trustees of his papers, Lord Mahon and Edward Cardwell, 2 vols (1856, 1857)

" "

Sir Robert Peel from his Private Papers, ed. C.S. Parker, 3 vols (1891-99)

Robinson, Henry Crabb

The Diary of Henry Crabb Robinson, ed. Derek Hudson (1967)

(Sadler, Michael Thomas)

Memoirs of the Life and Writings of M.T. Sadler, by R.B. Seeley (1842)

Scott, Sir Walter

The Letters of Sir Walter Scott, ed. H.J.C. Grierson, 12 vols (1932-37) (Vols IV & V consulted)

" "

The Life of Sir Walter Scott by J.G. Lockhart, author's

Wellington, Arthur, Duke of

abridgement 1848, (edition 1912)
Despatches, Correspondence, and Memoranda of Field Marshal Arthur Duke of Wellington, 7 vols (1867-78) (Vol VII consulted)

Magazines and Reviews

Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine

Edinburgh Review

Fraser's Magazine

Gentleman's Magazine

London Magazine

Quarterly Review

Scots Magazine

Tait's Edinburgh Magazine

Westminster Review

Newspapers

Albion

Courier

John Bull

Morning Chronicle

Morning Journal

Morning Post

Standard

The Times

Pamphlets and Tracts

(All but the two last-named are to be found in a bound volume of Tracts on Blackwood's Magazine, held in the NLS, ref. hh 4.40/2)

'Calvinus'

Letters...on the Parody of Scripture, lately published in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine (1817)

Anon.

Anon.

'Monitor'

'An American Scotchman'

Anon. (By the author of
'Fleurs, A Poem')

'A Heavy Dragoon'

A Review of Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine for October 1817 (1817)
Hypocrisy Unveiled and Calumny Detected in a Review of Blackwood's Magazine (1818).

A Letter to Mr. John Murray of Albemarle Street... (1818)
Blackwood & Dr. Morris (1820)

The Scorpion Critic Unmasked (1821)

The Retort Courteous, To the Editors of Blackwood's Magazine (1821)

Public letters from William Blackwood, James Hogg, J.G. Lockhart and John Scott, giving their versions of disputatious matters.

Duke of Newcastle

(Sir Walter Scott)

An Address to all Classes and Conditions of Englishmen (1832)
Letters...from Malachi Malagrowther on the Proposed Change of Currency (1826) (repr. Wm. Blackwood & Sons, 1981)

Unpublished theses

Golby, J.M.

'The Political and Electioneering Influence of the Fourth Duke of Newcastle'. (M.A., University of Nottingham, 1961)

Haythornthwaite,
Josephine A.

'The Proceeds of Literature: a study of some aspects of the publication and reception of the writings of Mrs. Margaret Oliphant' (Ph.D., University of Strathclyde, 1983)

Simes, D.G.S.

'The Ultra Tories in British Politics, 1824-1834' (D.Phil., University of Oxford, 1974)

Thompson, Wm. Ross

'The Letters of George Croly to William Blackwood and his Sons', 2 vols (Ph.D., Texas Technological College, Lubbock, 1957)

Publications of Dr. A.L. Strout

Books

The Life and Letters of James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, vol I, 1770-1825 (Lubbock, 1947) (No vol II).

A Bibliography of Articles in Blackwood's Magazine, 1817-1825 (Lubbock, 1959).

Articles

'S.T. Coleridge and John Wilson of Blackwood's Magazine, Publications of the Modern Languages Association, XLVIII (March, 1933), 100-128.

'The Cost of Libel and Maga,' Times Literary Supplement, March 28, 1936, p.278.

'Concerning the Noctes Ambrosianae,' Modern Language Notes, LI, (December 1936), 493-504.

'The Noctes Ambrosianae and James Hogg,' Review of English Studies, XIII, (January, 1937), 46-63 and (April, 1937), 176-189.

'James Hogg's Forgotten Satire, John Paterson's Mare,' PMLA, LII (June, 1937) 427-460.

'Walter Scott and Maga,' TLS, February 5, 1938, p.92.

'John Wilson's Election to the Professorship of Moral Philosophy, 1820,' Journal of English Literary History, VI, (December, 1939) 291-299.

'J.W. Croker and the Noctes Ambrosianae,' TLS, March 9, 1940, p.128.

'Lockhart and Croker,' TLS, August 30, 1941, p.424 and September 13, 1941, p.464.

'A Study in Periodical Patchwork: John Wilson's Recreations of Christopher North, 1842,' Modern Language Review, XXXVIII, (April 1943), 88-105.

'Some Unpublished Letters of John Gibson Lockhart to John Wilson Croker, 1819-1837,' NQ, CLXXXV, (September-October, 1943).

'Some Unpublished Letters of John Gibson Lockhart to John Wilson Croker, 1838-1844,' NQ, CLXXXVII, (September-November, 1944).

'John Gibson Lockhart as Ogre. (The 'Ventilation' of David Boswell Reid.),' NQ, CLXXXVIII, (June 2, 1945) 228-230.

'Some Unpublished Letters of John Gibson Lockhart to John Wilson Croker, 1845-1847,' NQ, CLXXXVIII, CLXXXIX, (June-October, 1945).

'Some Unpublished Letters of John Gibson Lockhart to John Wilson Croker, 1848-1850,' NQ, CXC (March-June 1946).

'Contributors to Blackwood's Magazine,' NQ, XCCV (1950) 70-72.

'James Hogg's "Chaldee Manuscript,"' PMLA, LXV (Sept. 1950), 695-718.

'George Croly and Blackwood's Magazine,' TLS, Oct. 6, 1950.

'Knights of the Burning Epistle,' Studia Neophilologica XXVI, 1-3 (Uppsala, 1953-4), 77-98.

'Writers on German Literature in Blackwood's Magazine,' The Library, (March 1954), 35-44.

'The Authorship of Articles in Blackwood's Magazine, Numbers XVII-XXIV (Aug. 1818-March 1819), 'The Library, (Sept. 1956), 187-201.

'The First Twenty-Three Numbers of the Noctes Ambrosianae,' The Library, (June 1957), 108-118. 'Maga and the Ettrick Shepherd,' Studies in Scottish Literature, IV, 1 (July 1966), 48-52.

Unpublished typescript.

'A Champion of Ultraconservatism, 1824-1831: David Robinson of Blackwood's Magazine.'

General Bibliography

(To facilitate the identifying of the main areas of reading which support this study, this section has been divided into three parts: I, Studies of periodicals; other works relating to Blackwood's Magazine and its contributors. II, Political, economic, and social thought; studies of Conservatism (ideas). III, British politics, 1817-46; including studies of Conservative politicians and party. Place of publication is only given when outside Britain. Editions of classic texts are only specified when quotations have been made therefrom.)

I

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Alison, Sir Archibald | <u>Essays: Political, Historical and Miscellaneous</u> , 3 vols (1850) |
| " " | <u>Epitome of Alison's History of Europe</u> (17th edition, 1869) |
| Bell, Alan | <u>Sydney Smith</u> (1982) |
| Ben-Israel, Hedva | <u>English Historians on the French Revolution</u> (1968) |
| Bennett, Scott | 'Catholic Emancipation, the Quarterly Review, and Britain's Constitutional Revolution,' <u>Victorian Studies</u> , XII, 3 (March 1969), 283-304 |
| Brooks, E.L. | 'Coleridge's Second Packet for Blackwood's Magazine,' <u>Philological Quarterly</u> , XXX, 4 (Iowa, Oct. 1951), 426-430. |
| Bulwer, Edward Lytton | <u>England and the English</u> (1833, repr. Chicago 1970) |
| Clive, John | 'The <u>Edinburgh Review</u> : the Life and Death of a Periodical,' in Asa Briggs, ed., <u>Essays in the History of Publishing</u> (1974), 113-140. |
| Cook, Sir Edward | <u>Delane of 'The Times'</u> (1915) |
| Croly, Rev. George | <u>The Book of Job</u> (includes a biographical sketch of Croly by his son) (1863) |
| Curry, K. and R. Dedmon | 'Southey's Contributions to the Quarterly Review,' <u>Wordsworth Circle</u> , VI, 4 (Philadelphia, Autumn 1975) 261-272. |
| De Luca, V.A. | <u>Thomas De Quincey: the Prose of Vision</u> (Toronto, 1980) |
| Dobrée, Bonamy, (ed.) | <u>Thomas De Quincey</u> (New York, 1965) |
| Douglas, Sir George | <u>The 'Blackwood' Group</u> (1897) |
| Escott, T.H.S. | 'What the Newspaper owes to the Magazine,' <u>London Quarterly Review</u> , 128 (July 1917), 62-71 |

- Fetter, F.W. 'The Economic Articles in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine and their authors, 1817-1853,' Scottish Journal of Political Economy VII (1960), 85-107 and 213-231
- " " 'Economic Controversy in the British Reviews, 1802-1850,' Economica, n.s..XXXII, 128 (Nov. 1965), 424-437.
- Grant, James The Great Metropolis, 2 vols (1836), vol II, ch.VII, 'Periodical Literature: the Monthlies'
- Hiller, Mary Ruth 'The Use and Misuse of Internal Evidence in Authorship Attributions,' Victorian Periodicals Review, XII, 3 (Toronto, Fall 1979), 95-101.
- Hindle, W. The 'Morning Post,' 1772-1937 (1937).
- Hogg, James, (ed.) De Quincey and his Friends (1895)
- Houghton, Walter E. (ed.) The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals, I (1966), II (1972), III (1979).
- Imrie, D.S.M. The 'Scots Magazine,' 1739-1826. A Bicentenary Study. (1939)
- Japp, A.H. Thomas De Quincey: His Life and Writings (revised edition, 1890; in first edition, 1877, author took the name H.A. Page)
- Johnston, William England As It Is: Political, Social, and Industrial: in the Middle of Nineteenth Century, 2 vols (1851).
- Joyce, M. Edinburgh: The Golden Age, 1769-1832 (1951).
- Kellett, E.E. 'The Press,' in G.M. Young, ed., Early Victorian England, 2 vols (1934)
- Lang, Andrew The Life and Letters of John Gibson Lockhart, 2 vols (1897).
- Lindop, Grevel The Opium-Eater. A Life of Thomas De Quincey (1981).
- Lockhead, Marion John Gibson Lockhart (1954)
- Lucy, Sir Henry 'Buff and Blue,' The Cornhill, n.s. vol LII (Jan. 1922).
- Masson, David De Quincey (1926).
- Maurer, Oscar 'Anonymity vs. Signature in Victorian Reviewing,' University of Texas Studies in English, XXVII, 1 (June 1948), 1-27.
- Millar, J.H. A Literary History of Scotland (1903)
- Miller, Karl Cockburn's Millenium (1975)
- Murray, Brian M. 'The Authorship of some Unidentified or Disputed Articles in Blackwood's Magazine,' Studies in Scottish Literature, IV (1966-7), 144-154.
- " " 'More Unidentified or Disputed Articles in Blackwood's Magazine,' SSL, IX (1971), 107-116.

- Oliphant, Mrs. Annals of a Publishing House. William Blackwood and his Sons. Their Magazine and Friends, 2 vols (1897).
- Rashid, Salim 'David Robinson and the Tory macro-economics of Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine,' History of Political Economy, 10:2 (Duke University, 1978), 258-270.
- Ridley, M.R. (ed.) De Quincey, Selections (1927).
- Roberts, David 'The Social Conscience of Tory Periodicals,' Victorian Periodicals Newsletter (forerunner of VPR), X,3 (1977), 154-169.
- Royle, Trevor Precipitous City. The Story of Literary Edinburgh (1980).
- Shattock, Joanne 'Showman, Lion-Hunter, or Hack: The Quarterly Editor at Mid-Century,' VPR, XVI, 3 & 4 (Fall & Winter 1983) 89-103.
- Swann, Elsie Christopher North (1934).
- Tave, Stuart M. New Essays by De Quincey. His Contributions to the 'Edinburgh Saturday Post' and the Edinburgh Evening Post,' 1827-1828 (Princeton, 1966).
- Thrall, Miriam M.H. Rebellious Fraser's (New York, 1934).
- Tredrey, F.D. The House of Blackwood, 1804-1954 (1954)
- II
- Black, R.D.C. Economic Thought and the Irish Question, 1817-1870 (1960).
- Blaug, Mark Ricardian Economics. A Historical Study (Yale 1958; repr. Greenwood Press, 1973).
- Burke, Edmund Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790; vol IV in O.U.P. 'World's Classics' edition of Works).
- Burn, W.L. 'The Conservative Tradition and its Reformulations,' in M. Ginsberg, ed., Law and Opinion in England in the Twentieth Century (1959).
- Calleo, D.P. Coleridge and the Idea of the Modern State (Yale, 1966).
- Campbell, Ian Thomas Carlyle (1974).
- Carlyle, Thomas Chartism (1839).
- " " Past and Present (1843).
- " " 'Signs of the Times,' Edinburgh Review (1829).
- Chandler, Alice A Dream of Order. The Medieval Ideal in Nineteenth Century Literature (1970).
- Coleridge, S.T. Lay Sermons (1816, 1817).
- " " On the Constitution of the Church and State (1830; Everyman edition, ed. John Barrell, 1972).

Courtney, C.P.	<u>Montesquieu and Burke (1963)</u>
Dickinson, H.T.	<u>Liberty and Property. Political Ideology in Eighteenth-Century Britain (1977).</u>
Disraeli, B.	<u>Coningsby (1844).</u>
" "	<u>Sybil (1845).</u>
Finlayson, G.B.A.M.	'The Changing Face of British Conservatism,' <u>History Today</u> (Oct. 1983), 15-21.
Freeman, M.	<u>Edmund Burke and the Critique of Political Radicalism (1980).</u>
Froude, J.A.	<u>Thomas Carlyle. A History of the First Forty Years of His Life, 2 vols (1882).</u>
Gay, Peter	<u>The Enlightenment: An Interpretation, 2 vols; I, 'The Rise of Modern Paganism' (1966),</u> II, 'The Science of Freedom' (1969) (U.S.A.; published in England 1967 & 1970).
Glickman, Harvey	'The Toryness of English Conservatism,' <u>Journal of British Studies</u> , 1 (Nov. 1961) 111-143.
Gordon, B.J.	<u>Economic Doctrine and Tory Liberalism, 1824-1830 (1979).</u>
" "	'Say's Law, Effective Demand, and the Contemporary British Periodicals, 1820-1850,' <u>Economica</u> , n.s. XXXII, 128 (Nov. 1965), 438-446.
Gow, H.B.	'Safe Harbour,' review of W. Harbour, <u>The Foundations of Conservative Thought: An Anglo-American Tradition in Perspective (1982), in Salisbury Review no.6 (Winter 1984), 54-55.</u> (Although only this item is listed, the <u>Salisbury Review</u> has been read from its inception.)
Halévy, E.	<u>The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism (1928, repr. 1952).</u>
Hampson, N.	<u>The Enlightenment (1968)</u>
Hart, Jennifer	'Nineteenth-Century Social Reform: A Tory Interpretation of History', <u>Past and Present</u> , 31 (1965), 39-61.
Hill, R.L.	<u>Toryism and the People, 1832-1846 (1929, repr. 1975).</u>
Hollander, S.	<u>The Economics of David Ricardo (1979: Introduction, and references to De Quincey).</u>
Holloway, J.	<u>The Victorian Sage (1953)..</u>
Jacob, Margaret C.	<u>The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans (1981).</u>
McDowell, R.B.	<u>British Conservatism, 1832-1914 (1959).</u>

- Meek, R.L.
" "
- Mill, J.S.
" "
- Murray, R.H.
- O'Brien, D.P.
Owen, D.
- Perkin, Harold
- Porter, Roy, and
Mikulas Teich, (ed.s)
Reisman, D.A.
- Ricardo, David
- Robbins, Lionel
- Roberts, David
" "
- Russell, Bertrand
- Skinner A.S., and
T. Wilson
Smith, Adam
- Walsh, W.
- White, R.J. (ed.)
- III
- Aspinall, A. (ed.)
" "
- Aydelotte, W.O.
" "
- The Economics of Physiocracy (1962).
Precursors of Adam Smith, 1750-
1775. (1973).
- 'The Logic of Political Economy, by
Thomas De Quincey,' review in
Westminster Review (June 1845), 314-331
Principles of Political Economy
(1848; vols II & III of Toronto edition
of Works, 1965).
- Studies in the English Social and
Political Thinkers of the Nineteenth
Century, 2 vols; I, 'From Malthus
to Kingsley' (1929, repr. 1972)
The Classical Economists (1975).
English Philanthropy, 1660-1960.
(Cambridge, Mass., 1964).
- The Origins of Modern English Society,
1780-1880 (1969).
- The Enlightenment in National
Context (1981).
- Adam Smith's Sociological Economics
(1976).
- On the Principles of Political
Economy and Taxation (1817; vol I of
C.U.P. edition of Works and Corres-
pondence, ed. P. Sraffa, 1951).
- The Theory of Economic Policy in
English Classical Political Economy
(1952; 2nd edition, 1978).
- Paternalism in Early Victorian England
(1979).
- 'Tory Paternalism and Social and
Economic Reform in Early Victorian
England,' American Historical Review,
LXIII, 2 (Jan. 1958), 323-337.
- Freedom and Organization, 1814-1914,
(1934).
- Essays on Adam Smith (1975).
- An Inquiry into the Nature and
Causes of the Wealth of Nations (1776).
Coleridge. The Work and the Relevance
(1967).
- The Conservative Tradition (1950).
- Politics and the Press, c.1780-1850
(1949).
- Three Early Nineteenth Century
Diaries (1952).
- 'The Country Gentleman and the
Repeal of the Corn Laws,' EHR LXXXII,
322 (Jan. 1967) pp.47-60.
- 'Parties and Issues in Early
Victorian England,' Journal of British
Studies (May 1966), 95-114.

Beckett, J.C.	<u>The Making of Modern Ireland 1603-1923</u> (1981)
Best, G.F.A.	'The Protestant Constitution and its Supporters, 1800-1829,' <u>TRHS</u> , 5th. Ser., vol 8 (1958), 105-127.
Blake, Robert	<u>The Conservative Party from Peel to Churchill</u> (1970).
Bradfield, B.T.	'Sir Richard Vyvyan and the Country Gentlemen, 1830-1834,' <u>EHR</u> , LXXXIII, 329 (Oct. 1968), 729-743.
Briggs, Asa	<u>The Age of Improvement</u> (1959)
" "	'The Background of the Parliamentary Reform Movement in Three English Cities (1830-32),' <u>CHJ</u> , X, 3(1952) 293-317.
Brock, Michael	<u>The Great Reform Act</u> (1973).
Brock, W.R.	<u>Lord Liverpool and Liberal Toryism, 1820-1827</u> (1941; repr. 1967).
Butler, J.R.M.	<u>The Passing of the Great Reform Bill</u> (1914; repr. 1964).
Cahill, G.A. (ed.)	<u>The Great Reform Bill of 1832: Liberal or Conservative?</u> (D.C. Heath, Mass. 1969).
Cannon, John	<u>Parliamentary Reform, 1640-1832</u> (1973).
Close, D.B.	'The Rise of the Conservatives in the Age of Reform,' <u>BIHR</u> , XLV, 111 (May 1972) 89-103.
Crosby, Travis, L.	<u>Sir Robert Peel's Administration, 1841-1846</u> (1976).
Davis, R.W.	'Toryism to Tamworth: The Triumph of Reform, 1827-1835', <u>Albion</u> , 12:2 (Appalachian State Univ., Summer 1980), 132-146.
Derry, John W.	<u>Castlereagh</u> (1976)
Finlayson, G.B.A.M.	<u>England in the Eighteen Thirties</u> (1969)
Fisher, D.R.	'Peel and the Conservative Party: The Sugar Crisis of 1844 Reconsidered', <u>HJ XVIII</u> , 2 (June 1975), 279-302.
Gash, Norman	<u>Aristocracy and People. Britain 1815-1865</u> (1979).
" "	'English Reform and French Revolution in the General Election of 1830', in R. Pares and A.J.P. Taylor, ed.s, <u>Essays presented to Sir Lewis Namier</u> (1956), 258-288.
" "	'F.R. Bonham, Conservative "Political Secretary", 1832-47', <u>EHR</u> LXIII, 249 (Oct. 1948), 502-522.
" "	'From the Origins to Sir Robert Peel', in Lord Butler, ed., <u>The Conservatives. A History from their Origins to 1965</u> (1977).
" "	<u>Lord Liverpool</u> (1984).
" "	'The Organization of the Conservative Party, 1832-1846, Part I: The Parliamentary Organization; Part II: The Electoral Organization', <u>Parliamentary History</u> , vol I (1982), 137-159; vol II (1983), 131-152.

- Gash, Norman
 " "
 " "
 " "
 " "
 Golby, John
 Hennock, E.P.
 Hilton, Boyd
 " "
 Hinde, Wendy
 Hyde, Ralph
 Jones, W.D.
 Knatchbull-Hugessen,
 Sir Hughe
 Large, D.
 McCord, Norman
 " "
 Machin, G.I.T.
 " "
 Milton-Smith, John
 Monypenny, W.F.
 Moore, D.C.
 " "
 Robson, Robert (ed.)
- 'Peel and the Party System, 1830-50',
TRHS, 5th ser., I (1951), 47-69.
Politics in the Age of Peel (1953;
 2nd edition, 1977).
Reaction and Reconstruction in English
 Politics, 1832-1852 (1965).
Mr. Secretary Peel (1961).
Sir Robert Peel (1972).
 'A Great Electioneer and his Motives:
 the Fourth Duke of Newcastle', HJ,
 VIII, 2 (1965), 201-218.
 'The Sociological Premises of the
 First Reform Act: A Critical Note',
Victorian Studies, XIV, 3 (March 1971),
 321-327.
Corn, Cash, Commerce. The Economic
 Policies of the Tory Governments,
 1815-1830 (1977).
 'Peel: A Reappraisal,' HJ, XXII,
 3 (1979), 585-614.
George Canning (1973).
 'Wellington's Downfall and the
 Reformist Donkey', British History
 Illustrated, II, 1 (April-May 1976),
 54-63.
Prosperity Robinson (1967).
Kentish Family (1960).
 'The Decline of "the Party of the
 Crown" and the Rise of Parties in the
 House of Lords, 1783-1837', EHR,
 LXXVIII, 309 (Oct. 1963), 669-695.
The Anti-Corn Law League, 1838-1846
 (1958).
 'Some Difficulties of Parliamentary
 Reform', HJ, X, 4 (1967), 376-390.
The Catholic Question in English
 Politics, 1820 to 1830 (1964).
 'Resistance to Repeal of the Test
 and Corporation Acts, 1828,' HJ, XXII,
 1 (1979), 115-139.
 'Earl Grey's Cabinet and the Objects
 of Parliamentary Reform', HJ, XV, 1
 (1972), 55-74.
The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, 2 vols
 (1910-12).
 'Concession or Cure: the Sociological
 Premises of the First Reform Act',
HJ, IX, 1 (1966), 39-59. Also reply
 to Hennock (see above) in Victorian
 Studies, XIV, 3 (March 1971), 328-337.
 'The Other Face of Reform', Victorian
 Studies, V, 1 (1961), 7-34.
Ideas and Institutions of Victorian
 Britain (1967).

Stewart, Robert		<u>The Foundation of the Conservative Party, 1830-1867</u> (1978).
"	"	'The Ten Hours and Sugar Crises of 1844: Government and the House of Commons in the Age of Reform', HJ, XII, 1 (1969), 35-57.
van Thal	Herbert (ed.)	<u>The Prime Ministers, I, 'Sir Robert Walpole to Sir Robert Peel'</u> (1974)
Ward, D.R.		<u>Foreign Affairs, 1815-1865</u> (1972).