

## THE BRITISH WORKING CLASS AND THE GENERAL ELECTION OF 1868<sup>1</sup>

The history of working-class politics in Britain during the last hundred years might be written in terms of changing attitudes towards Liberalism; a Liberalism which was continuously redefining itself as its social composition altered and political circumstances changed. Successive generations of working-class leaders attempted both to identify themselves with Liberalism and to disengage themselves from it. Those who saw the political future of labour in terms of full incorporation within the Liberal party were never left unchallenged; those who believed in political independence rarely thought of that independence as involving a complete break with Liberal values. From the eighties onwards the conflict between the desire to be assimilated and the urge to independence was continuously present within individuals as well as within movements.

<sup>1</sup> I must express my gratitude to Asa Briggs, Professor of Modern History at the University of Leeds, for his valuable criticism and encouragement.

I am indebted to the Sheffield University Publications Committee for a grant which enabled me to consult materials held in the Howell Collection, Bishopsgate Institute London.

Some time after this article had been completed, Mr H. J. Hanham's book, "Elections and Party Management" appeared. It was at once recognised as a work of great industry and scholarship; an important contribution to our understanding of politics in the age of Gladstone and Disraeli. It included a chapter on working class radicalism and good use was made of the manuscript volume of "Election Reports" to which I had frequently referred in the course of writing the present article.

There are a number of points of fact and of opinion where I consider Mr Hanham to be in error. For example, in his estimate of the number of Reform League Branches in the provinces (p. 329); in his assertion that the Junta was anxious to unite all elements in the working class world (p. 325); and in the vague, artificial and sometimes unhistorical manner in which he attempts to classify these elements (p. 324-5; 331-2). Further, Mr Hanham does not try to assess the electoral consequences of the secret agreement between the Liberal Whips and the leaders of the Reform League nor does he consider its implications for the subsequent history of Liberal-Labour relations. It must be borne in mind that Mr Hanham is not primarily concerned with the Labour Movement. Thus, this article covers some of the same ground, but in much more detail and within a very different general perspective.

Recent studies by British and American historians have contributed to an understanding of this theme. They have provided detailed accounts of the origin and the outcome of the secret electoral pact concluded in 1903 between Macdonald and Hardie on the one hand and the Liberal whips on the other.<sup>1</sup> This agreement had momentous consequences for both parties. In its absence the Liberals would not have enjoyed their great majority at the election of 1906, while the Parliamentary Labour Party would have scarcely existed at all. Yet, as an exercise in “independent” working-class politics, these Liberal-Labour negotiations were of dubious value. In a sense the new Party existed by grace of Campbell-Bannerman and Herbert Gladstone. It is really most extraordinary (and most illuminating) that a Party whose whole *raison d'être* lay in its independence was able to engage in a bargain of this kind.

However, the agreement of 1903 was not entirely unprecedented. Some thirty-five years earlier the most politically influential labour leaders had made a secret deal with Gladstone's whips. Unlike the situation in 1906, the existence of some pact or arrangement could not be inferred from the election results by any intelligent political observer. Only a handful of men knew that negotiations had been carried on. Yet, as in 1903, these negotiations were of great importance for the subsequent General Election and the succeeding history of Liberal-Labour relations. There is nothing in the history of Mid-Victorian Labour which provides a better insight into the intellectual and financial dependence of the Labour Leaders upon the Gladstonians than the story of the secret agreement of 1868. For students of Marx it has a particular interest. At the Hague Congress of the International, the German Socialist declared that “almost all” the recognised English Labour leaders were “sold to Gladstone, Morley and Dilke”. Even historians who have sympathy with Marx and with Marxism have dismissed this charge out of hand.<sup>2</sup> The present article furnishes some of the material with which an informed judgement on this matter can be made.

The following account of the 1868 agreement falls into three parts. First, there is a brief sketch of the general characteristics of the Labour Movement in the eighteen sixties together with some indication of the challenges and the possibilities with which it was confronted in 1867–68. In the second section an account is given of the secret agreement

<sup>1</sup> F. Bealy and H. Pelling, *Labour and Politics 1900–1906*, London 1958. P. P. Poirer, *The Advent of the Labour Party*, London, 1958.

<sup>2</sup> G. D. H. Cole, *Marxism and Anarchism 1850–1890*. Being volume II of *A History of Socialist Thought*, London 1954, p. 267.

between the leaders of the Reform League and Gladstone's whips and an attempt is made to show its far reaching consequences for all working-class candidates and interests in the ensuing election. Finally, there is a description of the aftermath of the agreement and an assessment is made of its more remote implications as well as its immediate results.

## I

The British Labour Movement in 1867 was distinguished by the predominance of institutions and attitudes which had scarcely been noticed twenty years earlier. In no other period was so short a lapse of time required for so large a transformation. When every allowance has been made for certain continuities – and it is essential to take account of them – the broad lines of contrast between the nature and spirit of working-class organisation in the forties and the sixties remains impressive and unmistakable.

In the first of these two decades the primary demands of the Labour Movement had been political; by the second they had become social and industrial. In the forties, the Movement had embraced all sections of the working class while much of the leadership and drive came from men whose skills had been displaced by the industrial revolution. In the sixties, the narrow stratum of the relatively well paid and privileged enjoyed undisputed ascendancy. Their skills, like those of the engineers, belonged to the new industry or else, as in the case of the building workers, were at a premium as a result of the demands which the rise of that industry created. The young economist, Alfred Marshall, had a lively appreciation of the character and importance of this mid-victorian labour aristocracy. He noticed that “artisans whose manual labour is not heavy, who are paid chiefly for their skill and the work of their brains, are as conscious of the superiority of their lot over that of their poorer brethren as is the highest nobleman in the land. And they are right; for their lot does just offer them the opportunity of being gentlemen in spirit and in truth; and to the great honour of the age be it said, many of the more steadily becoming gentlemen”.<sup>1</sup>

All the most important and characteristic institutions of the eighteen sixties are only intelligible in terms of the special opportunities of this stratum. The co-operative movement which exchanged its vision of the “new moral world” for the more tangible advantages of the “divi”, succeeded not only through its re-discovery of the principle of dividing

<sup>1</sup> A. Marshall, *The Future of the Working Classes*, an address delivered on 25th Nov. 1873. Reprinted in: *Memorials of Alfred Marshall*, ed. A. C. Pigion, 1925, p. 105.

profits on purchases, but because it excluded credit. This rule limited membership to the comparatively prosperous.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly the trade unions, which were no longer “schools of war” but schools in which workmen learnt to be “respectful and respected”, were increasingly basing themselves on the “new model” with its principle of high contributions and high benefits. Thus, membership of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers cost 1/- per week at a period when skilled men were earning about 27/- and their labourers about 18/-.<sup>2</sup>

The new institutions of the eighteen-sixties brought with them a new style of Labour leader. The age of the great romantics, visionaries and demagogues closed and their place was taken by the trade union oligarchy, shrewd administrators, great men of business. Under the direction of William Allan, Robert Applegarth and George Howell, workmen built enduring institutions and exchanged the heroic failures of the forties for the pedestrian successes of the sixties. Disenchanted with millennialism and weary of apocalyptic forecasts, the labour leaders of the sixties turned their backs on revolutionary movements, believed profoundly in the virtues of class collaboration and set their sights on giving workmen “a stake in the country” and bringing them “within the pale of the constitution”.

In part this immense transformation is intelligible in its own terms. The failure of Chartism was itself a force which demoralised many old militants and which prepared them for new departures and for compromises which once would have seemed shameful and unthinkable. Thus, to take but one example, John Snowden who had been a militant chartist in Halifax, lent his services in the 1868 election to a local mill-owner, a whig who had once dismissed Snowden from his employment and who now paid him 10/- per week, as a kind of retainer. In 1859 Snowden had written to Ernest Jones describing the disintegration of Chartism in Halifax and the surrounding villages. He reported that “Many who were once active chartists have emigrated, and others, who [sic] residing here as usual, have become so thoroughly disgusted at the indifference and utter inattention of the multitude to their best interests, that they too are resolved to make no more sacrifices in a public cause”. He went on to refer to Jones’ “foolish integrity and zeal” on behalf of the “unthinking and ungrateful multitude” and advised him to look in future to this own personal interest.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> G. D. H. Cole, *A Century of Co-operation*, Manchester 1955, p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> J. B. Jeffreys, *The Story of the Engineers*, London 1945, p. 29 and p. 62. Also M. Jeffreys and J. B. Jeffreys, *The Wages, Hours and Trade Customs of the Skilled Engineer in 1861*, in: *Economic History Review*, 1947, p. 32.

<sup>3</sup> J. Saville, *Ernest Jones: Chartist*, London 1952, p. 74.

However, it was not merely a question of the chartists becoming exhausted. Their failure was spelt out in the spectacular successes of British capitalism in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. As year after year foreign trade increased, it seemed as if British industry was assured of continual progress.

Given a certain amount of “play” in the economy, there was a feature of British class structure which was likely to make employers more sensitive to working class opinion than they were on the continent. The absence of a peasantry in England deprived private property of its customary basis of mass support. The inflexibility of the continental bourgeois and his intransigence towards the claims of labour appeared to be quite suicidal to his English counterpart. In the second half of the nineteenth century many large employers of labour, with interests in such key sections of the economy as textiles and engineering, came to see that “whatever the poor may feel towards the rich, the duty of the rich towards the poor is too plain for misconception. Whether moved by considerations of policy or by the nobler impulses of humanity, it must be the object of our universal solicitude that no class in society should be exposed to the fatal influences of despair”.<sup>1</sup>

Thomas Brassey, who wrote this passage, was fully aware that it was a peculiar feature of British class structure which made it so imperative to remove the “fatal influences of despair”. He noticed that “in England the class of persons is gradually being diminished, who without large means, enjoy the advantage of holding a position of independence. Theirs is an order essential in a happily constituted society, as the connecting link between the rich and the poor. They are the defenders of the rights of property, while in their modest and frugal households there is nothing which obtrudes itself in painful contrast to the condition of the less independent wage-earners among whom they live”.<sup>2</sup> This was among the considerations which led Brassey to teach the advantages of co-operative production as well as the economy of high wages.

Brassey observed that “the disposition to be liberal towards workmen is developed, as a general rule, in proportion to the extent of the business and capital of the employer...”.<sup>3</sup> And there can be no doubt that the social philosophy with which he himself was identified did find its most accomplished exponents among large capitalists with keen political interests. Men like M.T. Bass and James Stansfeld in brewing; Samuel Morley, A. J. Mundella, Titus Salt, Robert Kell and many others in textiles; and – with some qualifications – Lord Elcho in

<sup>1</sup> T. Brassey, *Co-operative Production*, in: *Contemporary Review*, July 1874, p. 235.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 215–216.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 215.

mining. These were the sort of men who saw to it that if the new model unionists had to fight an occasional battle for recognition, they were still able to meet influential employers who favoured collective bargaining and who were eager to establish joint machinery for conciliation and arbitration. They were all of them, with the exception of Elcho, devoted admirers of Mr. Gladstone. It was their wealth, their skill and experience which helped to give body to the ruling idea of Gladstonian Liberalism both in industry and in politics. This idea had been expressed most succinctly by Gladstone in the middle sixties when he was obliged to defend himself from the reproach that he was encouraging the demand for parliamentary reform: "Please to recollect", he wrote, "that we have got to govern millions of hard hands; that it must be done by force, fraud or good will, that the latter has been tried and is answering; that none have profited more by this change of system since the corn law and the Six Acts, than those who complain of it".<sup>1</sup> Gladstonian liberalism was one of the formative influences upon the new labour movement. The two forces acted and reacted upon each other. Each could gain confidence in itself only to the extent that it experienced a growing confidence in the other.

These relations of mutual confidence were by no means fully established in 1867. G. G. Glyn, one of the partners in the great banking house of Glyn, Mills and Co, had recently become Liberal Chief Whip and he felt obliged to warn Gladstone that the Reform Act of 1867 had made a general election an incalculable business: "all is new & changed & large & I fear I must say in some respects *dark*".<sup>2</sup> The size of the electorate had been just about doubled and none of the established party leaders could be sure that ways would be found of organising and controlling the new voters. Indeed, there was some reason for supposing that the newly enfranchised workmen might bring forward their own candidates or, short of that, exert independent pressure on both parties in the interests of a distinctive programme of their own.

The materials required to produce such effects appeared to be present. The legal status of the trades unions was in question. The security of their funds had been imperilled by the decision of the Court of the Queen's Bench in the case of *Hornby v. Close*, and their freedom to engage in strikes was endangered by the application of the law of conspiracy to a dispute in the London tailoring trade. To make matters worse, the terrorist activities of a few workers in Sheffield had been exploited to bring the whole trade union movement into bad

<sup>1</sup> J. Morley, *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone*, II, London 1903, p. 133.

<sup>2</sup> A. F. Thompson, *Gladstone's Whips and the General Election of 1868*, in: *The English Historical Review*, April 1948, p. 189.

odour. A Royal Commission had been set up to enquire into the workings of the unions and it was feared that its recommendations might lead to further restraints being imposed upon them.<sup>1</sup>

Under these circumstances it was not altogether surprising that one of the unionists' most influential advisers, Professor Beesly, was hard at work trying to persuade unionists and working-class reformers to break through the closed ring of established party politics. Even before the Reform Bill had become law, he had drawn up a six point programme in which the main emphasis was placed on securing a satisfactory legal settlement for the unions. He urged that this issue, together with demands for an extension of the factory acts, a reduction in indirect taxation, and a system of national, secular and compulsory primary education, should be given priority over all other questions. He expressly warned against the danger of subordinating this programme to that of the middle-class radicals. He regarded it as "quite certain" that "many candidates who swallow the Ballot, or even warmly support it, would go dead against workmen's interests on intellectual and social questions".<sup>2</sup>

Beesly had been asked to draw up this programme by the Bradford trade unionists and reformers and in 1867 he felt that there were workers all over the country who were ready and willing to take his advice.<sup>3</sup> However, he had only limited success with the "Junta". The Conference of Amalgamated Trades was prepared to take up and develop his ideas on labour law reform, but it showed a characteristic reluctance to merge, the special interests of trade unionism in a general class programme.<sup>4</sup>

Yet despite the almost total absence of socialist ideas, there were indications that workmen might feel their way towards independent political activity. The small, but exceedingly energetic, London Working Men's Association held discussions on labour representation and the possibility of building up an electoral fund. Its platform contained most of the planks in Beesly's programme, but they were tagged on to the end of the usual democratic demands.<sup>5</sup>

In the autumn of 1867 it would have been excusable for a political observer to predict that Labour would appear as a distinct force in the

<sup>1</sup> S. & B. Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, London 1920, pp. 259–273.

<sup>2</sup> E. S. Beesly, *The General Election of 1869: Programme for Trade Unions*. Coll. E. Section B. vol. cxx, item 41, Webb, T.U. Collection, British Library of Political and Economic Science.

<sup>3</sup> E. S. Beesly to R. Congreve, 28th August 1867. A Positivist Archive, British Museum. Add. Mss. 45227–64.

<sup>4</sup> Minutes of the Conference of Amalgamated Trades, 30th September 1867. (Webb, T. U. Collection. British Library of Political and Economic Science.)

<sup>5</sup> G. D. H. Cole, *British Working Class Politics 1832–1914*, London 1941, pp. 39–44.

next election. It had numbers, grievances, its own programmes and projects to discuss and, in the Reform League, it had by far the largest and most perfect political organisation in the country. At this time (1867) the League had “departments” in Scotland, Ireland, the Midlands, the North, the North East, the West Riding and in Oxford. In London alone there were nearly one hundred branches and there were nearly three hundred or so more scattered up and down England and Wales.<sup>1</sup>

The officers of the League themselves were probably unaware of the exact membership, but it certainly ran into many thousands. Most of the recruits were made between the middle of 1866 and the first four or five months of the following year. Thus, in Bradford, for example, a branch was formed in September 1866. A year later it reported that it had been able to establish 14 auxiliary or ward organisations within which 2,500 people were organised. During the same period it assisted in the formation of four other important branches.<sup>2</sup>

All members of the League in England paid a minimum subscription of 1/- per year – a third of which went to the centre. George Howell, a bricklayer who had been prominent in many trade and political movements, was employed as full-time secretary with a salary which reached £ 2-10- per week.<sup>3</sup> In addition to Howell, the carpenter, W. R. Cremer served as a full-time organiser and fund-raiser.<sup>4</sup> At various times James Finlen,<sup>5</sup> a French-polisher and an associate of Ernest Jones; George Odger,<sup>6</sup> shoemaker and Secretary of the London Trades Council; and George Mantle,<sup>7</sup> an old Chartist who had served several prison sentences, were employed as lecturers and agents. The President was Edmond Beales, who was one of the Revising Barristers for Middlesex until he was deprived of his appointment. He enjoyed an unequalled prestige among all sections of working-class reformers. It was correctly said that “he lost his practice, his office, his voice, his health in the people’s cause”.<sup>8</sup> These officers worked under the formal

<sup>1</sup> A List of Departments and Branches of the National Reform League, 1867. Inside volume entitled: Election Reports in the Howell Collection, Bishopsgate Institute, London. Henceforth all references to unpublished materials are references to this collection unless otherwise stated.

<sup>2</sup> Bradford Review, 5th October 1867.

<sup>3</sup> Cash Book of the Reform League, entry for November 1867.

<sup>4</sup> H. Evans, *Sir R. Cremer: His Life and Work*, London 1909. For Cremer’s remuneration as a League agent, see G. Howell to W. R. Cremer, 29th November 1867.

<sup>5</sup> J. Finlen, *Mr. J. Finlen’s Defence of Himself Against the Attacks Made Upon Him By the Parliament and Press of England*, (London, 1868?), p. 16.

<sup>6</sup> D. R. Moberg, *George Odger and the English Working-Class Movement* (Ph. D. Thesis, London School of Economics, 1953).

<sup>7</sup> G. Howell, *Draft Autobiography*. Note on “G. H. Mantle, 1865–1870”.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* (“Edmond Beales”).



control of an Executive Committee which was in its turn accountable to a General Council consisting of representatives from the branches.

It would be a mistake to imagine that the rivalry between the League and the London Working Men's Association represented a crippling division in the ranks of working-class reformers. The strength of the L.W.M.A. lay almost entirely in London and largely depended upon its control of the Bee-Hive Newspaper. In 1867 the League had almost as many branches as the L.W.M.A. had members.<sup>1</sup> Potter and Hartwell had shown that they were capable of bringing large numbers of workers into the streets of the metropolis and that their followers might manage to infiltrate into the Reform League's General Council, but they could neither dislodge their opponents from office nor seriously undermine their authority as national leaders. The League was unquestionably the most important organisation of working-class reformers. At the end of 1867 it had ceased to be sure of itself, but this had little to do with George Potter and his friends.

## II

If the organised working class was going to make itself felt in the approaching General Election then it could only be through the powerful machinery of the Reform League. Yet no sooner was the Reform Act passed than it found itself beset with financial and political problems which threatened to deprive it of any further influence.

Within the General Council there were violent debates on the question of Fenianism. Benjamin Lucraft,<sup>2</sup> George Odger and other well-known leaders announced their sympathies with the Irish. Odger went so far as to declare that had he been an Irishman he would have been a Fenian.<sup>3</sup> Important sections of the press fastened on these statements and interpreted them as evidence that the League favoured terrorism and approved of physical force policies. George Howell soon found that he had to write reassuring letters to professional and middle-class friends who were alarmed by these reports.<sup>4</sup> He was unable to prevent a number of resignations and he could see no way of putting a stop to the League's decline unless these divisions on the Irish question were healed. "Now is the time when unity is required,"

<sup>1</sup> Report of Saint Martin's Hall Conference, Bee-Hive, 9th March 1867.

<sup>2</sup> G. H. Dyer, Benjamin Lucraft, London 1879.

<sup>3</sup> Minutes of the General Council of the Reform League, 23rd. Oct. 1867. (Hereafter referred to as G. C. R. L.)

<sup>4</sup> Howell to Prof. Thorold Rogers, 23rd November 1867 and to W. E. Forster, M. P., 17th. Dec. 1867.

Howell observed, “for some people are easily defeated after a victory”.<sup>1</sup>

However, unity required some agreement about the future work of the League. In December 1867 the General Council called for joint action with the Unions to secure the return of Labour Representatives to the next Parliament in numbers “proportionate to the other interests and classes at present represented in Parliament”, but no practical steps were taken to help carry this out.<sup>2</sup> Howell had great misgivings about such resolutions and he explained in private that he did not see his way clear in this matter.<sup>3</sup> “As to working-men representatives as a rule our time is not yet come. We want *good men* no matter whence they come or what they are”.<sup>4</sup> Talk of labour representatives was likely to give further distress to middle-class patrons of the League who were disturbed enough by the debates on Fenianism.

From its inception the League had received some financial support from wealthy Liberal manufacturers. Of the total national receipts, amounting to £ 3,101 in the financial year ending in April 1867, half was accounted for by “donations”. Some of the contributions under this heading came from workmen.

“A few engineers, £ 1”; “Three of the venal and the ignorant, 2/6” – there are many such entries in the League’s cash books. But the greater part of this money came in much larger sums and from other quarters. Thus, between 10th. November 1866 and 17th. April 1867 ten Liberal politicians and manufactureres, headed by Samuel Morley and Titus Salt, made contributions totalling £ 1,150. There were many other middle-class men who subscribed sums of under £ 50.<sup>5</sup> Samuel Morley was said to have “erected benevolence into a business”<sup>6</sup> and Howell knew all such men, if they gave generously, brought to their giving the same shrewdness and calculation which they displayed in their investments. They needed to know their man before they parted with money and they expected a proper account of how it was spent. Not one of them could be counted as an uncritical admirer of the League’s programme. Not one of them would give a penny so long as there was any doubt or uncertainty about where the League would stand in the coming election.

Throughout the winter of 1867–68, Howell recorded a steady worsening of the financial position, which he explained in terms of the

<sup>1</sup> Howell to C. Hills, 26th. Nov. 1867. – (Howell kept carbon copies of letters, which are bound in date order in a series of letter books.)

<sup>2</sup> Minutes G. C. R. L., 4th Dec. 1867.

<sup>3</sup> Howell to Elk, 27th. Oct. 1867.

<sup>4</sup> Howell to Clayton, 28th. Feb., 1868.

<sup>5</sup> Reform League cash book, 1866–7.

<sup>6</sup> Samuel Morley, Dictionary of National Biography.

separation of the League from its middle-class friends. It was a deplorable situation whether regarded from the standpoint of his political ideals or equally in relation to his personal interests. Although one of Howell's earliest recollections was of George Snell calling at his father's house before going off to die in the Newport Rising of 1839,<sup>1</sup> Chartism and Owenism were objects for him of sentimental curiosity rather than of serious commitment. When he came to London in the eighteen fifties he saw Robert Owen and gave some support to Ernest Jones, but his object was to equip himself for public life and to fulfil his three ambitions: to speak in the Exeter Hall, to publish a book, and to enter the House of Commons.<sup>2</sup> He came into the Labour Movement during that period of half-light in which Chartism had not yet passed finally away nor the new institutions firmly established themselves. But by the time he was Secretary of the Reform League he had long ceased to drink at the old Chartist water-holes and he recommended his working-class correspondents, "as to works on politics and political economy, get Mill on Liberty and Political Economy. There are many other works, but go to the fountain head at once. Mill, Gladstone and Bright are great authorities on politics, taxation and government".<sup>3</sup>

At first sight, Mill, Gladstone and Bright make a strange trio. Yet despite profound differences of mind and character, these three men had achieved a substantial measure of political agreement during 1867–68. They certainly shared a quite remarkable prestige among working-class reformers as a whole. Even Professor Beesly admitted that "no workman would cast his vote against such men as Mr Bright, Mr Mill or Mr Gladstone, let the opposing candidate promise what he would".<sup>4</sup> But if Beesly faced what he took to be the facts, Howell rejoiced in them. If Beesly thought of Mill, Bright and Gladstone as exceptional individuals whom workmen could not be induced to oppose, Howell saw them as representatives of social and political forces with which the working class must be aligned. For Howell was firmly convinced that workmen would never accomplish anything in politics without the help and advice of professional teachers such as Goldwin Smith, Thorold Rodgers, Frederic Harrison and Mill. He believed that, if they were to exercise any serious influence, they had

<sup>1</sup> Howell, *Draft Autobiography*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Howell to W. Thomas, 4th May 1868.

<sup>4</sup> Beesly, E. S. "The General Election of 1869: Programme for Trade Unions". (Undated, but 1867). (Webb T. U. Collection; London School of Economics, Coll. E. Section B. Vol. cxx Item 41).

to work closely with progressive parliamentarians like James Stansfeld and Walter Morrison. While Beesly looked forwards to the supremacy of working-class interests, Howell declared "I have never been, and never shall be, an advocate for merely changing our masters. I neither want aristocratic rule, nor the rule of the middle classes, nor the rule of the working classes. I want a government of the entire people – where wealth and intellect will have its fair share of power – no more".<sup>1</sup>

Howell's most immediate fear in the winter of 1867–68 was that a separation from the middle-class Liberals would result in the League's falling into the hands of ultra radicals. If this happened the only consequence would be that the manufacturers would be driven back into the arms of the Whigs. As he explained to one of Francis Place's old friends, "The greater the element of our middle classes in these movements, the less violent and more progressive will be the results. For then there will be no fear of counter-plotting and reaction".<sup>2</sup>

The political considerations that led Howell to deplore the withdrawal of middle-class support were powerfully reinforced by personal financial problems. Several times in his life he had seemed within measurable distance of escaping from the insecurity and drudgery of a working-class existence. His father had been a stone mason in the West Country. He had managed to become quite a substantial sub-contractor, but had lost out heavily in a legal dispute. When Howell came to London as a young man he managed to earn a skilled worker's wage and, with only a wife and one child to support, his responsibilities were relatively light. But, as a result of his activities in the great strike and lock-out in the London building trades, he was victimised by the masters and forced to find employment elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> In 1867 he enjoyed what he described as his "very first year of real comfort". In the course of the year he was able "to buy a few things and not really pinch for it". He added, "Yet I have not lived extravagant [sic], but very moderately and carefully. Never felt that I should live fast or spend in gaiety".<sup>4</sup> Indeed, he had managed to save £6 and was thinking of buying a house. He told his brother, "If I can get over this year (1868) I shall feel quite safe and at my ease. It will be a great struggle, but then the victory will also be great".<sup>5</sup>

Howell's prospects were jeopardised by the weakness of the League and, in particular, by the reluctance of the middle-class sympathisers to continue their subsidies. While his wife and son visited friends or

<sup>1</sup> Howell to Morrison, M. P., 30th. Nov. 1868.

<sup>2</sup> Howell to Dr. Black 22nd Febr. 1868.

<sup>3</sup> Draft Autobiography.

<sup>4</sup> Howell's Diary, 1868. (Personal Financial Review for the past year).

<sup>5</sup> Howell to "Dear Brother", 14th April 1868.

went to the Comic Opera, he employed the winter evenings studying French, reading Machiavelli, and drawing up plans for a personal canvass of rich supporters in the north of England.<sup>1</sup>

In February 1868 Howell visited Bradford, a town where the class conflicts within English Radicalism appeared with exceptional sharpness and clarity. Here there were many workmen who were ready to follow Professor Beesly and Dr. Bridges, and to argue that the Tory radicalism of Oastler and the democratic radicalism of Bright and Cobden were equally perishing species which ought to yield to a new social philosophy in which the control of capital would appear as the paramount issue. Arrayed against them were the men whom Howell had come to see, the influential textile manufacturers, Robert and S. C. Kell, vigorous supporters of further political reform who resented any attempt to introduce disruptive questions about the legal status of trade unions.<sup>2</sup>

Howell was immediately made aware of the intense class-consciousness which prevailed in the town. He recorded that he “went to Kells; saw Mr S. C. Kell; had a long chat. But he was very shy about cash.... Went in the evening to hear Mundella’s lecture on Arbitration versus Strikes. I found the Cmttee room full of employers, Chamber of Commerce men, and they evinced their partiality for the employers’ view of the question in the way they applauded every hit at the workmen. But the men met the charge well. Never was I more convinced of the necessity of the unions than this night”. But he immediately added, “I was asked to speak, but refused as I saw I must say some things which would be disagreeable to those I came to see and I knew it would be unadvisable. Workmen, defend your unions! say I”.<sup>3</sup>

Howell’s diplomacy was not rewarded. “Met Arthur Illingworth; had a long talk. They were all closefisted... saw Titus Salt... no cash whatever, not even a direct promise. Illingworth strongly insisted on a union of Manchester with London, Kell the same. My private impression is that the manufacturing class are rather afraid of the power the People now have. They are beginning to be shy”.<sup>4</sup>

On returning to London Howell wrote to thank Kell for his hospitality: “I sincerely hope that Mr Titus Salt will give us some help for we are sorely pressed for cash and quite unable to move. It does seem strange that after doing such good service for two years, and being capable of much more service for some time to come, we should be in

<sup>1</sup> Howell’s diary, 3rd. Jan. 1868.

<sup>2</sup> For this controversy, see Bradford Review, 31st. Aug. to 28th. Dec. 1867. This was a continuation of an earlier struggle: see The Commonwealth, 12th. May to 16th. June 1866.

<sup>3</sup> Howell’s Diary 5th. Feb. 1868.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 6th. Febr. 1868.

such crippled circumstances for a few hundred pounds".<sup>1</sup> The same day, Howell had to explain to Illingworth that there was no immediate prospect of combined action between the League and the Middle Class Reform Union, the condition to which the Bradford manufacturers attached so much importance.<sup>2</sup> In fact, Edmund Beales was thoroughly roused by the attempted interference and, at the Executive Committee meeting of 12th. February, he strongly condemned middle-class dictation.<sup>3</sup>

Fortunately there was in London a Liberal politician who was far more polished and experienced than the blunt men of Bradford. James Stansfeld, who was closely associated with Glyn, had worked with labour leaders over a number of years.<sup>4</sup> He saw that it was a mistake to complicate the task of building a class alliance by insisting that an end should be put to the organisational rivalries between the Reform Union and the League. Howell went to see him and he promised to help him to raise £ 500. Howell was delighted: "Nothing could be kinder than his reception. He is indeed, one of the *best* of our public men".<sup>5</sup>

Stansfeld did not want to impose conditions upon the labour leaders, but to cultivate closer relations between them and men of his own social and political position. To this end, he had tried to induce Howell, Applegarth and others to join the Century Club, where there would be an opportunity for them to meet Liberal intellectuals and Parliamentarians.<sup>6</sup> The workmen found the subscription prohibitive, so he devised a scheme for a new club. The initial capital was to be supplied by Liberal manufacturers, but it was to be run by a Committee on which workmen were to be represented. It was eventually established in the premises of the Reform League at Adelphi Terrace and its object was declared to be – "doing something to bridge over the gulph which now exists between different classes and thereby developing a more kindly feeling than has hitherto existed".<sup>7</sup> A large number of professional men, including Mill, joined the Club and sent books for its library. Titus Salt, Samuel Morley and others

<sup>1</sup> Howell to R. Kell, 11th. Feb. 1868.

<sup>2</sup> Howell to A. Illingworth, 11th. Feb. 1867.

<sup>3</sup> Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Reform League, 12th. Feb. 1868. (Hereafter referred to as E.C.R.L.)

<sup>4</sup> Sir James Stansfeld, 1820–1893. D.N.B. Also J. L. Hammond & Barbara Hammond, James Stansfeld: A Victorian Champion of Sex Equality, London 1932.

<sup>5</sup> Howell Diary, 8th. Feb. 1868.

<sup>6</sup> Howell to J. Stansfeld, M. P., 18th. Nov. 1868.

<sup>7</sup> Draft Appeal for the Adelphi Club, 9th. April 1869. (Howell's letter book for 1868.)

supplied the funds. Professor Beesly was the only middle-class friend of Labour who refused to have anything to do with it.<sup>1</sup>

A few weeks after Howell's interview with Stansfeld, the financial position of the League began to improve. Funds were now available for an important series of lectures which Howell planned to organise in London. The series had already been opened by Ernest Jones, who had created a very bad impression among middle-class friends. Samuel Morley complained about Jones' lecture and described him, rather oddly, as "a wild Irishman".<sup>2</sup> The remaining lectures in the series were given by such reliable men as W. E. Forster M.P., A. J. Mundella and Stansfeld himself. Little difficulty was experienced in persuading M. T. Bass, Edmund Potter M.P., H. C. E. Childers M.P., and others to help supply the money.<sup>3</sup>

Within the League Howell counselled members to adopt moderate and "realistic" policies. In March he told the Pimlico branch that there were four issues which ought to be put before the country: further democratic reform of the electoral system; justice to Ireland; national education; and trades unionism. This was virtually the last occasion upon which he placed any emphasis at all upon the problem of securing a sound legal status for the Unions. At Pimlico he explained, "While I adhere to my radical creed with all the tenacity of a partisan, I still think that we in England can only permanently succeed by compromises".<sup>4</sup>

He discussed the question of candidates with the Secretary of the Scottish Department of the League. "We must go in for the best we can get to come forward, but better have *new* Liberals than old Whigs. I *hate the Whigs*. They have ever been our enemies and are now . . . We must fight the next election tooth and nail and *if the Whig is doubtful* I personally should prefer a Tory. But of course this is a delicate matter and one which requires care in the working out . . . but we must tell the professing Liberals that their programme must be a good and bold one and their pledges must be kept or they will not do for us".<sup>5</sup> Howell had already made clear that in his view, the selection of working-class candidates was not a serious proposition.

While he was elaborating these general principles, Howell was already engaged in trying to place "good men" in constituencies. Mr B.

<sup>1</sup> E. S. Beesly to Geo. Howell, 26th. April 1868. (Letters to Howell are kept in packages for each year and arranged in alphabetical order.)

<sup>2</sup> Howell's Diary 11th. Dec. 1867.

<sup>3</sup> Howell's letters of thanks to Potter and to Childers, 24th. March 1868.

<sup>4</sup> Howells draft of Lecture to Pimlico Branch, 24th. March 1868. (In letter book for 1868.)

<sup>5</sup> Howell to Geo. Jackson, 11th. May 1868.

Samuelson, the Liberal Member for Banbury, who was no great friend to trades unionism,<sup>1</sup> wished his son to join him in the House of Commons. Howell wrote about the matter to one of his correspondents in Cheltenham. "I am desired by a well known and good Liberal member of the House of Commons to enquire of you as to the chances of success for a good young Oxford Liberal. His father is a good man and one of great ability and standing in the House. But he is desirous of his son being elected without resort to any corrupt or dubious means, or in any way compromising his own feelings of integrity. The family is wealthy and very liberal in all good works. Please treat this letter as *private* and tell me the chances for such an one, and also whether you are free to support him if he should come out for Cheltenham".<sup>2</sup>

The matter was managed successfully and H.B. Samuelson was adopted. Howell thanked his father for a donation of £ 10, adding "I think our League will do good service".<sup>3</sup> He told Titus Salt, "We feel that to disband [the Reform League] before the next General Election would be a national misfortune for the Liberal Party".<sup>4</sup> Salt's earlier doubts on this subject were by now subdued and he contributed £ 100.<sup>5</sup>

By offering general assurances and performing small services, Howell prepared the way for the more formal and comprehensive agreement which was concluded with the Liberal Whips in the middle of 1868.

Glyn and Stanhope now joined Stansfeld in the negotiations. They regarded a deal with the Reform League as a very delicate matter which had to be kept as secret as possible. It would not be desirable to have the proceedings discussed in the General Council. In so far as it was practicable they wanted to confide only in Howell and Cremer.<sup>6</sup> The election of a new Executive Committee in May made it much easier to satisfy these conditions. Lucraft, who had been associated with the left wing of the old Executive was not re-elected.<sup>7</sup>

The first act of the new body was to establish a Parliamentary Sub-Committee for "registration and electoral purposes". It consisted of a professional election agent, James Acland; a wealthy merchant, Joseph Guedalla; Beale's friend, Col. Dickson; W. R. Cremer, George Odger and Thomas Mottershead.<sup>8</sup> The delegation by the Executive of

<sup>1</sup> See Ch. IV.

<sup>2</sup> Howell to C. Hiscot(?), 2nd. April 1868.

<sup>3</sup> Howell to B. Samuelson, M. P., 20th. April 1868.

<sup>4</sup> Howell to T. Salt, 3rd. April 1868.

<sup>5</sup> Howell to T. Salt, 25th. April 1868.

<sup>6</sup> See Ch. V.

<sup>7</sup> Minutes E. C. R. L. 6th. May 1868.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 9th. May 1868.



its powers to this Committee; to a small finance committee and, on occasion, to Howell and Cremer directly, allowed negotiations to proceed confidentially and discreetly. It was not until the election was over that Howell and Cremer were charged with exceeding their authority.

The Parliamentary Sub-Committee lost no time in displaying its usefulness. In June it sent six men down to the Bristol by-election to organise support for Samuel Morley.<sup>1</sup> Morley had been a candidate for Parliament before, but had been unseated on a petition. This time he was elected. Shortly after this, Cremer reported to the Executive that he had had an interview with one of Gladstone's Whips, H. S. Stanhope, "in reference to the pending General Election and as to funds being made up for the use of the League". At the same meeting Howell referred to interviews which he had had with the Liberal Whips.<sup>2</sup> It was decided that a deputation consisting of Howell, Cremer and Worley, should "wait upon Mr Stanhope, Mr Adams or others in reference to the elections and with regard to funds".<sup>3</sup> By the end of July, Howell was able to tell the Executive that he had seen Samuel Morley and that Morley had donated £ 250 to the League. Cremer spoke of "the negotiations now pending for raising a fund of £ 1,000" for preliminary election expenses.<sup>4</sup>

The Minutes of the Executive – which it must be remembered were kept by Howell himself – suggest that there was scarcely any sustained questioning about the precise conditions under which the money was received. In the General Council, Whitfield and a few others complained that the Executive was arrogating too much power to itself and wanted to know whether sums of money were distributed among its members without the Council's sanction,<sup>5</sup> but members of the Executive simply expressed their dissatisfaction with these questions, condemned them, and then went into a month's adjournment.<sup>6</sup> It was only when the election was over that some sort of general explanation was offered to the membership as a whole. They were then informed that in order to carry out the declared policy of the League – the return of as many "Advanced Radical Reformers" to the next Parliament as possible – it was necessary to make a large outlay, "much larger than the funds of the League permitted. In this emergency, Mr Samuel Morley, who has ever been the foremost of our supporters, consented to act as Treasurer

<sup>1</sup> Minutes RLEC, 17th. June 1868 on the Sub-Committee's report.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 15th. July 1868.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 31st. July 1868.

<sup>5</sup> Minutes of E.C.R.L., 24th. June and 13th. July 1868.

<sup>6</sup> Minutes of the E.C.R.L., 31st. July and 6th. August 1868.

of a "Special Fund", to be raised for the above purpose. The first sum raised was £ 1,000, to be specially devoted to a preliminary investigation into the condition of such Borough constituencies as had heretofore returned *one or more Conservative Members*.<sup>1</sup> To this the three members of the Finance Committee, Mottershead, Weston, and Worley (all members of the International) added their own ingeniously qualified remarks. "The League, having been called upon from outside its ranks, to aid in returning as good a Liberal Parliament as possible under the circumstances; an extra special fund, was established with that object, and in part placed at our disposal. Under some restrictions it was made available, so far as possible, after meeting other expenses, to assist in defraying expenses of members of the League as candidates for election to the House of Commons."<sup>2</sup>

In fact, Morley was not merely Treasurer of the "Special Fund". Between 8th. August and 20th. November he supplied £ 1,900. The money was not paid over in a lump sum, but in a series of instalments, which had the effect of keeping the League leaders on a tight leash.<sup>3</sup> The first £ 1,000 was, indeed, used for the "preliminary investigation". It was because many members of the Executive were fully employed on this work that that body adjourned in August, but the reports were sent to Glyn and Stanhope.<sup>4</sup> Far from being used to help League candidates at the election, the money was given on the express understanding that "not a shilling" would be used to empower anybody to fight against Liberals. This term was interpreted as covering Whigs like Sir Henry Hoare in Chelsea and Lord Henley in Northampton.<sup>5</sup> The whole operation was under the general supervision of Glyn and the other Whips, and they had assigned to Howell and Cremer direct responsibility for work in particularly tricky constituencies which Glyn had designated as "special".<sup>6</sup>

The first interest of Gladstone's Whips was simply in the provision of information. The organisation of the new electorate required the development of a new party apparatus, but this could not be accomplished over night. Political power still lay, very largely, in the constituencies.

<sup>1</sup> Reform League Report and Balance Sheet for May 1st.-30th. November 1868.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Reform League Cash Ledger, "Special Fund" Folios 127-133. (Samuel Morley sent £ 100 on 8th. August and the same amount on 15th. and 24th. August. The same amount again on 5th. and 15th. September. He sent £ 200 on 19th. September and the same sum on Oct. 1st. and 23rd. He sent £ 300 on 7th. November and the final instalment of £ 500 on 20th. November).

<sup>4</sup> Howell's copy of letter to Stansfeld, 26th. August 1868 in small black diary for 1868.

<sup>5</sup> Howell to S. Morley, M.P., 1st. Dec. 1868.

<sup>6</sup> Howell to J. Stansfeld, M.P., 6th. Jan. 1869.

It was exercised by local magnates, landlords or great capitalists; cliques of socially influential persons; or, rather exceptionally, by middle-class wire-pullers who had built up a caucus within which some shop keepers and workmen were organised. It was exceedingly difficult for Glyn to move without offending these local interests which were bent on protecting their autonomy. To add to his difficulties, the Whigs were suspicious of Gladstone and were not making their customary contributions to the coffers of the Party. Glyn complained endlessly to his chief about their miserly and obstructive conduct.<sup>1</sup> Brand, who had come back to help Glyn in the management of the election, clearly indicated the source of the trouble when he told Gladstone, "in many quarters there is apprehension that the Church and the rights of property are not safe in your hands!!!"<sup>2</sup> Deprived of the support of the Whigs, Glyn was fearful of upsetting the balance within the Party which Gladstone was interested in maintaining. He saw a danger of putting himself "too much in the hands of those to whom I do not think I should be under an obligation".<sup>3</sup> Short of money and faced with the old local party managers who refused to recognise the altered state of affairs, the Liberal Whips lacked the basic data without which they could not help in ensuring the fullest registration of Liberal voters, discreetly push forward or pull back prospective candidates, or properly perform several other tasks which were in the interests of the Party.

As a result of his negotiations with Howell and Cremer in July, Glyn was able to arrange for fifteen experienced working-class organisers to visit more than seventy boroughs which had hitherto returned one or more Conservative members and to furnish him with reports on the political situation in each one of them. By this arrangement he got some of the essential work of his office done efficiently and cheaply. Such lines of communication as he already had with the constituencies were not likely to supply him with information about the state of opinion and organisation among the new electorate. In addition to these great advantages, Glyn had removed, at one stroke, a potential source of mischief. He certainly regarded his agreement with Howell as an asset of the highest value to the Liberal Party. He congratulated himself on his achievement and he had every reason for doing so.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A. F. Thompson, *Gladstone's Whips and the General Election of 1868*, in: *English Historical Review*, April 1948, p. 193. (Glyn to Gladstone on 31st. August and 14th. Sept. 1868.)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Brand to Gladstone, 4th. August 1868, p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Glyn to Gladstone, 12th. Sept. 1868, p. 195.

<sup>4</sup> Glyn to Gladstone, 10th. Sept. 1868. (B.M. Add. MSS, 44, 348 F 157).

## III

Throughout August 1868 Howell, Cremer and their agents were visiting the constituencies and drawing up their reports which were then compiled by Howell and sent on to Glyn and Stanhope.<sup>1</sup> In addition to Howell and Cremer, there were fifteen other men involved, most of them having had considerable industrial or political experience. George Odger and the working-class poet and publicist, J. B. Leno,<sup>2</sup> were extremely well known and had, like Cremer and Howell themselves, been members of the Central Provisional Council of the International Working Men's Association. So had W. C. Worley.<sup>3</sup> The other ten agents were not so prominent, but their reports show that many of them were shrewd and intelligent. They were Charles Bartlett, a bricklayer who had befriended Howell when the latter had first come to London,<sup>4</sup> A. J. Bannister, S. Brighty, J. Coffey, G. Davis, T. Saunders, C. J. Walsher and William Osborne, (who is not to be confused with the John Osborne who was a foundation member of the I.W.M.A.), C. Wade, and Thomas Connolly, a stonemason and a distinguished working-class orator, who became "dissatisfied with the *arrangements and terms*" and, since he swore that he would not abide by them, was not sent out. Connolly chattered about what was going on to Robert Hartwell, the old Chartist and sometime editor of the "Bee-Hive", and this caused both Stansfeld and Howell some anxiety.<sup>5</sup>

Howell instructed his agents "to get all the information you can as to *who are the candidates*, what their politics, how they stand, either locally or otherwise. What associations there are in the town, where they meet, and on what nights, the names and addresses of their secretaries etc. etc. In fact, let our reports be full of information".<sup>6</sup>

These directions were faithfully carried out with the result that Howell's volume of election reports provides a major source of information about British political conditions on the eve of the 1868 election.

<sup>1</sup> "Election Reports" – a volume in the Howell collection, hereafter referred to as ER. The volume contains reports on boroughs arranged in alphabetical order and gives the names of the reporters. All future references will take the form "ER: Andover: Leno and Worley).

<sup>2</sup> J. B. Leno, *Autobiography*, London 1892.

<sup>3</sup> L. E. Mins (editor), *Founding of the First International*, New York 1937, pp. 43–44.  
<sup>4</sup> Howell's Draft *Autobiography*.

<sup>5</sup> Howell to J. Stansfeld M. P., 26th. August 1868. (Copy in Howell's small black leather diary for 1868). The minutes of the Executive Committee of the League for 6th. August 1868 mentions 15 men being selected to work under "Special Fund" arrangements. They include Connolly and William Dell, sometime Treasurer of the I. W. M. A. He did not go out. Bartlett and Wade appear to have taken the places of Connolly and Dell.

<sup>6</sup> Howell to Hales and Brighty, 13th. August 1868.

The reports cover the 65 boroughs which the agents visited<sup>1</sup> and the picture which emerges must be taken into account in any estimate of the problems and possibilities of working-class politics at this time. (Some of the agents visited, but did not send written reports on conditions in other places such as Middlesborough, Hartlepoons and Stockton. There were no written reports on the "special" constituencies which Howell and Cremer handled directly. These constituencies were Blackburn, Rye, Stafford, Stoke, Brighton, Shoreham, and Northallerton.)

The reports usually began with an estimate of how far the electorate had been increased as a result of the Reform Act and then went on to describe the progress which was being made by both parties in getting new voters on to the register. The reporters (they usually travelled in twos or threes) then attempted to identify the centres of power and influence in the Borough; the issues which loomed largest; the political position of such candidates as were already in the field and the main problems confronting the Liberal Party.

From many constituencies it was reported that power was still in the hands of a great landlord or landed family; direct pressure being brought to bear on tenants and trades people. Such was the position, for example, in Andover, Buckingham, Chichester, Dorchester, Huntingdon and Marlborough. Hales and Brighty declared that in Knaresborough nearly all the land in the vicinity "belongs to two rampant Tories, Sir Charles Sligsby and Mr. J. Collins; and most of the working men hold small allotments under them, and they are getting the screw on as tight as they possibly can. Mr. Collins has already dismissed a boy who was in the Charity School because his father promised to vote for Illingworth". From Chippenham, Geo. Davis and W. Osborne described the activities of Squire Ash "who has large estates and a great deal of cottage property in the Borough..." From Huntingdon it was reported that the local nobleman had taken revenge for a Liberal victory at the last municipal election "Every tenant of the Earl of Sandwich who voted for liberals was at once turned out, and every

<sup>1</sup> Andover, Bath, Beverley, Birkenhead, Bolton, Boston, Brecon, Bridport, Buckingham, Cambridge, Chichester, Chippenham, Christchurch, Cokermonth, Colchester, Coventry, Cricklade, Devizes, Derby, Dorchester, Durham, Exeter, Grantham, Guildford, Harwich, Haverford West, Helston, Hereford, Huntingdon, Ipswich, Knaresborough, Kidderminster, Leeds, Lichfield, Liverpool, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Ludlow, Macclesfield, Maldon, Marlborough, Monmouthshire, Newark, Newport, Northallerton, Preston, Plymouth, Pontefract, East Retford, Stamford, Southampton, Sunderland, Tewkesbury, Thirsk, Tiverton, Truro, Warwick, Warrington, Weymouth, Westbury, Whitehaven, Whitby, Wigan, Wilton, Winchester, and Woodstock.

voter in the employ of a Tory was immediately discharged".<sup>1</sup> Mottershead and Bannister described how feeling in Whitehaven was running high against the "Lonsdale" of "castle influence". "This power", they said, "sits like an incubus upon the town, controlling its local affairs, returning its M.P., and in the belief of the people, generally paralysing the industry of the port".

Occasionally the agents sent in accounts of attempted resistance by tenants and workmen to aristocratic control. For instance, in Woodstock efforts were being made to form an agricultural workers' association capable of defying the Duke of Marlborough whose power in the town was already under challenge. Many a tough quarryman was incensed by the Duke's savage sentences for offences against the game laws, and the spirit of independence seemed to be growing even among labourers who paid 4d or 5d a week rent for their "wretched cottages".<sup>2</sup>

Elsewhere the place of the powerful landlord or landed family was taken by a capitalist or a great company. In Beverley, the Tory Member exercised control through a substantial interest which he held in the local iron works.<sup>3</sup> At Harwich, the Tory was Vice President of the Great Eastern Railway Company and was able to exercise a large amount of patronage.<sup>4</sup> From Macclesfield it was reported that "the Brocklehursts, who have furnished one member since 1832, are the greatest employers of labour in the Town, and are in possession of the Whig influence". The Tories were capable of making a fight of it, because their candidate had bought a mill and put it to work and there were three other manufacturing Tories who expected their employees to vote that way.<sup>5</sup> A better instance of a single, over-riding capitalist interest was supplied by Birkenhead – "an utterly hopeless case". "The political feeling of this Borough is Liberal, but such a pressure is put on all those employed on Laird's works and shipyard, and other works of a similar nature, that the Liberal feeling is stultified and the Tories have it all their own way. It is the general opinion of the working and middle-class leaders that there is no hope for liberalism in this Borough, until the death of Mr Laird or the introduction of the *Ballot*".<sup>6</sup>

The shipping interest was alleged to exert a comparable influence in Southampton. The local secretary of the Reform League told Howell's agents that the P. & O. steam ship company would "put the

<sup>1</sup> ER: Huntingdon: Hales and Brighty.

<sup>2</sup> ER: Woodstock: Walsher and Bartlett.

<sup>3</sup> ER: Beverley: Sanders and Wade.

<sup>4</sup> ER: Harwich: Davis.

<sup>5</sup> ER: Macclesfield: Mottershead and Bannister.

<sup>6</sup> ER: Birkenhead: Sanders, Wade and Bartlett.

screw” on all its hands in favour of the Conservatives.<sup>1</sup> In Liverpool the shipping interest re-enforced the power which the Earl of Derby held over persons whose leases were about to expire. “The Secretaries of the principal trades are liberal – even Radical – but dare not act in consequence of the complex character of their respective trades”.<sup>2</sup>

In some constituencies the controlling interest still lay, in whole or in part, with traditional corporate interests, the Cathedral and the University. In Cambridge the University aided the Tory party through its hold on college servants and its large custom with the shop keepers.<sup>3</sup> But it was in such constituencies as these that the old patterns of power and influence were most likely to be disturbed by the Reform Act; the University could not save the Tory at Cambridge. Similarly, the Reform Act created the conditions for an assault on the traditions of what might be described as “compact Boroughs”; Boroughs in which there was a traditional arrangement between the Whigs and the Tories. Truro<sup>4</sup> and Weymouth<sup>5</sup> were compact boroughs, while in Ipswich “there seemed to be an understanding that, though they always like a contest, perhaps for the pleasure of bleeding the candidates, yet, still, one and one are to be returned”.<sup>6</sup> Akin to the “compact boroughs” were nomination boroughs such as Brecon, which was “alternatively provided for by Lord Camden, Liberal, and Lord Tredegar, Tory.”<sup>7</sup> In some small boroughs of this kind the traditional pattern was not upset by the Reform Act. In Stamford, where there was little manufacture and where the tradespeople were in consequence dependent upon the local gentry, it was still as impossible to get a contest as it had been when the constituency was in the pocket of the Marquis of Exeter. All the lawyers in the place received £ 10 10 s. a year as a retaining fee from the nominee M.P.<sup>8</sup>

As against those boroughs in which the Reform Act without the ballot had made little difference, there were many others in which its impact was considerable. If there were still constituencies in which the Castle and the Cathedral, the great landowner and the large employer, concentrated power in their own hands; there were others in which power was more diversified and in which the pattern of conflicting interests and influences was far more complex and subtle. Places like Bridport,

<sup>1</sup> ER: Southampton: Worley and Leno.

<sup>2</sup> ER: Liverpool: Sanders, Wade and Bartlett.

<sup>3</sup> ER: Cambridge: Osborne and Davis.

<sup>4</sup> ER: Truro: Odger and Coffey.

<sup>5</sup> ER: Weymouth: Bartlett and Walsher.

<sup>6</sup> ER: Ipswich: Davis and Osborne.

<sup>7</sup> ER: Brecon: Leno and Worley.

<sup>8</sup> ER: Stamford: Hales and Brighty.

where the Liberal was supported by the Gundry family; merchants, manufacturers and lawyers who all exercised considerable influence from the number of hands they employed, but who also enjoyed “outside” support conferred by a dissenting minister; a coal merchant; the principal banker; a flax and twine merchant and the officials of the working men’s institute. The Tories in Bridport relied upon the support of an opposing team of merchants and manufacturers.<sup>1</sup> In Guildford, Howell’s agents declared that the principal wire-pullers on the Tory side were a brewer, a banker and a gentleman farmer. The Liberals were led by solicitors, a chemist, an ironmonger and an upholsterer.<sup>2</sup> In Cokermonth, the Tory power based on traditional social and economic influence was confronted by a newly created Liberal organisation. On the one side, “the Wyndham family holding lands and Cokermonth Castle in the centre of the Town – often keeping great revel in it. Giving tradesmen large orders for good and half yearly invitations to dine at the Castle”. On the other, a Committee composed of manufacturers, traders and workmen which was divided into eleven district sub-committees within each of which a hundred electors were organised.<sup>3</sup>

At this level it may well have been the case that the reports merely confirmed information which was already in the hands of the Whips. Stanhope told Howell that he tested several of the reports and that they “harmonised” with his own knowledge of the political condition of several constituencies.<sup>4</sup> No doubt they helped to bring the Whips up to date. It may have been of real practical value to know that in Andover “the old solicitor is dead”<sup>5</sup>, while in Cricklade they should have nothing to do with Mr F. Rowland Young, once a Chartist, “now a Unitarian, who used all his influence at the last election on behalf of the Tory.”<sup>6</sup> However, news of individual wire pullers was probably of less interest and importance than the light which was thrown on the state of working-class morale, opinion and organisation. This was the kind of information which Howell’s agents were particularly well qualified to supply.

The over-all picture was not encouraging. In addition to those constituencies in which the new electors were subject to control through intimidation or patronage, there were one or two others in which they

<sup>1</sup> ER: Bridport: Unsigned (Bartlett?).

<sup>2</sup> ER: Guildford: Leno and Worley.

<sup>3</sup> ER: Cokermonth: Mottershead and Bannister.

<sup>4</sup> Howell to J. Stansfeld, M.P., 26th. August 1868. (Copy in Howell’s small black leather diary for 1868.)

<sup>5</sup> ER: Andover: Leno and Worley.

<sup>6</sup> ER: Cricklade: Davis and Osborne.



were said to be completely demoralised politically and ready to sell their votes to the highest bidder. Guildford provided an extreme example: "The political morality of this town is, to say the least, extremely discouraging; not one but nearly all with whom we came in contact, estimate the value of the vote by what it will fetch in the market, and openly proclaim (with the approval of all present saving myself) that their votes would go to the highest bidder – that candidates for election were guided by no principle, and hence no discredit attached itself to those who traded on their desire for personal advancement".<sup>1</sup> The Tories were alleged to be debauching the electorate in their Public Houses; the Liberals had only three Public Houses in the entire Borough.

In Guildford, trade unionism was effectively confined to the bricklayers and the tailors. This was fairly representative of the smaller boroughs. Either there were no trade unions at all, as was the case in Thirsk or Christchurch; or unionism was confined to the carpenters, engineers and tailors, which was the position in such places as Bath, Beverley and Hereford. There were, however, a number of significant constituencies in which unions were well established and looked capable of wielding considerable influence. There were powerful union branches in Leeds,<sup>2</sup> and in Preston a large Trades Council was in the habit of transforming itself into "The Working Men's Political Association" whenever it wanted to engage in politics.<sup>3</sup> From Derby, Hales and Brighty reported that there were twenty-two trades societies and that eight of them came together in the trades council. Hales' own union, the elastic web weavers, organised three hundred members, the A.S.E. had two hundred and seventy five engineers and the Steam Engine Makers a further forty five. In Derby, even some of the labourers were organised.<sup>4</sup>

In Sunderland, there were said to be as many as a thousand men in a General Labourers' Union, while two thousand more were enrolled among the iron ship builders, boiler makers and smiths. The movement was headed by the Shipwrights society which had one thousand six hundred members.<sup>5</sup> The position in Wigan confirmed the impression that unionism was rather stronger among the labourers than has been generally supposed, for in that Borough there were, in addition to the powerful miners' lodges, three hundred labourers organised in their own union.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ER: Guildford: Leno and Worley.

<sup>2</sup> ER: Leeds: Hales and Brighty.

<sup>3</sup> ER: Preston: Sanders, Wade and Bartlett.

<sup>4</sup> ER: Derby: Hales and Brighty.

<sup>5</sup> ER: Sunderland: Mottershead and Bannister.

<sup>6</sup> ER: Wigan: Sanders and Wade.

Yet even where a borough did happen to be a stronghold of working-class organisation, there is little indication that workmen were making themselves felt, or that they were determined to push their own distinctive demands forward as issues in the approaching election. Howell and Cremer, who visited Carlisle, found that the workers there were mainly preoccupied with the labour laws.<sup>1</sup> But, in general, Marx was quite right in saying that “the Irish question dominates”.<sup>2</sup> The indignation of the parsons over Gladstone’s threat to the Irish Church loomed far larger than the anger of the trade unionists over the treatment which they received in the courts. When any reference was made to working-class opinion in the reports which Howell’s agents submitted, it was more likely to turn on feeling about the Permissive Bill<sup>3</sup> than on the prospects for new labour legislation.

However the reports did not give Glyn grounds for indulging in unrestrained rejoicing. If workmen showed little sign of exerting independent pressure, they were by no means as wholeheartedly behind Mr Gladstone as the leaders of the Reform League or, for that matter, the printing workers of Cambridge where, in one establishment, 77 men out of 80 declared themselves to be Liberals.<sup>4</sup> From the factory districts and the larger Boroughs came distressing reports of Tory sympathies among workmen. In Coventry, where the Reform League had 700 members, the depressed state of the silk trade was explained by reference to the French Commercial Treaty, and the Conservative Workingmen’s Association made five hundred recruits.<sup>5</sup> The French Treaty was also an issue with the weavers in Macclesfield, men who “never had any strong love for the Manchester School”. Here the weavers’ Secretary was a Liberal, but was uncertain about the membership as a whole. Howell’s agents reported that these weavers were very independent and could not be intimidated by the employers.<sup>6</sup>

In Kidderminster, the power loom for carpet weaving had reduced the population by 25% over the past thirty years. These looms were now being brought back to the Borough and the emigrants were returning home after being through the “political school of the North”. This did not preclude the Tory working man. “The form in which the conservative working man is developed in Kidderminster is that of Benefit Societies, organised, patronised and liberally assisted by

<sup>1</sup> Howell’s notes of his trips to the factory districts. (Small black leather diary for 1868).

<sup>2</sup> Marx to Kugelmann, 6th. Apr. 1868. (Letters to Kugelmann, London 1936, p. 67).

<sup>3</sup> The Permissive Bill was designed to permit a majority of rate-payers to impose prohibition on a district.

<sup>4</sup> ER: Cambridge: Osborne and Davis.

<sup>5</sup> ER: Coventry: Hales and Brighty.

<sup>6</sup> ER: Macclesfield: Mottershead and Bannister.

the swell conservatives".<sup>1</sup> This device commended itself to Howell's agents: "We can found a great politico-provident society, self-supporting, with head-quarters in London, and ramifications all over the provinces".<sup>2</sup> The unsuspected political associations of Friendly and Benefit Societies appeared elsewhere. In one Borough all the Odd Fellows were said to be Tories, while the Foresters were all Liberals.<sup>3</sup>

From Preston there was a call for Odger or Cremer to come down and strengthen the trades. There were indications that some of them "might go Tory."<sup>4</sup> In Sunderland, the "advanced" Liberal's advocacy of arbitration made the shipwrights "fretful and fearful". They had already had some experience of employers who went to arbitration and abided by its rules only when it suited them.<sup>5</sup>

Although the main business in August was to gather information, Howell's agents frequently addressed meetings and helped to establish local Liberal Electoral Committees. In Bolton, Sanders and Wade held a general meeting of trades delegates and formed a "Liberal Trades Political Association". They also founded a working men's committee in Warrington. Mottershead and Bannister established a branch of the Reform League in Cockermouth, but in other Boroughs branches of the League were transformed into Liberal Registration or Electoral Associations.<sup>6</sup> In Newcastle-under-Lyne, Hales and Brighty set up a new Liberal Committee with the object of taking matters out of the hands of a few lawyers – it was still customary to find solicitors playing an important part in the management of elections. However, the new committee was dominated by tradesmen and the workers had little influence. In many places workmen were already organised, while in others, such as Beverley, it was thought to be impossible to do anything with them, "so few of them having Political Honesty".<sup>7</sup>

Apart from setting up new organisations, Howell's agents did their best to develop understanding and active collaboration between the Whig cliques and the old electors on the one hand, and the new men of the lower middle and working classes on the other. Glynn explained to Gladstone that this was one of his biggest problems. "The great difficulty", he said, "is that the old local party managers do not realise the altered state of matters & if they do they are extremely slow in

<sup>1</sup> ER: Kidderminster: Davis and Osborne.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> ER: Colchester: Davis.

<sup>4</sup> ER: Preston: Sanders, Wade, and Bartlett.

<sup>5</sup> ER: Sunderland: Mottershead and Bannister.

<sup>6</sup> ER: Warwick: Hales and Brighty. Also ER: Whitby: Mottershead and Bannister.

<sup>7</sup> ER: Beverley: Sanders and Wade.

coalescing with the new men".<sup>1</sup> After the reports had been submitted to the Whips, Howell laid particular stress on this question: "in *most* cases our opinion is that the only thing to be done is to lay the foundation for a thorough organisation of the Liberal Party in which organisation the working men shall be consulted and called into active political life.

One great cause of failure in the past, has been ignoring the working-class voter. This must not now be. They are a power and must be consulted and subjected to discipline. We find no difficulty with them when treated fairly".<sup>2</sup>

In public, one of the most distinguished leaders of the League had said, "we must look to our organisation at the approaching general election. I sincerely trust that the American caucus system will be shortly introduced into this country; it is, beyond doubt, the most equitable and most efficient system yet devised. It would give the working classes a commanding influence they can never otherwise possess.... No constituency ought to be divided in the Liberal interest".<sup>3</sup>

In practice, Howell's agents found that, even if the several elements within the Party were united behind a candidate, they often met separately. In Whitby, Mottershead and Bannister found that this was the case. Although the middle-class men were well intended, they were "scarcely ought but a fossilised lot of old Whigs... seeming to think that they can carry the election by the same machinery they could use in contesting for the Parish Beadle". They visited both sides and tried to impress upon them the need for closer unity.<sup>4</sup>

Again in Bath and in Derby the liberal electors were agreed on their candidates, but were organised separately in their own associations. In the former place closer collaboration was ensured by an arrangement whereby representatives of the two associations came together in a special electoral committee.<sup>5</sup>

If the question of unity within the "Liberal camp" was important in constituencies in which there was a straight fight with a Tory, it took on an added significance in double member constituencies in which there might be a compact either to return one liberal and one Whig, or even one Whig and one Tory. Glyn made it a general rule not to

<sup>1</sup> Glyn to Gladstone, 8th. Oct. 1868. B. M. Add Mss: 44347 f 190.

<sup>2</sup> Howell to J. Stansfeld, M.P., 26th. August 1868. (Copy in small black leather diary for 1868).

<sup>3</sup> J. Guedalla, *The Political Situation*, London 1868, p. 32.

<sup>4</sup> ER: Whitby: Mottershead and Bannister.

<sup>5</sup> ER: Bath: Davis and Osborne.

interfere in fights between Liberals unless a Tory appeared.<sup>1</sup> If he interfered at this stage, it was with the greatest caution. There was a deep and widespread prejudice against taking the control of elections out of local hands and establishing a centre for “Liberal Candidate Manufacturing”.<sup>2</sup> Whenever he did interfere, Glyn had to avoid exposing himself to the charge that he was pushing Gladstonians against the Whig interest. A. J. Mundella who was contesting Sheffield against the Whig, Roebuck, explained to Howell, “I have written to Parliament Street. The fact is that they (the Whips) are frightened out of their wits lest R. should get in; and they dare not appear to do anything to help me”. Under these circumstances Mundella wanted Howell to send his agents up to Sheffield and prevent the workmen falling for the “debauching influences”.<sup>3</sup> This was at the end of August and Howell, after he had managed to negotiate the second major instalment of the “Special Fund”, duly obliged. But even while the agents were out on their “preliminary investigation”, they were actively concerned about the claims of rival candidates, since this was the issue around which the most serious divisions in the “Liberal” ranks generally centred. They sometimes suggested that a particular Liberal should be induced to withdraw. For example in Maldon, they reported that the Whigs had called a meeting of the old Liberal electors and chosen a candidate. This arrogant procedure was also followed in other places, but in Maldon it produced an immediate reaction. A self made man, a manufacturer of agricultural machinery, named Bethall, resented this dictation and decided to stand himself. He employed hundreds of men and he set to work organising them on his own behalf. Howell’s agents suggested that Glyn should be asked to get Bethall a straight fight with the Tory and this appears to have been done.<sup>4</sup>

Things worked out differently in Kidderminster where the division was between “the excellent Bristow” who had been nominated by the local branch of the League and Mr Lea, “a *promising* liberal, but with nebulous ideas... He is the nominee of the manufacturers and the old Whig party and seems only to have been brought forward out of jealousy of the working class”.<sup>5</sup> Mr Lea was duly elected. At Kidderminster, explained Howell, “I was most careful as reports in the papers will show”.<sup>6</sup> And a few days later to Samuel Morley he modestly stated, “we have done something to secure the withdrawal of Mr

<sup>1</sup> Glyn to Gladstone, 28th. Oct. 1868. B. M. Add Mss. 44347 f 220.

<sup>2</sup> The Halifax Guardian, 24th. Oct. 1868.

<sup>3</sup> A. J. Mundella to George Howell, 29th. August 1868. (H.C.B.I.)

<sup>4</sup> ER: Maldon: Davis and Osborne.

<sup>5</sup> ER: Kidderminster: Davis and Osborne.

<sup>6</sup> Howell to H. S. Stanhope, M.P., 29th. Oct. 1868.

Bristowe from Kidderminster. The Liberal is now safe".<sup>1</sup> However, this is to anticipate work which was done after August.

From Hereford and Sunderland there were reports of probable Tory victories as a consequence of a split vote among the Liberals. In Sunderland the workers were divided in their allegiance between Gouxley, a ship-owner and merchant who aspired to "getting Mrs G. presented at Court", and the Whig, Thompson, who was a barrister and coal proprietor.<sup>2</sup> The absence of a Tory allowed the matter to be fought out without interference. A similar situation was found in Newark where the Whigs supported Dennison, an opponent of the Ballot, and the radicals followed Handley, a strict Gladstonian Liberal. Hales and Brighty remarked that "it would be dangerous to interfere".<sup>3</sup>

In a number of instances Howell's agents drew attention to openings which existed for a "good Liberal Candidate". Only Mottershead and Bannister suggested that the Reform League as such should supply a vacancy, and their choice fell upon the unlikely Borough of Whitehaven." From Cricklade it was reported that the new men wanted a candidate and would "prefer a moderate one, and if possible a local man".<sup>4</sup> A good, moderate, liberal candidate was required in Dorchester; while in Warwick there was room for "an advanced liberal of good position".<sup>5</sup>

From his side, Howell was trying to place candidates. During August he helped to get one of Goldwin Smith's friends, Dr Sandwith, adopted for Marylebone.<sup>6</sup> He sent a private and confidential letter to the land reformer and journalist, A. A. Walton, enquiring "Is there an opening for a good candidate in Brecon? If so, will Mr Passmore Edwards have a chance?"<sup>7</sup> He also sounded out the position at Nottingham.<sup>8</sup>

It is not surprising that the Liberal Whips were delighted with the "election reports", not only for the information which they provided, but for the evidence of work done. The general spirit of these working-class organisers was obviously excellent. Glyn told Gladstone: "I should like to show you some of the reports made by the working men. They are so sound and so sensible & in most places their great

<sup>1</sup> Howell to S. Morley, 4th. Nov. 1868.

<sup>2</sup> ER: Sunderland: Mottershead and Bannister.

<sup>3</sup> ER: Newark: Hales and Brighty.

<sup>4</sup> ER: Whitehaven: Mottershead and Bannister.

<sup>5</sup> ER: Warwick: Hales and Brighty.

<sup>6</sup> Howell to Dr. Sandwith, 6th. Aug. and 8th. Aug. 1868.

<sup>7</sup> Howell to Walton, 7th. Aug. 1868.

<sup>8</sup> Howell to W. Smith, 7th. Aug. 1868.

object is to unite the two sections of the party *for you* & not to put up their own or any extreme men.”

This was a fair judgment on the quality of the reports as a whole. One can imagine the sort of passages which Glyn had in mind. For example, when Odger and Coffey were touring the West Country, they reported that “we had several interviews with that thorough-going old Radical, Mr. Rowcliffe. He regrets that a member of the League did not come forward upon the principles of the League.” (This was in Tiverton where the Liberal candidates were Geo. Denman and Heathcote Amory.) “But after some conversation he accepted our opinion, that as there are two Liberals before the constituency having the confidence of the majority of the voters, it would be extremely undesirable for the Radicals to entertain any doubts which would be calculated to weaken Liberal interest in the Borough; more especially as the State Church in Ireland would form the question upon which the strength of the two parties is to be tested”.<sup>1</sup> Odger and Coffey spoke to the same effect in Exeter, where the local branch of the Reform League resented its exclusion from the selection of the liberal candidates.<sup>2</sup>

However, there were much more striking instances than these of the uncritical and unwavering loyalty which some of Howell’s agents showed towards Mr Gladstone and his supporters. A good example is provided by the report on Wigan, “The Liberal Candidates for this Borough are messrs Wood and Lancaster. The first-named gentleman being the sitting member. His election is sure, but as the election of the second gentleman depends largely on the miners, and they having a serious trade dispute with him, his success is not so certain.

Mr Lancaster is chairman, and a large shareholder, in the Wigan Coal and Iron Company. The dispute arises out of the difference between weighing and measuring coal; the men demanding weight as more just than measure. He is also disliked for tyrannical strictness to the hands, and for calling upon the police to assist him in a recent trade difficulty. He is nevertheless a liberal in politics, will go for the ballot, security to Trades Union Funds, and will give his support to Mr Gladstone. If the miners could be persuaded to support him, it is thought that he would use his influence with the company to give or compromise [sic] the demands of the men. “The miners have 3,000 votes, but some of these are commanded by the Conservatives who have coal and iron works, but their influence is not great”.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Glyn to Gladstone, 9th. Sept. 1868. B.M. Add. Mss: 44357 f 154.

<sup>2</sup> ER.: Tiverton: Odger and Coffey.

<sup>3</sup> ER.: Exeter: Odger and Coffey.

<sup>4</sup> ER.: Wigan: Sanders and Wade.

Subsequently, Howell wrote a letter headed "*Private*" to Mr Leigh Ellis, Esq., Liberal Cmttee Rooms, Wigan. It ran: "We are taking very important action in reference to Trades Societies, but we must deal with each Boro' separately and differently.

We are managing the unions in Blackburn, Bristol, Preston, and a great many of the large towns at this moment and will, if you desire it, send down a man at once to do something in Wigan. At Sheffield our delegates have done what the local agents could not do viz, unite the numerous trades into one committee for electoral purposes.

The enclosed card will indicate the way in which we do our work. But in all instances we take independent action, so as not to commit the candidates in any way. They pay us by giving a donation to our special Fund, Mr Morley Treasurer".<sup>1</sup>

A day or so later Howell was making enquiries as to "who is the general sec of the Miners Union?"<sup>2</sup>

There was a similar case involving some railway workers in Swindon. Howell invited Glyn to bring some pressure to bear on the company directors while he was "setting things all right with the railway men".<sup>3</sup>

Thus, the leaders of the Reform League and their agents paid no heed to Professor Beesly when he warned them to be content with nothing but the clearest of pledges on trade union questions and added, "Employers who look to nothing but money-making or who have made themselves conspicuous by attempts to crush Unions ought to be opposed with the greatest determination. They are the most dangerous enemies of Labour. No profession of Radicalism, not even to the extent of manhood suffrage and the ballot, ought to gain them a moments hearing".<sup>4</sup>

*(to be concluded in the next issue)*

<sup>1</sup> Howell to Ellis, 12th. Oct. 1868.

<sup>2</sup> Howell to John Holmes, 14th. Oct. 1868.

<sup>3</sup> Howell to G. G. Glyn, M.P., 30th. Sept. 1868.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 10.