

misuse of the prerogative could be more gross than that under which that dissolution took place. Sir Robert Peel goes on to say :

" I do not think a dissolution justifiable for the purpose merely of strengthening a party. The power of dissolution is a great instrument in the hands of the Crown ; and it would have a tendency to blunt the instrument if it were employed without grave necessity. If the purpose were to enable the country to decide whether ministers had been justified in proposing the measures of commercial policy brought forward at the beginning of the session, those measures having passed into a law, I do not think such a purpose alone would be a sufficient ground for a dissolution. There ought also to be a strong presumption that after a new election there would be returned to this House a party with strength sufficient to enable the Government, by their support, to carry that system of public policy of which it approved."

Now, some years later, another dissolution took place, a dissolution under the Government of Lord Derby ; and on that occasion, Lord John Russell expressed his opinion upon the subject of that dissolution. Lord Derby's Government had been defeated. The dissolution was not for the purpose of simply strengthening his party but for the purpose of restoring harmony between the Administration and the House of Commons. The House of Commons had defeated a weak Administration ; it had defeated the Government of Lord Derby, and he said that as his political opponents were divided it was impossible to constitute a government in a House so divided, which could be assured of the continued support of the Commons, and so a dissolution took place for the purpose of furnishing Her Majesty with a government and a House of Commons whose sentiments would be in accord. Lord John Russell on that occasion made this statement :

" It appears that the right hon. gentleman told his constituents that if a majority of this House had voted a censure upon Her Majesty's Government they would have to defend their opinions upon the hustings. Now, I beg leave to remind the House what have been the maxims on this subject of other statesmen while possessing the confidence of the Crown. They have thought where there was a great question depending, upon which no satisfactory conclusion would be obtained in this House—when the House and the Ministers of the Crown were decidedly at variance, such as was the case upon the Great India Bill of 1784, upon the Reform Bill of 1831, upon the question of free trade in 1841—that the solution of any such question should be sought in an appeal to the electors of the United Kingdom. But it is quite another matter when the question is whether a particular prime-minister, or a particular party should remain in office. And when Sir Robert Peel in 1846, explained his conduct in this House on resigning office, he stated that he had declined to propose to, or to advise Her Majesty to dissolve this House, because it was his opinion that that was a most delicate and sacred prerogative of the Crown, and ought not to be exercised for the purpose of any individual who might be at the head of affairs or for the purpose of any party. Now that entirely agrees with my opinion, and when I offered my resignation to Her Majesty in 1852 I declined to offer any advice to Her Majesty to dissolve the then Parliament. But there seems to be an opinion acquiring weight, which I am sorry to observe, that upon any occasion when a ministry has not a majority he may have recourse to that which Burke called, and I think truly called, a penal dissolution—that is to say, he may not only put the members of this House to the great trouble and expense of an election, but may expose them to the dangers of any misrepresentation to which they may be subject in the performance of their duty. Now that, I think, ought not to be the relation between the Crown and the members of the House of Commons."

It appears that the right hon. gentleman told his constituents that if a majority voted a censure upon Her Majesty's Government they would have to defend their opinions on the hustings. Now, I beg leave to remind the House what have been the maxims on this subject of other statesmen while

possessing the confidence of the Crown. They have thought when there was a great question depending, upon which no satisfactory conclusion could be obtained in this House, when the House and the Ministers of the Crown were decidedly at variance, such as was the case upon the great India Bill of 1784, or when the House of Lords defeats the measures supported by the House of Commons, as upon the Reform Bill. The House will see by this quotation that Lord John Russell, on that occasion, assumed that even then dissolution would only be advised in case a difference had arisen between the majority in the House of Commons and the Administration. I have already alluded to the circumstances under which Lord Derby advised the dissolution of Parliament in 1859 upon the defeat of his Administration on the proposed Reform Bill ; and lest it might be supposed that the sentiments which he expressed in any way support the Government here on this occasion, I will read a sentence or two from his speech in the House of Lords, in defence of the advice he had given, and also a sentence or two from the speech of Mr. Disraeli, who was then Chancellor of the Exchequer and leader for the Government in the House of Commons. It will be seen from both these extracts that neither Minister supposed for a moment, that there could be any advice given pointing to a dissolution except there was a difference between the Government and the majority in the House of Commons, which made it impossible that the work of administration and legislation could be successfully carried on. Lord Derby, on the occasion I have referred to, said this :

" We do not appeal to the country on the subject of Parliamentary Reform, still less do we appeal to the country on the particular provisions of that Bill. We appeal to the country on a much larger and broader question, whether the present state of the House of Commons, split up as it is into hundreds of petty parties, any one of which is unable to conduct the business of the country, but which are able by combining together, to obstruct any Government that may be formed, shall receive the continued support and countenance of the people of England. We appeal to them as men who have endeavoured faithfully to discharge the duties of our office, who have endeavoured to deserve the confidence which the House of Commons has withheld and the confidence which our Sovereign has been pleased to renew to us."

That was the ground upon which Lord Derby, in 1859, based his appeal to the country, and defended the advice in favour of the dissolution which he gave Her Majesty on that occasion. And Mr. Disraeli, in speaking to the House of Commons on the same occasion, said :

" Believing that this state of affairs is prejudicial to the repute of Parliament and injurious to the best interests of the country, and believing, too, that it is of the utmost importance at this moment that the authority of the Government should be supported by the authority of Parliament, and not being conscious that during the time we have exercised power we have done anything to forfeit the good opinion of our fellow-countrymen, we have thought it our duty to advise Her Majesty to exercise her prerogative and to dissolve this Parliament."

Here you see again the ground of dissolution is a difference which existed between the House of Commons and the Administration for the time being. In 1868, the Government of Mr. Disraeli was defeated upon Mr. Gladstone's motion for the Disestablishment of the Irish Church ; and on that occasion Mr. Disraeli intimated to Parliament that he would advise the dissolution of the House. Mr. Gladstone, in speaking against the proposition of dissolution, said that there was a majority of sixty or sixty-five against the Administration on the two motions upon which they had been defeated, and