SIR ARTHUR HELPS, GLADSTONE AND DISRAELI

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In an age in which the art of letter writing perhaps reached its zenith, there is no master of the skill superior to Sir Arthur Helps (1813-1875). Although he was a prolific author of published works—fiction, history, biography, and essay— it is doubtless as a letter writer that his fame as an author will endure. A clue to his success is found in his letter to Lord Ripon on 25 September 1872. He wrote: "I never take any trouble with letters. I have vividly before me the man to whom I am writing; and I write to him as if he were before me in the flesh". Perhaps his best letters are those which he wrote to his intimate friends such as Ripon, Stephen Spring-Rice, Charles Howard, and William Dougald Christie. However, his skill as a correspondent is demonstrated as well in his letters to Ruskin and Carlyle. During his years as Clerk of the Privy Council (1860-1875) his letter writing expanded to a wider variety of political and Royal correspondents. Although here restricted somewhat by the protocol of official correspon-

1 Thanks are due to Mrs. C. Coccio and Dr. Charles Mayo for a critical reading of the manuscript; to the Bodleian Library and the National Trust for permission to quote from the Disraeli Papers; to the British Library for permission to quote from the Gladstone and Ripon Papers; and to Sir William Gladstone for permission to quote from the Glynne-Gladstone Papers (on deposit at St. Deiniol’s Library, Hawarden) and the Correspondence of William Gladstone with Queen Victoria and other members of the Royal family (on loan to the British Library). I am grateful, too, to Dr. Peter Helps for permission to quote from a letter from Gladstone to Sir Arthur Helps, and to the City of Dunedin Public Library, Dunedin, New Zealand, for permission to quote from a letter from Disraeli to Helps.

2 His novels include Realmah (1869) and Casimir Maremma (1870); his histories the various volumes of The Spanish Conquest in America; and his essays the various series of Friends in Council. His most important biography was perhaps The Life and Labours of Mr. Brassey, the railway builder (1872).

3 The Ripon Papers, British Library.
4 National Library of Ireland.
5 Castle Howard Collection.
6 The Correspondence with W. D. Christie is now in the Rylands Library.
dence, something of his warmth, sincerity, and fluency sometimes appears, even in letters to the Queen herself. As Clerk of the Privy Council he was necessarily in correspondence with a rather large number of prime ministers, even at times when they were not holding this high office. No two premiers of the Victorian period are of greater interest and importance than Gladstone and Disraeli.

Although the evidence seems to be somewhat contradictory, it is essential briefly to look at the functions of the Privy Council Office at this time and at the role of Helps, its Clerk. The decidedly opinionated, and satirical, sketch "Sir Arthur Helps, K.C.B." by "Jehu Junior" in Vanity Fair (15 August 1874, p. 93), accompanying a cartoon by "Ape", describes the Clerkship of the Privy Council as "a post of high importance as long as the Privy Council played its proper part in the State, but now deprived of all meaning other than that attached to the salary. Having thus had much leisure on his hands, Mr. Helps set himself to write books ..." Royston Lambert, on the other hand, in a fully documented account, in his Sir John Simon, 1816-1904, and English Social Administration (London, 1963, p. 309) declares that "the Privy Council Office ... [had] never lost its amoeba-like impulses. Once the education business [Committee on Education] had been separated in 1853, the office was expected to revert to purely consultative and routine duties, and so the Treasury reduced its staff and arranged for the two Clerkships of the Council to be amalgamated. But the office steadily accumulated new executive functions until, by 1866, the Clerk was complaining of the vast increase in work, and, by 1868, insisted on a total revision of the Treasury settlement. Its business in the 1860s, though fluctuating in quantity, was very varied in type (in 1867 it performed twenty-eight executive functions), and sometimes critically important. Indeed, in the crises of the American Civil War and the Cattle Plague, the pressure and gravity of its work moved even the

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10 During the period of Helps's Clerkship, Gladstone was Chancellor of the Exchequer from June 1859 to June 1866 and Prime Minister from December 1868 to February 1874. Disraeli was Chancellor of the Exchequer from June 1866 to February 1868 and Prime Minister from February to December 1868 and from February 1874 to April 1880.
11 Paul Emden in Behind the Throne (London, 1934), p. 119, mentions several men connected with the Privy Council Office who also had careers in literature.
stonehearted Treasury to augment its salaries, numbers, and comparative status."

This information concerning the functions of the Privy Council Office, and suggesting the responsibilities of its Clerk, should make clear the importance of one phase of the relationship, indeed more accurately perhaps a framework for it, between Helps and these two prime ministers, which is the province of this essay.

Although it does not seem that he succeeded in becoming a close friend of either, his official position required a somewhat prolonged connection. His skill made it possible for him to adapt his letter writing to both these contrasting figures; but it is necessary to realize that the responsibilities of his office required an objective, discreet, and non-committal approach to all controversial subjects, at least in official letters. Also, one must clearly take complimentary references by all correspondents with a certain amount of scepticism as demonstrations of official courtesy. Overall the number of extant letters is not very large, especially those written by Gladstone and Disraeli to Helps, but there is a sufficient amount of illuminating evidence to clarify their relationship. Finally, it is interesting to note that even in his official correspondence, perhaps in spite of himself, one finds traces of Helps's characteristic stylistic turns, such as use of epigrams and quotations, as well as his fondness for humour and satire.

Most of the extant letters written by Helps to Gladstone are found in the British Library, and several of the letters from Gladstone to Helps in the Correspondence of Sir Arthur Helps, edited by E.A. Helps. Most of the letters from Helps to Disraeli are in the Hughenden papers, now on deposit at the Bodleian, but one is found in the Correspondence. Several letters from Disraeli to Helps, formerly in the collection at the Jewish Museum, London, are now in the possession of the present writer; one is in the Correspondence and one is in the Alfred Reed Collection at the public library in Dunedin, New Zealand. Several letters, although stylistically interesting, are not included in this study because they are fragmentary or because their exact context is difficult or impossible to determine.

12 Lambert, n. 1, cites letters written by Helps to the Treasury as well as an 1867 "Confidential Memoranda Relating to the Business of the Council" (printed).
13 For example, letters to Gladstone of 7 February 1862 and 6 January 1863.
Most of the letters here presented are hitherto unpublished and of historical and biographical interest. Wherever possible, subjects and themes relating to both Gladstone and Disraeli are treated together for comparative purposes. However, since several letters touch upon a variety of subjects, some overlapping is unavoidable. At times, too, Helps deals with matters pertaining to only one of them, and these must be treated separately. In giving the complete texts of letters or only excerpts, emphasis is placed on matters of general, personal, and literary as well as of social, political, and administrative significance.

Although it is naturally impossible to determine with absolute certainty, it is interesting to conjecture, on the basis of the tone with which he writes to them and on the basis of statements in letters written to other persons, what Helps thought of both Gladstone and Disraeli. Like the personality of the man to whom he is writing, Helps’s letters to Gladstone are solid, sincere, and correct, but developing greater fluency in due course. Although there may have been something of a struggle on Helps’s part to overcome the sense of awe in the presence of the dazzling and brilliant Disraeli, he sometimes communicates in his letters to him a sense of warmth and, in particular, a desire to become his friend not found in letters to Gladstone.

Helps’s earliest known reference to Gladstone is found in his letter to Dr. Phelps, Master of Sydney Sussex College, on 9 March 1857, explaining his unwillingness to stand as a Liberal candidate for Cambridge. One reason for this disinclination is his attitude towards two of the party’s leaders, Lord John Russell and Gladstone. His attitude toward the latter may have initially established Helps’s feelings, although these were doubtless modified by further acquaintance:

Among the foremost men in politics [he wrote], there is hardly any one with whom I have hitherto sympathized less than I have with Mr. Gladstone; but I am not blind to the nobility of his nature, and to his ardent desire for right and justice on every occasion. I cannot accuse such a man of facetiousness.

It should be noted here that the first extant letter from Helps to Gladstone is that of 20 August 1861.15

14 Correspondence of Sir Arthur Helps, ed. E.A. Helps (London, 1917), p. 188.
15 B. L. Add. MS. 44,397, Gladstone Papers, Vol. cccxii, ff. 66-67. Hereafter only the MS. number and folios will be cited.
In a letter to Ripon of 27 February 1871\textsuperscript{16} Helps suggests a slight antagonism toward Gladstone and perhaps a slight preference for Disraeli. He writes “of a most unexpected event. Disraeli succeeded in putting Gladstone into a passion the other night. He did; and that wicked Dizzie, whom I met at the Levée on Saturday and with whom I had some talk, did not seem to regret his wicked provocation”.

And finally, on 22 December 1872,\textsuperscript{17} Helps writes to Disraeli that “The misfortune of your great rival [Gladstone] is that he does not understand a man, even if he sees ever so much of him”.

Early references to Disraeli are not especially favourable. As early as 1843 the Liberal Helps made a somewhat deprecatory reference to the Young England movement, in which Disraeli was a participant, but without any personal reference to him. In writing to his brother T.W. Helps, he declared: “There is a not bad joke current about Young England. A knot of steady-going ministerialists were talking over the demands of Young England, when one of them observed, ‘What a fool old England must have been to have got such a son’!”\textsuperscript{18}

In January 1854 Helps’s friend and patron, Lord Monteagle, wrote that “even Disraeli himself occupies a larger space than that which concerns the whole family of man”.\textsuperscript{19} The occasion was Helps’s attempts to arouse widespread support for an effort to prevent a threatened cholera epidemic in the East End of London. It is to be assumed that Helps approved of this rather facetious statement.

Helps wrote to another member of his family (the uncertainty as to person and date is due to the letter coming from a Sotheby catalogue), perhaps his favourite daughter, Mellicent: “I cannot get up any sympathy with him [Disraeli]. He seems to me to be profoundly worldly, and to deify success. This of course for your private ear”.\textsuperscript{20}

Quite early a more sympathetic note had been sounded. In 1858, when Disraeli was Chancellor of the Exchequer, Helps wrote in *Fraser's Magazine* of his restrained enthusiasm for Disraeli’s Bill for the improving of London drainage on the principle of local

\textsuperscript{16} Ripon Papers, British Library.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{18} *Correspondence*, pp. 26-7, August 1843.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., p. 169, 28 January 1854.
\textsuperscript{20} Sotheby Catalogue, 21 December 1961.
liability, but with reservations concerning the haste with which it was introduced and debated.\textsuperscript{21} He added, however, in a footnote: "We attribute no especial blame to the party at present in office. They, indeed, are much less guilty than their predecessors".\textsuperscript{22}

Further favourable references to Disraeli will be found in certain of the letters that follow. In addition, in a letter to his daughter Mellicent on 23 March 1871\textsuperscript{23} Helps wrote concerning the departure of the special train from Paddington for the marriage of the Princess Louise at Windsor: "Dizzie was the only one who was cheered by the immense crowd at the station. That man has a real personal popularity". On a less complimentary note he wrote to her again on 1 July,\textsuperscript{24} "I am much depressed this morning because Dizzy told me last night, in his most emphatic manner, that Life was not worth anything after the age of 30. The only thing then was to get out of it. But then you see Dizzy has not any children: that alters the case. I begin to brighten a bit".

Public figures like Gladstone and Disraeli were often hosts at dinners and receptions at which Helps was a guest. Of some special interest, however, is his deprecatory comment to Ripon on 16 March 1871:\textsuperscript{25} "I was at Mr. Gladstone’s last night [evidently the latter’s own house.] It was a squeeze. The horrors of the ‘middle passage’ as I call that narrow passage between the two drawing rooms—were very severe".

While there is no special significance attached to routine invitations, some importance may be found in hospitality received on a personal, informal basis. Although Hawarden was too far from London for a frequent Helps visit, there is no evidence, and no likelihood, that he ever went there. He was, however, a frequent visitor to Hughenden, and correspondence concerning these visits indicates a certain warmth and intimacy. It appears that the only hindrance to a visit by Helps was his antipathy to "walks". For instance, in a letter of 27 August 1868,\textsuperscript{26} accepting an invitation to Hughenden, he wrote:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} Fraser’s Magazine, p. 172.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Ibid., n. 1.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Correspondence, pp. 305 ff.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Ibid., p. 312.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Ripon Papers, British Library,.
\item \textsuperscript{26} B/XXI/H/440.
\end{itemize}
I am rather lame at present, having met with a slight accident since I saw you. This is not much of a deprivation to me, as I have always felt that walking is a painful, superfluous silly waste of tissue. Your acute perception would easily divine that I had a motive in writing these two previous sentences—in truth they were meant to deprecate your sending me out with the Duke of Buckingham, if he should happen to be with you, or any such ruffianly vigorous individual.

But I am sure you would be a very merciful host to a sickly, indolent man; and so I shall come joyfully from Friday to Monday.

Disraeli wrote to Helps on 20 August 1873, 27 (the original is in writers's possession):

I was glad to hear from you: I should be more glad to see you. Could you be tempted to visit a real hermit, one who lives in real solitude?

Assuming you are in town, wh: is probably erroneous, would you come here on Saturday next? Or, if you be frightened at the prospect of Sunday in the country, wd. you, or could you come on the following Monday?

You shan’t be overwalked this time.

Helps replied on 21 August 28 that “Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to come and see you very much. But alas! (between ourselves) there is a Council at Balmoral impending over me; and I may have to be there by next Wednesday afternoon”.

Quite unexpectedly, Helps wrote on Friday 22 August 29 “I am quite happy to say that the Council is to be two days later than I expected; and, therefore, if you are in the same mind as regards the invitation you gave me for tomorrow, I will come tomorrow, leaving town, if I can get through my work early, by the 1.15 train. I must return on Monday”.

Helps wrote to Ripon an extended account of this brief visit on 24 August: 30

I am the only guest, and the host and I pass a good many hours of the day together in solemn talk. There are two points on which we are agreed: we, both, hate competitive examinations, and we, both, believe that prigs and pedants are, in official and political life, the very curse of creation. Upon other subjects we are not, perhaps in such harmony.

27 This is one of several letters from Disraeli to Helps formerly in the Jewish Museum, London.
28 B/XXI/H/456.
29 B/XXI/457.
30 Ripon Papers, British Library.
Oh, yes, there is another point on which we entirely agree—namely, in admiring Lady Ripon.

Seriously speaking, he is a very agreeable companion, and has had a great deal to say upon most earthly subjects. I have not ventured, as yet, to touch upon heavenly ones; but, if I can muster up courage, I will do so this afternoon.

He is not a brutal walker, though more active than one—that is, this one—could wish. However he is going to arrange that a carriage should follow us in our walk this afternoon. This is very considerate of him, for doubtless he does so on my account.

In my bedroom, where I am writing this letter, there are portraits of Disraeli’s family, and among them a beautiful one of Dizzy’s father, when a boy. The countenance is a charming one. How much there is in race! Almost every portrait in the room is a portrait of what mine host said A. Horsham(?) was—namely, a ‘superior person’.

I must leave off; and I must go down to be walked. If he were not very amusing and agreeable, I would not go and endure this needless ‘waste of time’.

On 5 September Helps had just returned from Balmoral. He writes Disraeli:

The Queen was looking very well and seemed to be in good spirits. I told Her Majesty that I had been at pleasant Hughenden, and endeavoured to describe some of the scenery to her. By the way, in all my journey I have not seen anything of woodland scenery to compare with the Chace. The woods one sees are, for the most part, business-like woods got up for a purpose—official woods if one may say so—very different from the native forest.

The Queen spoke very kindly of you as she always does and pitied your solitude.

As for myself, I am ‘reconstructed’—that is, I have undergone a great deal of change and do not feel any better for it. The rapid journeying to and fro, and the anxiety that the business of the Council should go rightly, always prevent my gaining any advantage in the way of health from the change of scene.

An idea crossed my mind when I was regarding the fuss and hurry of all the tourists I met with. It is this: to complete a liberal education, I think, instead of ordering, as in former days, that a young man should travel, I shall order that he should stay at home, or, at any rate, travel not more than 50 miles from home. If a Londoner, he might go to see Hughenden or Hatfield or any place within the defined circle; but I should forbid Scotland.

31 B/XXI/H/458.
32 It has not been possible to identify this woodland.
I wish you had seen the anxious, wistful face of a youth whom I met in some hotel, and who heard I was going to Braemar. "Ah," he said, with the memories of past suffering shown in his countenance, "it takes 3 days to do Braemar".

Poor Fellow! Probably his own idea of travelling was doing places in the shortest possible time.

Disraeli replied on 10 September (the original is in the writer's possession):

I was very much obliged to you for your letter, but I can make only a barren return of gratitude, for I have not spoken to a human being since your most agreeable and much too brief visit permitted.

However, toward the end of the month I am going into Shropshire to see my friends the Bradfords—when, I suppose the spell of silence will be broken.

This vein of warmth and lighthearted cordiality is maintained in Disraeli's letter of 12 December 1872:

We have a gay and gorgeous party here [Blenheim], but the frost has stopped all the hunting, and the fog marred the shooting. Yesterday I accompanied the Princess to Oxford, but the atmosphere was not Aryan, and we could neither see nor be seen. We had an amusing and agreeable luncheon at the Deanery, and I saw Jowett and Max Müller and Ruskin in the flesh, which was something. The first does not look like a man who could devise or destroy a creed, but benignant; the second was all fire, and the third all fantasy.

Additional to his Clerkship Helps was, as we have noted, an editor and author. As such he established a pattern in dealing with correspondents of sending copies of his books, accompanied by a self-deprecatory letter, but expecting the gratification of praise, and such was the case with both Gladstone and Disraeli. Since he wrote several letters to Gladstone concerning the latter's published works these will be here included. Probably because the letters are fragmentary there are no surviving letters from Helps to Disraeli concerning the latter's works of fiction.

Although there is no evidence that Gladstone had obtained a copy from Helps or that Disraeli's copy was a gift from Helps

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33 Correspondence, pp. 360-1.
34 Benjamin Jowett (1817-1873), Master of Balliol and Vice-Chancellor of Oxford.
35 The German philologist, 1823-1900.
(probably unlikely), there is an interesting correspondence involving *The Speeches and Addresses of The Prince Consort*, edited by Helps and published late in 1862. On 4 May 1863 Lady Augusta Bruce wrote to Helps:  

> The Queen knows with what particular interest you will read anything from the pen of Mr. Disraeli on the subject which engrosses Her Majesty; but, independently of this, the Queen has been anxious that you should have an opportunity of perusing the most striking and beautiful letter that Her Majesty has received, and has therefore directed me to send you the enclosed extracts from that in which Mr. Disraeli acknowledged the volume sent to him by the Queen.

> I need not tell you how her Majesty has been affected by the depth and delicacy of these touches, or how soothing it is to the Queen to have this inexhaustible theme so treated.

> In expressing his gratitude for "Yr. Majesty’s gracious and affecting condescension, and for the inestimable volume which Your Majesty has deigned to present to him", Disraeli declares:

> If in venturing to touch upon a sacred theme, Mr Disraeli may have, occasionally, used expressions wh: Yr. Majesty has been graciously pleased to deem not altogether inadequate to the subject, he speaks from the heart and from long and frequent musing over its ever living interest.

> His acquaintance with the Prince is one of the most satisfactory incidents of his life: full of refined and beautiful memories and exercising, as he hopes, over his remaining existence a soothing and exalting influence.

> The Prince is the only person, whom Mr. Disraeli has ever known, who realized the Ideal.

Helps, in turn, sent on to Disraeli Lady Augusta’s letter.

A draft of Disraeli’s reply is the earliest extant communication from the latter to Helps. Disraeli wrote, rather formally,

> Mr. D. read the introduction to the Albertine Vol. on its appearance with critical mind, and concludes its perusal with complete satisfaction. The general conception of the character is strong and true; the details are full of just and fine discrimination; and all is conveyed in a style—pensive and gracious—like the subject.

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36 Disraeli Papers B/XIX/A/25a.
37 Ibid., B/XIX/A/24A.
38 Ibid.
On 3 January 1868 Helps wrote to Gladstone: "I send for your acceptance the book [Life of Los Casas] alluded to yesterday. It is taken substantially from a history which I wrote some years ago [the volumes of The Spanish Conquest in America], and has been put in a biographical form by my son [E.A. Helps]. I think you would be interested in the life of Los Casas, if you should have time to read it."

Helps's letter to Gladstone of 9 January 1868 refers to one of the latter's own publications. He writes: "What you say about 'Ecce Homo' is very brave and noble, I think". This is a reference to a series of articles by Gladstone upon Sir John Seely's Ecce Homo, a controversial theological work dealing with the life of Christ, published in 1866. Gladstone's essays appeared in the January, February, and March, 1868 issues of Good Words. According to Morley (ii. 126): "It was an attempt, so Mr. Gladstone described it, to bring home to the reader the impression that there is something or other called the Gospel, 'whatever it may be,' as said by an old pagan poet of the Deity [Euripides], that has formidable claims not merely on the intellectual condescension, but on the loyal allegiance and humble obedience of mankind. The book [Seely's] displeased both sides, orthodox and sceptical ... Between these two sets of assailants Mr. Gladstone interposed with a friendlier and more hopeful construction".

Of particular interest in this letter is the following: "I send, for your acceptance, an early copy of the Queen's book". This, of course, is A Journal of Our Life in the Highlands to the editing of which Helps had devoted months of patient labour. "I am almost sure you will like it", he continues, "and I hope you will not disapprove of my preface: It was a very difficult thing to write and I dare say I have done it ill". Then he declares: "The Queen, I should think, will send you a copy; but I thought you should like an early copy from the editor". Here it may be noted that the present Sir William Gladstone, who resides at Hawarden, does not own either copy. One or the other, or both, could have been misplaced when Gladstone's books were transferred from the Castle to St. Deiniol's Library.

39 B. L. Add. MS. 44,414, ff. 5-6.
40 Ibid., ff. 523-4.
Gladstone replied promptly to Helps on 10 January 1868:42 "Accept my best thanks", he writes, "for your kindness in sending me an early copy of the Queen's Journal. In your Preface you had a difficult task to which you have applied yourself with much skill and I think much truthfulness". He continues: "My impression is that in all which proceeds from the Queen's pen the 'public' will find developed with a simple unity the qualities which are essential to her character, which have so much endeared her to the country, and which will give her a place all her own in the roll of British sovereigns". Then he sounds a warning: "I wish I could think the present prospects of her reign as bright as her mind, heart, and life are pure. But I own I am sad about them. Not that there are any obstacles which are in themselves unsurmountable. But I fear we may not pluck up courage enough to face them in time".43 And finally: "I am glad indeed that you approve of what I have said, thus far, in Ecce Homo".

That these compliments were appreciated is indicated in Helps's letter of 5 February:44 "I am delighted to hear how much you like the Queen's book. I know it will please Her to know this. Perhaps there never was a book published (unless indeed Pepys' Diary) which, when written, was so little intended for publication. It has certainly had a great success; and, what is more important, has, I am sure, done a great deal of good". In reference to one of his own works, he writes: "I am much pleased to find that you have been interested in the life of that great man, Los Casas".

Disraeli, in turn, graciously acknowledged his copy of the Queen's Leaves on 11 January 1868. In sending it on 9 January45 Helps had written: "I hope you will not disapprove of the Preface. If you do, you must remember that such a thing is very difficult to write. 'Difficult,' you will perhaps say like Dr. Johnson, 'I wish it had been impossible'. "Disraeli replied,46 "They say that Truth and Tact are not easily combined: I never believed so: And you

42 The original is in the possession of Dr. Peter Helps. It is bound in a copy of the Illustrated Leaves.
43 At the end of his letter of 5 February. Helps writes: "I was very much struck by the letter you wrote me a few weeks ago in which you alluded to the state of public affairs, and I could see that it weighed heavily on your mind just now—as it must on the minds of all thoughtful men".
44 B.L. Add. MS. 44,413, ff. 79-81.
45 B/XXI/H/438.
46 Correspondence, pp. 264-5.
have proved the contrary; for you have combined them in your Preface, and that's why I like it". Concerning the work itself, Disraeli wrote: "Its vein is so innocent and vivid, happy in pictures and touched with what I ever think is the characteristic of our Royal Mistress—grace. There is a freshness and fragrance about the book like the heather amid which it is written".

Helps wrote to Disraeli on 19 November: 47 "I venture to send you, though you are in the midst of turmoil, a copy of the book I have just published, for I should not like you not to have one of the earliest copies". This is Realmah, a novel with but thinly disguised references to contemporary personages and events, alluding to such matters as the retention of Gibraltar as a fortification. He continues: "If you ever read it, (which I do not think I should advise you to do, as the book is somewhat dull) there are things in it which you will find, I fear, will not please you. I cannot, however, help sending it to you as it gives me another opportunity of expressing my gratitude for all your kindness".

Helps announced to Gladstone on 24 November 1868: 48 "I have just finished reading your bit of autobiography". This was the latter's A Chapter of Autobiography, published by John Murray, and describing quite candidly the change in his attitude toward the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church of Ireland. Helps declares that "It seems to be very touching, truthful, and noble; and it makes one like you better—at least that is the effect it produces on me". However, "There are one or two points of expression which I think if you had more time for revision, you would have improved; but they are trifling matters; and, in any edition of your work, they can be looked to".

Helps's letter of 22 April 1869 49 accompanies the gift to Disraeli of his newly-published Life of Pizarro. "It is not worth your reading [Helps declares]: there is not much new in it; but I should like it to have a place on your shelves at Hughenden, for I should like it to be known, if anything is to be known about me in after years (which I must doubt), that I was, in some degree, a friend of yours; and that, at least, you allowed me to send to you anything I had written".

Disraeli acknowledged the gift on 26 April, 50 addressing Helps

47 B/XXI/H/445.
49 B/XXI/H/447.
50 From a John Wilson catalogue. Location of original unknown.
as "My dear Philosopher". Thanking him for the book, he adds: "I shall revive my memories of the bold Pizarro, a wicked Almagho, whom, as a child, I hated".

On 6 February 1870 Helps wrote to Gladstone, as he sent him a copy of his second novel, *Casimir Maremma*, dealing with emigration schemes: "Of all men in England you are the last whom just now one can expect to read one's books. Still, one ought to send them to you, otherwise one should miss an opportunity of expressing respect and regard". And then, "Years hence, in some vacation when you have time to look at books of this kind (I shall perhaps be dead), you will exclaim: 'Poor Helps, I have been looking at that book of his which he sent me years ago. He used to talk about good English. I've found a great deal of bad English in that'". The context of this statement is a preceding one made by Helps that "Yesterday, I mentioned in fun, to offer a bet, as you can recollect, anent the English of the forthcoming speech". This was evidently one that the Prime Minister was currently preparing to be read by Her Majesty, and of some sensitivity. Gladstone wrote in his Diary on 5 February of an audience with the Queen. "who agreed to retaining the passage about her non-appearance".

One wonders whether Helps had reached the point of familiarity where he could jest about the correctness of Gladstone's English (perhaps doubtful) or whether he was referring to the possibility that the Queen, in reading her speech, might depart from the prepared text.

6 February 1870 brought a briefer letter to Disraeli accompanying a gift of the same work:

I am not sure that I should advise you to read it; but I think you might skim through the introduction to the tale. However this may be, I have the pleasure in sending the book to you, because it gives me the opportunity of expressing once again my gratitude for all your kindness to me when I was one of your official slaves.

On 30 March 1870 Disraeli wrote Helps concerning his appreciation (perhaps sincere) of his friendship and his literary ability. Disraeli had not been inclined to correspondence for some

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51 B.L. Add. MC. 44,424, ff. 254-5.
52 *Diaries*, vii. 233-4, 5 Fb.
53 B/XXI/H/448.
54 From a John Wilson Catalogue. Location of original unknown.
time because of illness and thanked Helps for “two wise and witty companions who have beguiled my time and mitigated suffering”. Indeed, “Do not, however, think me ungrateful, but believe in my high appreciation of your richly cultivated intellect, and of the graceful style in which you present its conclusions to the public thought”. On 29 June 1870, Helps wrote:

There is a time at night when you throw official cares, and soothe your mind by reading—perhaps even condescending to read what is very inferior so that is seems to divert your attention.

I, therefore, venture to send you the accompanying Number of Macmillan [Macmillan’s Magazine], in which there is an ‘In Memoriam’ of Dickens written by me.

It is not by any means what I could have wished it to be. These things are difficult to write; at least I find them so. But if you knew the man, and I dare say you did, there may be some traits which you may recognize.

Do not take the trouble to acknowledge the receipt of this.

Helps’s letter to Gladstone of 27 October 1870 is one of the best examples of his characteristic blend of apology and flattery with political and/or literary matters, in this instance the latter.

“One is always rather afraid to take up your time; you are a lover of Italian literature—indeed I owe to you an introduction to one of the greatest Italian writers. I think, therefore, that you will be greatly interested by the quotations I have made from Machiavelli in the accompanying paper [perhaps a portion of the periodical publication, possibly in proof, of Conversations on War and General Culture, published in book form in 1871, or of the book itself]”. Helps had read Machiavelli before he knew Gladstone, and in Companions of My Solitude, published in 1851, makes reference to him. It must be mentioned that in the Quarterly Review for March 1850 (Article One) Gladstone had written on the “Works and Life of Giacomo Leopardi”: “We believe it may be said, without any exaggeration, that he was one of the most extraordinary men whom this century had produced, both in

55 B.L. Add. MS. 44,427, ff. 170-1.
56 Macmillan’s Magazine, July 1870.
59 Also published in Gleanings of Past Years (London, 1878), pp. 65-129.
his powers, and likewise in his performances, achieved as they were under singular disadvantages". So Helps may have had Leopardi in mind. Helps continues: "They [quotations from Machavelli] seem to me to have the closest application to the present state of things. Do not read any more than the 3d chapter—skip the 2d—and then you cannot waste more than ten minutes; and, candidly speaking, I do not consider it to be time wasted. What he says of the French is severely applicable". In Chapter III of Conversations Milverton (Helps's alter-ego) declares: "I'll bet you, that if you give me ten minutes time to look over my copy of Machiavelli, I will produce a number of passages from his writing which will compel you, if you are a just man, to admit that they have the most clear bearing upon the present state of the war between the French and the Germans, and that these passages are pregnant with suggestions to both sides".

On 19 March 1871 Helps wrote to Disraeli: "I venture and send you a little book of mine published today". This could have been either Brevia: Short Essays and Aphorisms or Conversations on War and General Culture, both published that year. A reply by Disraeli is in the Alfred Reed Collection at the Public Library, Dunedin, New Zealand. Sir Alfred Reed believed that it refers to Shorts Essays and Aphorisms. "I do not know that, if you read it, [Helps continues] you will see anything in it to like or approve. But I have a pleasure in seeing my books in the libraries of my friends, amongst whom I always presume to account you as one".

"I send for your acceptance an early copy of my Life of Cortes", Helps wrote to Gladstone on 30 March: 62

I am always rather afraid of sending you my books, and I will tell you why. It is not that I think you will not be indulgent to them. A man who has done much work himself is always predisposed to be tolerant of, and even gracious to, the work of others. He knows what work is; and how difficult it is to do anything tolerably.

But I think of my Horace and say to myself, 'Cum tot sustineas et tanta negotia,' not exactly 'solus', but still with the inevitable solitude that besets a Prime Minister, I am somewhat ashamed to interrupt these labours even for a few minutes.

[The following suggests a certain diffidence on Helps's part concerning

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60 Conversations on War and General Culture (London, 1871), p. 110.
61 B/XXI/H/449.
62 B.L. Add. MS. 44,430, ff. 84-5.
63 See p. 93, ll. 6-7.
Gladstone, not likely to be found in his relationship with Disraeli.] And then again I can't help fancying that you may say to yourself, 'If he finds time to write these books, he must neglect his official work'. But it is not so. I get up early and work for about an hour and a quarter in literary labour; and the rest of the day I give to the duties of the day. It is astonishing—and indeed it often surprises myself—what a lot of work can be got through in this short time devoted each day to this one pursuit.

And now for the work itself. I honestly think that if you read it—it is not the best but the most elaborate life that has yet been written of this remarkable man, Cortes; and I trust you will have approved of my having indulged my readers with plenty of maps. Having said thus much for it, I commend it to your favourable consideration.

Although Disraeli undoubtedly received a copy of The Life and Labours of Mr. Brassey (the railway builder), there is no letter extant covering its gift nor any latter from Helps to Gladstone concerning it. However, on 29 August 1872 Helps acknowledged with satisfaction a letter from Gladstone thanking him for a copy of the recently published book. Helps writes: 64 "It cost me a good deal of thought and labour; and I had to consider most carefully what should be omitted". Also: "The life could have been more interesting if all could have been told; but would have given pain to numbers of firms that have been ruined, and I felt that he would have been the last person to have wished for any glorification at the expense of other people's feelings. As it is, I have no complaint from any one of the persons concerned with the late Mr. Brassey, except, perhaps, that the initials of Christian names have been wrongly given, or some slight matter of that kind".

On 10 September 1873 Disraeli wrote to Helps: "Pray, if you have not done so already, read in Revue des Deux Mondes, for September 1, 65 an article entitled "L'Espagne Politique"—if you have the time, give me yr. view of it". Helps replied on 22 September, 66 "I ought to have answered your letter before this time: but I have had a great deal of anxiety and trouble about official matters, and have not had time to go to my club and read the article in the Revue to which you referred me".

64 B.L. Add. MS. 44,435, f. 157.
65 Victor Cherbuliez, "L'Espagne Politique", pp. 5-38. This letter is in the possession of the writer.
66 B/XXI H 459.
On 19 February 1873 Helps sent Gladstone "herewith a new work of mine [Some Talk of Animals and Their Masters, a by-product of the responsibility of the Council Office for the treatment and control of animal diseases and the transportation of animals.] It is sent merely as a token of respect and regard, and you are not expected to read it. As I have said before, 'Cum tot sustineas et tanta negotia' (because you are undertaking so many and such great affairs), not exactly 'solus', but sometimes pretty nearly so, you cannot be expected to read books of this kind".

In a similar vein Helps wrote to Disraeli on 19 August with a copy of this new book:

I thought that it had been sent to you; but, on enquiry yesterday, I found that it had not.

I think I have mentioned to you before that I never expect my friends to read my books, but I like that they should be in their libraries, and so, occasionally, to be reminded of me.

Quite seriously, you need not read this book (very little of it will be new to you); you need not even acknowledge the receipt of it; but you must, for my sake, give it a place on your shelves.

During 1873 Helps was already at work gathering material for his last novel, with a Russian setting, Ivan de Biron; or, The Russian Court in the Middle of the Last Century, published in 1874. On 21 August he asked, "In your library have you any rare work similarly telling the secret history of Russia from 1730 to 1756?"

In the same vein he wrote Disraeli on 5 September "The only thing new in the way of literature which I have met with since I saw you, is a book of the rites and ceremonies of the Russian Church. Naturally the subject of the book has an especial interest for her at the present time. [This was the engagement of Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, to the Tsar of Russia's only daughter, Marie]. It is very well written and some day I should like to show it to you. It is serviceable to me in what I am doing".

On 22 December 1873 Helps wrote to Disraeli, "I send you herewith a copy of my new work, Ivan de Biron. All I can say about it is that the historical part is accurately told. I do not know though that this is any particular merit. You do not need to read

70 B/XXI/H/460.
68 B/XXI/H/455.
69 B/XXI/H/458.
the book, if you do not like to do so. I am very fond of my friends, but I never like them, on that account, to like my books. It is quite enough, for me, if they like me”.

On 21 January 1874 Disraeli acknowledged the receipt of the copy of the book and declared that he had now read it. (The original letter is in the possession of the writer):

I have long since ceased to read works of fiction, as works of fiction; the taste for them, once lively enough, is quite extinct in me: but I am not insensitive to your books in any form, full of remarks, often just, always ingenious, and ever expressed in a classic and graceful style.

So I am led on by degrees, till I found myself quite interested in a story and its characters. I think you have hit upon a novel vein, and one which will touch the public fancy. You might have found a motto for your book in the national epic, which commemorates “the graceless name of Biron”—[possibly the Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron, 1608]. But then your hero is not entitled to that epithet, but is the reaction of his misbehaving race—I brought your book down here, Bretby Park, Burton on Trent, in a despatch box, and have given it to Lady Chesterfield to read, who will like it—

The imperial marriage ought to call an edition.

Although there is no surviving correspondence between Helps and Gladstone concerning any of the former’s later works, Helps writes to Northbrook on 28 September 1874 concerning one of Gladstone’s publications. He declares: “Now for what you have to say concerning religious or rather theological matters—I quite agree with you. I, as you, was surprised at the absence of any powerful exposition of liberal views on questions of opinion within the Church. And, moreover, I am with you, too, in sympathizing with Gladstone’s arguments. They are fully developed in the Contemporary Review. You will see all about them in the Times today”. This appears under the heading “Mr. Gladstone on Ritualism”, which presents the essential argument of Gladstone’s “Ritualism and Ritual”, to appear in the October Contemporary Review.

On 1 December 1874 Helps wrote to Disraeli: “I venture to send you a copy of my new book [Social Pressure, his last]. You really need not read it to please the author, however much it would gratify him that you should do so. There is one essay which I have

71 Correspondence, p. 369.
72 B/XXI/H/464a.
marked that would please you, and it is on the subject of "Over-
Publicity".  

"The Clerk of the Council, in modern times, must perforce
become much skilled as regards the treatment of animals. He must
master the trade of a butcher and the art of a drover. He is learned
in offal. Hence he produces this book [Some Talk of Animals and
Their Masters]". So Helps wrote to Gladstone on 19 February
1873 presenting the book which dealt with the transportation of
animals and, most significantly, with the problems arising from
the Cattle Plague (Rinderpest). Although it might seem mildly
ridiculous that the sensitive and literate Helps should have been
concerned with such matters, and perhaps even more so Disraeli
himself (Gladstone raised cattle on his farm at Hawarden), this
was one of the most pressing problems shared by Parliament and
the Ministry in the Victorian period, the historical importance
of which has perhaps not been fully realized. As one of the
responsibilities of his office was its control, Helps was constantly
at hand for information and advice to those who requested it.
There is perhaps no more important single document concerning
the origins and spread of the Cattle Plague and the attempts to
control it than the letter he wrote to Disraeli in January 1874:

You will be rather frightened at seeing another letter from me in re the
Cattle Plague, but I think it is one you may be glad to have, and perhaps
some day to make use of as it treats of the subject generally.

I want you to know, or rather fly to appreciate, for you do know,
how successful the legislation has hitherto been in this matter. For this
purpose I must give you a little history of it. When the first outbreak was
announced I was in the fortunate position of knowing a great deal about
the matter. A considerable time before the disease appeared in England I
had noticed what had been its results in Foreign Countries, and I had
employed a gentleman in my office, who is at this moment acting as my
amanuensis [H. Preston-Thomas] to make certain calculations which
showed the deadly nature of the disease.

Afterwards, I ascertained, certain physicians, French and Italian, had
carefully investigated the disease, and the conclusion the best of them
arrived at was that the immediate slaughter of the infected animals and
of those who had herded with them was the only remedy yet known.

74 B.L. Add. MS. 44,437, ff. 176-8.
75 Correspondence, pp. 360-3.
Mr. Simon, the Medical Officer of the Privy Council, and Simonds, the well-known Veterinary Surgeon, were of the same opinion. The outbreak was at the end of the Session. Nothing was done in Parliament about it, and the whole matter was left to the action of the Privy Council and the Pole Axe. My Lords were obliged to give way to the cry. There is a curious diagram which has been formed of the progress of the Cattle Plague by means of a series of ascending and descending lines and curves, and this diagram clearly shows how salutary was the plan of immediate slaughter.

But now comes the thing which will interest you. Lord Northbrook and myself (Lord Northbrook taking far the greatest part) investigated the action of the Privy Council and Parliament as regards the outbreak of the Cattle Plague in the last century.

We found this, that it was at first dealt with by Orders in Council, that Parliament then met and gave its most serious attention to the matter, that most elaborate and apparently well-devised Bills were prepared and submitted to Parliament; that they were widely discussed there, but that somehow or other, for reasons which we cannot ascertain from the meagre accounts of Parliamentary proceedings at that period, all these Bills came to grief: and the matter was, that Parliament left the whole matter to the wisdom of the King in Council.

Of course numerous Orders were passed; but they were not by any means as good as our present ones, and the disease raged for twelve years in England.

Now the point that I want to show you is, that we in our day managed so much better as regards legislation than our ancestors. You, political Personages, took the matter into your hands and really laid down those regulations by Act of Parliament which have succeeded in crushing the disease whenever it has appeared.

I am afraid to sing a Song of Triumph before the battle has been thoroughly won; but I cannot help being struck by the great wisdom which in my judgment has pervaded legislation in this matter, and I think it some day may be a valuable instance for you to show how judicious the action of Parliament has been in this matter.

It is almost impossible to overrate the importance of it. I dare hardly tell you the number of millions of cattle that a well-known German statistical man has given as the number of cattle which died of this disease throughout Europe the last Century. The movement of Armies and the results of Battles were greatly influenced by it. Of course the

76 (Sir) John Simon, the celebrated surgeon and sanitarian.
77 James Simonds, veterinary surgeon (1810-1904), was chief inspector of the Veterinary Department of the Privy Council Office.
78 Lord Northbrook (1826-1904), a friend of Helps, was presently Governor General of India.
ordinary Historian makes no mention of it; but you, who have probably thought over the philosophy of history, will at once appreciate the important results to which this disease was a compelling cause.

However, what I was anxious that you should fully appreciate, and why I have written this long letter, which I hope will not be as tiresome as it is long, was to show you that in this case we who are sometimes supposed to be inferior to our Ancestors in prompt and forcible legislation have proved to be their superiors.

It is, in view of this, essential to present the basic concerns of Helps concerning the Rinderpest in his correspondence with both prime ministers.

A new or impending outbreak of the Cattle Plague, a constant burden and responsibility to the Privy Council Office, had brought a long letter from Gladstone, to which Helps replied on 27 December: 79 "Nothing can be more clear or forcible, as it seems to me, than the way in which you have put the various points of the case, and I think it altogether a most valuable letter".

Helps responded in detail to particular passages in Gladstone's letter (not now extant), perhaps his most important suggestion being that "there might be formed a large national association for the insurance of cattle, having its headquarters in London, and dealing with all the Local Societies as affiliated with it—that this should be, in the main, a commercial undertaking with paid-up capital; but that it should also seek aid from those persons who are generally found willing to subscribe liberally to mitigate or avert the effects of any national visitation—which subscription should go to form a guarantee fund—and that to this association might be transferred any monies remaining from the large subscriptions given on account of any previous calamity". Helps makes clear that "This plan of a National Association is not my own idea, but has been suggested to me by a Banker, who wished me to sound other people on it, and who is convinced that it would meet with support in the City".

The Cattle Plague having finally broken out, or spread, Helps wrote to Gladstone on 31 January 1866 80 enclosing "a copy of a letter, 81 which as a landowner and farmer in Hampshire, I have addressed to our Lord Lieutenant. I wish you would kindly look

79 B.L. Add. MS. 44,408, ff. 251-6.
80 Ibid., 44,409, f. 146.
81 Ibid., ff. 149-50 (printed).
over it, and tell me whether you see any objection to my allowing it to be made public. I imagine that in recommending the course that I do [slaughtering of cattle, diseased and otherwise], I am acting very much as you would wish”. Another letter of the same date\(^8^2\) suggests that Helps has “availed” himself of Gladstone’s suggestions and encloses “a corrected copy of the letter”.

In the printed letter, included with Helps’ letter to Gladstone, the former indicates that he writes as a private “landowner and farmer” and that he goes against the trend of public opinion which opposes the slaughtering of cattle on infected farms: “From all parts of the country, in private letters and in newspapers, there appeared the telling alliteration of ‘the Privy Council and the Pole-axe’. Even the Cattle Plague Commissioners—to whom we are all indebted—pronounced decidedly against the power of slaughtering”. Helps now proposes to the Lord Lieutenant: “Let us appoint an inspector of inspectors, who should, on the first outbreak of the disease, proceed to the infected farm, or the infected district, and endeavour to ‘stamp out’ the disease”; Because of the responsibilities of his office, Helps himself cannot be directly involved.

That Gladstone was personally concerned with the ravaging effects of the Rinderpest is indicated by a letter to his wife of 15 January 1866,\(^8^3\) in which he wrote: “Today I have written to Willy [his eldest son] about the cattle plague and have sent to him the Aberdeen Papers [evidently the Constitution, Rules, and Regulations of the Aberdeenshire Rinderpest Association, referred to in the letter to the Lord Lieutenant mentioned above] which have just reached me. I also recommend killing Phillips’ [one of Gladstone’s tenants] cow. But I would rather not hear details unless there is something to be done—Nothings takes more out of me, and I have it not to spare. I am glad you are there to assist in action—And my letter to Willy is only an expansion of your suggestion—it is stupid of me not to have thought of him before”.

And again on 16 January:\(^8^4\) “If it should happen that the plague hereafter shall run through places which it has not yet touched, leaving (as is likely) more where it is now, some people

\(^8^2\) Ibid., ff. 147-8.
\(^8^3\) Glynne-Gladstone Papers, deposited in St. Deiniol’s Library, Hawarden, Clwyd.
\(^8^4\) Ibid.
will be on their marrow bones". But on 19 January: "There is a small diminution I am told in the cattle cases for the week".

Marked "private" was Helps's letter of 16 November 1865, the first to Disraeli on record:

I must tell you, at the risk of appearing intrusive, that I am very grateful for the kind and encouraging words you have used in reference to the efforts of our office as regards the Cattle Plague, at your late meeting in Buckinghamshire.

You may imagine my position when this broke out here. I had been studying the Cattle Plague as it had appeared in Egypt and in Russia; and I felt that probably I was the only layman who knew how fatal it had proved to those countries.

I do not wish to speak more than is strictly just, in favour of my present masters [Gladstone's government]; but I do assure you they, from the first, entered earnestly into all the difficulties of the question.

 Everywhere, however, at first, and from all kinds of people, my alarms were met by remarks such as these: 'You must not listen to anything that these veterinary surgeons tell you'. 'It is their business to create alarm on this occasion'. 'Thus they magnify their office'. Now, no one knows better than you that Government in this country cannot take strong measures which are not to some degree warranted by public opinion, and, in this matter, speaking generally, we were all comparatively ignorant; and perhaps hardly anybody fully realized the danger.

I enclose a copy of the Reports of the Evidence which you may like to have.

I hope you will not think that I went too far in urging the Commissioners not to neglect the Local Authorities. I do not believe that anything in this country can be well done without great reliance is placed upon, and responsibility attached, to Local Authorities.

Considerably more lengthy, replete with copies of "Orders", is a letter of 13 September 1867, of which it is possible to present only brief extracts. It should be mentioned that Disraeli was once again Chancellor of the Exchequer. Helps writes:

Mr. [C. Rivers] Wilson, who is acting as your Private Secretary, has just brought me your note upon a letter from the 'Home Cattle Defense Association'.

85 B/XXI/H/436.
86 B/XXI/H/437. Enclosed are B/XXI/H/437c, 20 August 1867 (Metropolitan Order) and B/XXI/H/437d, 20 August 1867 (General Consolidated Order).
87 For further information about Wilson see C. Wilson, Chapters from My Official Life (London, 1916), pp. 30-1.
I have no doubt that the Royal Bucks Agricultural Association, and many other people, dread the admixture of Foreign with English cattle in the market, and that they would desire that there should be a separate market for Foreign cattle in the Metropolis; but the question is, are the Government prepared to establish such a market? [The question arises, too, as to where the imported cattle, if such were possible, should be landed and/or slaughtered].

I can say for myself that for a long time I was the sole local authority for the Metropolis, independent of the Council Office, and that I never went through so much work in my life.

The business being found to be immense, in April 1866 the Cattle Plague Department was created. (The Veterinary Department for Statistical Purposes had been created before). You may form some notion of the extent of the business when I tell you that 130 clerks were kept in full employment. They are now reduced to 33, and it is considered that the Privy Council Office proper is relieved from this work, though I find that many hours a day are often obliged to be devoted by me to it, for I cannot refuse to see people who come here on Cattle Plague business.

He writes to Wilson on 13 September, returning the Chancellor’s Memorandum and sending the preceding letter of explanation. Helps wishes “it were more lucid, or indeed lucid at all; but the subject is a detestably thorny one, and requires to be handled with great caution, to speak authoritatively about it”.

Not especially flattering to Helps was Wilson’s memorandum to Disraeli, again on 13 September: “Having committed the unpardonable in discretion of consulting the Clerk of the Council—for there was no one else to refer—upon the Aylesbury cattle plague complaints [the occasion of the letter preceding] I am compelled to forward to you the formidable MS. in which he has embodied his explanation and defense—Mr. Helps has prepared you a regular brief upon the supposition that you are going to make a speech on this particular subject—but I think he answers your questions with sufficient clearness in case you should have occasion to do so”.

Additional to the problems and responsibilities brought about by the Cattle Plague, the Clerk of the Privy Council was concerned

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88 B/XXI/H/473a.
89 B/XXI/H/437b.
with sanitary reform and the control of diseases among human beings as well. Of some interest, therefore, is Helps’s letter to Disraeli of 22 September 1872:  

I am very cross—cross with all you statesmen and members of Parliament. Indeed, I wish you were all taken in one ship to some desolate island, or to Spain, where you could not do much harm; and that the permanent official people were to administer and legislate for one year. Very little legislation, by the way, should we do! and much happier and wiser the country would be in consequence of our splendid inactivity.

But, you will exclaim: ‘What has put the philosophic mind of my friend Helps into such a ferment?’

I will tell you. You passed a Bill, with the intention of taking from the Privy Council the management of all sanitary matters, and handing them over to the Local Government Board. But you forgot to include Scotland, and so the Privy Council has to arrange separately for that part of the British Empire—not that difficult to deal with.

Now in preparing for the possible advent of cholera, we in the Council Office have more trouble and more labour than if the whole burden had remained on our shoulders, for we have to take care that what we do shall be in consonance with what the Local Government Board does: and two birds, pecking at the same cherry, generally quarrel. Not that that will happen between Lambert and myself.

Surprisingly interesting is the series of events presented in letters leading up to Helps’s receiving the C.B. in 1871 and the K.C.B. in 1872. A significant preface to this sequence of correspondence is an earlier letter from Helps to Disraeli, marked “Private” of 7 August 1868.  

Although he ardently disclaims any ambition for honours of his own, it is possible to suggest that this ambition might have existed:

I should like to say something further to you about the subject respecting which I wrote to you the other day. You are the most gracious Prime Minister I have ever known, as regards giving one time to say to him what one has to say; but still one is so fearful of taking up your time, and of boring you, that one is afraid to express fully all that one has in his mind.

I can hardly tell you how much I think all the English statesmen neglect the power you might win for Government by an extensive and

90 B/XXI/H/459.
91 B/XXI/H/439.
judicious granting of honours. You do not play the part that the Romans would have played. You do not attach the colonists to you, as you might, if you made them partake, liberally, in British honours.

I dare say you knew how the great Napoleon relied upon his power of granting honours. Shallow people say 'the French are so different from the English in this respect'. But according to my judgment, this is all nonsense. Mankind are much the same everywhere.

Now you may, or you may not, be Prime Minister again. I think you will be; and it would not surprise me if it falls to your hard lot to settle the Irish Church question. But, let us assume, for the moment, that you are, for many years at least, kept out of power. At any rate you will have the opportunity of sharing what is in your mind, and what will be the direction of your actions in these important matters.

I am sure that you are too wise a man, and have studied modern politics too deeply, not to see that in these matters I allude to, it will not do to be guided by aristocratic prejudices. The time for them has gone by.

Now you will ask yourself 'What is this man's object, in writing to me in this way,' for you always want to get at the real motives of the man. 'Does he want any honour himself?' No: he would hardly walk across the street—he certainly would not take the trouble of writing a letter, which is always a great trouble to him,—to receive an honour; but, from his earliest years he has been employed in Government; and he has always thought that statesmen omitted to make use of a great moving power, in their parsimony as regards the granting of honours; they have often conferred them unworthily—giving them to mere rich men—not attaching and encouraging the intellect of the nation.

Believe me it would be a great thing for you to show that you are of a different spirit from former prime ministers in this respect.

I am, as you know, a Whig: I owe my present appointment to Lord Granville, and I shall always go as far as I can with my party.

But I care for Government more than for any party. I think you are a man of real originality; and, therefore, in the interests of public service, I bring before you the arguments I have urged, unsuccessfully upon other Ministers.

Now, look at your Order of the Bath: how little you make of it; do not fear to increase the numbers: break through rubberstamp precedents; and give us the example of a Minister who really cares for merit, and longs to reward it.

In these modern times what great benefactors we have had in the human race! Take the man Sir James Simpson.\(^\text{92}\) I don’t know what you

\(^\text{92}\) Simpson (1811-70) was a pioneer in the medical use of chloroform and an famed gynaecologist.
feel, but that man made life happier and easier to me—removing from me some of the horror of a possible operation.

All I have said above applies to what I said to you the other day about Privy Councillors. With your usual acuteness, you somewhat answered me, when you said, ‘Why, what old men you suggest to me, Mr. Helps! Are these men to be of any use to you?’

Well, I think they would, but I was guided a good deal by the notion that it would be a great reward for merit, as in the case of Sir Alexander Spearman. 93

Hamilton94 would be most useful, because he should have the benefit of the Treasury view of any matter from the first.
Waddington95 and Hammond96, I declared, have been most useful.

I have now liberated my mind. I shall never presume to raise the subject again with you.

If you say to yourself—it is impertinent in this man to write to me in this way, you must admit that you have brought it on yourself, for you have, since first taking upon yourself your great office, been so kind, so courteous, and so encouraging to me, that you must not wonder that you have made me a sort of friend—who ventures to speak out to you exactly what he thinks.

You have only to show that it is displeasing to you, and I shall retire into my shell again, and never venture to molest you further.

Following are the events leading up to the conferring of the C.B.:

On 20 June 187197 Gladstone wrote to Helps: “It has been thought expedient to look over the names most prominent and most honourably known in the several departments with a view to the tender of the Companionship of the Bath and it has also been determined that, except in certain limited categories, no one shall hereafter receive the Civil K.C.B. who has not passed the threshold of the C.B. Under the circumstances, I hope you will be disposed to accept a Companionship of the Bath, which I have Her Majesty’s permission to propose to you”.

93 According to C. R. Wilson (op. cit., p. 160) Sir Alexander Young Spearman (1793-1874) was Comptroller General of the National Debt, “having previously been, over a long period, Secretary to the Treasury”. 94 George Alexander Hamilton (1802-71) became Financial Secretary in Lord Derby’s government and was later appointed one of the Commissioners to administer the Irish Church Act.
95 Horatio Waddington (1799-1867) was Permanent Under Secretary of State for the Home Department from 1848 to his death.
96 Edmund Hammond (1802-1890) was Permanent Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs from 1854 to 1873.
97 Copy, Ripon Papers.
On 24 May Gladstone had written to the Queen of this step-by-step decision, namely, that "the honour of the Civil K.C.B. should hereafter, except in the cases of persons advanced in life and in cases distinctly special, only be conferred upon persons who have previously received the C.B."

The Queen was not pleased with this "alteration you propose for conferring the Civil Order of the Bath". Her secretary, Ponsonby, wrote the Prime Minister on 28 May: She "dislikes any restrictions being placed on the power of conferring honours, which should be free and unfettered—There are many occasions when the Rank or Service of the individual to be rewarded makes the offer of the Companionship of the Bath inadequate or unsuitable".

But the will, or judgment, of Gladstone had prevailed, and on 21 June Helps wrote that "I have no hesitation in accepting the Companionship of the Bath which you are kind enough to offer me as of yesterday's date".

However, the Clerk of the Privy Council was not entirely pleased. For instance, he wrote to his son, E.A. Helps, to whom he had sent copies of the letters, on 22 June: "You will note that the tone of G.'s is a little excusative. I believe that it was suggested to him that a K.C.B. ship would be the better thing to offer to me. I suppose when I am 83, it will be offered!"

The copies were also sent to Ripon on 21 June: "I hope and believe that you will approve of my accepting". But then, with characteristic irony: "I am afraid it will not keep me out of the draught. I dare say you do not know what I mean. One of the chief advantages of any honour, or title, is that it gets one a place at dinner (especially in small houses) removed from the bottom of the table near where the servants enter and the draught comes in. Besides it may bring one next to the lady of the house who is always agreeable, even if she is not naturally known to be pleasant, for she wishes her parties to go off well, and every

98 B.L. Loan 73/10, Bundle 12. On 5 June (Bundle 13) Ponsonby had written to Gladstone that "although Her Majesty regrets the necessity for placing restrictions on the distribution of Rewards, she makes no further objection to the establishment of the Rule you propose".
99 B.L. Loan 73/10, Bundle 12.
100 Copy, B.L.. Ripon Papers.
101 Helps Papers.
102 B.L. Ripon Papers.
woman can make herself agreeable when she pleases. These are profound Machiavellian views bearing on the great questions of honours”.

The offer of the K.C.B. on 12 July 1872 was received by Helps with greater alacrity than the C.B. the preceding year, Gladstone perhaps having been aware that the higher honour was overdue. On 10 July, Gladstone wrote a memorandum to the Queen of his nomination: “In making this recommendation Mr. Gladstone has special regard for the marks of confidence with which Mr. Helps has been honoured by Your Majesty. Mr. Helps is not aware of this submission”. The Queen on 12 July replied that she “has much pleasure in approving of the K.C.B. for her friend Mr. Helps”. In Gladstone’s letter of the same date he informs Helps that “I regard with more than common interest your receiving a distinction (as I hope you will consent to receive it) which may serve as a record of the sense entertained of your most loyal and most valuable service to the Sovereign”. In accepting on 13 July Helps declared that there “are some men of letters like myself who might not care for this distinction, even though they were civil servants; but, from my earliest years, I have been thoroughly devoted to the service, and therefore appreciate any honour derived through it, more than any other kind of honour. I think that you will sympathize with me in this feeling, seeing that you, too, have devoted your life to official work in its highest branches, as I have to the humbler career of a permanent official. Forgive me for assimilating myself for the moment, to yourself; but the same motives may actuate men in very different positions”.

Helps sent Disraeli a copy of the letter from Gladstone offering the K.C.B., almost immediately upon its receipt, on 13 July 1872: I always venture, as you know, to reckon you as one of my friends—certainly, too, as one who has invariably been most kind and considerate to me. I, therefore, send to you the enclosed copy of a letter which I have

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103 B.L. Loan 73/13, Bundle 21.
104 Ibid.
105 Correspondence, pp. 322-3.
107 B/XXI, H/453.
108 B/XXI/H/453a.
received from Mr. Gladstone, and to which I have gratefully given an answer of assent.

I mention the matter now because I should not like you to see it first in the newspapers, and not in the handwriting of one who is always

Very Sincerely Yours
Arthur Helps.

On 17 July Helps wrote to Disraeli: 109

I could not help sending on your letter of the 15 inst.—telling Her Majesty at the same time that I was half ashamed to send it, as it spoke too favourably of myself, but that I knew it would please her to see what were your feelings in regard to the memory of the Prince Consort.

The Queen returns your letter to me today [evidently in reference to his honour] with these words:

‘The Queen returns this gratifying letter with many thanks’.

I hope you are not angry with me; but, poor lady, she has not many delights in the world now, and such a letter does give her much pleasure.

Two significant political happenings, involving Queen Victoria, occurred during the Gladstone and Disraeli ministries respectively, when Helps was Clerk, which have received very little attention.

In August 1871. Gladstone and other liberal leaders wanted the Queen to stay in London, in the words of Ponsonby, “till the 21st the day of—or the day before—the prorogation. But she made up her mind to go on the 15th and she said she would delay till the 18th if that were of any use otherwise she would go as settled originally”. Ponsonby writes: “The Queen knowing my opinion did not enter into the matter any further with me, but communicated her views through Helps—a proceeding which some of the Ministers resented as he was an authorized channel”. Indeed “it is evident she thinks she is asked to do things merely to support a political party. In the mean time the children were much distressed and wanted to get her to do more. She asked Sir W. Jenner but he said his care was her health and not her actions”. 110

In a “confidential” letter to Ripon on 9 August, 111 Helps presented his own observations and reactions: “The Queen is in a state of excitement and tribulation such as I have never seen her in

109 B/XXI/H/454.
110 Arthur Ponsonby, Henry Ponsonby, Queen Victoria's Secretary (London, 1942), pp. 72 ff.
111 B.L. Ripon Papers.
before. She cried; she sobbed; she was, in the highest degree, hysterical, when I saw her yesterday; and today she is really very unwell. What she threatens to do now, I am certain she really means”.

He explains:

It is not the present question alone—namely as to her journey to Balmoral—which disturbs her. It is the feeling that her movements are always to be controlled—that the ‘Sovereign’ is being dictated to in every way and by everybody—that she is comparatively friendless, and is not supported by those who should support her; that nobody seems to believe, or, at any rate, to act and speak as if they believed, that her state of health is what it is; that the world is thoroughly ungrateful to her, that she had always striven to do her duty and will strive to do it; but that she wishes that she were dead.

I endeavor, in the foregoing paragraph, to give you a notion of what she thinks and feels from her point of view and feeling. [In conclusion] I could write much more; but it would not, perhaps, be very prudent to say what I have to say in writing; and, besides, I have said enough to convey to you the state of things.

Gladstone’s own consternation is shown in letters to his wife. In one of these, of 11 August, 112 he declares that “It lies like a lump of lead at my heart. For sheer folly I have hardly known anything to equal it”.

Evidently one of the problems was the necessity of holding a meeting of the Council before prorogation. On 8 August, 113 Helps wrote Gladstone that “an examination of our books indicated that in a large majority of instances the Council had met the day before Prorogation. Still, there was one precedent in our favour, and, as I said before, if you could see your way on the 17th to fix the day for certain when the prorogation should take place, there would be nothing irregular in doing so.

Should you wish to make any statement to the Queen in reference to the matter, and would telegraph to me in the course of the day, I could convey this statement to Her Majesty.

It is not a very pleasant task that [latter incomplete”.

Another letter to Gladstone (12 August) 114 declares that Helps has received a letter from the Queen, of which he encloses a copy:

112 Glynne-Gladstone Papers.
113 B.L. Add. MS. 44,431, ff. 184-5.
114 Ibid., ff. 203-4.
“I do not know that it alters the situation in any way; but still, as the Queen commands me to communicate something to you, I do so accordingly”. He notes in a postscript, “You will observe that the first sentence is incomplete”. The letter, which is enclosed, reads as follows: “The Queen, since writing to Mr. Helps, has received a most kind letter from the Lord Chancellor, and she has therefore (having heard tonight from Mr. Gladstone that the prorogation cannot be before the 22d and who can tell for certain whether it can then)”. Also: “She never felt more convinced that this ill-natured and idle clamour is mere nonsense ... and delay is the only thing the House of Commons care about, and would like the Queen to wait for their convenience”.

On 14 August Helps had received a letter from Sir William Jenner which he describes to Gladstone: “H.M.”, he writes, “desired me to add that she could not have a Council at Windsor as was proposed—She is feeling so very unwell.”

On 15 August Gladstone wrote his wife that “the Queen goes [to Balmoral] to-morrow after all. We told her the prorogation might have been on Saturday if she had stayed—And all might be over for her by noon of that day—but for her to leave in the heat of the day was ‘impossible’”.

In a “confidential” letter to Gladstone of 8 February 1872 of particular concern is the following, indicating Helps’s continued concern for Her Majesty:

I have had communications to make to you, which you might have said ought to have been made directly [from the Queen to Gladstone]. But you know how I am placed. After the Prince Consort's death, the Queen made occasion to see me very frequently and to treat me with confidence. I became, in fact, as much as one can be, a friend of the Sovereign's. My sole object has been, in that capacity, to be of use to Her, and, in a humble way, to the Government, whoever might be in power, to make things go more smoothly if I could.

115 Ibid. Copy.  
116 Ibid., ff. 205-6.  
117 Glynne-Gladstone Papers. On 15 August Helps wrote to Algernon West, Gladstone's principal private secretary (Add MS. 44,431, f. 207): “You will, perhaps, be rather astonished at the notification that will appear in the morning newspapers”. The Times of 16 August 1871 announced (p. 7, col. C) the prorogation of Parliament as of “Monday next. We understand that the state of public business is such as to allow Parliament to be prorogued on Monday”.  
118 B.L. Add. MS. 44,433, ff. 143-5.
I hate 'Difficulties', to use an American phrase—especially when they are caused by misunderstandings.

Now the reason of my saying all this to you is only to illustrate my sense of your kindness and to show you, I hope, that it is not misplaced.

I am well aware of your anxiety for the welfare of the Queen and of the monarchy; and, if I may say so, I thoroughly sympathize with these anxieties.

[In a Postscript] Pardon me if I have been indiscreet or presumptuous in writing this letter.

An equally significant but quite totally different Royal-political involvement of Helps occurred at the very beginning of the second ministry of Disraeli. The reason for its neglect is perhaps that the pertinent letters in the Hughenden Papers have not been catalogued in the correct order.

On 20 February 1874 Disraeli wrote to Helps (the original is in the writer's possession): "Monty Cossy [his secretary] is away at a sister's funeral, so I must be my own private secretary. The thing to do must be confined to the Cabinet, which is complete, and enclosed".

This introduces a cluster of letters from Helps to Disraeli as Prime Minister in February 1874. On February 20, evidently in reply to the preceding, Helps wrote:

General Ponsonby, in a conversation with me yesterday, said Mr. Disraeli will go down to Windsor tomorrow [20 February], but not on Saturday.

Now this cannot be. You must go on Saturday to be sworn in.

Formerly the First Lord of the Treasury did not take any oath of office; but now, by an act recently passed, he has an oath to take in the presence of the Queen. And it really would be the play, without the part of Hamlet, if your appointment were to be omitted at the first Council.

I enclose a copy of the Act.

Can I be of any use to you while Monty Cossy is away?

A number of letters relate to the problem of bringing members of the "Old Court" and the "New Court" to Windsor.

One, marked "one o'clock Friday" [27 February], suggests a difficulty: "I had just received a letter and telegram from the

119 B/XXI/H/461. The Times, 19 February, states that on the preceding day Disraeli had been summoned to Windsor by Her Majesty and that "by nightfall the list of the Conservative Cabinet will be completed probably".

120 B/XXI/H/466.
Queen. I am starting for Windsor, to endeavour to persuade Her Majesty to allow everything to be as it was arranged to be. If her Majesty wishes to see those whom, in her letters to me, she calls the “Old Court”, before receiving the others, I will telegraph to them from Windsor. I suspect the “Old Court” will not consist of more than 2 or 3—Lord Steward, Lord Chamberlain, and perhaps one other”.

Helps wrote:

1/4 past 1 o’clock [immediately after the preceding]: I do not think there will be much harm if Lord Sydney and Lord Bessborough should have to come with us. I will go in a compartment with them. Not that, as men of the world, they will care a straw about coming down with the new men.

I only hope I may be able to persuade Her Majesty to let things be.

[On 1 March (1 o’clock)] after some parley, the Queen was kind enough to say that she would give up her plan of having two trains at different hours, and would abide by the arrangements already made.

We shall have an addition of some of the Old Court people in our train, but they will not bite any of us, nor shall we bite them. It is not like two sets of ministers meeting, which might perhaps be awkward, for I am told by the Newspapers that they sometimes say rude things to one another. New Court people never do.

I can hardly tell you how glad I am that this matter is settled as it is. It would otherwise have caused so much inconvenience to so many people. I had to exercise a little perseverance—not to say intrusiveness—before I could get a hearing, but afterwards all went well, and it ended with the Queen’s laughing heartily and commenting upon the number of chickens who were to form the brood of the Clerk of the Council tomorrow.

As noted earlier, because of the fragmentary nature of the correspondence it is not always possible to present every aspect of the relationship between Helps and the two prime ministers on a comparative basis. Therefore, in the remainder of this study will be presented significant additional disclosures, first concerning Helps’s involvement with Gladstone and then with Disraeli.

121 B/XXI/H/466a.
122 Viscount Sydney had been Lord Chamberlain.
123 The Earl of Bessborough had been Lord Steward.
124 B/XXI/H/465. The Times of Tuesday, 3 March, states that on the preceding day the various “officers of state and other officers of Her Majesty’s Household were introduced to Her Majesty’s presence before the meeting of the Privy Council”.
One of Helps's strongest antipathies was toward competitive examinations for civil service appointments and university degrees. Gladstone's letter of 13 January 1869\textsuperscript{125} refers, apparently, to certain of Helps's pronouncements, in a letter not extant, concerning university examinations. Also, he seems to have speculated on the nature of the university of the future. "Though it is very magnanimous in you to give me the opportunity", Gladstone writes, "I would on no account interfere with your 'Liberty of Prophesying'." Moreover, "I am glad that the tendency to over-examine should be kept in check by vigilant criticism". He acknowledges that "I am no blind worshipper of the system of examinations. It is a medicine which the nineteenth century seems to require, but like other physics there is poison in this also". Indeed, "My ideal of the affair of teaching and learning is—shall I confess it?—most nearly embodied in the medieval university, say Oxford of the 13th century". And finally, referring once more to Helps's letter, Gladstone commented; "If you give us the three universities you mention, I hope in common justice you will abolish three of those we have already".

Although it was a part of his official responsibilities as Clerk of the Privy Council, it is possible that Helps was particularly concerned about superintending the passage of an Order in Council sought by Gladstone. It pertained to the church of St. Thomas Seaforth, established by his father, John, adjacent to his estates, in 1814-15. John Gladstone had with some difficulty effected the establishment of this church for the profits from pews and burial plots and "the ministry and message of what he could control".\textsuperscript{126} Checkland tells us that upon his father's death in 1851, William "accepted the Seaforth estate as part of his patrimony at a valuation of £51,000 with a view to its further development as a housing estate".\textsuperscript{127} But a crisis developed in 1870 concerning the establishment of a separate parish for St. Thomas Seaforth for patronage purposes, for which an Order in Council was necessary. On 17 August\textsuperscript{128} Helps wrote to Gladstone: "I wrote to you, before leaving town, to say that the Law Officers had reported in favour of the Order in Council

\textsuperscript{125} Correspondence, pp. 269-70.
\textsuperscript{127} Checkland, p. 375.
\textsuperscript{128} B.L. Add. MS. 44,428, f. 42.
[respecting St. Thomas Seaforth], to which you referred, and now I write to say that it has passed". In brief, this Order, according to the *London Gazette*,\(^ {129}\) stated that the new parish was to be endowed by William Gladstone, who was to possess the "whole right of nomination of the incumbent of the same new parish". The crucial nature of the Order's passage to the Gladstones is indicated by William's letter to his wife of 20 August that "by Tuesday it would have been too late".\(^ {130}\) On 18 August he had written in his diary:\(^ {131}\) "Mr. Helps announced to me the passing of the Order in Council which makes the new provision for the Seaforth Church. At length then I have accomplished in the main this act of honour to my dear Father's memory".

On 8 August\(^ {132}\) Helps wrote to Northbrook: "I am prepared for the Council tomorrow, at which Mr. Gladstone will be sworn in as Chancellor of the Exchequer ... One must be very sorry for the additional labour that will be thrown on Mr. Gladstone".

He exclaims to E.A. Helps on 9 March 1874\(^ {133}\) concerning the fall of the Gladstone ministry: "What a political collapse! Was there ever anything like it?" His personal feelings were particularly strong because of the loss of his son-in-law's Portsmouth seat: "Of course you are sorry at Stone's being thrown out".

There is no mention of the death of Helps on 7 March 1875 in the letters of Gladstone to his wife. He was no longer Prime Minister, but must have sent a letter of condolence.

On 28 November\(^ {134}\) Helps writes to Disraeli that he wants to see him at the latter's house. He has just received a letter from the Queen "in which she expresses a wish that I should see you and consult with you about something". In a postscript Helps mentions that "In the course of the letter H.M. speaks very warmly of the pleasure it has given her to confer the honour of a peerage on Mrs. Disraeli, to whom, or rather to Lady Beaconsfield, for I suppose the Patent has been made out by this time, please present my congratulations".

Helps wrote to Disraeli on 10 May 1871:\(^ {135}\)

\(^{129}\) *London Gazette*, 19 August 1870, pp. 380-1.

\(^{130}\) Glynne-Gladstone papers.

\(^{131}\) Diaries, vii, 345.

\(^{132}\) Correspondence, p. 354.

\(^{133}\) Ibid., p. 355.

\(^{134}\) B/XXI/H/447.

\(^{135}\) B/XXI/H/450.
It has 'borne in upon me', as certain religious people would say, to tell you what I thought of your speech last night. It rejoiced the 'cockles of my heart'. To my mind you were never more effective.

Now I know that praise is somewhat impertinent; but, I assure you, it is not praise that I presume to offer, but sympathy, which is a very different thing, and which seldom is unwelcome, even when offered to eminent men by small and unconsidered men.

[Important here is the sharing of views.] One thing in your speech particularly delighted me. It was where you repudiated the notion of your claiming to be 'the people'—the 'poor but virtuous people', as that odious fanatic Robespierre was wont to call them. I do not think that you in yourself have a just idea of the good that you have done by that sentence.

And you know well that I never flattered you, when you were most, officially speaking, powerful; and so I am sure you will thoroughly believe me when I say that I never felt prouder of you, and of your being a friend of mine (for so I venture always to think of you) than when I read your speech this morning”.

Equally significant is his letter of 7 February 1872:

In your last letter to me, you expressed approval of my English. I do not return the compliment, for I was pleased to believe, and do believe, that it was not a compliment, but an appreciation. I heartily reciprocate.

I do think that you and I (for the moment I venture to put myself in the same class with you in this respect) can say what we want to say in clear and distinct language. Certainly you can: & your speech last night was a remarkable example of the power of lucid expression. One has not to puzzle over a single sentence. You may think that small praise; but it is praise that can very seldom be given to speeches in the House of Commons.

I wish I had been in the House last night.

In Helps’s letter to Disraeli of 10 September 1874, having referred to Privy Council business, he continues: “I hope you have better weather at Balmoral than we have here. If you should go out shooting and should shoot any black-cock, please think of a poor slave of yours at Downing Street. Were you not astounded at Ripon’s “version”? I use that word advisedly. Convert is too flattering: Pervert too condescending: Vert is the proper word,

136 B/XXI/H/452. Earlier in the letter he had written: “I have just finished reading your speech of last night. It seems to be admirable. It is very dignified, patriotic, just. In fact it is one of your happiest—not efforts—but successes”.

137 B/XXI/H/462.
especially for statemen and official men, who delight in compromise and ambiguous sayings. Not that you do, but our clan does generally”.

Of some interest is Disraeli’s addressing Helps once more as “My dear Philosopher” on 1 December 1874 (original in the possession of the writer).

The last known letter from Helps to Disraeli is of 1 December 1874:138 “It is, perhaps, an ill-natured and selfish thing to say: but I really think that the gout [with which Disraeli had been lately affected] ought to be confined to persons of a calm and douce temperament, such as yourself. If it were to attack me (and from hereditary tendencies I ought to have it), I should be so irritable that no one would be able to bear with me, and my remarks upon men and things would be plus-quam-Grevillian.

With every wish for your complete conquest over that dire enemy, the gout”.

On 27 February 1875 (slightly more than a week before his death) Helps wrote to his daughter Rose:139 “I am a miserable man, for my time of dinner-going has commenced; and I am engaged to dine with Disraeli and Company to an unlimited extent”. This letter suggests a more cordial than just official relationship with Disraeli to the end, for his fatal affliction developed from a chill contracted during a levée of the Prince of Wales. He died on 7 March.

138 B/XXI/H/464a.
139 Original in Helps papers.