INTRODUCTION

The career of Henry John Temple, third and last Viscount Palmerston (1784–1865), is almost unrivalled in English politics. He was a member of Parliament for nearly sixty years and a minister of the Crown for almost fifty; only two British statesmen in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Gladstone and Churchill, have sat longer in the Commons, and none has been minister so long. Palmerston’s bold hand and lucid style are justly famous; yet, apart from the many semi-official letters he wrote to diplomats abroad, we have very little of a private nature from his pen in the first half of his ministerial career. Consequently the details of his early political life and the development of his character and beliefs remain obscure; and we lack much shrewd commentary from a high vantage-point in an important period of British history.

For this deficiency accident and design must share the responsibility. In his boyhood Harry Temple wrote frequent, and detailed, letters to his parents from school and college. But his father died in 1802 and his mother in 1805, only as his political career was beginning; and few of his letters to his principal guardian, the first Earl of Malmesbury, have so far come to light. His relations with his two surviving sisters, Frances (‘Fanny’: 1786–1838) and Elizabeth (‘Lilly’: 1790–1837), were very affectionate but their correspondence has comparatively little political interest. On the other hand, his brother William (1788–1856) was abroad on diplomatic service during most of his adult life and Palmerston’s letters to him are therefore more numerous and informative. But while they figure quite prominently in the material used by the official biographers, Bulwer and Ashley, there is about them a somewhat formal and distinctly cautious tone. In this respect they do not compare with those written by Palmerston’s mistress to her brother, who was also in the diplomatic service. Lady Cowper’s letters to Fred Lamb (1782–1853: Baron Beavoule from 1839 and third, and last, Viscount Melbourne from 1848) more than make up for lack of dates and punctuation with racy political gossip and court scandal. By contrast, the substantial

1 Another sister, Mary, born 15 Jan. 1789, did not survive infancy, succumbing to the after effects of inoculation against smallpox on 17 May 1791. The second Viscount’s first wife had died on 1 June 1769, a few days after giving birth to a stillborn child. (Connell, pp. 94, 165, 195, 206 and 213.) It is extraordinary that, over fifty years later, Debrett should have been permitted to go on recording Elizabeth as this child, ‘born 16 May 1769’.

B. P., G. C./TE nos. 137–372. There are also a few detached items in B. P. W.

3 Many of the more interesting passages in those letters have been omitted from The
number of Palmerston’s letters to her that survive among the Broadlands Papers in Winchester are for the most part very dull indeed. Only the half dozen or so deriving from the period before their marriage in December 1839 are really interesting. Since their intimate friendship seems to have begun as early as 1808 or 1809, there may perhaps be rather more of the same period among the inaccessible Lamb Papers in the British Library. But these too can hardly be very informative about politics. For shortly before they married Lady Cowper is supposed to have asked Palmerston how it happened that he was for so long a time in a comparatively minor official position.

Palmerston’s response to this inquiry was the famous ‘Autobiographical Sketch’ printed in full and with only a couple of changes by Bulwer. Covering the period down to November 1830, this is an important and often cited sketch. But it lacks immediacy and, naturally enough, is not entirely reliable, though probably as much so as Palmerston’s memory and prejudices allowed. His surviving pocket diaries and journals are also very disappointing. Of the former there is nearly a complete run from 1847 to 1864: those for 1850 and 1856 alone are missing. But for the earlier period there are only those for 1818, 1819, 1829, 1833 (from June only), 1835 and 1836. These, moreover, contain mainly notes about appointments and assignations and have very few political or other comments. Palmerston tended to be more discursive only when covering trips abroad, such as in Ireland in 1841 and Germany in 1844. There are also rather more extensive journals of his European travels in 1815, 1816 and 1818 than have appeared in print. They seem to have been discovered among his papers only after the first volume of his official biography had been printed. Bulwer was strongly opposed to their being published, arguing that their anti-French bias would do Palmerston no credit. The essayist Abraham Hayward, who had known Palmerston well in the latter part of his life and published a stylish notice of him, argued against this that people would easily appreciate how a generation of

Letters of Lady Palmerston, edited by T. Lever, 1957, and from In Whig Society 1775–1818, 1921, and Lady Palmerston and Her Times, 1922, edited by Mabell, Countess of Airlie. The dates in both cases are also unreliable. The originals in B.P.W. are now freely accessible; others, in the Lamb Papers in the British Library (Add. MSS. 45546–56 and 45911), will remain closed until 1980.


5Ashley, i. 10, n. 1.

6Bulwer & Ashley, i. 367–83; cf. B.P./D no. 26.

7B.P./D nos. 3–24.

8B.P.W. nos. 1989 and 1988. There are also a notebook of memoranda concerning his visit to Ireland in 1826 (B.P./D no. 25) and two very dull journals of a journey from London to Edinburgh in the autumn of 1800 and a tour of the Highlands in the early summer of 1803 (B.P.W. nos. 1943 and 1945).

9Fraser’s Magazine, lxxvii, Nov. 1865.
war had influenced the writer and suggested that Bulwer was merely jealous of anything being produced which he had overlooked in the biography. So, with a few editorial amendments and omissions and rather more mistakes, there appeared in 1871 Selections from Private Journals of Tours in France in 1815 and 1818. The journal for 1816, however, remained unnoticed and unprinted.

Of political journals there are only two, each covering a disappointingly brief period. The first extends only from June to December 1806 and contains very perfunctory and jejune remarks about the major political and martial events of the day. Characteristically Palmerston in 1812 appended the following note: 'The opinions and remarks contained in this volume are the exact expressions of my feelings at the moment when they were written. Upon many points, however, relative both to persons and things, cooler reflection, and a few more years' observation and experience, have, as is natural, very much altered my sentiments.' The second political journal, covering the period 9 March 1828–24 January 1829, for the first two months of which Palmerston was in the Cabinet, is much less cautious and therefore far from dull or uniformative.

Both the political diaries were made available to Bulwer, who printed virtually the whole of them as well as the autobiographical sketch complete in the Life. Yet, as he complained to Palmerston's family, they fill only short stretches of time in the large gaps made by the relative paucity of Palmerston's letters covering his early political career. One feels all the more surprised, therefore, that neither he nor his successor, Ashley, made more use than they did of Palmerston's correspondence with his friend and brother-in-law, Laurence Sullivan.

Although Palmerston in later years would fondly recollect his happy days at Harrow (1795–1800) and Edinburgh (1800–3), it was at Cambridge that he made his only really lifelong friends among men. When he was travelling with his parents in Italy he had made friends of the youngest Bessborough children, Caroline Ponsonby (who married William Lamb) and William Francis Ponsonby (afterwards first Baron de Mauley), and he continued his friendship with William and his elder brother Frederick in the same house at Harrow. An ancient Harrovian informed Bulwer in 1870 that Palmerston had also 'messed together' with Althorp, afterwards third Earl Spencer,

10 Undated correspondence, c. 1870, between Henry Bulwer, Abraham Hayward and Palmerston's heir, William Cowper-Temple, B.P.W.
11 'Journal of Tour in France Italy & Switzerland in 1816', B.P.W.
13 Bulwer & Ashley, i. 24 note.
14 Undated correspondence, c. 1870, B.P.W.
and Duncannon, the eldest Ponsonby boy and afterwards fourth Earl of Bessborough. But neither they nor Lord Burghersh (afterwards eleventh Earl of Westmorland), whom Palmerston himself later mentioned as a friend at Harrow, figures much in Palmerston’s letters home. In them, rather, one finds—in addition to a passing report of Lord Haddo, his rival, the future Earl of Aberdeen—Lord Royston (the Earl of Hardwicke’s heir), William Bruère (the son of an Indian official of the same name), John Madocks (the son of a noted amateur actor who committed suicide on the failure of Watier’s in 1806), Philip Sydney Pierrepont (the fourth and youngest son of Viscount Newark, afterwards first Earl Manvers) and the two young Ponsonby boys. Royston preceded Palmerston to Cambridge but died soon after; Bruère turned up both in Edinburgh and in Cambridge but disappeared thereafter. Madocks, perhaps, became too good a friend of Byron’s, for Byron reputedly hated Palmerston. But there is no trace in the Broadlands Papers of any lasting friendship even with the closest of Palmerston’s old Harrovian friends. Both Ponsonbys seem to have drifted away, the elder into the army and the younger into a quiet and prosperous married life. Pierrepont joined Harry Temple in Edinburgh in the winter of 1801 and in Cambridge in 1803; but he too soon passed out of sight.

After Henry Temple had passed his first and probably rather lonely few months in Edinburgh he was joined in January 1801 by the son of a blue-stockling friend of his mother’s, Francis Cholmeley of Brandsby near York, who as a Catholic would have little future at an English university. The following winter there also arrived three old Harrovians he knew, Pierrepont, Thomas Orde-Powlett and Charles Henry Rich. Rich was also the eldest son of a Hampshire neighbour of the Palmerstons, Sir Charles Bostock Rich, first Baronet of Shirley House; but Harry did not like him much. On the other hand, Powlett, who was the younger son of Lord Bolton and a contemporary of William Temple’s at Harrow, he thought ‘one of the greatest quizzes’ he had ever seen. Powlett lived in Edinburgh as one of the pupils of the witty Sydney Smith and there was some notion that he would be joined there by an even earlier acquaintance of Henry Temple’s, Francis George Hare (1786–1842). Henry Temple had met Francis

15 Bulwer & Ashley, i. p. x.
17 Henry Temple to the 2nd Viscount Palmerston, 13 June 1800, B.P.W.
18 Bulwer’s informant may possibly have been correct in identifying one of Palmerston’s fags at Harrow as a son of Earl Poulett (Bulwer & Ashley, i. p. x); but it was certainly Lord Bolton’s son in Edinburgh. Curiously neither Orde-Powlett nor Hare is mentioned by Sydney Smith’s biographers though the facts are clearly stated in Henry Temple’s letters to his father of 22 Mar. and 6 Nov. 1801, B.P.W. See also Smith Letters, i. 67, n. 2.
Hare, the youngest of four brothers who were all to become famous for their learning, at the age of four or five and this unlikely pair are supposed to have kept up their friendship until Hare’s death in 1842. Hare spent most of his later life in Italy and had only occasional meetings with Palmerston. But it is fascinating to think what might have been their influence upon each other had Hare been able to find room with Sydney Smith instead of proceeding as he did to Aberdeen.

Palmerston did make several new and interesting acquaintances in Edinburgh, but most of them, like Lord Henry Petty (afterwards third Marquess of Lansdowne), Henry Brougham and Sydney Smith himself, were politically antipathetic to him. So was Gilbert Elliot (afterwards second Earl of Minto), the eldest son of his parents’ closest friends. Gilbert was two years older than Henry and although they saw a good deal of each other, it was only during the years of Melbourne’s premiership that politics made close allies of them. In Edinburgh, moreover, Henry Temple lived at the opposite end of the town from the Mintos, with Professor Dugald Stewart. There, he just missed John William Ward (future Earl of Dudley and also Foreign Secretary), and found instead as fellow-student and lodger Richard Barré Dunning, second Baron Ashburton (1782–1823). Ashburton was the only surviving child of the famous politician, John Dunning, who had died in 1783 when his son was still a baby and had left the boy to be sadly smothered by his mother’s care. But young Ashburton eventually broke free at last by marrying his professor’s niece. The Stewarts by no means approved and the affair seems also to have put a strain on Palmerston’s patience (nos. 13, 48). But in any case, although they kept on reasonably good terms, Ashburton was not the sort of man who could ever have made a close friend of Palmerston. For he was as eccentric in mind as he was unprepossessing in person and at eighteen was already displaying many of the signs of the madness which overtook and killed him as early as 1823.

When Palmerston went up to Cambridge in October 1803 he was, therefore, at the age of twenty, still without any really close friends. But at St John’s, which he had chosen in part because of the large number of Harrovians who went there, he found ‘remarkably good society at present ... the best in the University’, he thought. Among them he picked out: Lord Henry Seymour Moore (1774–1825: younger son of the first Marquess of Drogheda and father of the third); Lord John FitzRoy (1785–1856: youngest son of the third Duke of Grafton); the Hon. Edward Clive (1785–1848: grandson of Clive of India; 

At a ‘hoppin’ to celebrate the birthday of his first daughter, Sydney Smith revealed to Palmerston why, in the search to give her a less commonplace name than Mary or Sarah, he had called her ‘Saba’ from a reference in Psalm 72: it brought to mind, Smith said, ‘Arabian valleys, and cinnamon groves, and palm trees’. (Palmerston to Frances Temple, 2 Feb. 1803, B.P.W.; cf. Smith Letters, i. 61.)
succeeded his father as second Earl of Powis in 1839); and two Percys, Hugh (1784–1856: third son of the first Earl of Beverley and afterwards Bishop of Carlisle), and his cousin, Hugh, Lord Percy (1785–1847: succeeded his father as third Duke of Northumberland in 1817).20 According to the diarist, Thomas Raikes, Lord Henry Moore, though possessing ‘a certain irascibility of temper’, was ‘extremely fascinating when he pleased’ and ‘one of the most amiable and agreeable companions ... his manners ... the very type of a high-bred gentleman’.21 But he took his degree in 1804 and is not known to have had any particular contact with Palmerston thereafter.

Lord John FitzRoy, the only Harrovian in the group, moved across the road to Trinity soon after Palmerston arrived at St John’s. Palmerston, however, formed some sort of friendship with another old Harrovian, Thomas Knox (1788–1872: grandson of Viscount Northland; succeeded his father as second Earl of Ranfurly in 1840), and later in his first term was joined at St John’s by two more, Pierrepont and Edward Berens Blackburn. Pierrepont, now grown rather fat, was a migrant from Christ Church, Oxford;22 Blackburn (c. 1784–1839) was the fourth and youngest son of John Blackburn of Bush-Hill, Middlesex. It was Blackburn who addressed a sort of official farewell to Palmerston in March 1806, probably as President of the Harrow Club.23 But Palmerston’s particular friends were to be found rather in a small Saturday club at St John’s. It met every Saturday in one of the members’ rooms to dine at four and spend the rest of the evening together. When Palmerston reported its establishment, early in his second year at Cambridge, he remarked that they had some thought of following the example of the Beefsteak in London and limiting each person to two bottles of wine, though on ‘extraordinary occasions a little excess’ might be permitted. The founder members included, besides Palmerston, only one Harrovian, Knox (though Pierrepont may have been admitted later). The others were Clive, the two Percys and three fellow-commoners, Cludde, Shee and Sullivan.24

Edward Cludde (ob. 1840) was the son of a Shropshire squire from Orleton, near Clive’s English house, Walcot. George Shee (1784–1870) had been born in India, the eldest son of an Irishman of the same name. George Shee the elder (1754–1825) had followed a profit-

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20 Palmerston to his mother, 26 Oct. 1803, B.P.W. He also mentioned Lord Altamont (1788–1845: succeeded Palmerston’s neighbour in Ireland as 2nd Marquess of Sligo in 1809). But Altamont was a student of Jesus and unless he made an unrecorded migration must merely have been visiting St John’s when Palmerston arrived.

21 A Portion of the Journal Kept by Thomas Raikes, Esq. from 1831 to 1847, 1856-7, ii. 115 (but Raikes confuses the family relationships).

22 Palmerston to Elizabeth Temple, 11 Feb. 1804, B.P.W.

23 Blackburn to Palmerston, 13 Mar. 1806, B.P.W.; Reminiscences of Henry Angelo, 1830, ii. 162.

24 Palmerston to Frances Temple, 10 Nov. 1804, B.P.W.
able career in India, where he was a friend of William Hickey, with another career in the public service in Ireland, where he became an intimate of the Irish Secretary, Thomas Pelham, afterwards second Earl of Chichester and one of Palmerston’s guardians. He was created a baronet in 1794 and further rewarded for voting for the Act of Union in 1801 by being made Receiver-General of Customs and a Privy Councillor. In 1800–3 he was also undersecretary to Pelham at the Home Office and in 1806–7 to Windham at the Colonial Office. He was described in 1803 as ‘a vulgar-looking and most superlative dull fellow’, but he had money enough, however much he grudged it, to enter his son as a fellow-commoner at St John’s.

Laurence Sulivan (1783–1866) had a very similar background and was, at first sight, hardly less surprising as an intimate friend of a most fastidious viscount. His grandfather, also named Laurence (1713–86), had made a fortune in India and was said to be one of the East India Company’s ablest rulers. But the elder Laurence lost a good part of his fortune after his return to England in 1753 in his speculations and battles (principally with Robert Clive) as a Director (Chairman in 1758–9, 1760–2 and 1781–2) and as a parliamentary candidate for Ashburton. In 1778 he sent his son Stephen (1742–1821) to recoup the family fortunes in India. Stephen, having begun as Persian Secretary, was prevented by his father’s enemies from exploiting his appointment as Resident at Tanjore. But Warren Hastings rescued Laurence Sulivan with a gift of £10,000 and made his son Judge-Advocate General in Bengal and his own acting private

26 C. K. Sharpe to his sister, 11 Feb. 1803, A. Allardyce, ed., Letters from and to Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, Esq., 1838, i. 158 (Sir George Shee the elder is confused with his son in the footnote).
27 The correspondence of George Shee, jnr, with his father makes it clear there were frequent disagreements about money. In a letter of 6 Feb. 1803 he explained: ‘My acquaintance is not very extensive I admit, but then my intimacies are comparatively numerous, & of them a great majority are remarkable either for rank or abilities.’ His ‘nominal’ income was, at £300 per annum, at least £50, and in two cases as much as £100, less than his colleagues’. He also insisted that while their expenses might be £100 more than those of pensioners, fellow-commoners did not study any less hard. Their expensively bought privileges, on the other hand, he had complained in another letter of 25 Mar. 1802, were sometimes under attack. One privilege had been that of not being obliged to attend college chapel more than four times a week. But two or three years earlier the number had been increased to five at a poorly attended meeting of the fellows and more recently ‘a newly appointed Dean [Daniel Bayley], a man most notorious and disliked in the College (even among the Fellows) from officiousness & desire of innovations’ had obtained an increase to seven for fellow-commoners and four for noblemen. Since there was no change for pensioners this meant a comparative, as well as an absolute reduction in the privileges of others and the noblemen had successfully resisted the change. The best the fellow-commoners could secure, however, was a short postponement and afterwards an unofficial understanding that absences would be excused more frequently than in the past. (Shee Papers; cf. G. H. Francis, ed., Opinions and Policy of the Right Honourable Viscount Palmerston, 1852, p. 264.)
secretary. While in India Stephen married Elizabeth Davis, the widow of a reputed slave-trading sea captain named Forde, and his only surviving child, Laurence, was born in Calcutta on 7 January 1783. Stephen Sullivan seems then to have returned to England, his son Laurence attending school in Hackney and eventually living with Dugald Stewart in Edinburgh. Laurence left Edinburgh before Palmerston arrived, but Ashburton had known him and dubbed him 'Lazy Laurence'. He was admitted as a pensioner at St John’s on 4 July 1800 and as a fellow-commoner on 2 October 1801.  

At the formation of the Saturday Club Palmerston had promised himself that it would be ‘a very pleasant thing, ... very agreeable while at College, and ... an additional tye between us afterwards’. 28 Cludde, Knox and even Pierrepont were before many years had passed to have, if anything, only a tenuous connection with Palmerston. In several cases, however, that ‘tye’ even formed a marriage knot. In 1811 Sulivan married Palmerston’s younger sister, Elizabeth; in 1817 Lord Percy married Clive’s younger sister. Clive himself married outside the circle but his fourth son married Cludde’s only child.

The Sullivans, Percys and Clives seem to have maintained long-lasting friendships among themselves and with other Johnian connections. In his early years in particular Palmerston was also often to be found among them, visiting Powis and Walcot or Alnwick and Kielder (nos. 11, 12, 28, 30). He also patently enjoyed frequent visits to his old college, for the Commencement Ball in June (nos. 27, 28, 54) and the Feast of St John’s between Christmas and New Year (nos. 92, 98, 125, 148, 198). He was inordinately fond of dancing (no. 5) and probably as fond of the common-room nuts and turkey-pie as he charged Sulivan with being (no. 98). But these Cambridge visits had a great deal to do with politics, and politics severely tested his closer friendships. Among the Johnians only Sulivan, Shee and to a creditable extent Clive survived the test.

Palmerston’s life at Cambridge had been touched by politics from the very first. There were fewer radicals or even liberals at St John’s than at Trinity and, probably, that had been one of the reasons for his family’s choice. But he certainly did not avoid controversy. Instead the first club he seems to have joined in November 1803 was a debating society. Having, for reasons that are not known, been denied participation in the famous Speculative at Edinburgh and restricted

28 L. S. Sutherland, *The East India Company in Eighteenth-Century Politics*, Oxford, 1952, *passim*, and especially pp. 50, 58–63, 192, 284 and 349; Namier & Brooke, iii. 508–11; *Alumni Cantab.*; Lady Minto to Minto, 30 Mar. 1812, Minto Papers IE/41; Laurence Sulivan, jnr, to Sir Henry Fitzherbert, 10 May 1844, Fitzherbert Papers; Dugald Stewart to [Stephen Sulivan], 9 Dec. 1799, S.P.; Ashburton to Palmerston, 10 Nov. 1803, B.P.W.

29 Palmerston to Elizabeth Temple, 11 Feb. 1804, B.P.W.
instead to the puerile domestic imitations arranged by Professor Stewart in his own house, Palmerston was delighted to find a debating club already in existence at Cambridge. It was ‘quite private’, possibly even a ‘secret’ society, since the university authorities disapproved of political discussion among the students in war-time. Palmerston usually refers to it in his letters as the Fusty. The meaning of the term is unknown but it may have had some connection with a story told by Palmerston’s father about the House of Commons once having been adjourned, in May 1792, on account of the smoke produced from a pair of ‘fustian breeches’ which had caught fire. If so, it was probably a private nickname, since from the many coincidences of names of members and subjects of debate, it seems to have been that more commonly known, in emulation of its model in Edinburgh, as the Speculative.

A year or two before Palmerston’s time in Cambridge, two future politicians from Magdalene, Charles Grant (later Baron Glenelg) and his brother Robert, had been leading members of the Speculative. And a couple of years after Palmerston had gone down there were also one or two King’s men, Stratford Canning and, probably, his friend Thomas Rennell. But in Palmerston’s time the membership seems to have been drawn exclusively from St John’s and Trinity. Who the members were in his first year is not known. Professor Pryme talked of there being twenty members meeting once a week in term-time in his ‘early days’ at Cambridge. Pryme took his degree in 1803 but for a few years afterwards he led an undecided existence between Cambridge scholarship and London law and the others he names—all Trinity men like himself save one, who was from King’s—belong to a later period.

Whatever the desired number of members, at the beginning of Palmerston’s second year it was ‘rather diminished’; there were only six in addition to himself. One, called Brown, is not precisely identified and there was no-one likely of that name among the noblemen and fellow-commoners to whom membership seems to have been restricted. The other Johnians were Shee, Sullivan and Palmerston’s ‘cousin Raikes’. There was then a fellow of the college, Richard

30 Palmerston to his mother, 15 Nov. 1803, B.P.W.
32 The diary of J. C. Hobhouse, 26 Jan. 1832, Broughton Papers, Add. MS. 56556; Stratford Canning, i. 25 and 27-8.
33 Pryme, p. 117.
34 Dominick Browne (afterwards 1st Baron Oranmore and Browne: 1787–1860) in a letter to Palmerston on 16 May 1855 (B.P., G.C./OR no. 1) recalled his student days in such a manner as strongly to suggest that he was not only a member of Palmerston’s ‘set’ but probably also of the Fusty. However he was not admitted a fellow-commoner at St John’s until July 1806 and he talks distinctly in his letter of being an undergraduate there when Palmerston was a graduate. He was really a contemporary of William Temple whom he recollects as a member along with Palmerston, the 1st Earl of Ellenborough and Michael Bruce.
35 Palmerston to his mother, 1 Nov. 1804, B.P.W.
Raikes (1743–1823) who was married to Lady Palmerston’s aunt or cousin, Ann Mee; but Palmerston’s expression refers rather to Richard Raikes’s nephew Henry (1782–1854), the younger brother of the diarist. After leaving Cambridge Henry Raikes travelled in Greece with Aberdeen, who had also been at St John’s but is never mentioned by Palmerston since he had left the college before his old enemy from Harrow went up. ‘Facetious Raikes’, as Palmerston called his cousin on his return from Greece (no. 28), later wrote some rather tedious books, but gained an entry in the *D.N.B.* as a divine. The two Trinity men were Henry Goulburn (1784–1856), who became Peel’s friend and Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Gerard Thomas Noel (1782–1851), whose elder brother was afterwards created Earl of Gainsborough. In their early years in Parliament, Goulburn and Palmerston mixed a good deal together and were both members of a small and select group of enthusiastic young Tories. Eventually, however, their political courses diverged and all the intimacy between them utterly disappeared. Noel became Palmerston’s vicar at Romsey from 1840 until his death in 1851. He devoted much of his time in Romsey to ‘restoring’ the Abbey Church. Palmerston tried to keep him on the right lines, telling him he was not sure that all the proposed work would be a genuine improvement and refusing to subscribe for any more ‘embellishments’ until the very considerable church rates were applied to putting the building in a proper state of repair (nos. 316, 317). It is clear, indeed, that he found his vicar rather tiresome.

In the course of 1805 two new names made fleeting appearances in Palmerston’s reports about the Fusty. But ‘Frazer’, whoever he was, is mentioned only once and William Douglas never seems to have taken up his place at Trinity. This was a pity since Douglas, and possibly Frazer as well, had been in the Speculative at Edinburgh (nos. 7, 9). In May, however, there were three new recruits from Trinity: J. C. Hobhouse (1786–1869), who became Lord Broughton;

36 For the ‘Alfred Set’, see Goderich, pp. 30–3. But the identification of the Marquess Wellesley as a member is surely an error. The Marquess belonged to the wrong House of Parliament and the wrong generation. Goulburn’s unpublished autobiography (Goulburn Papers, Surrey County Record Office, Kingston-upon-Thames) seems rather to say ‘Mr Wellesley’. The Marquess’s eldest, illegitimate son, Richard Wellesley (c. 1787–1831) was returned M.P. for Queenborough on 1 June 1810. Sir George Shee, 1st Bart, was ‘co-manager’ of the Alfred (Lord Hertford to Shee, May 1811, Shee Papers).

37 Sullivan to Palmerston, 20 Feb. 1805, S.P. William Douglas, the son of James Douglas of Orchardton, Kirkcudbrightshire, was admitted to the Edinburgh Speculative on 28 Feb. 1804 and to Trinity on 12 Oct. 1804. But it is doubted that he ever resided at Cambridge. He was admitted to Lincoln’s Inn on 20 June 1806 and later became a member of the Scottish Faculty of Advocates. (*Alumni Cantab.*, *History of the Speculative Society of Edinburgh from its Institution in MDCCLXIV*, Edinburgh, 1845, p. 235.)
Henry Pepys (1783–1860), who became Bishop of Worcester; and J. F. Pollock (1783–1870), who became Peel’s Attorney-General and a baronet (no. 9).

Perhaps in the debating society, as in so many other things, Trinity was already overtaking St John’s. For Sulivan and Shee both left Cambridge in the summer of 1805 and though they came back from time to time for meetings and debates, Palmerston had to rely in the following session on Clive as his faithful lieutenant (‘Achates’). However, he soon recruited at least one new Johnian in the person of Michael Bruce (1787–1861), the Etonian son of an East Indian banker, but ‘a staunch Foxite’ (no. 14). Soon Palmerston was immersed again in a fierce debate on the ‘Revolution of 1788’ (sic); ‘I was a furious Jacobite’, he reported. No wonder that others should have tried to find out what was going on. In the Broadlands Papers there is an item addressed to Bruce and endorsed by Palmerston: ‘Latin lines by W. Bankes [of Trinity] at Cambridge upon his being caught listening at the door of the Speculative Society 1805.’

Evidently, and in spite of the strength of Trinity’s representation, Palmerston had become the dominating figure, perhaps even ‘President’, as was in 1807 another Johnian, Edward Law (afterwards first Earl of Ellenborough). According to Hobhouse’s recollection, the Fusty met in Palmerston’s rooms, usually on a Wednesday. As at Edinburgh, the subjects for debate were usually written up beforehand by the principal ‘speaker’ and read out aloud at the meeting. Palmerston himself prepared five such essays, each of them preserved along with his Edinburgh pieces among the family papers and under their author’s cautionary endorsement: ‘N.B. These Essays were written to set off to the best advantage a given argument or a particular side of a debatable question. They are therefore to be considered as Exercises in Composition and not as Records of decided opinions. P.’

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38 Palmerston to Malmesbury, 19 Nov. 1805, Malmesbury Papers.
39 Palmerston to Frances Temple, 7 Nov. 1805, B.P.W.
40 B.P.W.
41 Stratford Canning, i. 28. The other members mentioned are Pollock and Charles James Blomfield, afterwards Bishop of London.
42 Hobhouse’s Diary, 29 May 1847, Broughton Papers, Add. MS. 43750.
43 Edinburgh 1800. H. Temple. Essays on various Subjects Historical & Political written between the years 1800 & 1806 at Edinr & Cambridge & read in debating Societies’, B.P.W. The titles and dates, amplified where possible from Palmerston’s family correspondence, are:

In Edinburgh:
A Vindication of Mary Queen of Scotland, [19] Dec. 1800
On the Comparative Advantages and Happiness of a Savage and Civilized Life, Jan. 1801
On Public and Private Education, Jan. 1801
On Gowry’s Conspiracy, 14 Mar. 1801
On the Advantages derived from the invention of Printing, Mar. 1801
Palmerston made his formal farewell to Cambridge on 13 March 1806. But William Temple, who succeeded to his brother’s place with Dugald Stewart and to his rooms in St John’s, became a member of both the Edinburgh and the Cambridge Speculatives, and Palmerston himself seems occasionally to have returned to Cambridge to take part in the club’s debates. Palmerston was also proud to recall that the Fusty had been amalgamated with two other clubs in 1816 to form the Cambridge University Union (no. 159). He might possibly have claimed the Oxford Union too. It is said that Augustus Hare founded a debating club at Oxford in 1810 in emulation of what he called the ‘Cambridge University Political Society’. Francis Hare seems to have been his brother’s close adviser and it may be significant that in the interval between Aberdeen and Oxford Francis had attended a private tutor just outside Cambridge and visited St John’s just when Palmerston was transforming his essay on the East India Company into his required declamation in Chapel. It is not known what Palmerston thought when his old college tutor, since become Master of St John’s and Vice-Chancellor, ordered the dissolution of the Union as an undesirable political society in 1817. His references to James Wood, as also to his private tutor Edmund Outram, had usually been rather condescending; but by the time he left college he, and most of his friends, were already involved in other political affairs at Cambridge that were far too serious to risk a clash with the University establishment for so frivolous a cause.

Palmerston afterwards said that Outram had ‘more than once’ suggested that his performance in the college examinations and the ‘general regularity’ of his conduct might justify his standing for one of the two university seats whenever a vacancy occurred. Outram was not an entirely unbiased adviser, since he was seeking support in his candidacy for the Regius Chair of History and had probably given similar encouragement to other old tutees like Lord Royston. However, when Pitt died in January 1806, Palmerston rushed off to

In Cambridge:

On the Probability of Europe Relapsing into Barbarism, [22] Feb. 1804
On the Policy of opening the East Indian Trade, [31] Oct. 1804
On the Policy of Transferring the Portugueze Government to the Brazils, [1 or 8] May 1805
On the Political Character of Cardinal Fleury, Oct. 1805
On the Disadvantages Resulting to Great Britain from the loss of her North American Colonies, Mar. 1806

44 Blackburn to Palmerston, 13 Mar. 1806, B.P.W.
45 According to Teignmouth, i. 47, one of the others also had a nickname, ‘the Anticarnalist’, because one member had been expelled for ‘a flagrant act of immorality’.
46 A. J. C. Hare, Memorials of a Quiet Life, 1870, i. 148–9 and 168–71; Palmerston to his mother, 16, 23 and 28 Nov. 1804, B.P.W.
47 Wright, i. 203–4, claims to have denounced the Union to Wood.
48 Bulwer & Ashley, i. 367–8.
Cambridge (no. 18). So began an involvement with the parliamentary elections there that lasted until 1831. At first he was unsuccessful, in the by-election of February 1806 largely because of the Saints' doubts about his stand on the abolition of the slave trade (nos. 19–26), and in the General Election of May 1807 because of the intrusion of another, and more senior, ministerial candidate (nos. 38–46). Malmesbury, still his mentor, was consequently obliged to look elsewhere, and after his protegé had been unseated upon a double return at Horsham in November 1806 (no. 37), and disappointed of an accusation of corruption securing a vacancy for him in Great Yarmouth in February 1807, he closed for the purchase of a seat in Newport, Isle of Wight, as soon as he learned of Palmerston’s second defeat in Cambridge.49

In the meantime the Ministry of All the Talents had collapsed and Malmesbury had secured for Palmerston minor office under Portland as a Junior Lord of the Admiralty from 6 April 1807. A little more than two years later, on 1 November 1809, Palmerston, having already refused the Exchequer, kissed hands as Perceval’s Secretary at War and began his eighteen and a half years of hard labour at the War Office. But Palmerston maintained his interest in the University of Cambridge and received one of its seats at last in a by-election in March 1811 (no. 76). Upon the dissolutions of September 1812, June 1818 and February 1820 he was also returned unopposed (nos. 84, 118), even though he had publicly announced his conversion to the cause of Catholic relief in 1812 and, more definitely, in 1813.50

The decisive victory of a ‘Protestant’, however, in a by-election for the other seat in 1822, suggested that anti-Catholic feeling was mounting among the University voters and cast doubt on the ‘Catholic’ Palmerston’s chances at the next General Election (nos. 124, 126). Thus encouraged, two more anti-Catholics joined him and his new colleague in a scramble for the two seats, and Palmerston found himself, to his dismay, involved in a contest with his own colleagues in Government, and in a canvass six months ahead of the General Election scheduled for June 1826 (nos. 156–8). He was still more disgusted when he found that his opponents were being favoured, not only by the active support of the Duke of York, who was a leading anti-Catholic and had clashed with Palmerston rather personally as Commander-in-Chief (nos. 102, 128–32, 176, 219), but also by the ‘neutrality’ of the Prime Minister, Liverpool, and some of his senior colleagues (no. 159).

In the event Palmerston held his seat quite comfortably, largely because of the support he received from ‘Catholics’ and, in the absence

49 Bulwer & Ashley, i. 367–70; Malmesbury Papers.
50 1 Hansard, xxiii. 707 (22 June 1812), and xxiv. 971–6 (1 Mar. 1813).
of an opposition candidate, from Whigs (nos. 161–2, 164–5). But the experience was one of the most decisive in his political development, comparable with his declaration in favour of Catholic Emancipation in 1813. Henceforth he fiercely disassociated himself from what he now called ‘the stupid old Tory party’.

He did not, however, move over to his new supporters, the Whigs. Instead he survived the rapid succession of prime ministers in 1827–8, and his political fortunes frequently promised to revive. He was promoted to the Cabinet and twice again nearly became Chancellor of the Exchequer (nos. 175, 179–80, 183–92). He survived Canning’s death, Goderich’s dithering and, for a time, even Wellington’s displeasure. Nor was he by any means written off after he seceded from the Government with Huskisson, Grant, Dudley and William Lamb in May 1828. Instead he was approached on several sides, apparently by the Lansdowne Whigs, certainly by the High Tories (no. 231), and more than once by Wellington’s associates.

Almost the last of these approaches from Wellington was made through Clive. Although the highest positions Clive ever reached were as Lord Lieutenant of Montgomeryshire and High Steward of the University of Cambridge, he was not an insignificant political figure among the Tories. For a long period he shared with his younger brother (also a Johnian) the parliamentary representation of Ludlow and by 1817 he had become, according to Lady Holland, ‘quite a Treasury runner & jobber’.

He played some part in helping Palmerston’s Cambridge elections, even in 1826, and Palmerston was certainly dragged into some of Clive’s affairs in Ludlow. Another local family in Shropshire, the Charltons, shared with the Clives the patronage of Ludlow and in spite of all attempted compromise they seem to have quarrelled frequently over the spoils. Palmerston intervened, perhaps even to avert a duel, in June 1823, with a draft of settlement in six foolscap pages of ambiguous compromise. When trouble threatened again in May 1829 Palmerston similarly drafted a careful letter of rebuttal from Clive and in the election of the following summer was the formal channel of communication between them.

Soon afterwards Clive was performing a similar task for Palmerston. By early middle age, if not sooner, Clive was very hard of hearing and while Sir Walter Scott might still consider him ‘intelligent and good-humoured’, Mrs Arbuthnot in 1830 dubbed him ‘deaf as a post and not

51 Bulwer & Ashley, i. 171.
52 Lady Holland to Grey, 10 Jan. 1817, Grey Papers.
53 Mrs Sulivan to William Temple, 16 June 1826, B.P.W.
54 ‘Minute of a Conversation between Lord Palmerston on the part of Lord Clive, & the Hon. H. G. Bennet on the part of Mr Charlton at Lord P.’s house in Stanhope Street on Sunday, 29 June 1823’ and draft of Clive to Charlton, 3 May 1829, B.P.W. The bitter rivalry, however, persisted: see T. H. Duncombe, The Life and Correspondence of Thomas Slingsby Duncombe, 1868, i. 368–70.
very bright’. Her friend Wellington would probably have agreed, having known Clive’s father in India as ‘old Puzzlestick’, if he had not had such good personal reasons to deny the equation of deafness with stupidity or the son with the father. However, since Clive was, as even Mrs Arbuthnot admitted, ‘a very honest man & a gentleman & quite a person we can trust’, he was employed in an attempt to reconcile Palmerston with the Duke’s Government in October 1830 (no. 242). He was not successful, though the combined diffidence, caution and pride of the two principals may have contributed as much to that as any obtuseness of his own.55 This failure left Clive and Palmerston politically apart for the rest of their lives. But they kept up a desultory correspondence and a social contact until Clive, who succeeded as Earl of Powis in 1839, was accidentally shot by his son in 1848 (no. 322).

Political differences seem to have ended rather more abruptly Palmerston’s friendship with Lord Percy, though the Duke of Northumberland was probably more to blame than his son. In his first attempt at Cambridge in early 1806 Palmerston evidently received support from Percy’s cousins, Lord Lovaine (the Earl of Beverley’s heir and another Johnian) and his younger brother Hugh Percy. But the Duke had already been approached by Carlton House and his son actively canvassed in St John’s for Lord Henry Petty (nos. 20, 23). At the General Election later in the same year, Percy threatened to emerge as an active candidate for the seat and though Palmerston had decided not to stand lest he suffer a more undignified defeat he very much resented Percy’s intrusion (no. 33). Percy soon withdrew, but Palmerston never got any answer to the letter of remonstrance he had addressed to Percy and their friendship seems permanently to have been strained (no. 224).

Palmerston’s friendship with Michael Bruce, by contrast, survived many years of strain. Bruce was evidently a romantic and a hothead, his early life as misadventurous as his father’s later business affairs. He had canvassed actively for Palmerston in May 1807 but left immediately afterwards for an extended tour of northern Europe (no. 48). Possibly he needed a break and a rest—his second year at St John’s had evidently also been interrupted by illness (no. 37)—but he missed the beginning of the next academic year and after a mere two terms in Cambridge was off again, to Portugal, in November 1808. His second, sudden and unexplained, departure disappointed his friends’ expectations of the highest academic honours and upset his father bitterly. Worse, however, was to come. Abroad he soon became entangled with Lady Hester Stanhope and Mme Ney, the latter

involving him also in the escape of some Bonapartists from Paris; an adventure which earned him a short period in jail and the nickname ‘Lavallette Bruce’.

At home and abroad his character and his politics were too volatile for Palmerston. In his few surviving letters, however, Palmerston always signed himself ‘Yours affectionately’, and he seems to have helped his friend whenever he could. After his father’s bank had crashed, Bruce settled down in England to the comparative dullness of marriage, belatedly took his degree and tried his hand at the bar and politics. For some reason his father did not approve of his marriage to the widow of Captain Sir Peter Parker, but Palmerston, who had always believed that while Bruce had shown much ‘want of judgement & discretion . . . in his public conduct’, he nevertheless had ‘a good heart’, acted as best man. He could not conceive why the father disapproved, he wrote in August 1818, for Lady Parker was ‘a pleasing & amiable person & really sensible enough to be of some use to him who is so deficient in ballast’. Indeed, time worked to bring Palmerston and Bruce a little more together in politics. In 1826 Bruce was again serving on Palmerston’s election committee in Cambridge and in 1831 Palmerston found him a profitable appointment as commissioner of claims. But a few years later their friendship was finally in ruins, probably because Bruce discovered Palmerston had played a part in stopping Lady Hester Stanhope’s pension from the crown.56

Some of Palmerston’s other Johnian friends also appear to have benefited from his patronage. It was evidently with the help of Palmerston, among other Cambridge friends, that Blackburn, after some years at the English bar, was appointed Chief Justice of Mauritius in 1824 (nos. 133, 134). So far as Palmerston was concerned the favour was probably as much for Mrs Blackburn’s sake as her husband’s. Eliza Madocks was the sister of his contemporary at Harrow and the granddaughter of Lady Craven, Princess Berkeley of Anspach. She married Blackburn in 1816 and by 1819 was already having an affair with Palmerston.57 In Mauritius Blackburn laid the foundations of a minor reputation as naturalist, but his wife became entangled with his private secretary, the private secretary ran off with his daughter and Blackburn himself finally wrecked his legal career by a clash with the public prosecutor, John Jeremie.

Jeremie was a fierce abolitionist who felt that his efforts against the local planters were not sufficiently supported. When, in August 1833, he found himself faced with prosecution for false imprisonment he

56 Palmerston to W. Temple, 4 and 21 Aug. 1818, B.P., G.C./TE nos. 160 and 161; Mrs Sulivan to W. Temple, 16 June 1826, B.P.W. See also I. Bruce, The Nun of Lebanon. The Love Affair of Lady Hester Stanhope and Michael Bruce, 1951, and Lavallette Bruce, His Adventures and Intrigues Before and After Waterloo, 1953.

denounced the bench for having a notorious vested interest in slavery. As the Governor had very little sympathy for him he was forced to resign, returning towards the end of 1833 to England. There he was joined by one of the four judges, John Reddie, who had also denounced his colleagues and been recalled for ‘unbecoming conduct’. In all this Blackburn seems to have been the particular object of accusations that extended beyond collusion to fraud, being charged in particular with having conspired to transfer slave property illegally to friends. The Colonial Secretary, Aberdeen, determined to recall him as well, but lost office before his wish could be carried out. The Melbourne Government must also have decided that Blackburn could not continue on the bench and he was induced to leave quietly by the promise made through his wife’s uncle, the Earl of Sefton, of a place worth £400 a year on the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. Unfortunately the place belonged to Sir Alexander Johnston who would not make way and Blackburn returned home a widower in 1836 to find himself in the middle of a major row. In the end, while Reddie and Jeremie both got new appointments, Blackburn had to rest content with being made commissioner on the estates of his old friend the Duke of Northumberland. He died at Alnwick on 7 August 1839. Palmerston had, however, already found a place in the Foreign Office for his eldest son (nos. 261, 262).

Palmerston’s other Johnian friends fared much better. Shee and Sulivan not only outlived him but profited more from his goodwill. Both went down from Cambridge before their noble friend, and began to study for the Bar, Shee at Gray’s Inn and Sulivan at Lincoln’s Inn. This turned out very well for Palmerston’s Cambridge elections, as his friends could then make up committees to canvass the voters among the London lawyers while others served in Cambridge. Neither Shee nor Sulivan, however, stuck very long to the law. Shee in fact had told his father in 1803 that he doubted his fitness for the law and that he preferred to try his luck in India. His father refused to provide the necessary funds, but in February 1808 he was married for the first time, much against his parents’ wishes, and having soon become tired of his wife’s ill-health sought the distraction of alternative employment (nos. 48, 49, 53). In October 1810 Palmerston, exercising his authority as Secretary at War, seized the opportunity of a chance vacancy and made him Agent-General of Militia. That office was wound up soon after the war ended. But when Palmerston


59 Shee to his father, 15 Feb. 1803, Shee Papers.
became Foreign Secretary for the first time in November 1830 Shee was made his undersecretary after Lord Ashley had refused.

Shee lasted only four years in the Foreign Office and his subsequent career in the diplomatic service was rather fitful and limited to a decade. In the Foreign Office he was reputedly given the special task of handling the press and gained no credit by it either in the Government or out of it. In October 1834 Palmerston decided he must move Shee out of the office and nominate him minister to Berlin. 'Tout le monde sera surpris,' said Talleyrand, 'y compris Sir George Shee.' Talleyrand may have had a personal grudge against Shee as well as against Palmerston. For Shee’s father, who had died in 1825, had played a most discreditable part in India many years before in the seduction of a young married woman who later became Talleyrand’s wife. But Shee’s appointment was greeted with disgust on all sides and when Wellington succeeded Palmerston shortly afterwards he cancelled it (no. 263). Palmerston found Shee another legation, in Stuttgart, as soon as he could after his return to office in 1835. But Shee ruined his career, apparently by marrying his mistress, and in October 1844 he was recalled, never to be employed again (nos. 310, 312, 313). He seems, for a while, to have stayed on in Stuttgart as a private citizen, but to have returned in 1845 when he found it all too uncomfortable there. 'I think he is right,' wrote Palmerston, 'for at all events if he makes up his mind to leave his wife at home he may himself enjoy the society of his friends.' For two more decades of their lives Palmerston’s diaries and letters record sporadic visits by Shee to Broadlands, alone and unaccompanied.

Sulivan, by contrast, made a most satisfactory marriage and kept the official place his friend had found him until old age forced him to retire. It is not known whether Sulivan had also expressed some dissatisfaction with the law, but in October 1809 Palmerston raised with him the possibility of his becoming his private secretary should Perceval in the end make Palmerston Secretary at War (nos. 64–5). Fourteen months later, in January 1811, Sulivan was promoted on a chance vacancy to one of the senior positions in the War Office as the third Superintendent of Military Accounts. Then, after a nominal change from Superintendent to Chief Examiner in 1824, he succeeded as Deputy Secretary in September 1826.

Sulivan must have been reasonably competent, since after Palmerston’s resignation from the War Office in May 1828 his Deputy survived a succession of twelve different ministers before his retirement.

60 Viscountess Enfield, ed., Leaves from the Diary of Henry Greville, [1st series], 1883, p. 23.
62 Palmerston to William Temple, 15 Nov. 1845, B.P., G.C./TE no. 310.
at the age of sixty-eight in July 1851; he was then made a Privy Councillor and an honorary Governor of the Royal Military Asylum. He was perhaps a little self-important and from time to time complained to his old friend that several of Palmerston's successors and in particular Hardinge, who was Secretary at War in 1828–30 and again in 1841–4, was attempting to circumscribe his authority and degrade his position in the Office. But when Hardinge retired in 1830 he certainly put on record his appreciation of Sulivan's 'very able superintendence' (nos. 253, 255, 301–2). Hobhouse, as an old friend in the Fusty, naturally recorded his appreciation still more warmly during his brief tenure of the office. ⁶³

Yet Sulivan was resented a good deal both by the military at the Horse Guards and among his colleagues in the War Office. Palmerston had become Secretary at War at a time of very serious parliamentary and official criticism of the War Office, which was viewed as a notorious example of the eighteenth-century system of government, clinging to its venal privileges and perquisites even as it proved itself ever more incompetent to cope with the increasing business generated by the long-drawn-out war with France. The Department of Military Accounts was one of the major innovations designed to deal with the vast amount of arrears in the War Office's principal function, the checking and clearing of regimental accounts. That department was not invented by Palmerston and Sulivan was not among its three original Superintendents. But Palmerston had the job of instituting and improving it and Sulivan, surviving all his colleagues, made it the springboard of his official career. Sulivan, however, liked to think that all the major proposals for reform had originated with him, and he even nursed a resentment—which surfaced, or came near to surfacing, on the eve of his retirement—that Palmerston had got all the public credit while he, Sulivan, had incurred all the private resentment in the strained and straitened office without ever being rewarded, as Deputy Secretary, with the proper salary for his post.⁶⁴

⁶³ Hobhouse's diary, 4 Jan. 1833, Broughton Papers, Add. MS. 56557.
⁶⁴ There is in Add. MSS. 59782–3 a small exercise book endorsed 'Account by Laurence Sulivan of his public service in the War Office written in 1857 or 1851'. In fact it is dated 17 Jan. 1851 and was evidently a draft or copy of a narrative he had enclosed with a letter to his chief, Fox Maule, intimating that he wished to retire. In it he claims that from the time of his appointment as Junior Superintendent in 1811 his 'most zealous endeavours were from that moment exerted to sit the whole system to the bottom. I very soon became convinced that it was calculated to perpetuate every mischief which it professed to remedy.' Palmerston resisted, 'strongly deprecating any present change'. However, having gained by his new position 'a thorough insight' of how bad things really were and being better placed therefore to combat 'the inveterate prejudices of those who had been brought up in a vicious school', he eventually prevailed upon Palmerston to give the matter his 'deliberate attention' and in 1813 finally to put a stop to the practice of the three superintendents acting as a virtually independent board. Thenceforth, Sulivan claimed, it was he who put all suggestions for improvements to Palmerston and kept a close watch over their application after his
He was not entirely fair in this. Palmerston certainly made public as well as private testimony to his Deputy's able assistance. As for the Deputy's salary, Palmerston had always striven to temper, for the sake of justice and efficiency, the economising onslaughts of both Parliament and Treasury. Sulivan's official salary rose very substantially in any case. As Superintendent he had a salary of £1,000 per annum; as Chief Examiner he received £1,200; and as Deputy Secretary £2,000.

Sulivan's reputation, however, did suffer both in and out of the office by his association with Palmerston. Inevitably his name was linked with Palmerston's famous clashes with the Horse Guards and when Hobhouse also tried his hand at bringing the Army to heel, Sulivan was seen behind him too (no. 252). He was a meddler, it was said in official circles, who if not restrained 'would drive the Army half mad, & make his principal so unpopular as no exertion of his own would undo'. Sulivan also suffered special odium in the office as the personal favourite of his chief. The Senior Superintendent, Michael Foveaux, was particularly venomous. He was hardly in a position to complain about favouritism since both he and his father had in earlier days profited from the support of a previous Secretary at War. But he evidently resented Sulivan's promotion to Superintendent in 1811 and still more his juniors taking over from him the supervision of the current accounts later that summer. Perhaps he sensed that he might be compulsorily retired when his own work on the arrears eventually came to an end. Quite possibly it was he, therefore, who fed the Opposition newspapers with War Office dirt with which to smear both Palmerston and Sulivan (no. 98). Certainly, when he found he was to be pensioned off in 1821, Foveaux's bitterness overflowed and, but for the intervention of his wife, might have threatened his pension as well as his job. Others in the office also complained of Palmerston and Sulivan (no. 302). They may have included Sulivan's predecessor brother-in-law had gone, though incurring in the process a good deal of 'unfair opposition' while others claimed the credit.


66 Michael Foveaux (1762-1832) had entered the War Office in 1783 when Gen. Fitzpatrick (1747-1813) was Secretary at War for the first time; Joseph Foveaux snr (ob. 1 Jan. 1814) in 1806 when Fitzpatrick was again Secretary at War, even though he was too old and ill to perform his duties of office-keeper and paid a substitute out of the considerable perquisites. Lt Col. Joseph Foveaux jnr (1765-1846), the controversial Lt-Governor of Norfolk Island, was evidently the younger son. The Australian Dictionary of Biography (i. 407-9) records that he was reputedly the son of a French cook employed in the household of the Earl of Upper Ossory and suggests that his very rapid promotion as a soldier in New South Wales must have been due to the influence of a powerful patron in England. Fitzpatrick was the Earl's younger brother. Possibly Michael and Joseph jnr were the natural children of the Earl or his brother who were both great philanderers.
as Deputy Secretary, even though both he and his son owed a good
deal to Palmerston, and after Palmerston had left the War Office
anonymous accusations from more junior clerks persisted. One of
these latter was particularly bitter, complaining both about the career
structure in the office and the demoralisation of clerks who were
'sacrificed to the iltemper [sic] of a scion of the East Indies, & to the
will of a member of the British Cabinet, who determines to support
the arrogance of his brother-in-law'.

Sullivan had evidently been a suitor for Elizabeth Temple’s hand
for some years. But his courtship did not run smoothly, especially
with Lilly still under the stern and disapproving control of Lady
Malmesbury. A loud and complaining woman—her husband was
both deaf and unkind to her—Lady Malmesbury was known as the
Kettle-Drum among her acquaintances; after Lord Malmesbury’s
death Joseph Jekyll used to call her ‘Dowager Screechowls’. Probably
she did not consider Sullivan good enough for her ward, at least
as regards birth and prospects. But, although apparently quite terrified
of her, Sullivan persisted and with Palmerston’s help finally won Lilly’s
consent (no. 79). They were married in St George’s, Hanover Square,
by the Malmesbury’s second son Alfred on 6 December 1811.

Faced with the inevitable, Lady Malmesbury had already decided
to make the best of it. ‘It is impossible to describe the comforts of
this marriage’, she reported to her brother-in-law in India. ‘Scarcely
ever does it happen that persons brought up together ... should really
fall in love. Yet so it is ... He is most admirable, in principles, in right
feelings, & understanding, & I have seen him tried in various ways,
& always come out of the fire.’ ‘It is good nick’, she added also, ‘with
respect to collateral.’ Lilly had a dot of £20,000 and Sullivan a similar
‘competency’. Lady Malmesbury’s sister, Lady Minto, on the other
hand, took quite a cynical view. ‘She is nearly the foremost in ugliness
in the present age, deformed, & with a considerable perfume in her
breath ... it is said to be love on both sides [but] I think Sullivan
is in love with Harry, & as he cannot marry him takes Lilly.’ A few
weeks later she elaborated for the sake of her husband:

They have passed many years as brother & sister, & by exertion I
suppose Humps etc. become invisible. He is really what one calls a
very good sort of man, & without any burthen of talents, makes to
follow Harry & I should if I dared say Toady—but he does I believe

87 ‘C. Pritchard’ to [?Althorp], 20 Mar. 1832, Broughton Papers, Add. MS. 47226.
88 Lady Malmesbury to Minto, 15 Sept. 1811, Minto Papers IE/67.
89 J. A. Home, ed., Letters of Lady Louisa Stuart to Miss Louisa Clinton, [first series],
Edinburgh, 1901, pp. 184–5, 189–90 and 195; A. Bourke, ed., Correspondence of Mr Joseph
Jekyll, 1894, p. 151.
70 Lady Malmesbury to Minto, 21 Dec. 1811, Minto Papers IE/67.

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consider him as the genius of the earth, & he flatters himself I think that he is something like him by having acquired all Harry’s ways & tricks with the greatest nicety. He is [? now] a prodigious favourite here [at the Malmesburys’], as every nobody is, but ... his father is a famous goose, & his mother was the widow of a master of a slave trade vessel ... She [his mother] is somewhat vulgar & besides is dreadfully ill-tempered.

But, Lady Minto concluded, since Lilly was so frightful she was lucky to get even Sulivan, ‘I trust they will not multiply’.

However outrageous the prospect had seemed to Lady Minto, the Sulivans had two sons and three daughters. The boys do not seem to have enjoyed very good health and neither fared well in later life. The younger son, Henry William, was born on 31 October 1815. According to Palmerston he was ‘really a very nice, agreeable, & intelligent person’, and after Christ Church, Oxford, he entered the church. He was also considered by his family to be something of a scholar, though he gained only fourth-class honours and seems to have done no more than publish the inevitable volume or two of sermons before his death, unmarried, on 22 March 1880. At his death some said he was virtually insane, and he evidently suffered throughout life from bouts of mental collapse (nos. 266, 290, 294–8, 305–6, 310, 319, 367).

One of these bouts was provoked by his elder brother’s behaviour in 1842. Stephen Henry Sulivan was born on 3 November 1812 and like his younger brother was educated privately at home, until he followed his father to St John’s, Cambridge, in 1830 (no. 245). He did not take his degree, but entered the Foreign Office as a junior clerk in August 1832 (no. 251), becoming Palmerston’s précis-writer in November that year and his private secretary in May 1833. Palmerston subsequently reported in June that his nephew ‘does his duty extremely well, and shows much industry and intelligence’, and in October that he ‘makes a capital private secretary, and improves daily’. Palmerston was biased perhaps by family affection; but, considering how harassed he was as Foreign Secretary, he would not have put up for long even with a nephew if his secretary had been really inefficient. Immediately before quitting the Foreign Office in November 1834 Palmerston launched Stephen Sulivan on a diplomatic career (nos. 259, 261). He was promoted Secretary of Legation in 1836, but ill-health dogged his trail wherever, for his comfort, he was moved (nos. 270, 275, 290). In Munich he had a very dangerous attack, having, in Palmerston’s view, ‘for a long time past been in the habit of eating and drinking too much’. In March 1842 his brother was...

71 Lady Malmesbury to Minto, 15 Sept. 1811, Minto Papers IE/67, and Lady Minto to Minto, 28 Nov. 1811 and 30 Mar. 1812, Minto Papers IE/40 and 41.
sent to bring him home. The ensuing revelations led to a recurrence of Henry Sullivan’s old complaint, though according to his uncle one that was not ‘so violent’. 73

The discovery his brother made was that Stephen Sullivan had evidently acquired an Italian mistress, Maria Giuseppa Margherita Lacinio, who now came back with him to England. Subsequently, Palmerston wrote, there was ‘an immense degree of plague & trouble’ about her. The family would not have her in the house, although Stephen insisted on seeing her from time to time. Consequently he was installed in Brighton with the eminent Dr Granville in attendance to prevent the sort of communication with his mistress that the doctor warned would be fatal in Stephen’s present state of health, and when the doctor had to go abroad towards the end of June, ‘the Italian woman’ was sent to Brussels, ‘in order’, in Palmerston’s own words, ‘to ensure the non-intercourse regulation being observed’. Palmerston, who had not hitherto known about her, hoped she would not return but run off with someone else; for during his illness Stephen had several times expressed the wish to marry her. Such a marriage, Palmerston observed, with all the sanctimonious hypocrisy of a more discreet philanderer, would be ‘fatal to his prospects & comfort in life’ and ‘a great affliction’ to his father. However, for the time being, Stephen contented himself with rejoining his mistress abroad (nos. 305–6, 310), where they could act more freely together. Palmerston had to admit that as he was ‘under a sort of infatuation with that woman’, her presence made his ‘mind more at ease, & his health was the better for it’. 74 Eventually, as Palmerston had frequently predicted, Stephen married his mistress, returning to England ‘privately’ to do so in the summer of 1845. He also asked, for discretion’s sake, to be removed from Munich. Palmerston reported the announcement to his brother as ‘an unfortunate end of an unfortunate beginning’, and went on to compare Stephen Sullivan’s position with Shee’s. They had both, he said, marred their prospects in the service; ‘for how could a Sec. of State appoint as minister at a court, a person married to a wife who could neither present English women at the court nor receive them at her table?’ But he nonetheless refused to move his nephew, merely endorsing his letter: ‘Explained to him inevitable inconvenience of his domestic arrangement as marring his professional advancement.’ 75


75 Stephen Sullivan to Palmerston, 30 Nov. 1845, B.P., G.C./SU no. 71; Palmerston to William Temple, 15 Nov. 1845, B.P., G.C./TE no. 310.
A few years later Palmerston evidently discovered that Stephen had acquired a new mistress. In self-defence Stephen explained that he had been 'henpecked' by his wife, who had an 'unhappy temper, domineering spirit and expensive habits'. Unhappy in Munich, where, he did not neglect to observe, Palmerston had kept him long against his will, he had taken his wife on holiday to Brussels. But there relations between them had become still worse and he had acquired another friend. He had subsequently discarded his new mistress, though remaining on bad terms with his wife. Laurence Sulivan, to whom Palmerston showed Stephen's letter, wrote to his brother-in-law: 'I have read it with pain, and with astonishment at the effrontery of addressing such a production to you. He must have well known her temper and disposition whatever they may be. I believe that during his long illness she devoted herself in the care of him; and when quite well, he has got tired of her, and does his utmost to drive her into vice. I have no doubt that he has outraged her in every way, and will leave her behind him, to her fate.'

Palmerston at once removed Stephen from Munich and as soon as he could transferred him as chargé d'affaires and consul-general to Chile. He probably exercised some pressure to ensure that Stephen took his wife with him. But it did no good. On his way to Santiago, Stephen quarrelled with an American consul, en route to Valparaiso, over some hotel rooms in Lima. In the course of the quarrel Stephen called the consul's wife a 'cook-maid' and the consul, being a 'Southern' man, in turn broke his stick across Stephen's head, holding off bystanders with a pistol while he administered a sound thrashing. An English traveller concluded Stephen was 'certainly an uncommon ass and most unfit for his appointment'. Palmerston was sure their wives were the ones behind it and Stephen, though offering his resignation, was allowed to proceed to his post.

In September 1852 the consul-general in Lima died, and in January 1853 Stephen Sulivan was appointed in his place. It was 'a good change for him', Palmerston thought, 'after all the scandal about his wife & mistress & duel in Chile'. But Palmerston was wrong. Possibly he meant to recall the thrashing in Peru, rather than some new affair in Chile. But in one place or the other Stephen again had parted from his wife and acquired another mistress. In 1855 he also had to be rebuked by the Foreign Secretary, Lord Clarendon, for

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76 Stephen Sulivan to Palmerston, 4 April, and Laurence Sulivan to Palmerston, 15 April 1849, B.P., G.C./TE no. 81.
77 B. W. Currie, Recollections, Letters and Journals, privately printed, Roehampton, 1901, i. 315 and 317-18, and ii. xcvi.
79 Palmerston to William Temple, 3 April 1853, B.P., G.C./TE no. 353.
being 'too violent & bullying' with the Peruvian Government. Two years later, on 11 August 1857, a man broke into Stephen Sulivan's house and fired a blunderbuss point blank into his stomach. Within two days Palmerston's nephew was dead (nos. 362-6).

The accounts of what had happened were extremely confused. Some said that Sulivan was dining alone; others that he had two companions with him. One account had it that the assassin never said a word; another that he exclaimed 'I am revenged' or something of the sort in Spanish. All were agreed that there were several accomplices—at least six or possibly fifteen—in the courtyard or the street outside; two of them, a Frenchman and a negro, were subsequently arrested. The motive was an even bigger mystery. The victim himself could offer no explanation. The Peruvian Government's opinion was that from the number of men involved it must have been political and something to do with the rebellion of General Vivanco. The initial suggestion was that it concerned two former rebel ships, the Loa and the Tombes. One or both of them had attacked and plundered a British steamer and, after the Royal Navy had seized one of them in retaliation, Sulivan had agreed to hand it over to the Government. Later it was suggested that the Vivanco party's hatred had been aroused instead by Sulivan's negotiation of a convention that upset their plan for a great guano swindle. Subsequently the Frenchman's role was also changed from that of an unimportant accomplice to that of principal assassin, and punished with a maximum sentence of fifteen years in the chain gang.

The British, both Government and family in London as well as the remnants of the consulate in Lima, readily accepted the notion that it was a political murder. But there were always rumours it was something much more personal. The Panama Herald and Star reported as early as 12 August that an intrigue with a woman was the cause, and soon afterwards it was rumoured that the brother of the deserted Mrs Sulivan had lately been seen in Chile or Peru, bent no doubt on a 'horrible vendetta'. These suggestions were indignantly denied by Sulivan's secretary John Cheesman. He explained them away as prompted by American jealousy of the influence Sulivan had secured in Lima. Cheesman was the principal witness, but the consular staff in Lima seem to have been strangely reticent about the dinner party which had been so tragically interrupted. They may not, perhaps, have been responsible for the initial version that said Sulivan was dining alone. But when Cheesman corrected that version and reported he had been dining with Sulivan he neglected to mention that there was also another guest. The reports of the vice-consul and of the captain of the Retribution stationed in the harbour also referred

80 Palmerston to William Temple, 12 June 1855, B.P., G.C./TE no. 358.
merely to a third ‘person’. Only in a subsequent statement on oath did Cheesman reveal that it was a certain Doña Nicida Vidal. The following year Palmerston received a begging letter that conveyed a gratuitous and second-hand account from Lima. Stephen Sulivan, it went, had left his wife in Chile and soon after arriving in Lima had been ‘ensnared by one of the most beautiful and ... most diabolical women in Peru’. She had two handsome sisters, one of whom was kept by ‘a wealthy English merchant’ and the other lived with the British vice-consul as his ‘housekeeper etc.’. But Sulivan’s was the villain of the three. Of his several predecessors, two had already met with violent deaths ‘when she had had all she wanted out of them and wished for a change’. Sulivan in turn had made property over to her and further provided for her in his will; while she had already selected his successor before his death. Palmerston recognised blackmail when he saw it. He endorsed the letter with a note of his reply: ‘Cannot assist him. The causes were quite of another nature.’ Stephen Sulivan’s will, of which Cheesman was executor, ordered his private correspondence to be burned and divided his money between his wife Margherita and his ‘best friend’, Doña Nicida Vidal.

Whatever Laurence Sulivan may have thought about the circumstances of the murder of his elder son, his sympathy reached out once more towards his deserted daughter-in-law. When she was tracked down in Italy in 1862, it was found that she had remarried in the year following Stephen’s death. But she professed still to be in desperate straits and Laurence Sulivan sent her substantial periodic payments totalling nearly £1,500.

Although these may have been Margherita’s portion from his son’s estate, Laurence Sulivan was undoubtedly a kindly man. Even his Army critics acknowledged he was ‘an excellent father and husband’ (no. 252). One of his daughters, as well as both his sons, was probably a disappointment to him. For when the second of his girls, born on 8 February 1820 and christened Mary Catherine Henrietta, married as his second wife the local vicar, the Rev. Robert George Baker of Fulham was seventy-seven and she was forty-five. She nevertheless predeceased him and died childless on 20 October 1871. The eldest daughter, Elizabeth Mary, born on 26 April 1814, married in 1851 Henry Hippisley of Lamborne Place in Berkshire. Hippisley was also a widower and already had a large family. The marriage seems to have been very happy and Elizabeth Hippisley took loving care of her unmarried stepdaughters. But her own elder son was a ne’er do well who, after a brief career in the Navy, died unmarried and in disgrace

82 Add. MSS. 59782–3.
abroad. Elizabeth Hippisley died in 1886. She was survived only by her youngest sister, born on 14 April 1823 or 1824. Charlotte Antonia Sulivan had some talent as a painter, but she never married and it was to her that Laurence Sulivan left his papers and his house in Fulham. At Charlotte’s death in 1911 Broom House was sold to the Hurlingham Club, and its contents were dispersed, by the curious provisions of her will, room by room among the descendants of her sister Elizabeth. Among those contents were Palmerston’s letters to his friend Laurence Sulivan.83

The collection of letters was subsequently broken up. Most of the three hundred and eighty letters printed below were divided among two of Elizabeth Hippisley’s descendants. A third portion is evidently the remnant of a group of letters loaned to Palmerston’s official biographers and not subsequently returned. Bulwer and Ashley, however, made only very limited use of the Sulivan papers and so far as is known very few outside the family have seen them since. Lord Lorne (afterwards ninth Duke of Argyll) and Mabell, Countess of Airlie, printed a few of them, not very accurately, in their respective volumes on Palmerston and Lady Palmerston, and Lord David Cecil is understood to have read some of them for his study of Melbourne. But for the most part they have remained neglected. The interest and importance of the earlier letters, with their wealth of comment on national affairs, parliamentary elections and the War Office, need no underlining here. There are obvious gaps in the surviving correspondence, though the letters addressed to Mrs Sulivan, usually when Palmerston was abroad, have also been included.84 Probably the gaps are not as large as might appear, for Palmerston was considered an unreliable correspondent by his friends. Shee once chided him: ‘Counsellor Sulivan . . . says that he is sure I have quite as good a chance of an answer to my letter as of the first prize in a lottery.’85 But after Palmerston’s departure from the War Office, and still more after his younger sister’s death in 1837, the letters declined very much in quality as well as quantity. Nevertheless they serve as the record of Palmerston’s principal adult friendship with a man, and in major political crises continued to the end to provide interesting comment and details.

83 Other portions of the family papers, notably those concerning the Sulivans’ Indian interests in the eighteenth century, have found their way by private transfer or public auction into the Bodleian, the India Office Library or private collections. Much of the nineteenth-century material seems to have been long ago destroyed, but an appreciable quantity, including a few scraps derived from Palmerston’s elder sister and her husband, was retained as an autograph collection.

84 There is also a considerable correspondence, preserved in B.P.W., with both his sisters during their earlier, unmarried years.

85 Shee to Palmerston, 3 July 1809, B.P., G.C./SH no. 81.