

# EDWARD SMITH-STANLEY – 14TH EARL OF DERBY

March 1799 – October 1869



Illustration 1862

He was born in 1799 at Knowsley Hall in Lancashire to a wealthy landowning family and was educated firstly at Eton and then at Christ Church, Oxford. He was devoted to traditional institutions and the sacrosanctity of property rights. He also had a deep evangelical streak inherited from his maternal grandfather, the Rev. Geoffrey Hornby.

In 1822 he was elected Whig member of Parliament for the rotten borough of Stockbridge but then alienated colleagues by voting against an investigation into the Protestant Church of Ireland and in 1826 he lost his seat. As the Whigs return to power in 1830 he was appointed Chief Secretary for Ireland, entering the cabinet in 1831. Stanley was in conflict with the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland but did manage to establish a system of National Education there which remains the model for its present system. In 1833 he became Secretary of State for War and the Colonies overseeing the passage of the Abolition of Slavery Bill.

As a devout Anglican, in 1834 he broke with the ministry over reform of the Anglican Church of Ireland and with 4 other ministers resigned. He formed a group called the Derby Dilly in an attempt at a middle course between what he saw as increasingly radical Whiggery and the conservatism of the Tories, but as Peel's Tamworth Manifesto was published before he made his big speech on the subject he was robbed of any credit for the idea.

Joining the Conservatives in 1841, he served as Colonial Secretary in Peel's second ministry and in 1844 entered the House of Lords as Lord Stanley of Bickerstaffe. In 1845 he broke with the prime minister over the repeal of the Corn Laws taking the majority of the Conservative party with him including Disraeli. He then led the protectionist faction of the Conservative party and in 1847 accused the Irish Catholic clergy of using the confessional to encourage lawlessness and crime which was disputed by the Bishop of Derry.

He succeeded his father as Earl of Derby in 1851 and in the next year despite winning only 330 seats in the June election was invited to form a minority government with Disraeli becoming Chancellor. As this was a minority government, Derby had a difficult job in trying to avoid any issues which could cause any government bodies going over to the Whigs and causing a vote of no confidence which his budget proposals did. The government fell making way for a Peelite-Whig Coalition.

In 1855 this also fell and Derby declined to form another minority government until 1858. This government was notable for bringing to an end the British East India Company after the 1857 rebellion. This term of office ended in another vote of no confidence. In 1859 Derby was appointed Knight of the Garter and in 1866 returned to government for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time when Lord Russell's government failed.



Lord Derby 1865

His government passed the 1867 Reform Act extending suffrage. In 1869 he retired on health grounds, allowing Disraeli ( his right hand man) to succeed. He was then appointed Knight Grand Cross of the Order of St Michael and St George for his role as Secretary of War and the Colonies.

He has been described as the father of the modern Conservative Party. His greatest claim to fame is that his 22 years as party leader stands as the longest in any party.

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