

resistance of more conservative colleagues, and to ensure the parliamentary time necessary for the bills to progress.

These qualifications are indicative of the discussion and debate to which this fine and stimulating book will give rise. If I may end with one small (but personal) quibble. Bogdanor writes of Enoch Powell winning 'classical prizes at his school, King Edward VII in Birmingham' (p. 61). The school which Powell (and I)

attended is known simply as King Edward's School, without regnal number. But, founded in 1552, it has no connection with Queen Victoria's eldest son! ■

After over forty years writing books and articles on twentieth-century British politics, David Dutton has more time in retirement to pursue other interests. His latest book, *Game, Set and Championship: A History of the South of Scotland Tennis Championships* was published in 2023.

- 1 W. S. Churchill, *Great Contemporaries* (London, 1959), p. 63.
- 2 N. Lawson, *The View from No. 11: Memoirs of a Tory Radical* (London, 1993), p. 613.
- 3 N. Hillman, 'A "chorus of execration"? Enoch Powell's "Rivers of Blood" Forty Years on', *Patterns of Prejudice*, vol. 1 (2008), p. 88.
- 4 A. Adonis and K. Thomas (eds.), *Roy Jenkins: A Retrospective* (Oxford, 2004), p. 162.
- 5 E. Dell, *A Strange Eventful History: Democratic Socialism in Britain* (London, 2000), p. 479.

Forgotten radical

Peter Jordaan, *A Secret Between Gentlemen: Lord Battersea's hidden scandal and the lives it changed forever* (Alchemie Books, 2023)

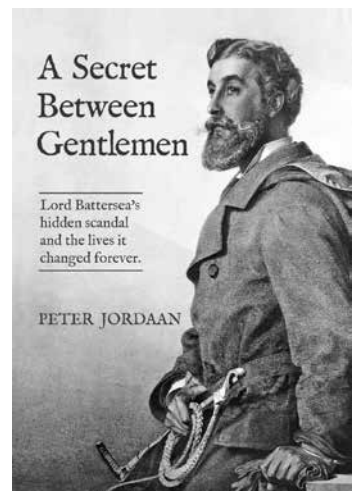
Review by Michael Meadowcroft

I never cease to be amazed by the number of genuinely radical Liberal politicians there were in the nineteenth century who have little resonance today. One such was Cyril Flower, the first and last Lord Battersea. Peter Jordaan brings him to life, warts and all, and for that we must be grateful. The one problem with his biography is its length and the lack of skilful editing. Within its 668 pages of text – 200 of them before we get a mention of Battersea – plus a further 100 pages of appendices etc., no snippet of information on Battersea's life appears to be omitted, and a further supplementary volume is even

promised encompassing Battersea's friends.

Essentially, the basic details are straightforward: a radical lawyer, he married great wealth, Constance de Rothschild, and was thus able to indulge his love of art and his progress in politics. A Liberal MP for twelve years, first for Brecon and later for Luton, he became a junior minister and a whip before acquiring a peerage, allegedly as a consequence of his large donations to the party, taking the title Lord Battersea. Amidst his politics, his wife's circle of rich friends and his ease of socialising with high society, he mixed with gay society, not least with men of influence who were

able to get teenage boys involved with apparent impunity. Jordaan names around thirty members of an upper-class circle of gay men. In addition to aristocratic



associates, he was also friendly with Oscar Wilde, Edward Carpenter and the poet Walt Whitman. Said to have exceptional good looks and 'an irresistible charm', he was able to continue this double life until 1902 when, with Battersea almost 60 years of age, he was arrested for homosexual offences. Jordaan states that influential members of society charged with such offences were given twenty-four hours' notice of their impending arrest, so that the individual could flee the country or even, in some cases, commit suicide. Battersea stayed put and, with the benefit of intervention by upper class sympathisers, including the then prime minister, Arthur Balfour, and, it is said, the monarch, Edward VII, the charges were dropped. However, the two young victims were sentenced to ten years' and five years' imprisonment respectively.

As Cyril Flower, his political career began when he joined the Liberal Party in 1875, having been persuaded to do so by Lord Rosebery. He was adopted as the candidate for Brecon in 1878 and gained the seat at the 1880 general election. The constituency boundaries were redrawn, and he lost the seat in 1885. Later that year, he fought and won the Luton seat, which he held until created Lord Battersea in 1892, even though he had earlier argued for abolition of the House of Lords. He rarely spoke in the House of Commons but addressed meetings in most by-elections around the country. In 1886, Gladstone appointed him as a whip, and Flower changed sides over Ireland in order to back Gladstone's campaign for home rule. Jordaan states that his parliamentary career was 'undistinguished' and that he was not

take seriously as 'he was thought to lack conviction'.

Although he left a considerable sum on his death, his unfortunate wife discovered that he also had massive debts, which she had great difficulty in discharging, even with her considerable wealth. Through all his vicissitudes, Constance stood by him and, after his death, she destroyed many papers. Peter Jordaan has done a remarkable amount of research for his biography of Lord Battersea, and it is a good addition to Victorian political biographies, even if somewhat prolix. ■

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Liberalism and populism

Alan S. Kahan, *Freedom from Fear: An Incomplete History of Liberalism* (Princeton University Press, 2023)
Review by John Powell

Alan Kahan's most recent book is, like all of his intellectual histories, learned and elliptical. It is the product of two related but disparate concerns – a lifelong interest in liberal political theory and a resurgent nationalistic populism that has called liberal politics

into question. By tracing 'the complex and layered nature' of contemporary liberalism (p. 6), the author attempts to explain the declining effectiveness of liberalism during the past two decades. Kahan argues that populism now threatens the nominally liberal landscape of the

Western world, mainly because liberal thinkers increasingly abandoned moral principles of governance (pp. 379, 401). Building on the work of Christopher Lasch and David Goodhart, he argues that the modern liberal has placed so high a value on autonomy, mobility and novelty