1872

Monday 4 March (London)

I went up to town.

Called at Hardys. He tells me that there is a real move in Lancashire to put Derby at the head of the Party, that it was discussed at Burghley before the meeting, that it was declared to be necessary to tell Disraeli but that every one shrunk from doing this and that he refused.[343] That he doubts whether Disraeli knows it, that he believes Derby does not wish it, only wishes to return to the Foreign Office. Derby's late speech,[344] when I was ill, brought him thus forward. On leaving Hardy the first person I met in the Park was Disraeli with whom I stopped to say a few amiable nothings as to weather etc.

Saturday [*sic*] 21 April[345] (London)

Called on Lady Derby and had a good deal of conversation with her. She regretted that Stanley had been obliged to attend the Manchester meeting as it involved the recognition of Disraeli as head of the Party thereby removing what might be a useful check on him, viz. the sense that he was not inevitable.

She told me that the late Lord Derby seemed almost effaced from recollection at Knowsley, probably because he had so few sympathies with others.

She has the full sense of the great place which Stanley as Earl of Derby and Master of Knowsley fills in Lancashire. She said that when he went to Manchester they kept it a secret by which train he went lest his reception should interfere with that of Disraeli's. But she spoke very nicely and with much feeling on many subjects.

[343] At a meeting at Burghley House, Stamford, home of Lord Exeter, on 1 February, attended by Hardy and members of the Opposition Front Bench, there were only two dissenters to the view that Derby would make a more effective leader. The Chief Whip, Gerard Noel, believed that Derby's name alone would be worth 40 or 50 seats (R. Blake, *Disraeli* (London, 1966), p. 521). Carnarvon, who was unwell after the Scott Russell fiasco, did not attend.

[344] Address at the meeting of the Liverpool Conservative Working Men's Association on 9 January.

[345] This entry should be for Sunday 21 April.

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Wednesday 11 December (Knowsley)

A long walk and talk with Wilson Patten.[346] He looks forward gloomily to the future, has no faith in the real conservatism of working men and believes that before long the old political questions will disappear in social controversies of a very dangerous kind.

He agreed with me as to the impossibility of Disraeli again taking the Prime Ministership with any success. He said he was convinced that Disraeli would not press it; that he had told him that he had gained all he cared for and implied that he would in every way make place for any better man.

Afterwards Lady Derby asked me to walk with her and I stirred the same question, saying that I believed Derby to be at this moment the best and the only man to lead. She then said that during last summer (at the time of the Thames Embankment bill),[347] a certain number of Conservatives (among them Cairns) had communicated with Disraeli and represented to him that he had better resign in fact, that he had expressed himself quite willing to do so and especially in favour of Derby, but that he did not think that a Prime Minister in the House of Lords was possible; that he had told this to Derby who had thereupon been more and more confirmed in his unwillingness to take the lead.

I then said something to raise the question as to the leadership in the House of Commons in the event of Disraeli failing. I said that Hardy was the only person. She then said this was not Derby's view and as good as intimated that he would not accept him as his lieutenant there. I then asked whom? and she to my great surprise suggested Cross as "our best man." I observed that this would be simply impossible; that however solid Cross might be, he had not by his antecedents or position the slightest chance with the body of the Party. If really she spoke Derby's opinion it was the most extraordinary view: but I suspect it was mainly her own.[348]

[346]Col. John Wilson Patten (1802–1892), Con. MP for Lancashire North (1832–1874), Chief Secretary for Ireland (1868).

[347]The Thames Embankment (Land) Bill was introduced in the Commons by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Robert Lowe, on 8 March 1872 (*Hansard*, CCIX, col. 1742).

[348]Richard Assheton Cross (1823–1914), MP for Lancashire South-west, was a frequent visitor to Knowsley. When he called on Lady Derby in June 1872, she had used him to spread the word that there was no lack of communication between her husband and Disraeli. See D.J. Mitchell, *Cross and Tory Democracy* (New York and London, 1991), p. 48.

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