1873

Monday 5 May

Dined at Grillions and oddly enough I found myself within one seat of Disraeli. At first he wore his Egyptian sphinx-like face as if he saw and did not see me, but I thought that this was unnecessary and absurd and so I opened the conversation on a literary topic and we then talked in a very friendly, and so far as he was concerned, in a very agreeable way.

Sunday 13 July (London)

A very wet day, the rain falling in heavy semi-tropical showers. Had a long talk with Northcote in the afternoon mainly on the Persian question of Reuter's concession.[349] He was on the cautious side as I expected but able, clear and open to all fair argument.

Disraeli dined with us, the first time since our memorable schism in '68. Since then we have frequently met, but there has always been constraint. Lady Chesterfield[350] is really the authoress of this and on the whole, whatever the results, I am glad. He was very agreeable and we talked on general and indifferent subjects but after dinner the Judicature bill came up. He is or seems of opinion that it might even yet be thrown out and that Cairns is really at heart sick of it. I intimated a disposition if circumstances allowed of it and "if Cairns was not actually a consenting but an assenting party" to move to get rid of the bill on the ground that it was morally damaged, like indeed the Government. Disraeli caught at this, said he would speak to Cairns and it was understood that some communication should follow.

In conversation, Disraeli said a curious thing, speaking of the Duke of Richmond, "that he was entirely under Cairns' guidance." Curious

[349]Baron Paul Julius von Reuter (1816–1899), who founded the first news agency, had obtained a concession accorded by the Shah of Persia the previous year to be given absolute right to provide the country's transport, exploit mining potentialities, and have preference in producing manufactured goods. Details of the concession emerged only a year later. See *The Times*, 5 July 1873, p. 7.

[350]Anne Elizabeth Stanhope (1802–1885), wife of George Stanhope, 6th Earl of Chesterfield, and a confidante of Disraeli.

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but quite true. He spoke too of Cairns with some light touch of criticism, as a very able lawyer but only a lawyer.

Tuesday 15 July (London)

Met Disraeli at the Carlton and talked about the Judicature bill. He was all in favour of extinguishing it in the House of Lords and on my *intimating* a readiness if all circumstances were favourable to move something to this effect he caught at it and said that he felt sure that Cairns would be glad if I did so, as Cairns felt himself in a false position by the course he had taken and would be glad to get out of it. Later however I saw Cairns in the House and opened the subject to him, explained that I thought there was a chance of postponing it for this year when it returned to us and put it to him. He admitted that he knew that many disliked it as I did but that he did not think it would be possible to deal with the bill in this way, that "the weak kneed" members of the Party would flinch and finally that he was so bound in honour as to be unable "to support" such a motion. I replied that I considered such a conclusion fatal and intimated that I should not proceed further with the matter though I did not disguise that I had always disliked the bill and the cessation of the judicial power.

I afterwards saw Dr. Ball[351] with whom I had had much previous conversation on the subject. He regretted it but did not dispute the course I had taken.

Tuesday 22 July (London)

Conference with Disraeli in morning on Judicature billI. He wrote to ask me to come to him or to propose to come to me.[352] I accepted the latter.[353] A curious interview in which he expounded what he believed to be Cairns's state of mind of the subject.

Conversation afterwards with Vernon as to Repton School scheme. I told him I could not consent to its abandonment this year.

[351]Dr John Thomas Ball (1815–1898), Attorney-General for Ireland (1868–1875), Lord Chancellor of Ireland (1875–1880).

[352]Disraeli had written, 'At half past 5 o'clock today, Lord Cairns had agreed to sanction the defeat of the measure, and pressed on me to ensure its being sent to your House if possible tomorrow. We arranged that the Rating Bill, which was to have been thrown out, should in consequence pass. Two hours afterwards, he sent for me and said all was at sea again, in consequence of the decided opposition of Lord Derby to the proposed course' (Disraeli to Carnarvon, 22 July 1873: CP, BL 60765, fo. 11).

[353]Ibid., fo. 12.

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Thursday 24 July (London)

Judicature bill came on, and the result of all our conversations, communications etc. over the carrying of the Commons amendments with one or two exceptions. The truth is that Cairns and Richmond and Derby were all for them and even Salisbury would not vote. I spoke and I believe I spoke fairly being a good deal cheered by all our party and I turned a few votes, but after all we only divided 34 to 61, there being a good many pairs.[354]

Tuesday 7 October (Bretby)

Went out shooting with H. Lennox,[355] a fine day [. . .].

Disraeli made himself very agreeable. We talked freely enough of Political matters, though of course abstaining from reference to our old subject of division, and a great deal of literary questions where he is at home. His training as a trustee of the British Museum has given him knowledge on many of these matters.

He spoke, more to Evelyn than to me but also to me, of the late Lord Derby with little or no affection. He said he (Lord D.) had no softness or kindness of heart. Stanley, the present Lord Derby, was very different and his marriage had called out the kindlier parts of his nature. Frederick Stanley[356] he says is very attentive in his attendance in the House of Commons but needs pushing.

One of the most remarkable features in this remarkable man is the apparently total absence of personal rancour. He seems to have no feeling against those who have shown the greatest feeling against him.

He spoke of Salisbury and Hatfield in the language of a wholly indifferent bystander, allotting to Hatfield the preference over every other country house in England, oddly enough on the same grounds on which I have always said the same.

[354] *Hansard*, CCXVII, 24 July 1873, cols 886–898. Carnarvon told Disraeli afterwards, 'I am sorry for the result of Thursday night. We made the best fight we could and but for a singularly untoward combination of unlucky circumstances might have been successful' (Carnarvon to Disraeli, 26 July 1873: CP, BL 60763, fo. 13). The Judicature Act amalgamated the superior courts into two divisions, the High Court of Justice and the Court of Appeal.

[355] Lord Henry George Gordon Lennox (1821–1886), third son of 5th Duke of Richmond. Con. MP for Chichester (1866–1885), Secretary to the Admiralty (1866–1868), Commissioner of Public Works (1874–1876).

[356] Frederick Arthur Stanley (1841–1908), younger son of 14th Earl of Derby. Con. MP for Lancashire North (1868–1885) and for Blackpool (1885–1886), Civil Lord of the Admiralty (1868), Secretary of State for War (1878–1880), Colonial Secretary (1885–1886), President of the Board of Trade (1886–1888), Governor-General of Canada (1888–1893), succeeded his brother as 16th Earl of Derby (1893).

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Friday 10 October (Bretby)

I took a long stroll with Disraeli through the Park. His conversation is of an agreeable kind – easy, with truth anecdote, occasionally a sparkle of genius, and often inclining to the dreamy not to say mystic. Anything of a poetical sort seems to attract him and his mind has much more *classical* culture than I had supposed. I fancy it has been obtained through German rather than English sources. Speaking of death he said to me "when the curtain falls I avert my eyes and dare not look beyond", and yet he acquiesced heartily when I said afterwards that it was far harder to disbelieve than to believe. He spoke of recent discoveries having given a real historical value to the Scripture records. It would be hard to say what are the limits of his religious belief.

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