1916

5 January

Introduction by the P.M. of the Compulsory Service Bill in the fullest House since the first few weeks of the War. A large number of members in khaki.

6 January

First reading of the Compulsion Bill carried by 405 against 105. A notable feature of the debate is a fervent speech supporting the Bill by John Ward,[1] the navvies' member now a Colonel in the Army.

The 3 Labour members of the Government including Brace,[2] my successor at the H.O., resign their offices.

11 January

Last meeting (I hope) of the Women's Employment Committee. It has been a very weary job composing the endless differences of the H.O. and Bd. of Trade members of this Committee.

[1]John Ward (1866–1934): trades unionist; MP for Stoke-upon-Trent and a successor constituency 1906–1929, first as a Lib-Lab, as a Lib. Coalitionist from 1918, and as Constitutionalist from 1924, rejoining the Liberal Party later that year. During the First World War he served in France with the 21st Middlesex regiment, of which he was lieutenant colonel.

[2]William Brace (1865–1947): Lab. MP for South Glamorgan 1906–1918 (initially Lib-Lab), Abertillery 1918–1920; Under-Secretary for Home Affairs 1915–1919. The other Labour ministers were Arthur Henderson, President of the Board of Education, and George Henry Roberts (1868–1928), Lord Commissioner of the Treasury. The resignations were rescinded after assurances were given that the proposed Military Service Act would not be used for the purposes of industrial conscription.

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19 January

Eric back to Summer Fields in charge of Antony Asquith[3] and young Runciman.[4] Mrs. Asquith at the station to see her boy off. She brings us all back to Montagu Sq. in her motor car discussing excitedly Northcliffe's attacks on the P.M. She evidently thinks that N. has some personal grudge against the P.M. – a mistaken impression that we do our best to dispel. She tells us that the P.M. works at his papers for two or three hours after his game of Bridge in the evening.

15 February

Opening of the new Session of Parliament. The King presented by a Commission of five peers in the H. of Lords and his speech read by the Lord Chancellor.

16 February

Short speech in the H. of C. in favour of the establishment of a department or Ministry for Air Service.

23 February

Conference at the H.O. with a view to settling a dispute in the clothing trade.

29 February

To the Board of Trade to arrange with Walter Runciman the personnel of the new public committee (superseding the recent inter-departmental committee) to consider the substitution of women for men in industries during the War.

[3]Anthony Asquith (1902–1968): youngest son of H.H. and his second wife Margot; became a successful film director.

[4]James Cochran Stevenson Runciman (1903–2000): third child of Walter Runciman; known as Steven; became an historian; knighted 1958.

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3 March

First meeting of the new Committee on Women's employment at the Board of Trade.

In the afternoon Turkish bath at the Automobile Club where I meet three men whose names in their several ways are as well-known as any in England – Sir John Dewar,[5] the head of the great whiskey firm, John Redmond (eagle-like and still dignified even in the scanty blue cotton wrapper of the hot rooms) and Winston Churchill, just back from the Front. In Winston's case the care that sits on the faded cheek of the statesman has been lost in the trenches and he has a fine healthy colour. He asks after Northcliffe and Rothermere and takes a cheerful view of the Allied prospects on the West front. Referring to the great fight now raging round Verdun [he] is always willing to exchange so many yards of ground for so many German bodies. 'I have always been against these local offensives,' he says. He has some thought of taking part in the debate on Naval estimates on Tuesday.

7 March

Winston is as good as or better than his word. He makes a sensational attack on Admiralty policy, following Balfour's introductory speech on the estimates.

Em and Daff to Luton for annual meeting of Liberal Women.

8 March

Correspondence at home before lunch. At 2 o'clock I preside at annual meeting of the Fisheries Organization Society (a legacy from my Board of Agriculture & Fisheries days); at 3 I attend meeting of Labour Exchange officials; at 5 I preside at Council meeting of the Garden Cities Association, and I have just time to get back to the H. of C. to meet the employers in the Wholesale Clothing trade whose men are threatening to strike. I who formed a resolve early in public life that I would not be rushed about from one committee meeting or other engagement to another!

[5]John Alexander Dewar (1856–1929): whisky blender; brother of Thomas Dewar; Lib. MP for Inverness-shire from 1900–1916; cr. baronet 1907; cr. 1st Baron Forteviot 1916.

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18 March

Daily Mail office to see Mr. Basil Clarke.[6] The D.M. is taking much interest in the question of substituting women for enlisted men.

On my way home after lunching at the Reform I walk through Hyde Park where there is a demonstration of married attested men.[7] They are demanding: (1) that unmarried exempted men shall be taken out of Munitions works etc. and put into the Army; (2) that the unattested married men of military age shall be compelled to join; (3) that adequate financial provision shall be made for enlisted married men. Their spokesmen threaten the Government with all sorts of difficulties unless these things are done.

21 March

I dine this evening with Alfred and Mary to meet Mr. William Morris Hughes[8] the Labour Prime Minister of Australia. He has made a great impression here with his finely expressive speeches on the War. He is a small delicate man and very deaf.

22 March
Luton.

Annual meeting of the South Beds Liberal Association where, in the evening, I make a speech on the War – party politics being wholly barred at this time.

During the day I visit two large engineering firms – Kent's and Davis's – both now chiefly engaged in making fuses (Kent's) and shells, hand-grenades and rifle-grenades (Davis's). Both places buzzing with activity. Hundreds and hundreds of girls in blue overalls and caps at Kent's, working with great skill on the machines used in the many processes of fuse-making.

[6]Basil Clarke (d. 1947 at age 68): journalist and subsequently public information official; knighted 1923.

[7]Under the Derby recruiting scheme of 1915, married men were encouraged to 'attest' their willingness to join up if the war situation were to demand it.

[8]William Morris Hughes (1862–1952): Prime Minister of Australia 1915–1923, initially as leader of the Labor Party and subsequently as leader of the Nationalist Party, which he founded. A member of the British delegation to the Paris Peace conference in 1919.

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Kent's have a great new works at Chaul End outside Luton for fuse-filling.

29 March

A painful incident in the House today. Just as Percy Harris,[9] the new member for Market Harborough, was taking the oath at the table, an officer began clambering over the railing of the Ambassadors Gallery to the left of the clock. His movements were swift and athletic and in a moment he was hanging by his hands looking about for a clear spot to drop among the group of members behind the Bar. We were all too much astonished even to exclaim. The officer let himself go, and fell, out of my sight, among the members. He was on his feet in an instant with some words about calling on the H. of C. to protect the heads of our soldiers against shrapnel. He was led out unresistingly. He seems to be a Lieut. Turnbull, R.A.M.C.[10]

4 March

McKenna makes another of his short and brilliantly clear Budget statements. It is my duty as his Parliamentary Secy. to send him along a glass of something for his voice – this time it is white and thick with perhaps a suspicion of rum in it. His butler is late with it and keeps me very fidgety until he arrives.

Such figures! Estimated total revenue for 1916–17: £502,275,000. Estimated Expenditure: £1,825,380,000.

6 April

Budget resolutions. Desultory debate all day. About 9.30 I go home with McKenna and dine with him, Mrs. McK., Lady Jekyll and J.H. Whitehouse, M.P.

[9]Percy Alfred Harris (1876–1952): Lib. candidate for Harrow Jan. 1910; Lib. MP for Market Harborough 1916–1918; Bethnal Green 1922–1945; Chief Whip 1935–1945; cr. baronet 1932.

[10]Dr Arthur Turnbull (? b.1884): a lieutenant in the Royal Army Medical Corps. He subsequently wrote to *The Times* apologising for his course of action; fought three by-elections as an Independent during 1916.

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McKenna shows me the King's cheque for £100,000 – H.M.'s 'War Savings' to be devoted to any purpose approved by the Govt. The King banks at Coutts's.

10 April

H. of C. Second Reading of the Bill embodying the new taxes on mineral waters, amusements, matches and railway tickets.

At 8 o'clock to the Sylvan Debating Club at the Tavistock Hotel. A larger attendance than I have ever seen at the Club to hear Alfred (Northcliffe) speak on his experiences during his 6 visits to the Front and on the shortcomings of the two successive War Governments. A most interesting discourse.

11 April

I go down to Lancashire to preside at a Conference of employers and operatives in the Cotton trade – the object being to devise means for bringing back to the trade married women weavers who have left it. There are other women temporarily unemployed because the mills in which they ordinarily work are shut down.

17 April

Cabinet crisis at its height. The question is whether conscription shall be extended to (1) the unattested married men and (2) young men of 18. The P.M.'s pledge that he will not remain head of a Government that makes itself responsible or an extension of the compulsory principle is thought to be an insurmountable difficulty.

18 April

In the House today the P.M.'s statement in regard to the recruiting crisis is postponed owing, as he says, to there being some outstanding points without which his statement would be 'incomplete and inadequate'. The House adjourns very early and I go home with Walter Runciman to tea. He tells me that but for Ll.-George the Cabinet difficulties would have been accommodated – that Ll.-G.

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assailed the P.M. very bitterly in a recent Cabinet. W.R. is far more deeply concerned himself about the shipping and shipbuilding questions than about recruiting. He shows me urgent memoranda on these questions circulated by him to the Cabinet.

19 April

The P.M.'s statement again postponed – this time until Tuesday next. He speaks now frankly of Cabinet dissensions that threaten the break-up of the Government. A crowded and excited House (many soldier members having been called back from the Front) and such a 'Lobby' as has scarcely been seen since the War began.

Sitting next Carson on the Front Opposition Bench he tells me of the P.M.'s fine courtesy and great patience in Cabinet but also of his utter lack of initiative, his main object on all occasions of difficulty being to contrive a formula that would cover difference of opinion instead of putting his foot down and insisting on having his way. The House rises early again and I go over to the Treasury to talk to McKenna. I point out to him that the best friends of the P.M. are distressed and uneasy and that most of them know nothing about the actual state of affairs except what they read in the accounts of Lobby correspondents in the papers. I urge strongly that the Government should have the matter discussed in the House sitting with closed doors and that the House should be taken frankly into the confidence of the Government. There can be no more danger in this, I suggest, than in the bruiting abroad of all sorts of rumours in newspapers pretty accurately primed by Ll.-George and his supporters.

20 April

At lunch at the Reform today, I sit with Alfred Spender, editor of the *Westminster Gazette*, and McKenna,[11] the Chancellor's brother. I take up my parable about the desirability of the Government's holding a sitting of the House with closed doors and telling members the plain truth about the situation. My suggestion is scouted as wholly impracticable and I am overwhelmed with a *great* wealth of arguments. We grow quite warm about it in fact and have not left our places at the table when Mackinnon Wood, the Scotch Secretary, comes along to tell us that the crisis is over and that the sitting on Tuesday is to be *in camera*!

[11] McKenna had four brothers; it is unclear which one is referred to here.

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25 April

This is the day of the Secret Session of Parliament and of much sensational news.

The first thing we hear at the H. of C. is that the Sinn Feiners have broken loose in Dublin, have taken possession of the G.P.O., the railway stations and other strategic points and are virtually in control of the Capital. There are rumours that the Under-Secretary, Sir M. Nathan,[12] is a prisoner in Dublin Castle and that even the Lord Lt. is in the hands of the insurgents. Mr. Redmond looking very haggard, and deep gloom generally prevails among the Nationalist members. It is felt that once again the fruition of national aspirations has been frustrated by the folly of the Irish people themselves.

The Secret Session is a comparatively tame affair. After strangers have withdrawn on the P.M.'s intimation to the Chair members overflow into the Peers', Distinguished Strangers' and Press Galleries and the P.M. makes a long statement of which only two or three points are of a really confidential nature. Carson, who replies, is critical enough but seems not inclined to carry his motion of censure to a Division. By dinner-time the House is nearly empty though excellent speeches continue to be made from time to time.

Of other sensational events a Zeppelin attack on the E. Coast and the bombardment of Lowestoft and Yarmouth by a German light squadron are the most important.

26 April

Communications with Dublin still interrupted. Em sends three prepaid telegrams to various relations and none are answered.

In the H. of C. the news is that Sir M. Nathan is really a prisoner but finds means in some way not fully explained to communicate by wireless with the Government. Some officers, returning from the races at Fairyhouse, taken as hostages by the rebels. Liberty Hall, near the Custom House, the headquarters of the insurgents, shelled to pieces by a gunboat operating in the river. Minor outbreaks reported from Swords and Lusk, from Ardee and from Drogheda.

In the House the depression of the Nationalists is set off by the unconcealed elation of the Ulster men.

[12] Matthew Nathan (1862–1939): Under-Secretary for Ireland 1914–1916, having previously held various colonial governorships; Governor of Queensland 1920–1925; knighted 1899.

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T.W. Russell tells me that the Irish Civil Service and especially the Post Office is packed with Sinn Feiners.

Second day of the Secret Session. A great deal of very frank criticism of the Government but again no real secrets are divulged.

2 May

P.M. announces that the Cabinet have decided to complete the circle of military compulsion.

3 May

At Question time Birrell appears sitting at the corner above the gangway on the bench immediately behind Ministers. He makes a frank explanation of the causes that have led to his resignation and is heard with much sympathy in every part of the House. The P.M., Carson and Redmond all make generous little speeches – Carson's coming with special grace from that dark incarnation of the Ulster spirit.

The P.M. introduces the Second Compulsory Bill – bringing in, that is, the unattested married men, the lads of 18 and making other minor provisions.

General Maxwell[13] announces that all the surviving Irish rebels have surrendered. It is also officially announced that Patrick Pearse,[14] Thomas MacDonagh[15] and Clarke,[16] three of the ringleaders, have been shot this morning.

I spend the afternoon with McKenna at the Treasury.

9 May

H. of C. Second Military Service (Compulsion) Bill. We sit late.

[13]John Grenfell Maxwell (1859–1929): army officer; Major General 1906; appointed as commanding officer with dictatorial powers following the Easter Rising of 1916; responsible for the disastrous decision to shoot fifteen of the rebels; knighted 1915.

[14]Patrick Henry Pearse (1879–1916): President of the provisional Irish Republic that the rebels declared.

[15]Thomas Stanislaus MacDonagh (1878–1916): poet, one of seven signatories to the proclamation of the Republic.

[16]Thomas James Clarke, (1858–1916): a significant figure in the Irish Republican Brotherhood, first signatory to the proclamation of the Republic.

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I find myself in mixed company on the front Opposition Bench these days. There is the grim-visaged Carson who is so gentle and even communicative in private conversation: Winston fresh from the trenches and full of hostility to the Government of which he was so recently a member: Sir F. Banbury,[17] the arch-obstructionist in old party days and now so impatient of the speeches of members below the gangway on the other side: Ellis Griffith, an ex-Under Secretary Home Office like myself, a brilliant critic of the unfortunate Government: Sir James Dougherty, formerly permanent Under Secretary in Ireland and full of inside information about Irish affairs: C.E.H. Hobhouse[18] who was once unaccountably a Cabinet Minister and whose bitterness against the Government is only restrained by his eagerness for another job: 'Tommy' Lough,[19] H.M.L.[20] for County Cavan (why?), an impulsive Irish tea-merchant who was 'stellenbosched'[21] in the early days of the 1906 Government: J.M. Robertson,[22] one of the junior ministers who like myself was displaced at the formation of the Coalition, a profound authority on Free Trade and Elizabethan literature: Sir Alfred Mond,[23] an 'Hebrew Jew', and with all his thick utterance and swarthy appearance well-nigh as able a man as there is in the House: Duke, K.C.,[24] the 'heavy father' of our group: Lord Claud Hamilton,[25] who was a junior Lord before I was born and who is one of the few aristocratic-looking aristocrats of our time: Sir

[17]Frederick George Banbury (1850–1936): Con. MP for Peckham 1892–1906; City of London 1906–1924; cr. baronet 1903; privy councillor 1916; cr. 1st Baron Banbury of Southam 1924.

[18]Charles Edward Henry Hobhouse (1862–1941): Lib. MP for Wiltshire East 1892–195; Bristol East 1900–1918; Under-Secretary of State for India 1907–1908; Financial Secretary to the Treasury 1908–1911; Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 1911–1914; Postmaster General 1914–1915; succ. as 4th baronet 1916.

[19]Thomas Lough (1850–1922): Lib. candidate for Truro 1886; Lib. MP for West Islington 1892–1918; Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education 1905–198.

[20]His Majesty's Lieutenant, or Lord Lieutenant, a largely honorific position.

[21]i.e. dismissed for inadequacy. During the Boer War incompetent British officers were sent to a camp at Stellenbosch in order to await transport to Britain. In his ministerial role, Lough had handled the government's Education Bill poorly.

[22]John Mackinnon Robertson (1856–1933): freethinker and rationalist author; independent Radical candidate for Northampton 1895; Lib. MP for Tyneside 1906–1918; Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade 1911–1915.

[23]Alfred Moritz Mond (1868–1930): industrialist; Lib. MP for Chester 1906–1910; Swansea 1910–1923, 1924–1928 (joining the Conservative Party in 1926); First Commissioner of Works 1916–21; Minister of Health 1921–1922; cr. baronet 1910; cr. Baron Melchett of Landford 1928.

[24]Henry Edward Duke (1855–1939): called to the Bar 1885; served as a judge from 1897–1933; QC 1899; Unionist MP for Plymouth 1900–1906; Exeter Jan. 1910–1918; Chief Secretary for Ireland 1916–1918; cr. Baron Merrivale of Walkhampton 1925.

[25]Lord Claud John Hamilton (1843–1925): Con. MP for Londonderry City 1865–1868; King's Lynn 1869–1880; Liverpool 1880–1885; Liverpool West Derby 1885–1888; South

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George Reid, an Australian statesman and as round as a barrel: Sir R. Finlay, K.C.,[26] a dour old Scotsman who has been a Tory Law Officer and who has been disappointed of the Woolsack: Stuart Wortley,[27] a third Home Office Under Secretary: and half a dozen other ex-Ministers and Privy Councillors. We are united by one sentiment only – namely, that, if only we had continued in such and such an office, such and such egregious blunders would not have been committed. There is a flutter of expectancy amongst us when any ministerial office falls vacant. When the appointment is made we relapse into our customary attitude of critical observation of the Government. In less anxious times than these it would be a delight to hob-nob day by day with this ill-assorted but entirely friendly crowd of greater or lesser political derelicts.

10 May

In the House the Irish members call for a discussion on the Military executions now taking place in Ireland. The debate is set down first order for tomorrow.

11 May

Discussion on the rebellion in Ireland. Dillon makes a characteristically bitter speech.

Military Service Bill in Committee. Having nothing more useful to do I sit out the Debate and make 3 small speeches.

17 May

The House rises early today. John Simon takes me to the Garrick Club where we dine pleasantly in the fine room full of handsome pictures.

Kensington Jan. 1910–1918; served as Lord of the Treasury 1868; Chairman of the Great Eastern Railway.

[26]Robert Bannatyne Finlay, (1842–1929): called to the Bar 1867; QC 1882; Lib. candidate for East Lothian 1883; Lib. then Lib. Unionist MP for Inverness Burghs 1885–1892, 1895–1906; Edinburgh and St. Andrew's Universities Jan. 1910–1916; Solicitor General 1895–1900; Attorney General 1900–1905; Lord Chancellor 1916–1919; knighted 1895; cr. Baron Finlay 1916; cr. Viscount Finlay 1919.

[27]Charles Beilby Stuart-Wortley (1851–1926): called to the Bar 1886; QC 1892; Con. candidate for Sheffield 1879; Con. MP for Sheffield 1880–1885; Sheffield Hallam 1885–1916; Under-Secretary at the Home Office 1885–1886, 1886–1892; cr Lord Stuart of Wortley 1916.

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Simon is a varied and resourceful talker with a touch of pedantry. He tells me that it is at 'The Club'? of which he is a member that the best modern conversation is heard. He has been present when the P.M. and two ex-P.M.'s (Rosebery and Balfour) were capping one another's stories in delightful style.

18 May

Lunch today at the McKenna's. Lord and Lady Pirrie,[28] Mr. and Mrs. Runciman[29] and Vaughan Nash there. The talk on the scribbling and other meditative tricks of members of the Cabinet in Cabinet. Balfour draws very pretty little ink sketches of Scotch scenery with groups of pines, using blue and red pencils for some of his effects. F.E. Smith produces a coin from his pocket, places a piece of paper over it and takes a 'rubbing' of it with a lead pencil. Bonar Law covers sheet after sheet of official stationery with spirals [. . .] McKenna draws endless carefully balanced geometrical designs. Winston Churchill's trick was to roll neat cylinders of paper and to tuck the open ends into one another, generally in a triangular form. The PM is always writing letters supposed to begin invariably 'Dearest —'. [Later: Letters to 'Hilda' no doubt.[30] C.H. 6/2/1934.] Much laughter at this.

19 May
Shelbourne Hotel, Dublin.

Lovely May morning. No signs of the late Rebellion save a Martial Law Proclamation here and there, some bullet holes in the lower windows of the Shelbourne and I see from my window long mounds of newly-turned earth in St. Stephen's Green – the parapets, I suppose, of the Sinn Fein trenches. (No – these are only road-mending materials. The

[28]William James Pirrie (1847–1924): Chairman of the Belfast shipbuilders Harland and Wolff from 1895; Comptroller of the Household of the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland 1907–1913; cr. Baron Pirrie 1906; cr. Viscount Pirrie 1921; m. Margaret Montgomery Carlisle (1857–1935) 1879.

[29]Hilda Runciman, née Stevenson (1869–1956): m. Walter Runciman 1898; Lib. MP for St. Ives 1928–1929; Lib. candidate for Tavistock 1929; became Viscountess Runciman of Doxford in 1937 when her husband was elevated to the peerage.

[30]Hilda Harrisson (1887–1972): widow of Captain Roland Harrisson (1882–1917); painter; one of several Asquith confidantes.

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'trenches' were no more than shallow scrapes among the trees at the corners of the Green.)

Em and Daff arrive two or three hours after me by the North Wall boat.

We go off to Sackville Street to see the ruins. The E. side completely wrecked as far as Nelson's Pillar. On the W. side there is a much shattered block standing and then ruins as far as the G.P.O., the outer shell only of which stands still complete. The devastation extends far down the side streets and is of much greater extent than I had imagined.

Lucas,[31] Dot, Enid and Lady Castlemaine[32] lunch with us. Afterwards I tour round the city with the Kings in their car, visiting. King Street where some of the fiercest fighting took place and the Linenhall Barracks now a gigantic ruin. The number of houses riddled with bullets is beyond counting in different parts of the city the College of Surgeons and houses adjoining, the Four Courts and many houses on that side of the river, together with almost every house in King Street.

21 May

To Roebuck Hall to lunch. [. . .] Dr. Mahaffy full of the exploits of the T.C.D. Officers' Training Corps a handful of whom manned the front of the College and saved the Bank and the heart of the City. They had a machine gun on the roof of the northern abutment and swept Westmoreland Street, Carlisle Bridge and Lower Sackville Street. All this under the skilful direction of Alton F.T.C.D.,[33] whom Mahaffy has recommended to the P.M. for the D.S.O. Dr. Mahaffy very scornful of the 'minor poets' who led the Rebellion and attributing much of their fatal enthusiasm to the study of the Irish language.

22 May

Lunch with Lucas in the Fellows' Common Room T.C.D. With us Alton and Prof. Starkie.[34] All agree that the present regime must go

[31] i.e. Lucas White King.

[32] Annie Evelyn Barrington (d. 1955): m. Albert Edward Handcock, 5th Baron Castlemaine 1895.

[33] Ernest Henry Alton (*c.*1873–1952): Fellow of TCD from 1905; Chair of Latin 1921–1942; Provost 1942–1952.

[34] William Joseph Myles Starkie (1860–1920): President of Queen's College, Galway, 1897–1899; Resident Commissioner of National Education in Ireland 1899–1920.

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and that in some way Irishmen must be associated with Irish Govt. Lord Macdonnell is mentioned as a possible Chief Secy. but there is the difficulty that he is a peer.

(I forgot to mention that Asquith told Mahaffy the two things that most pleased him during his visit to Ireland were the Provost's House and the beautiful gorse of County Cork!)

After lunch we fetch Em and Daff from the Shelbourne and all in the motor-car on a further tour of inspection of the damaged parts of the City – the City Hall, Four Courts, the City of Dublin Distillery and Boland's bread factory.

We dive with Lucas into sundry musty old curiosity shops on and about the Quays, looking for rebellion relics. No Sinn Fein stamps or rebel Proclamations to be had for love or money. A belt, a copy of the 'War News', and two or three Irish Volunteer and republican buttons comprise our bag.

24 May

We dine with the Archbishop and Mrs. Bernard. John Dublin's[35] view is that two first steps are necessary at the present unhappy juncture in Irish affairs (1) the maintenance of a very strong garrison and (2) the pardoning of the rank and file of the rebels now in prison in Ireland and England while at the same time and as a part of the same policy making it clear that the imprisoned ringleaders will not be amnestied but must work out their sentences to the bitter end.

I receive a telegram from Alfred Northcliffe saying that he has shown my recent letter to Lloyd-George and asking me to stay on in Dublin for some days longer. He is busy in London trying with Ll.-G. to solve the Irish problem.

A story of the Rebellion. While the populace were looting a shop in Henry Street a woman who was vainly struggling to carry away groceries and other goods beyond her physical capacity was heard to exclaim – 'Glory be to Mary, why didn't I bring me ass an' cart!'

25, 26 & 27 May

I have no daily record of this period. On Thursday Em and Daft went down to spend the night with the Bernards of Bernard Castle,

[35] i.e. Bernard. The Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin signed himself 'John Dublin'.

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Kinnety while I stay in Dublin to track down Wm. M. Murphy,[36] the great tramway magnate and owner of the *Daily Independent* whom Alfred and Ll.-G. regard as an essential element in the negociations now going on for the settlement of the Irish question. The role of Pacificator has been assigned to Ll.-G. by the Cabinet and he has not only Liberal opinion with him but almost the whole of British Unionist opinion too. Murphy's newspaper has all along maintained an attitude aloof from that of the regular Nationalist party. It has been severely critical of the Home Rule Bill and has usually been less than cordial to the Nationalist leaders. With its circulation of 120,000 a day it is a power to be reckoned with, especially if it is assumed that large numbers of its readers share its opinions. Clearly, Murphy and the *Independent* cannot be left out of account in any proposals for 'settling' Ireland.

29 May

We spend the morning at the Hardinge (Rebellion) Commission[37] now sitting in one of the rooms of the Shelbourne. We hear the evidence of two ex-police officers, Sir J. Ross[38] of Bladensburg and Mr. Harrel.[39] Their evidence strengthens the impression that during recent years there has been no government in Ireland, Castle or other.

2 June

A telegram from Alfred saying that he and Ll.-G., want me to see prominent Dublin business men and sound them as to the present situation. I see Mr. George Stewart,[40] Governor (last year) of the

[36]William Martin Murphy (1844–1919); tramway entrepreneur and press magnate; Irish Nat. MP for St. Patrick's, Dublin 1885–1892; candidate for Kerry South 1895; Mayo North 1900.

[37]The Royal Commission on the Rebellion in Ireland, chaired by Lord Hardinge of Penshurst, reported in June 1916.

[38]John Foster George Ross (d. 1926 at age 77); Chief Commissioner of the Dublin Metropolitan Police 1901–1914; resigned in protest at the dismissal of W.V. Harrel (see following note); knighted 1903.

[39]William Vesey Harrel (1866–1956); Assistant Commissioner of the Dublin Police for twelve years prior to 1914, when he was dismissed in the wake of the Howth gun-running affair, in which a Nationalist attempt to land weapons was followed by the shooting of unarmed civilians by the authorities.

[40]George Francis Stewart (1851–1928): land agent; Irish Unionist.

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Bank of Ireland and Sir Wm. Goulding, Bart.,[41] Chairman of the Irish Railway Clearing House and of the Great S. & W. Railway etc. Both mild Unionists but agreed that Home Rule must ultimately come. They deprecate, however, any instalment of H.R. at this present juncture – Mr. Stewart because such a concession would be regarded as a triumph for the Sinn Feiners, Sir Wm. Goulding rather because he thinks Redmond has lost so much influence that he could not govern Ireland. The exclusion of the recalcitrant Ulster counties necessary in any case. Both much prefer a *governing* Lord Lieutenant, with a nominated Council of Irishmen.

3 June

I call this morning at the Castle on Herbert Samuel, Home Secretary, who is over to settle the question of compensation to property owners in Dublin for damage caused during the Rebellion and on Sir Robert Chalmers[42] of the Treasury who has been over here as Under Secretary since just after the Rebellion. Poor Chalmers by no means happy in his novel and difficult position. He regards himself as exiled and is visibly delighted to have a Minister from England to support him. He greets me with effusion as a comrade from the Treasury. Chalmers *is* the Irish Government so far as it is not in the hands of General Maxwell.

I lunch with Samuel, Chalmers and Sir J. Barran, M.P.,[43] Samuel's parliamentary fag, at the Hibernian Hotel, and we then drive out in a military car to see the rhododendrons at Howth Castle. We trudge to the top of the hill, Chalmers toiling up the rugged path in a big overcoat and mighty glad to rest on the turf with a splendid view before him of Dublin Bay, Clontarf, Sutton, Portmarnock and even of the Mourne Mountains. [. . .]

Samuel and Barran are dreadfully 'English' in their opinions of Ireland and know as much about it as I do of Ceylon, and Chalmers frankly loathes his job. The P.M. sent him here and he will stay, I suppose, until it has been decided how Ireland is to be governed. He

[41]William Joshua Goulding (1856–1925); member of the Irish Convention 1917–1918; subsequently member of the Irish Free State Senate; cr. baronet 1904.

[42]Robert Chalmers (1858–1938): Treasury civil servant 1882–1919, including a period as Permanent Secretary (1911–1913): and with a break during which he served as Governor of Ceylon (1913–1915). From May to September 1916 he served as Under-Secretary for Ireland. Knighted 1900; cr. Baron Chalmers of Northiam 1919.

[43]John Nicholson Barran (1872–1952); Lib. MP for Hawick Burghs 1909–1918; Lib. candidate for North-West Hull 1922, 1923 and 1924; succ. as 2nd baronet 1905. During his Commons career he served as PPS to a succession of ministers, including Samuel.

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wishes to Heaven I were to come to Ireland as Chief Secretary thinking that with my views and my knowledge of Ireland we together would have no difficulty in managing the country – which shows that he too knows very little about it. The distinguished statesmen *will* pronounce the 'th' in Howth and Louth hard. These little things count in Ireland.

5 June

Lucas fetches me off in the morning and introduces me to some important business men at the Chamber of Commerce. We discuss the proposed H. Rule settlement, all my new friends being resolutely opposed to the exclusion of Ulster as well on business as on other grounds.

After lunch the Archbishop calls for me and we go to the Palace and smoke a pipe or two together. Again the topic is the 'settlement' of Ireland. John Dublin has been asked to send his views to Ll.-George and has done so.

10 June

We leave Dublin for London by the morning mail. As wet and dreary a June day as ever I saw.

20 June

To 11 Downing Street at 9.15 to breakfast with the Minister of Munitions. I find Ll.-G. bending over a map of the Western Front, looking for the places where his sons are. He greets me cordially and tells me that he is much obliged for the information which I sent to him through Alfred from Ireland and that he found it perfectly accurate. Referring to the negociations for the Irish settlement he says that there is trouble with some of the Unionist members of the Government. I urge him to *force* a settlement if it comes to – that to 'jump with both feet' on obstruction.

We repair to the breakfast room where Mrs. Ll.-G. ('Maggie', Ll.-G. calls her), one of their daughters in nurse's uniform, and Prof. Pares,[44]

[44]Bernard Pares (1867–1949): professor of Russian language, literature and history at London University 1919–1936; spent much time in Russia during and after the First World War, becoming an adviser to the anti-Bolshevik forces during the civil war; knighted 1919.

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the great authority on Russia, join us. It is a simple domestic party, each of us fetching his or her fish, or bacon and eggs from a side table. Ll.-G. is as brisk at this early hour as most other people are when the world is well-aired and hums a cheerful stave as he moves to and from the side-table. He drops the Irish question when Pares comes in and discusses the prospects of the Russian offensive in Buchovina with much animation. He doubts whether the Russians have yet munitions sufficient for a campaign all along their extended front.

The conversation turns on the similarity between Russian and some of the Balkan languages. Pares says that a Russian can understand these cognate languages (Serbian was specially mentioned, I think) with a little practice. Ll.-G. says that when he has heard the Bretons talk it was as if he were listening to Welsh spoken indistinctly. He thinks he could pick up Breton in a month or so.

Immediately after breakfast and a small cigar Ll.-G. goes next door to see the P.M. There is direct communication through between No. 11 and No. 10. His parting words to me are to supply him with any further Irish information that comes my way and mine to him to stand no nonsense and to compel if necessary a settlement of Ireland. The breakfasts at No. 11 are famous and I quite enjoyed the experience though I am not myself good for much so early in the day. They do say that many a political plot has been hatched over the bacon and eggs at No. 11.

4 July

Small business in the H. of C. All the talk in the smoking-room is of the great British offensive and of the still pending Irish settlement. Lord Lansdowne, Walter Long and Lord Robert Cecil said to be still recalcitrant.

5 July

Lunch with Harold at 10A Duchess Street. With him are Lord Charles Beresford[45] and Lord Murray of Elibank. 'Charlie' Beresford gives us an interesting account of the part he played on Sunday August 2 1914 when it was yet uncertain whether we should join in or not. On that

[45]Charles William de la Poer Beresford (1846–1919): high-ranking and controversial naval officer; Conservative MP for East Marylebone 1885–1992, Woolwich, 1902–1903, Portsmouth 1910–1916; cr. Baron Beresford 1916.

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day he called two or three times on the French Ambassador (Cambon)[46] and the Russian Ambassador (Benckendorff)[47] and found them both ringing their hands at the prospect of our standing put. He called, too, on Balfour, the only leader of the Opposition in town. Learning that Bonar Law was 'week-ending' at his riverside place near Reading the vigorous old sailor proceeded there immediately and found B.L. and F.E. Smith playing tennis! He had some difficulty in persuading B.L. of the extreme gravity of the crisis but he was successful at last in getting him to confer without delay with Lord Lansdowne. The result was the famous letter signed by Lord L. and B.L., assuring the Liberal Government of the whole support of the Opposition in any action they chose to take. [But Charlie Beresford's stories were always taken by those who knew him with many a grain of salt.]

7 July

An emergency meeting at the Board of Trade of the Women's Employment Committee. The question is whether the Government should be advised by us to interfere (by administrative action or otherwise) to prevent women in poorly-paid employments from going into munitions works. A typical case is that of Carlisle where women's wages are low and where they are only waiting until the Government munitions works at Gretna is opened to transfer their services. We fail to agree and decide merely to state the case for the powers that be.

10 July

In the H. of C. the P.M. makes his formal statement as to the result of the negociations for the settlement of Irish affairs.

Then the 2nd Reading of the Small Holding Colonies Bill which comes down to us from the Lords and which affects to cope with the huge problem of putting on the land our soldiers and sailors after the War by providing in Great Britain 8,000 acres for experimental small holding colonies! I join in the chorus of dissatisfaction at these meagre proposals.

[46] Paul Cambon (1843–1924): French Ambassador to Britain 1898–1920.

[47] Count Alexander Konstantinovich Benckendorff (1849–1917): Russian ambassador to Britain1903–1917.

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Jesse Collings[48] at 85 years of age takes an effective part in the debate. The famous old champion of the agricultural labourer reads his notes and quotations from Reports etc. without the aid of glasses.

24 July

A hot Irish debate in the H. of C. The Lloyd-George settlement has broken down and the Nationalists talk of going into vigorous opposition to the Coalition. Fine conciliatory speech by Carson – one of the half dozen utterances in point of importance and effectiveness of my time in the House.

31 July

In the H. of C. the P.M. announces the definite break-down of Ll.-G.'s Irish negociations and the re-establishment, for the time being, of Castle Government.

9 August

At the Treasury there is a discussion – McKenna, Mackinnon Wood, and Sir Thomas Heath[49] – as to whether it is possible to relieve the Lord Lieutenant *[of Ireland]* of a part of the Income Tax charges on his official salary of £20,000 a year. Income Tax and Super Tax come to 8/6 in the £1 and there is besides a standing charge of £2,000 a year and more for the gardens of the Viceregal Lodge. His Excellency is very hard hit by War taxation. It is decided to enquire whether £15,000 of the salary may be regarded as an 'allowance' and so relieved of taxation.

[48]Jesse Collings (1831–1920): advocate of land reform and follower of Joseph Chamberlain; Mayor of Birmingham 1878–1880; Lib. MP for Ipswich 1880–1886; Lib. Unionist MP for Birmingham Bordesley 1886–1918; Under-Secretary to the Home Office 1895–1902.

[49]Thomas Little Heath (1861–1940): civil servant; joint Permanent Secretary to the Treasury 1913–1919; knighted 1909.

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17 August

It is just as well we are breaking up in the H. of C. in a few days. The House is tired and tempers are rising especially among my colleagues on the front Opposition bench. Carson is snappy and Winston positively rude to his late friends on the Treasury bench. I think he must feel that he has made a mess of things. His retirement from the Admiralty a year ago evoked no popular emotion. People thought he was doing a sporting thing when he joined his Regiment at the Front and they don't understand why he so soon deserted the trenches. Meanwhile neither wing of the Coalition seems anxious for his return to office indeed I hear that the Tories have flatly refused to have him back. His manner is specially offensive to the P.M. and Bonar Law.

21 August

McKenna and I walk over from the House to the Treasury and I spend the rest of the afternoon there with him Lord Reading and Sir John Bradbury. The talk is all of the measures that have been and must be taken to keep the exchanges right between us and the U.S.A. Lord, what financial burdens we are bearing, and yet some people still complain that we are not pulling our full weight in this War!

29 August

Archbishop and Mrs. Bernard arrived [at Henley] last evening at 6.15. [. . .]

Bernard and I discuss the political situation an Ireland. One of the questions is, whether liberal-minded Irish Unionists like B. himself, Horace Plunkett,[50] Lord Desart,[51] Sir Hutcheson Poë[52] and others should issue a manifesto declaring their willingness to work with Redmond and other loyal Irishmen for the good of Ireland. I

[50] Horace Curzon Plunkett (1854–1932): Unionist MP for South County Dublin1892–1900; founded the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society 1894; chaired the Irish Convention 1917–1918; Irish Free State Senator 1922–193; knighted 1903.

[51] Hamilton John Agmondesham Cuffe (1848–1934): Director of Public Prosecutions 1894–1908; Treasury Solicitor 1894–1909; knighted 1898; succ. as 5th Earl of Desart 1898; cr. Baron Desart 1909.

[52] William Hutcheson Poë (1848–1934): army officer, landowner and magistrate; Irish Free State Senator 1922–1925.

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suggest that such a declaration might (1) embarrass Redmond and (2) result in these influential Unionists being labelled 'Nationalists' with the inevitable loss of their influence as moderators of opinion in Ireland. B. shows me letters he has received from Plunkett, Desart, Poë, etc.

3 October

I dine with Harold at the Ritz. [...] Among those present are Bonar Law, Winston Churchill and F.E. Smith. Winston, as usual, talks for himself and everybody else. He is exceedingly pessimistic about the prospects of a war in the direction of which he has now no part. F.E. is gloomy and, when he secures a conversational opening, sententious – so much so, that Bonar congratulates him slyly on having recovered his platform manner. Bonar's occasional thrusts are highly effective.

4 October

Harold has just been appointed Director General of the Army Clothing Dept. at Pimlico.

10 October

House reassembles.

[...] I attend a lunch of the Aldwych Club at the Connaught rooms where Alfred gives an 'uncensored' address on his experiences and views of the War. About 500 lunchers, some 1500 more having failed to secure tickets. Business men, M.P.'s of all parties, and journalists. Alfred has a reception that would not be accorded, I think, to any one of our statesmen with the possible exception of Ll.-G.

More men and still more men, says Alfred; no twaddle about Peace as long as the Huns remain in France, Belgium, Poland and Servia; no interference by politicians with the Army; conscription for Ireland; watch narrowly the arch mischiefmaker Lord Haldane; look out for the democratic tendencies of our men in the trenches who will demand high wages and land for themselves – these are some of the points of his very interesting discourse.

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14 October

Dinner with Mother at 'Northcliffe' where she has been staying [. . .]. Alfred there – in most amiable mood. He tells us that he has given Ll.-George warning not to interfere with strategic affairs. He is said to be worrying Sir William Robertson[53] and even to have another little military expedition of his own in view – A Gallipoli, it may be, or a Mesopotamia!

16 October

Alfred comes early for me and takes me off to Princes Golf Links at Sandwich, a splendid natural course of great difficulty. Alfred has with him a young pro., Cole, from Kingsgate who seems able to put in any amount of vigorous golf but has been adjudged by the Tribunal as too delicate for military service. We speculate as to how these things are arranged.

Quick and splenetic as he is ordinarily Alfred is one of the most placid golfers I have seen. Today he did describe one lie as damnable but he eschews bad language with wonderful fortitude. Getting into the rough at one hole (and the rough at Prince's is rough indeed) he ambitiously tried a wooden club with disastrous results. 'There's no fool like a fat fool' was his only comment.

The 8th at Princes is a very celebrated hole, long and extremely difficult. 'He did the 8th hole at Princes in 4', is to be part of Alfred's epitaph. Today it is 7 or 8.

19 October

A great deputation of Irish members at the Treasury to urge McKenna to grant War bonuses to the very badly paid elementary school teachers in Ireland. However acute Irish political differences may be there are two occasions when Irish members of all sections dwell together in perfect amity (1) when a raid is to be made on the Exchequer and (2) when whiskey is threatened with higher taxation. So we have today Redmond and Carson sitting cheek by jowl and conferring as to how most successfully to squeeze McKenna, with

[53]William Robert Robertson (1860–1933): army officer; Chief of the Imperial General Staff 1915–1918; Field Marshal 1920; cr. baronet 1919.

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Tim Healy's brother[54] (as representing the Cork faction) regarding them appreciatively from a back chair. Carson is not less insistent than the others in voicing the wrongs of the teachers and his remarks are punctuated by warmer applause (from Orangemen and Nationalists alike) than the stately Board Room is accustomed to. In the end McKenna offers the same War bonuses to the school teachers as are being conceded to members of the regular Civil Service.

23 October

Sir Hutcheson Poë to dine with us this evening. He is the leading spirit among those 'Southern' Irish Unionists who desire to live on friendly terms with the Nationalists and who having made up their minds that Home Rule is certainly coming are disposed to fall cheerfully into line and to work the new system to the best advantage of their country.

26 October

I spend the afternoon at the Treasury with McKenna, Mackinnon Wood and Sir R. Chalmers. Lord Reading looks in. The talk is of course all of War finance.

Chalmers tells me that Duke, the Irish Secy., wants me to go with him as his parliamentary private fag. [Later: I was acting in that capacity to McKenna at the time and decided not to change. I was always sorry afterwards I didn't go with Duke. In fact, however, I was getting impatient of this sort of ministerial subordination and thinking it high time I had a Government job of my own. It is unwise for an aspiring young politician to serve for more than a short term as Private Parliamentary Secy, to a Minister. The position gives him a close insight into a great government Dept. of which he has the full run and brings him in immediate contact day by day with his own and other Ministers, but it has severe limitations. It deprives him of his liberty of action in the House and of most of his chances of speaking, since he can make no use of his special knowledge gained in the Dept. nor criticize his Govt. –, any more than if he were a member of it. C.H. 6th Feby. 1934.]

[54]Maurice Healy (1859–1923): Irish Nat. MP For Cork City, 1885–1900, 1909–1910, 1910–1918.

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8 November

A concert at Summer Fields. Daff and I leave Gol and walk to the station and so home. I have to go to the H. of C. at 10 to vote [the Carsonites having challenged a Division involving a vote of Censure on the Govt.].

10 November

With the Parliamentary Air Committee to Hendon to see the splendid works of the Aircraft Manufacturing Coy. At the beginning of the War about 50 people were employed – now there are 2,500. Aeroplanes are made here, all parts of them except engines and propellers. The great shops are scenes of varied and ceaseless activity – delicate carpentering, brazing of parts, wire-drawing, canvassing wings, beating out and shaping aluminium bodies and assembling.

I go for a flight (Mr. Birchenough,[55] pilot) in an aeroplane. A glorious sensation! Strange to say, though I have the poorest of heads for dizzy heights I am not a bit nervous when we mount over the patchwork fields and see trains looking like toys. The finest sight of all is when the new fast 'Havilland' (130 miles an hour) circles and manoeuvres beneath us like a beautiful great hawk.

The noise is deafening, not unlike that of one of the huge Daily Mail presses at full speed or a train rushing in a rocky cutting. The pilot and I cannot converse but he turns in his seat every now and then and smiles at me reassuringly. [. . .]

In the afternoon I take the Chair at a Council meeting of the Old Boys' Corps, now the 3rd Battalion of the London Volunteer Regt. The Army Council is taking over the Volunteers and our civil management will soon be a thing of the past.

11 November

To the official cinema pictures of the Somme battles after lunch. A sad but intensely interesting record. The operator must have gone into the thick almost of the battles. We see our wounded soldiers returning from the fights and dazed German prisoners still holding up both hands in token of surrender. There are dead men too, our own and German, lying out in the open or huddled in the almost obliterated

[55]William Birchenough: test pilot.

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trenches. I could scarcely bring myself to look at some of the scenes. Yet it is right that we stay-at-homes should get even a faint idea of what this war really means. No doubt these films will be preserved and will be shown to future generations who will marvel at the mad horrors of these unhappy times.

21 November

Sad news today of the death in action of my very dear nephew and godson Vere. I go to see poor Harold. Alfred and Leicester, Vyv and Esmond with him.

24 November

This is one of the gloomiest periods of the War. Though Haig[56] has made recently good progress on the Somme and the Servians have just taken Monastir there is for the moment a bleak prospect in every other direction. My own thoughts are coloured no doubt by the loss of Vere, but depression rules in the H. of C. and everywhere I go. The Germans seem to be overrunning Roumania going through it like brown-paper – and have sunk our great hospital ship the 'Britannic' by mine or torpedo together with an ever rising list of cargo vessels belonging to us the Allies and the neutrals. A Russian Dreadnought is said to have gone down in the Black Sea and indeed Russia fails us at every point.

In the House there is an almost general dissatisfaction with the Govt. which is always late and piles blunder on blunder.

We have had moments like this before but I have never seen so many people shaking their heads over our chances of winning the War.

3 December

Rumours all this week-end of a Cabinet crisis with confident statements in some of the Sunday papers that a War Council of four or five is to be set up and to be charged with full responsibility

[56]Douglas Haig, 1st Earl Haig (1861–1928): army officer; Commander-in-Chief (C.-in-C.) of the British Expeditionary Force 1915–1918 and of the Home Forces 1918–1921; Field Marshal 1917; cr. Earl Haig 1919.

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for prosecuting the War with all possible vigour. The members of the Council are said to be:

The P.M. (Mr. Asquith)
Mr. Lloyd George
Mr. Bonar Law
Mr. Balfour and
Sir E. Carson

with Sir J. Jellicoe[57] and Sir W. Robertson as Naval and Military assessors.

In some forecasts the P.M. and Mr. Balfour are left out and a Labour Minister included.

For some time past the P.M. and the Coalition have been criticised severely for their lack of vigour and resolution and this not only in the 'Northcliffe Press' but in faithful Radical sheets also. Alfred (Northcliffe) has been actively at work with Ll.-G. with a view to bringing about a change.

4 December

The following official statement was issued at 11.45 last night:–

'The Prime Minister, with a view to the most effective prosecution of the war, has decided to advise his Majesty the King to consent to a reconstruction of the Government.'

Times Dec. 4th.

Alfred on the telephone early today. 'Who killed cock robin?' he cries. 'You did' I reply.

Later at the Treasury McKenna tells me that in view of the P.M.'s announcement (above) there is now no Chancellor of the Exchequer and no Government. He seems not to view his own position with much concern. He agrees that the P.M. cannot possibly hold on if he is not to be in the War Council. We can't have two Prime Ministers!

Later again I see Alfred at St. James's Place. He tells me that he was with Lloyd-George yesterday and that the two clever Hebrews Samuel and Montagu – both of whom owe their political fortunes to Asquith – were already there staking out claims. N. says they greeted him (N.) with positively oriental salaams.

In the H. of C. confusion and bewilderment. Most people have been growing uneasy under the nerveless direction of the P.M. but most people also regard the possible premiership of Ll.-G. with dismay. It

[57]John Rushworth Jellicoe (1859–1935): naval officer; commander of the Grand Fleet 1914–1916; First Sea Lord 1916–1917; Admiral of the Fleet 1919; Governor-General of New Zealand 1920–1924; knighted 1907; cr. Viscount Jellicoe 1918; first Earl Jellicoe 1925.

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is not exactly a case of better the divvle you know than the divvle you don't know – (for we know both divvles intimately. But Ll.-G.'s erratic record!

And while we are absorbed in the excitements of a domestic political crisis the Germans are thundering at the gates of Bucharest!

5 December

The Times announces this morning that a state of deadlock as regards the political crisis exists. I go to the Treasury and find McKenna's Secretaries, H.P. Hamilton and Alan Parsons,[58] packing up. The belief is that Herbert Samuel is to succeed our chief. I see McKenna later and represent to him strongly that he and other good Liberals should not desert the Govt. that is to be formed. He says that as regards himself: (1) He could not serve under Ll.-G. and (2) That Ll.-G. wouldn't have him anyway. To the Ritz Hotel to see Harold. I find him with Winston who walks rapidly up and down the room talking at the top of his voice. All the swiftly-changing aspects of the crisis are heatedly discussed.

Home to dinner leaving Winston declaiming.

Tonight the P.M. resigns and Bonar Law is sent for by the King.

6 December

Things move rapidly today. Bonar informs the King that he is not in a position to form a Ministry.

The King summons the 'elder statesmen' of the former Coalition to a Conference at Buckingham Palace with a view no doubt to securing agreement. The upshot is that Ll.-G. is invited to try his hand at Cabinet making.

The London Liberal daily papers all this time are full of denunciations of Northcliffe whom they regard as the arch wrecker of the Asquith Govt. There is truth in this of course but not all the truth. Grave dissatisfaction with the P.M.'s leadership has been growing apace among Liberals in the House and has found expression in such staunchly Liberal papers as the *Manchester Guardian* and *The Nation*.

[58] Alan Leonard Romaine Parsons (1889–1933): civil servant and drama critic of the *Daily Mail*.

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7 December

The shortest sitting of the H. of C. on record I should think. I am only 3 or 4 minutes late at the House but the business of the day is already over. Gulland, the Chief Liberal Whip, has moved the adjournment until next Tuesday and members are all out in the Members' Lobby which is densely packed and hums like a bee-hive.

It is said that Liberal ex-Cabinet Ministers have resolved to stand out of the Bonar – George Ministry en bloc. I write to Runciman who is confined to his house urging that this is an unwise and even an unpatriotic policy.

Meanwhile, Ll.-G. is reported to have made generous offers of ministerial appointments to the Labour Party and to have secured their support by a narrow majority.

Of Liberal Members, so far as I have had any talk with them, about half are burning with indignation at the way the P.M. (Asquith) has been treated by Ll.-G. and Northcliffe while the other half think that his habits of delay and indecision – the policy of 'wait and see' – have been the main cause of merited misfortune.

8 December

The 'Court Circular' last night contained the following:

The Right Hon. D. Lloyd George, M.P., had an audience of the King this evening, and accepted his Majesty's offer of the post of Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury, and kissed hands upon his appointment.

A party meeting under Mr. Asquith's Chairmanship at the Reform Club today which neither Leicester nor I attend. I doubt the expediency of holding such a meeting, am a little afraid that rival resolutions may be moved and in any case have no wish to hear what may be said in criticism of Northcliffe who has had so large a share in the present upheaval. In fact, however, nothing embarrassing seems to have happened at the meeting.

Some Cabinet appointments announced [. . .]

Harold has been offered the First Commissionership of Works and has declined.

11 December

Women's War Work Committee at the Board of Trade.

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Chief offices in Govt. are now filled with the exception of some of the new Ministries. The elder Tory statesmen mostly retained but the Liberal Ministers are generally new men. A good sprinkling of Labour representatives.

12 December

First meeting of H. of C. under Lloyd-George's Govt. Bonar Law moves the adjournment of the House until Thursday. Ll. -G. and Asquith both in bed with had colds.

The House crowded and in a very excitable mood. The proceedings last less than an hour and then all Members stream out into the Lobby which hums again like a bee-hive.

I have a long talk with Winston and John Dillon in the Smoking-room.

All the Cabinet posts in the Govt. are now filled.

26 December

I take the two boys to see their Uncle Northcliffe at *The Times* office. We find the King maker in the handsome Georgian parlour of the oldest fashioned house in London. N. presents each of the boys with a one pound note and promises them copies of his Red Cross book 'At the War'.[59] He takes us into the great machine room where everything is ready for printing tonight's *Times*. N. is to spend two hours this evening with the Prime Minister (Ll.-George).

[59]Lord Northcliffe, *At the War* (London, 1916). Published by Hodder & Stoughton for the Joint War Committee of the British Red Cross Society and the order of St John of Jerusalem in England.

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