1921

28 January

A long talk with Harold (Rothermere) today. He has been seeing a good deal of Ll.-George lately and has been offered and has refused the post of First Lord of the Admiralty from which Walter Long is retiring.

15 February

Opening of Parliament by the King.

I hear the King read his Speech in the House of Lords. He wears his crown and purple robes lined with ermine: the Queen a splendid tiara and flaming jewels on her breast. The P. of Wales is almost lost in his robes as he takes his place in his little chair to the right of H.M.

25 February

On First Commissioner's Supplementary estimate today we can do no better than 88 to 78. Some of our supporters would certainly have voted against us if they had not suspected that the Govt. was in difficulties. The portents are ominous at this so early stage in a new Session. But where is the Govt.'s large majority?

17 March

First dinner of the 1920 Club. [. . .]

A sparkling speech by Ll.-G.

Today, announcement is made by Ll.-G. in the House that Bonar Law is seriously ill and has been ordered by the doctors to rest for some months. The news is wholly unexpected and fills the House with genuine regrets. We have all come, Liberals as much as Tories, to feel

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a warm liking for the unassuming Chief who has led the House for so long.

18 March

To Luton this evening to speak, with Lord Hugh Cecil, at a League of Nations Union meeting.

21 March

Austen Chamberlain elected by the Tories leader in the H. of Commons of their Wing of the Coalition.

In early April Harmsworth took a fishing holiday at the Three Cocks Hotel, in the Wye Valley.

4 April

It is in Butler's Catch and about 5.30 in the evening that I hook a great fish. When he leaps at the end of my line I think of a thirty pounder at least and his dogged struggle of 25 minutes suggests unusual size and weight. I bring him alongside at last [. . .] The fish weighs in fact 18 pounds.

5 April

The Coal Strike is on and there is likelihood of the railwaymen and transport workers coming out in sympathy. I must cut my little holiday short.

[Later: –

I blush even now when I remember that I took French leave from the F.O. and the House, when I went to fish the Wye at Three Cocks. By an inadvertence which I cannot explain I made no arrangement for the answers to my F.O. Questions and other F.O. business in the House. Some important Questions were in fact asked and there was surprise and some little impatience when they were answered by junior Ministers with, necessarily, no more information than that contained in the written answers. 'Where is the Under-Secy?' was the cry.

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Exculpating myself afterwards to my Chief, Curzon of Kedleston, he was delighted with my story of the jolly 18 pounder. But there was a hint in his eye that this sort of thing ought not to occur again. And it didn't.

C.H. (July 1936)]

20 April

I introduce the Hungary Peace Treaty Bill in the H. of Commons.

27 April

Mr. Whitley elected Speaker nem. con., the proposed Opposition candidature of Sir Frederick Banbury having been withdrawn.

What an unnerving place the H. of Commons is. Here is Whitley, who has been Chairman of Ways & Means for 10 years, going white as a sheet when he is conducted to the Chair which he has so often occupied in a deputy capacity, by Mildmay[1] and Arthur Henderson. In its moments of ceremony the House is very grand indeed.

1 May

Today the *Daily Mail* celebrates its 25th birthday by a Luncheon party at Olympia. It is an immense gathering, some 7,000 invitations having been issued to members of the staff of all grades, and their womenfolk, the whole affair being superbly organized by J. Lyons & Co.

Alfred shakes hands with the guests who pass by him in an almost endless queue. Dear Mother and Mary Northcliffe come in just before lunch begins at 1 o'clock and are received with great cheering and the waving of little flags. The 'Stentorphone' arrangements made to enable Alfred to address the multitude are not very successful and even the City toast-master with his huge voice and a megaphone is not, I think, very widely heard.

As soon as lunch begins the people pull the Christmas crackers they find in their places and many of them don the gaily-coloured paper caps and so add to the brightness of a wonderful scene. The lunch

[1]Francis Bingham Mildmay (1861–1947): Lib. (then Unionist) MP for Totnes 1885–1922; cr. Baron Mildmay 1922.

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itself is cold and is as good in quality and as well-served as in a first-rate restaurant.

And this concourse represented only a part of the huge body of workers that Alfred's genius has brought into co-operation!

Afterwards Daff, Bud and I to Poynters where we find dear Mother none the worse for her fatiguing and affecting ordeal.

26 May

Breakfast at Lord Derby's in Stratford Place 'to meet the P.M.' Ll.-G., who must have the constitution of an internal combustion engine, bright and gay and smoking a long cigar immediately after breakfast. The talk is about Silesia, the coal strike and the coming visit of the Dominion Prime Ministers. About 25 sturdy Coalitionists present. But defend me from such unseasonable entertainments.

[Later: It was Ll.-G. who started (? revived) these horrible political breakfasts. He has the digestion of an ostrich, sleeps always like a top and is as gay in the earliest hours as the gayest of us at lunch time. Two or three of them were quite enough for me. C.H. 27th Jany. 1934.]

This evening we give a dinner-party at the H. of C. [. . .]

The Hamar Greenwoods pretty cheerful in spite of the desperate news from Ireland this morning. The rebels have burned down the Custom House, the most beautiful building in Ireland. Lady Greenwood tells me of an exciting experience at Chequers. Some of the house-party including the P.M. were out walking in the grounds – the P.M. and another ahead of the others and the private detectives as usual in sight. When the P.M. came to a summer house he found Sinn Fein inscriptions in chalk in the walk – 'Up the rebels!' 'Up the I.R.A.!' and the like. Four men were seen making off in the grounds. They were subsequently caught and taken to Aylesbury Gaol. Three were released next day and one, who confessed to being Irish, was detained. So the matter stands at present.

24 June

Dinner this evening 'to welcome the Dominion Prime Ministers' in the Royal Gallery of the H. of Lords. The function is ruined by the prolixity of Mr. Meighen[2] (Canada) [Mr. Meighen's name is pronounced

[2]Arthur Meighen (1874–1960): Prime Minister of Canada 1920–1921, 1926.

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Mee-han.] Mr. Hughes (Australia) and Mr. Massey (N.Z.)[3] 'F.E.', the Lord Chancellor, in the Chair but not equal to his best as an orator. Mr. Speaker, short and plain. Sir Thomas Smartt[4] speaks and speaks briefly and well for S.A. in place of General Smuts. The honours of the evening rest with the Hon. V.S. Srinivasa Sastri,[5] who, in a turban, represents the Indian, the youngest of Imperial parliaments. He is dignified, measured and witty and above everything on a tropical night and at a late hour, BRIEF.

14 July

The P.M. is engaged in his momentous talks with De Valera. It is curious to observe at the Whitehall end of Downing Street a crowd of Irish people with green, yellow and white Sinn Fein flags. So intolerant a people are we!

Dinner at the Hotel Cecil to McCurdy the Chief Liberal Whip of the Coalition. P.M. arrives very late after his Conference with De Valera and is enthusiastically received.

16 July

To town this morning to see Alfred off at Waterloo on his tour round the World. A large gathering from *The Times*, *Daily Mail* and the other newspapers – including some of the workpeople and their wives and children.

18 July

I attend meeting at the Colonial Office of a Committee of the Imperial Conference to consider the retention of British nationality by British people in foreign countries – the S. American states, Japan, etc., etc. Winston in the Chair and present also Hughes of Australia, Massey of N.Z., Sir T. Smartt of S.A., somebody from Canada, an Indian delegate, Shortt (Home Secy.) and others. We dispose of our particular business in about three and a half minutes. Hughes, who is exceedingly

[3]William Ferguson Massey (1856–1925): Prime Minister of New Zealand 1912–1925.

[4]Thomas William Smartt (1858–1929): South African politician.

[5]Valangiman Sankaranarayana Srinivasa Sastri (1869–1946): politician; represented India at the 1921 Imperial Conference in London.

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deaf, carries about with him a small black box that you might mistake for a camera. He puts this on the table in front of him, opens the lid and adjusts a receiver to his ear. Seems then to hear pretty well but doesn't need to hear much for he talks himself most of the time in a hard metallic voice. Even Winston can't always get in a word.

19 August

The House adjourns at long last. It had been intended to prorogue but the state of the negotiations with De Valera is such that it has been thought best to keep the Session in being.

The most wearisome and thankless parliamentary year in my experience!

12 October

Opening of the Anglo-Swedish Chamber of Commerce, Trinity Square. At the subsequent luncheon I sit by the Crown Prince of Sweden[6] – a tall man of about 30 years of age, speaking perfect English and with a most modest, approachable manner.

He asks me about Northcliffe and his travels. Among other things he discusses with me is the future of Lithuania, Latvia and Esthonia. We agree that, historically speaking, they are little likely to continue to exist without the good favour of Russia.

To the annual Dinner of the Pembroke College Oxford Johnson Society at Dr. Johnson's House. A humorous speech by Dr. Inge,[7] Dean of St. Paul's, who is known in the London Press as 'the Gloomy Dean', as indeed he is the most dreary looking man of our time.

21 October

The Provost of T.C.D. dines with Bud and me at Montagu Square.

Bernard is more gloomy about the state of Ireland than I have ever known him. He tells me of the enforced money levies of the Sinn Feiners on helpless citizens – even (and I have heard it before) on notable loyalists. It is rumoured, he says, that conscription is being

[6]Oscar Fredrik Wilhelm Olaf Gustaf Adolf (1882–1973): reigned as Gustav VI Adolf from 1950.

[7]William Ralph Inge (1860–1954): Dean of St. Paul's 1911–1934; knighted 1930.

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enforced and he is apprehensive lest it should be imposed also on the College boys.

1 November

Em and Daff return from Ireland this evening. They are full of amusing stories of their adventures in Dublin. The truce (established during the period of the negotiations between H.M.G. and the Sinn Feiners) is in force in Ireland and people breathe more freely there though they do not yet speak freely in public places.

2 November

Annual Dinner of the Printers Pension Corporation. Early this morning, Mr. Mortimer, the excellent Secretary, telephones to say that the Ld. Chancellor (Birkenhead) who was to have replied for 'His Majesty's Govt.' will be prevented by the Irish negotiations, in which he is taking a leading part. Will I oblige in his place? What else can I do?

An anxious day piecing together my notes for tonight's speech amidst many distractions. The humour of it is that I had originally consented to attend the Dinner on the express understanding that I was to say nothing and to enjoy myself listening to 'F.E.'

A boiling hot company of some 600 people at the Connaught Rooms. Who can make an after-dinner speech to such a multitude? And in a hall of such abominable acoustics?

11 November

Remembrance Day and this year Flanders 'Poppy Day' because of Lord Haig's emblem for the fund he is raising. At 11 o'clock the maroons sound and all the activities of life cease in London and generally throughout the country. At the end of our Square men stand with their hats off and such few vehicles as there are, are stationary.

I go down to Bedford to the unveiling (by S.H. Whitbread, Ld. Lt.) of the memorial to the Bedfordshire Regiment. It is a handsome small domed structure with an obelisk.

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17 November

Maurice Burton takes Em and me in his beautiful touring Rolls-Royce all the way to Leicester to see, at Hamshaw's, a Vauxhall car we noticed at the recent Motor Show in London.

The Vauxhall is an elegant Limousine (a closed car well-suited to town work) but there is little head room and a poorish look-out and I am disposed to turn it down. I must have a Vauxhall because (1) they are made in my Constituency (at Luton) and (2) there is much unemployment in the Vauxhall works.

23 November

Coalition Meeting at Barking. Captain Martin[8] the local Member in the Chair. Trouble is expected because of the present very severe unemployment and of the growth of a small but intolerant Communist party in the E. end of London.

However, all goes well.

14 December

Special Session of Parliament opens today to ratify the agreement with Sinn Fein Ireland. The King and Queen (and Princess Mary) in State.

By a curious oversight the King omits to end his speech with the customary invocation of Almighty God to bless our labours. Shortt, the Home Secy., tells me at lunch that the omission had passed wholly unnoted by himself and by all others responsible for H.M.'s Speech. Later, the Speaker in addressing the H. of C., repairs the omission.

15 December

Debate on Ireland in full swing in both Houses today.

[8]Albert Edward Martin (1876–1936): Coalition/Nat Lib. MP for Romford 1918–1923; joined the Conservative Party in 1923.

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Em and I dine with the Swiss Minister and Madame Paravicini.[9] Also present Herr Sthamer,[10] the German Ambassador and his wife, an American lady – the first German we have met since the War. We look forward with apprehension to meeting them but they prove to be quite decent people.

Strange that M. Paravicini, a trained diplomatist, should have sent word to the F.O. today advising me that the Germans were to be present at his dinner-party so that I may have a chance of excusing myself if I so desire! But how could I, whatever my feelings might be?

Of course, Herr Sthamer has been several times to the F.O. to see Curzon. But I have not hitherto met him.

16 December

Ratification of the Irish Treaty carried in the H. of C. today by 401 to 58 and in the H. of L. by something like 3 to 1.

Great speech in the Lords by 'F.E.' (Ld. Chancellor) of which I am able to stay to hear only the opening sentences. Their Lordships muster in, for them, good strength. 'F.E.' follows Lord Salisbury, a political lightweight, and the only Salisbury who is totally devoid of grey matter. It is a strange reflection on the H. of L. as at present constituted that so silly a fellow should ever figure so importantly there.

19 December

Parliament prorogued. In Dublin the Dail Eireann is engaged in discussing the terms of the Treaty. [. . .]

Lord Curzon asks me to go to Geneva as Government representative on the Council of the L. of Nations at the meeting to be held in January. I gladly assent.

[9]Charles Rudolf Paravicini (1872–1947): Swiss Minister in London 1920–1939; m. Lilian de Watteville 1910.

[10]Gustav Friedrich Carl Johann Sthamer (1856–1931): German Ambassador to London 1920–1930.

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