1879

Tuesday 25 February (London)

I dined with Lady Abercromby alone and heard a great deal from her that was interesting to me. The Queen, when she told her that I had made a speech in support of the Government and the Zulu War,[684] said, "Oh, but you know it is his war." This is another indication of the line that Disraeli has taken. He has, I think it is clear, laid the responsibility of the war on me as the result of my annexation of the Transvaal.[685] Salisbury is, I hear, in much favour with the Queen, and Lady S. is perpetually retailing all sorts of gossip and scandal to the Queen. What is really bad, she tells frequent stories against the Derbys. This is only what I believe she did last summer in London but it is not the less odious.

Thursday 20 March (London)

Some talk with Derby on the Zulu debate on next Friday. He put the case very clearly against Frere.[686] I told him of my personal difficulty in condemning Frere and he was evidently not surprised. So we parted with an understanding on the subject.

[684]See Carnarvon's speech in the House of Lords on 13 December: *Hansard*, CCXLIII, cols 1064–1068.

[685]Sir Henry Frere, Governor of Cape Colony and High Commissioner of South Africa, was convinced that confederation in South Africa could be achieved only when the power of the Zulu chief, Cetewayo, was broken. Frere therefore issued an ultimatum to him on 11 December 1878. British forces under Lord Chelmsford entered Zululand on 6 January 1879 and were heavily defeated at Isandhlwana sixteen days later (see A. Lloyd, *The Zulu War 1879* (London, 1973), pp. 67–73). Disraeli, like the rest of the nation, was deeply shocked, and took to his bed. Carnarvon, however, stood by Frere 'as I do not expect that he will have a very warm defence at the hands of the Government' (Carnarvon to Heathcote, 21 February 1879: CP, BL 61074, fo. 211).

[686]Carnarvon told Heathcote, 'My disposition is to say what I can in defence of Frere and not to attack the Ministry' (Carnarvon to Heathcote, 23 March 1879: CP, BL 61075, fo. 9).

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Tuesday 25 March (London)

Zulu debate in the House. I spoke to a thin house as it was close upon 8 o'clock when I began, but a very attentive one. On the whole I was tolerably satisfied when I ended with what I had said and the way of saying it, and Bath and Enfield[687] who were there told me that they thought it was quite a good speech, if not better, than they had heard me make. I was about an hour.[688]

Monday 19 May (London)

Derby wrote to propose to come to me to discuss Frere's despatch in yesterday's papers which seems to suggest the abandonment of the Transvaal.[689] I said I should be happy and he came – to argue strongly that the annexation had been an experiment, that it had failed and that it was desirable to give the Government help in getting rid of the bad bargain. My answer generally was that I felt sure that we should soon hear more fully from Frere in explanation of this despatch; that though I was prepared to accept changes and withdrawal of policy if necessary, yet that I thought this was particularly a case for great caution and for no hurry, and one too in which it is quite fair to let the Government find their own way out of the difficulty in which they have placed themselves or been placed. I afterwards wrote to him again in much the same sense. But it is quite clear to me that it would be a very foolish thing for me at all events to take the initiative. If I

[687]George Henry Byng (1830–1898), Viscount Enfield (1860), 3rd Earl of Strafford (1886). Lib. MP for Tavistock (1852–1857) and for Middlesex (1857–1874), Parliamentary Secretary to the Poor Law Board (1865–1866), Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office (1871–1874).

[688]A resolution in the Lords condemning Frere's ultimatum leading to war and stating that the conduct of affairs should be taken out of his hands, was lost by 61 to 159 votes (*Hansard*, CCXLIV, 25 March 1879, Carnarvon, cols 1645–1657, Kimberley, cols 1670–1678). Frere later wrote to Carnarvon, thanking him for 'your noble defence of me in the House of Lords [. . .]. We have all been like the crew of a ship in a hurricane – so hard at work saving the ship from foundering that I have barely time to keep the official log' (Frere to Carnarvon, 7 May 1879: CP, BL 60797A, fo. 109).

[689]Carnarvon wrote to Derby the next day, 'After seeing you I learnt that the Government are not aware whether the despatch published in the *Standard* is accurately given or not' (Carnarvon to Derby, 20 May 1879: Derby Papers, 920 DER (15)). Headed 'The Boer memorial to the Queen', the despatch set out the substance of a meeting with the Boers six miles from Pretoria, at which a memorial was presented stating that 'their [the Boers'] independence was unjustly taken away from them by the Act of Annexation'.

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must accept the abandonment of the annexation, I am anyhow not the person to propose it.[690]

Tuesday 27 May (London)

I made an enquiry in the House as to the relations of G. Wolseley to the present Lieutenant-Governors of Natal and the Transvaal.[691] It is clear that he is sent out in a military capacity rather than a civil one though his appointment does two things: supersedes Chelmsford and gives a very decided buffer to Frere. I almost expect Frere now to resign.[692]

I made a short speech on a Malay question afterwards brought forward by Stanley of Alderley.[693]

We dined at the Goschens, met the Gladstones and Childers amongst others.

Friday 27 June (London)

Later I brought up my Armenian case in the House of Lords. Elsie[694] and Winifred went into the Peeresses' Gallery to hear. I think my statement was fair enough. Salisbury's reply was in argument very weak, and the ground he took up in the repudiation of all responsibility in Asia Minor was extraordinarily inconsistent with all that was said

[690]Derby commented after the meeting, 'I always doubted the wisdom of the policy of annexation, & assented to it reluctantly. It was a mistake, & one for which Carnarvon as colonial secretary is primarily responsible' (Vincent, *Derby*, IV, p. 127).

[691]South Africa – Natal and the Transvaal. Appointment of Sir Garnet Wolseley as High Commissioner: *Hansard*, CCXLVI, 27 May 1879, Carnarvon cols 1329–1330.

[692]The Cabinet decided on 19 May to replace Frere and Chelmsford, though the Queen was reluctant to consent. Chelmsford was sent back to England. On 27 May, Disraeli wrote to the Queen on the Cabinet deliberations of the previous day, 'It was with much difficulty that Lord Beaconsfield secured the arrangement, that Sir Bartle Frere should remain as High Commissioner of the Cape Colony and its dependencies. These are more than 1,000 miles from the seat of war' (Buckle, *Disraeli*, VI, p. 432).

[693]Henry Edward John Stanley (1827–1903), 3rd Baron Stanley of Alderley (1869), orientalist and diplomat. The motion introduced was 'Concerning the rights of succession following the death of the Sultan of Johore': *Hansard*, CCXLVI, 27 May 1879, Stanley of Alderley, cols 1341–1346, Carnarvon, cols 1347–1348. The motion was brought on by Stanley, 'that strange animal compounded of foolishness and mischief' (Diary, 15 May 1879).

[694]Elisabeth Catherine Howard (1856–1929), first daughter of Henry Howard of Greystoke Castle and Charlotte Long, married Carnarvon in December 1878. She was Carnarvon's first cousin, and twenty-five years younger than him.

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last year as anything that was ever said in Parliament.[695] It was a most strange speech, to which Morley[696] and Granville both gave a very good answer. What is the meaning of it? Did Salisbury in Cabinet object to the English Protectorate and now, when in difficulty, go back to his old opinions? Disraeli has not been in the House the last two nights. One way or another I think the Government are failing.

Friday 11 July (London)

This evening Mr. Corry met me after the Committee as I was going into the House and asked for a few minutes conversation. He then asked me from Lord Beaconsfield whether I would be willing to undertake the Chairmanship of the Commission moved for the other evening by H. Chaplin[697] on the agricultural distress, its causes, etc.[698] I said it was a very large and important matter and must take a little time to consider. I promised an answer by Sunday afternoon.

Tues 15 July (London)

A debate in the House of Lords on the Vivisection bill[699] introduced by Lord Truro.[700] Beauchamp's tone offended me much and I attacked him rather severely for it.[701]

[695]Treaty of Berlin–Armenia: *Hansard*, CCXLVII, 27 June 1879, cols 811–830. Carnarvon referred to the articles in the treaty that promised improvements and reforms by the Turks in the treatment of Armenians (ibid., cols 811–819). Salisbury, in reply, 'repudiated any responsibility for the acts of the Turkish Government' (ibid., cols 820–826).

[696]Albert Edmund Parker (1843–1905), 3rd Earl of Morley (1864), Lord-in-Waiting to the Queen (1868–1874), Under-Secretary of State for War (1880–1885), Chairman of Committees, House of Lords (1889–1905).

[697]Henry Chaplin (1840–1923), Con. MP for Mid-Lincolnshire (1868–1896) and for Wimbledon (1907–1916), Chancellor, Duchy of Lancaster (1885–1886), President of the Board of Agriculture (1889), President of the Local Government Board (1895–1900), 1st Viscount Chaplin (1916).

[698]An archetypal Tory squire, Chaplin found himself, as a member of the Royal Commission on Agricultural Distress, resisting the efforts of the Radicals to set up peasant proprietors in place of landlords. See E.H.V.T. Stewart, Marchioness of Londonderry, *Henry Chaplin: a memoir* (London, 1926), p. 161.

[699]Cruelty to Animals Bill, second reading: *Hansard*, CCXLVIII, 15 July 1879, cols 419–436.

[700]Charles Robert Wilde (1816–1891), 2nd Baron Truro (1855).

[701]Ibid., Truro, cols 419–422, Beauchamp, cols 422–426. Carnarvon pointed out the need for new legislation because the 1876 Act had undergone so many changes in the Commons during its passing that it was deprived of its effectiveness (ibid., cols 433–434). The second reading was resolved in the negative.

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Friday 25 July (Highclere)

I received a letter from Northcote in answer to my last long recapitulatory communication[702] saying that the Government were grateful to me but that they perceived the difference of opinion was wider than they had at first thought and that they would look to some other arrangement.[703] Northcote's letter was very friendly and I wrote him back a few lines in a very friendly tone saying that I thought the Cabinet were quite right in their decision. And I am also very glad to be spared the work [. . .].

I suspect that they desired more of me than I was prepared to give. In one of his letters Disraeli spoke of the difference of opinion between us not only as to the composition but as to the *duties* of the Commission. Did this mean that he wished it to be worked in a class and sectional interest?[704]

Oddly enough with this letter of Northcote's came one from Beach, knowing of course of the breakdown of these negotiations, asking me to take the Chair of a smaller Commission to consider the various military and naval stations abroad, their defence, the mode of defence, the way in which the expense should be divided, etc.

Wednesday 30 July (London)

Beach called on me in Bruton Street to communicate with me as to the Colonial Defence Commission of which he wishes me to take the Chair. He was satisfactory in all he said. He proposes to make the Commission one perfectly fair as regards political parties, Childers, Brassey, myself, L. Simmons, Milne, Barkly. I raised some objection to Milne and Barkly, the first as not adequately representing the modern and scientific view of things, the second as not conferring any real strength on us, and I suggested Holland as a very useful addition, to which he agreed. I also said that I must have Jekyll, to which he

[702]Carnarvon had objected to the proposed size of the Commission – fifteen members in all – as well as its composition, 'consisting mainly of tenant farmers with a few politically lightweight landowners' (Carnarvon to Heathcote, 24 July 1879: CP, BL 61075, fo. 51).

[703]The chairmanship of the Commission was offered to the Duke of Richmond, who accepted it. There were twenty members. The report of the Commission was issued in 1882. See F.M.L. Thompson, *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1963), p. 309.

[704]Ever suspicious of Disraeli's motives, Carnarvon asserted, 'The chances of making a success of it is very small and in the event of failure making a scapegoat of me would have been irresistible' (Carnarvon to Granville, 1 August 1879 (copy): CP, BL 60773, fo. 119).

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assented, as Secretary. Subject to all this, I accepted.[705] I should on the whole have preferred not to have this particular task imposed but I hardly know how to decline.[706] I seem to live in a vicious circle of Royal Commissions but it cannot be helped.

Friday 8 August (London)

I went up to town by myself.

Beach called on me in Bruton Street to discuss and settle the question of the Colonial Defence Commission. It was agreed that the Commission should consist of myself as Chairman, Childers who has accepted, Brassey, Sir L. Simmons, Sir A. Milne, Sir H. Barkly and Holland, if he will serve, with Jekyll as Secretary. The whole affair passed off in a very quiet and friendly manner. But Beach's manner (I can hardly say why) gives me the notion that he is not on the most perfect terms with his colleagues or some of them.

Afterwards a long conversation with Bath who has just returned from his Bulgarian tour, which is still entirely in his mind. He is very bitter against the Government and especially against Salisbury and said to me that he would support even Arch[707] if he could damage the Government and take away from them a seat.

Later I urged the case of the India Museum in the House of Lords, but got an unsatisfactory reply from Hardy.[708] That august body was *in extremis*, scarcely anybody on the Opposition benches and an appearance of more than usual sleepiness and inactivity.

[705]Thomas Brassey (1836–1918), Lib. MP for Hastings (1868–1886), later publisher of *Brassey's Naval Manual*; Gen. Sir John Lintorn Arabin Simmons (1821–1903), Inspector-General of Fortifications, War Office (1875–1880); Sir Alexander Milne (1806–1896), Junior Naval Lord, Admiralty (1866–1868, 1872–1876); Sir Henry Barkly; Sir Henry Thurstan Holland; Capt. Herbert Jekyll (1847–1932), private secretary to Carnarvon at the Colonial Office.

[706]Informing Derby of his acceptance as chairman of the Commission, Carnarvon wrote, 'It is a much smaller affair [than the Royal Commission on Agricultural Distress] involving nothing but a moderate amount of trouble' (Carnarvon to Derby, 31 July 1879: Derby Papers, 920 DER (15)). This analysis turned out to be wrong.

[707]Joseph Arch (1826–1919), Organising Secretary and President of the National Union of Labourers (1872), Lib. MP for Norfolk North-west (1885–1886, 1892–1902).

[708]Carnarvon protested at the impending break-up of the India Museum, set up over 100 years previously by the East India Company: *Hansard*, CCXLIX, 8 August 1879, cols 491–492. Hardy commented on Carnarvon's wish to keep the collection together, 'I [. . .] found plenty to do until the House met at the I.O. [India Office] – Carnarvon did not do much as to India Museum' (Johnson, p. 419).

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Thursday 14 August (London)

I went up by myself by an early train and took the Chair at an unofficial and informal meeting of the Colonial Defence Commission at the Colonial Office. We discussed preliminaries and I subsequently talked over the results of our discussion with Beach, who, I am bound to say, improves on acquaintance in business. He is I think straightforward and devoid of all shiftiness and he seems to me to be rather wide in his ideas on political matters, and to think more of what is desirable in a Colonial or Imperial than a party point of view. Jekyll, who is Secretary of the Commission, will take notes of all that passes and I therefore need not record it here.[709]

Thursday 13 November (Pixton)

A very heavy post [. . .]. An important letter from Derby informing me that he had taken his name off the Carlton and giving me his reason, viz. that the "logic of events" in Lancashire had been irresistible and had compelled him to this.[710] I answered him at some length for it was a letter needing a reply.[711]

Monday 29 December (Pixton)

In view of present events and of future contingencies it may perhaps be well, if only to clear my mind, that I should endeavour to put down very briefly what I conceive my political position to be.

I. The Position

(1) There has been extreme bitterness during the last two years towards me by many of the Cabinet and their supporters. All intercourse has ceased and hardly ever a letter passes. The only members of the Cabinet with whom I seem to be on anything like friendly terms are Sandon and Beach, perhaps Northcote.

[709]General principles were discussed by the Commission. It was agreed that India should be excluded from their deliberations, that the Commission should handle the self-governing colonies with tact, and that more information was needed on the state of Australian defences. The Commission gave priority to the need for secrecy and a guarantee that their reports would be for the Cabinet only. See D.M. Schurman, ed. J.F. Beeler, *Imperial Defence, 1868–1887* (London, 2000), p. 86.

[710]Derby to Carnarvon, 11 November 1879: CP, BL 60766, fos 76–77. At the same time, he withdrew from local Conservative organizations.

[711]Carnarvon to Derby, 13 November 1879: Derby Papers, DER (15).

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(2) As regards political opinion I have long been conscious that I am considerably in advance of all the Government. They might perhaps concede as much as I should but it would be under pressure and not from any conviction. This of itself is not enough to prevent my acting with them. In many Conservative Cabinets there have been individuals by conviction much more Liberal than their colleagues. There are advantages and disadvantages in such conditions which need not be discussed here.

(3) With the general body of the party there is no necessary cause of quarrel. They distrust me and dislike me, but would gladly accept me or anyone else amongst their leaders if it suited party purposes. But a different question arises with regard to the Leaders. I do not trust them *politically* as regards neither convictions nor sound judgement. But this may be said of many other possible Cabinets and the amount of confidence which I should be ready to place in any conceivable Cabinet would after my past experience be limited. But the worst part of the business is that I cannot trust the most important section of the present Cabinet, *personally* as men. I think Beach is straightforward and there are some others whose word like his I would accept in all ordinary transactions, but there are some who are absolutely and as I know by experience, are [*sic*] perpetually intriguing either with or against each other. My offences in their eyes have been great, and after what has passed my political honour and certainly comfort would not be safe unless there were an infusion of some new and purer elements upon which I could count.

(4) But it may be said that there is not enough in this to call for a complete alienation from the party. The answer to this is that the party so far as London politicians and London society are concerned, have completely drawn aside from me. They have endeavoured to mark their displeasure sometimes by personal isolation, sometimes by petty spite. I at least, owe them nothing, and am free to consider my own course of action without the slightest reference to them.

As regards the party generally, the old principles whatever they were worth are gone. The Conservatives have become Tory Democrats avowedly appealing to a combination of the Crown and Populace. What policy they have is flashy and dangerous. They have found out the dangerous secret of appeal to the warlike spirit of the non-tax paying part of the community, and they are such bad financiers that there is a serious risk of permanent mischief.

II.

(1) The question is hardly less difficult when I come to consider my position with the Liberals in office. In a really Radical Government I could have no confidence, or hope, or sympathy. It is very different

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as regards the Whigs. With them I have always had many friendly relations. Socially and intellectually, there are many bonds of union and much personal kindness has been shown me by many of them, as indeed by many more advanced Liberals when I have been thrown over by my supposed friends. Except in Church questions I probably agree with the Whigs as much as I do with any party and I have indeed some points of sympathy with some of the best of the more advanced Liberals. It may easily become a question how a public man may do most good whether in supporting a Conservative or Liberal Government. Nothing would be more dangerous I believe than a shift of the whole political ballast of property towards the Conservative side. It would be a repetition, but a much more dangerous one, of what occurred in Mr. Pitt's day. There is a strong tendency already in this direction and a risk that the Whig or moderate liberal party should become unduly weakened. It is perhaps possible to render the greatest service to support and so restrain a Liberal Government.

(2) Gladstone may be an important factor in the future political arithmetic. To me he is not a cause of apprehension. There are things I regret and in which I disagree, but I have far more in common with him than with most living statesmen and I am perfectly convinced that the very Radical schemes with which he is credited are wilful misrepresentation or absolute delusions. If I am wrong in this I have no pretence to understand character and am absolutely unfit to do another stroke of public work. My belief is that the Conservative and cautious side of his character largely exceeds the Liberal and the impulsive side. His political errors are those of a generous temperament and an unduly strong morality. His merits are perfect simplicity and truthfulness of character.

III.

(1) What position shall I take up when Parliament meets? Derby having to all intents and purposes, if not openly, joined the opposition, my impression is that it will be wise to retain my present seat, to watch events and not to attack the Government unnecessarily. With the general election change must come. Both parties must declare their policy and it will now be time enough for me to take a more decided course. Morally I feel quite free to act, as I may think best; politically I believe there is a road open to me in either direction.

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