1870

Friday 4 February (Hatfield)

Ritual Commission. Evelyn came up to London and we then went down together to Hatfield.

Salisbury in the evening before dinner came to my room to speak to me. He said that he had been repeatedly urged during the winter to change his seat, that he held out no promise on the subject but said that he would speak to me. A curious communication had also passed through Malmesbury from the Queen who is anxious "that the Opposition should reconsolidate themselves as the Government may any day break to pieces." This was said of course on the general subject and not on the change of seats. I promised I would think it over, meanwhile my impression on the whole being the same as his that it would probably be inadvisable to make the change now.

There are several reasons for this:

1. To go to Cairns' dinner is a move which will probably be commented on: to change seats afterwards will make the step a much more important one.

2. So long as Disraeli is the nominal leader it is unwise to put oneself in a position which implies a complete reconciliation with him. This might set him up.

3. It is a last card to be played out if the Government do anything very outrageous.

Salisbury declared that nothing would tempt him to serve again with D. He knew nothing more than I do of the leadership of the House of Lords, and supposed Stanley would probably take it. Lady Salisbury at dinner spoke more quietly than usual but with her customary dislike of Stanley.

Sunday 6 February (Hatfield)

After Church walked for some time with Cairns. Our conversation was very frank and friendly. He said he had no intention whatever of retaining the leadership, and he grounded this on the ground that

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he was receiving a pension for judicial work which was incompatible with political.[317]

He said that on the whole he thought Stanley was fittest to lead in the House: and that his very neutrality of temper on many subjects made him at present the fitter, that he only needed the requisite pressing.

He strongly argued that Salisbury and I should change over seats, on ground that the party was gone for the moment in the House of Commons, and that its principles could be best expounded from the House of Lords, that whenever a change of Government should come the choice of a prime minister must be from there, and that if the House of Lords led the House of Commons (i.e. Conservatives in it) would follow. He also said that Disraeli had given up all idea of again being prime minister.

I had in the evening a talk again with Salisbury on the subject, telling him what had passed and advising him to consider the whole matter carefully.

Monday 7 February (London)

Dined in the evening at Cairns' Parliamentary dinner, where he announced definitely his intention of resigning. Cadogan[318] made a speech in which he said that he hoped the leadership would not be settled in any small caucus, but he got little by his harangue. I suspect everyone knows his measure by this time. The Duke of Manchester[319] made an ass of himself and Malmesbury gave us a long rigmarole on the gravity of the position, otherwise everything passed off quietly.

Tuesday 8 February (London)

Meeting of Parliament. Cairns made a good, but as usual, too long a speech.[320]

The Duke of Richmond opened a conversation with me the object of which was to convince me that Salisbury and I ought to return to the front opposition bench. After the debate in returning home he renewed the subject. There is clearly a decided wish on it amongst the principal members of the party. They say – and it is doubtless

[317]Cairns invited Carnarvon to dinner on 7 February, the eve of the meeting of Parliament, to discuss his successor (Cairns to Carnarvon, 3 February 1870: CP, BL 60768, fos 16–17).

[318]Henry Charles Cadogan (1810–1873), 4th Earl Cadogan (1864).

[319]William Drogo Montagu (1823–1890), 7th Duke of Manchester (1855), MP for Bewdley (1848–1852) and for Huntingdonshire (1852–1855).

[320]*Hansard*, CXCIX, 3 February 1870, cols 16–40.

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true – that the party looks all the stronger from the appearance of being undivided.

Saturday 12 February (London)

We had a dinner party in the evening [. . .]. Mr. Featherston and Mr. Dillon Bell,[321] the two New Zealand envoys, dined. Sandon, Cairns, the Hardys, the Stanhopes, also dined.

Cairns after dinner resumed the conversation as to the leadership in the Lords. He said Salisbury would be best, and repeated his belief that there need be little communication between the leaders in the two Houses: but failing him he thought Stanley was ready though not anxious to take it. I promised to talk once more to Salisbury on Monday and to tell him the result[322] and it was then agreed that we should have a meeting of all the Peers in town in order to consider and decide the question before the end of the week as he then leaves for Mentone.

Wednesday 16 February (London)

Wrote to Cairns a letter as to leadership of the House of Lords, which is entered in letter book.[323] Subsequently received a note from Colville asking me on Cairns' part to see him, my letter having crossed his. I saw him this afternoon: and told him that Salisbury had come to the conclusion that whilst Disraeli remained leader in the House of Commons, he could not take the lead in the House of Lords but that he would attend the meeting of Conservative Peers next Saturday or that if he could not attend I would be present and say as much for him.[324] I

[321]Dr Isaac Earl Featherstone (1813–1876) and Francis Dillon Bell (1826–1898) were sent to London to negotiate the retention of two British regiments and a loan of two million pounds towards public works. They went back to New Zealand with a loan of only one million pounds.

[322]Lord Cowley, who had been staying at Highclere, wrote to Lady Derby, 'Lord Carnarvon seems low and dispirited about politics. He evidently wants Cranborne [*sic*] to make it up with Dizzy, but despairs of bringing about a reconciliation. He is afraid that Dizzy will give the lead in the Lords to the Duke of Buckingham or Marlborough, I forget which, but it is pretty much the same' (W.A.H.C. Gardner, Baroness Burghclere (ed.), *A Great Lady's Friendships: letters to Mary, Marchioness of Salisbury, Countess of Derby, 1862–1890* (London, 1933), p. 238).

[323]See Carnarvon to Cairns, 16 February 1870: Cairns Papers, TNA, PRO 30/51/8, fo. 65.

[324]Carnarvon wrote afterwards to Salisbury, 'I am, as you know, sorry that matters cannot be so arranged as to admit of your taking the lead: be as it may, it may do after all perhaps best as it is' (Carnarvon to Salisbury, 16 February 1870: Hatfield House Papers, 3M/E).

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distinctly said to Colville that Stanley if he took the lead, knowing as he does that he is not in accord with us on religious subjects, must in return for our support exercise forbearance on religious and suchlike questions, to which he quite assented.

Saturday 19 February (London)

Meeting of Conservative Peers at the Carlton. The Duke of Richmond proposed and Salisbury seconded the appointment of Stanley to Cairns' place. Salisbury was nearly late for the meeting and they asked me if he failed then to second.

Salisbury in doing this guarded himself and others by saying that whilst giving a support he could not pledge himself to an absolute adhesion on all points, especially those other than secular. Redesdale also put in a sort of caveat in the same sense and the Duke of Northumberland said that the events of two years since had induced him to break all allegiance to the party and to act with reference to his own feelings alone. Stanley was then accepted by the meeting which was not a very large one – about 50 or 60 – and the Duke of Richmond went to inform him but returned in 20 minutes saying that he was out having mistaken the hour. Lord Chelmsford[325] and Colville undertook to communicate with him, the Duke of Richmond leaving London. Cairns starts for Mentone this evening.

Monday 21 February (London)

Colville called to consult me as to the present difficulty. It seems that Stanley has positively declined the leadership, and has written two letters to Colville – one private and expressed in very good terms the other for the newspapers tomorrow morning more formal and dry and guarded. The substance in both was much the same. He rested the refusal on personal grounds, his inexperience of the House etc, his doubt whether he would be efficient in debate, the absence of those combative elements needed in a partisan leader and in the private letter the comparison which he thought he should provoke with his father.[326] Colville was at his wits ends what to do and felt the responsibility much.

[325]Frederick Thesiger (1794–1878), 1st Baron Chelmsford (1858), Lord Chancellor (1858–1859).

[326]Derby set out at length for his own consideration 'Reasons for accepting' and 'Reasons against accepting' (Vincent, *Derby*, I, p. 50).

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I advised:

1. the calling together at an early day of a fresh meeting of Peers.

2. the consideration in the interval of a scheme to be recommended.

What that scheme should be is the difficulty. The Duke of Richmond he says has positively declared he will not accept the leadership.

Finally at his request I consented to go to Stanley and afterwards to meet him and Lord Chelmsford at the Carlton. I found Stanley in and was received in a friendly manner: I put the whole case before him, that failing him there was only Salisbury, that S. would not undertake it whilst Disraeli led in the House of Commons, that failing Salisbury the party might disband in the House of Lords and we might then lose our majority there.

I pointed out that some of his objections were not really weighty. He admitted and said that the truth was that the Party was out of office for years, that he thought it better for himself to keep himself clear, that during his father's life he had followed him, that now he saw no necessity for sacrificing himself, that he had some influence with the moderate Liberals and Whigs and intended to keep somewhat aloof. From Colville's account to me he had used somewhat different arguments to him. He then asked me whether I would not take the leadership. I said at once no, that I had no wish to mix myself up with it though ready and perhaps able to give useful support. In conclusion his mind seemed to be made up. I went on to the Carlton, met Colville and Lord Chelmsford and helped them to draw up circular for next meeting of Conservative Peers. Wrote to Salisbury and urged him to come up.[327]

I put to Colville and Stanley, both, that the obstacle to Salisbury leading was Disraeli, and suggested his retirement if he knew the case.

Tuesday 22 February (London)

Met Colville, Duke of Richmond and Malmesbury by appointment at Carlton to consider question of leadership. The Duke of Richmond declared strongly against taking lead himself, saying he knew his own measure too well to undertake it. I then saw Salisbury at their request and urged upon him the expediency on the whole of his taking it. I pointed out that 1. probability that if we drifted on thus we might lose our majority in the House of Lords 2. that if we did even assuming that

[327]With the changing situation, Carnarvon told Salisbury, 'There would be no reason why you should not take the lead in the House if Disraeli were out of the way' (Carnarvon to Salisbury, 21 February 1870: Hatfield House Papers, 3M/E).

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the Whigs would ultimately join when property became imperilled we should see Church questions go hopelessly by the board. 3. that if he took it the understanding should be clear that he and we should act independently of Disraeli both now and in the future in the most improbable event of a change of government. He said it was too serious a matter to give an answer at once but he would write me his answer.

I next had a talk with the Duke of Richmond whom I strongly urged to take the lead if Salisbury would not. He grounded his great hesitation 1st on his doubt of his own power, 2nd on the dislike of the Duchess to his taking part in public matters. I promised him if he did lead my hearty support and help. I think he will take it if Salisbury does not.

Finally I had a conversation on the same subject with Hardy, than whom no one could be more friendly. His view was I was the best leader, failing Salisbury: and that though Disraeli was not popular in the House of Commons no such terms as I suggested would be practicable. I told him that the Party in House of Lords had behaved to me with so much injustice and unkindness that though I had forgiven it I should not forget it and that whilst I would do as I was doing every real service in my power, I was not inclined to undertake the lead.

Ritual Commission [. . .]. I walked up from the Ritual Commission with Walpole who curiously enough repeated what Hardy had said to me respecting my leading in the House.

Colville called on me in the evening to show me a letter from the Duke of Richmond in which he implied pretty clearly as he had to me that failing Salisbury he would screw himself up to the point and take the leadership. He said that he had no ambition and I believe him.*

[* but now that he has taken the place he likes it. Oct. 1870]

Thursday 24 February (London)

Received a long and carefully written letter from Salisbury deciding against taking the leadership.[328] I communicated the fact to Colville who asked me to write to Salisbury to beg him to propose the Duke of Richmond, which I did.

Saturday 26 February (London)

Meeting at the Carlton to settle the question of the leadership in the House of Lords. According to agreement Salisbury proposed

[328]Carnarvon was disappointed at Salisbury's decision: 'I admit all the weight of your argument whilst I cannot avoid regretting your conclusion' (Carnarvon to Salisbury, 2 March 1870: Hatfield House Papers, 3 M/E).

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and Stanley seconded the Duke of Richmond who then said that understanding that the Party thought that at this juncture he would be the best person he was ready to make all personal sacrifices and to accept the post: but that he should need all support, and that he must make it his earnest and personal request to Salisbury and myself that we would change our places and move from below the gangway to the front bench by him. Salisbury in reply said that the request rather put him on the defence and that consequently he hoped no one would be offended if he said that his reason for having taken his seat there was that he was not prepared now or hereafter to act with Mr. Disraeli, but that with that explanation he would comply with the request and move.

I then followed and said that Salisbury's explanation covered my position but that I thought after what the Duke of Richmond had said I ought to express my own readiness to give him all the support in my power. That wherever I sat I hoped to render him any service that I could believing that he was in all respects the best leader: but that if he really looked upon a change of seat on my part as an evidence of personal regard for him and a wish to support him I could not refuse and would do as he desired. That I had little doubt that I should concur with him in his general views: but that in making this change of place he would not misunderstand me if I also reserved to myself all freedom of action should circumstances make it necessary. This is as nearly as I can remember what passed. Redesdale in the Chair. What I said was well received.

After the Duke of Richmond asked me to stay and to help him in drawing up a circular to the Peers which I did, and when we parted he thanked me in the heartiest manner for all that I had done, and in fact I know that as I could have prevented at any moment the present settlement of the question, so I have been the means of smoothing all the difficulties. Almost 50 Peers were present.

Monday 28 February (London)

Went down to the House and took my seat according to promise on the front opposition Bench – with some rather curious feelings. Three years ago I deliberately resigned my seat on that bench, or at least on the Treasury bench, since then I have been in exile below the gangway, always an object of dislike sometimes of attack, with many opponents and few friends. And now I return at the earnest personal appeal of the new leader of the party whom I probably as much as any man have helped to place there and apparently to the great satisfaction of the party. It is a curious piece of personal history:

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and perhaps the end of the chapter is not yet. But I seek nothing, and if it comes as a matter of duty will refuse nothing.

Tuesday 28 June (London)

Fourth and last night of Committee on the Land Bill.[329]

Some conversation with Salisbury as to the course to be taken on the rejection by the House of Commons of a considerable part of our amendments. I am afraid we may have a breeze. He is keen for standing to almost all that we have carried and he says that the feeling in the back benches is that we shall be utterly discredited if we have any repetition of the compromise of last year.

He declared his intention in such case of leaving the front opposition Bench and resuming his old position of "fighting for his own hand." I said what I could to bring him to a somewhat more moderate view. At the same time from what Colville subsequently told me I suspect there is a good deal of feeling on the subject on the back benches, but then they have little responsibility and are sure to be vehement in such cases. I spoke cautiously and *confidentially* to the Duke of Richmond, who is sore with Salisbury it seems and said he was much disposed to push matters to extremities.

Friday 22 July (London)

In the afternoon a meeting of Peers at the Carlton to consider amendments or rather one amendment in the Irish Land Bill. The Duke of Richmond and Cairns proposed to agree to the House of Commons amendment and then Salisbury denounced it on the ground that it was an attempt of the House of Commons to coerce the Lords and that at any risk it should be resisted.

Some speeches were then made and I then said it was difficult to decide, that I disliked the principle of the bill and of the amendment so far as this latter could be called a principle, but that on the whole believing there to be little real principle in it, none for the future, and that the wording was such as to render it inoperative, I thought it better to agree to it. As regards a collision with the House of Commons, that I was quite ready to fight but on one condition, that we could choose our battlefield and the sense of the country to back us: but that in this case I thought the point was not one that would be intelligible and that for that reason we should only be defeated if we risked our

[329]The Irish Land Bill (*Hansard*, CCII, 28 June 1870, cols 1052–1088).

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strength on it. What I said seemed to be accepted generally and the amendment was agreed to. Salisbury seemed a little put out I thought at the moment but afterwards in the House he supported me well.

In the House I introduced my Canadian motion with regard to the Volunteers. I was obliged to give up the division so there was some hesitation in our own back benches, some on genuine, some on foolish grounds.[330]

Tuesday 20 December (Pixton)

Heard from Bernstorff[331] who conveys the virtual refusal of the German authorities to give Gleissner the safe conduct for which I had applied.

I received also a very curious letter from H. Mayhew[332] with whom years ago I had a "misunderstanding" and who now writes to express his regret and offer his apology, which he says he is convinced is due from a study of my public career. Of course I have written a thoroughly hearty letter thanking him and saying that in some measure perhaps the cause of misunderstanding may have been mine.

This is the 4th reconciliation which I have had this year: Lord Derby, Cairns, Bath, Mayhew. A singular combination.

[330] Ibid., CCIII, cols 703–729, on the Canadian frontier volunteer militia.

[331] Count Albrecht von Bernstorff (1809–1873), Prussian Foreign Minister (1861–1862), ambassador at London (1871–1873).

[332] Henry Mayhew (1812–1877), joint first editor of *Punch* (1841), author of *London Labour and the London Poor* (London, 1851; reissued with additions 1861, 1862, 1864, 1865).

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