1883

Tuesday 7 August (Highclere)

I went early to the House where we had a long debate on the Agricultural Holdings bill. I spoke and voted for it. Richmond was very keen for it, Salisbury spoke against it but did not vote, Elcho's speech was very dismissive, Carlingford's feeble.[784]

Friday 10 August (London)

All night in Committee on the Agricultural Holdings bill.[785] I moved several amendments etc but mine were all harmless. I cannot say as much of the other changes introduced. I regret much the party character given to the attack on the bill and Salisbury lent himself too much to it. Richmond who was very fair about it and who I think understands the bill was in despair on the subject and lamented bitterly over the whole proceedings. But it was all to little purpose and the bill was treated with a roughness which was from my point of view unfortunate. Legislation is, I admit, very bad and may possibly lead to mischief but when once that has been considered it is worse than idle to attack the bill with amendments which are for all practical purposes useless and which will give the Liberals the power of saying the bill is wholly illusory.

Tuesday 14 August (London – Highclere)

I went up to town for the report of the Agriculture Holdings bill and I took the opportunity of talking freely to Salisbury on the subject urging him strongly not to sacrifice the bill for the sake of amendments which were really useless. I assured him that if we came in Office we

[784]The Tenants Compensation Bill, or Agricultural Holdings (England) Bill, rewarded tenants making improvements on their holdings by obtaining compensation from their landlords. Second reading, *Hansard*, CCLXXXII, Carlingford, cols 1796–1803, Elcho (Wemyss), cols 1803–1807, Richmond, cols 1818–1824, Salisbury, cols 1831–1835; Voting: Contents 55, Non-Contents 9. The bill was sent to the Committee of the Whole House.

[785]Ibid., CCLXXXIII, cols 5–51.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960116309990297 Published online by Cambridge University Press

could not pass a more moderate bill ourselves and that it was playing the Radical game to upset this measure.[786]

Sunday 18 November (Highclere)

I walked about with Froude this afternoon. He was as usual very agreeable and his remarkable powers of memory and his inexhaustible store of information struck me much. I thought him in rather a melancholy mood. He said that he thought that when once he had finished his life of Carlyle[787] he would not write again. He said that it had been a terrible task imposed on him by Carlyle to undertake these papers,[788] and that Carlyle's own feeling was to make atonement by his public exhibition of his own faults and weaknesses for the wrongs which he thought he had done his wife. He said that he was doubting whether or not to insert two characters of Gladstone and Disraeli which Carlyle had drawn. The former Carlyle detests: the latter he did not like. I told him that as he was certain to meet a good deal of censure he might as well accept the whole and not omit that which would be very interesting. He laughed in his comical fashion and agreed. We afterwards happened to talk of Charles Kingsley,[789] and he told me, which was new to me, that the last two or three years of his life C. K. was always wishing for death. At that time he was once fishing somewhere with Henry Cowper,[790] who overheard him say to himself almost with every cast of his fly, "I wish I were dead, I wish I were dead." Froude estimates Kingsley most highly as a poet.

[786]Ibid., cols 439–447. After attending the debates on the bill, Carnarvon left for Canada on 22 August.

[787]Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881), Scottish writer and historian.

[788]Froude, as Carlyle's literary executor, by the will of 1873 was given the task of writing the *History of the First Forty Years of Carlyle's Life* and *History of Carlyle's Life in London*. The first two volumes were published in March 1882 and the second two in October 1884. See Dunn, *James Anthony Froude*, II, pp. 471–480.

[789]Charles Kingsley (1781–1860). His declining health and mental obsessions are described in S. Chitty, *The Beast and the Monk: a life of Charles Kingsley* (London, 1974), p. 225.

[790]Henry Frederick Cowper (1836–1887), second son of 6th Earl Cowper, Lib. MP for Hertfordshire (1865–1885).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960116309990297 Published online by Cambridge University Press