1914

3 January

In the evening to the National Sporting Club to present prizes in place of Alfred (Northcliffe) at an Assault of Arms of the Northcliffe Sports Association. The theatre packed with people from the Amalgamated Press, *Daily Mail* & *Daily Mirror*. A really inspiring sight. Great enthusiasm and excellent boxing and wrestling.

4 February

Dinner of the Luton Chamber of Commerce – Mr. Harry Inwards in the chair. I sit next Mr. George Elliott,[1] K.C. [who was greatly loved in the Constituency, by Liberals & Tories alike. C.H. 2nd Febry. 1934], former Conservative candidate for S. Beds, and, as it turns out, an old friend of my Father of whom he speaks very warmly in the course of a brilliant speech proposing the Luton Chamber of Commerce. I propose 'Luton & its industries'.

9 February

Em and I attend the Prime Minister's reception at Downing Street taking Lilian (Lady Rothermere) with us. A brilliant and very cheerful assemblage. Mrs. Asquith receives her guests sitting down. The P.M. in his uniform as a Brother of Trinity House looking more like Oliver Cromwell than ever.

10 February

The King and Queen open Parliament – H.M. wearing his crown as the new custom is, and the Queen a blaze of diamonds. Em in feathers

[1]George Elliott (d.1916); successful criminal and licensing lawyer; called to the Bar 1882; Unionist candidate for South Bedfordshire 1900 and Jan. 1910.

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and lappets surveys the scene from one of the side galleries in the H. of Lords. I have a seat in the strangers' gallery.

In the H. of Commons the debate turns immediately on Home Rule.

11 February

Resumed debate in the H. of C. on Home Rule. Most impressive speech by Sir Edward Carson.

17 February

Dinner party H. of C. given by me to representative Australians in London in aid of the projected Town-Planning tour in Australasia. Ewart Culpin, Mr. Davidge,[2] Chas. Reade and four or five Australasians. We secure the guarantee for the tour.

18 March

Harold takes the oath and signs the Roll in the House of Lords as Baron Rothermere. I go into the Moses Room and find him in his robes and with his cocked hat. With him are Alfred (Northcliffe), Lords Lincolnshire[3] & Colebrook,[4] Garter King in his tabard, Black Rod and assistant Black Rod. Afterwards the quaint ceremony of traversing the floor and the gangways of the House. Mother witnesses the ceremony, the only woman, it is said, who has ever seen two sons take their places in the H. of L. as first peers of their line.

22 March

Breakfast with Harold (Rothermere) at Claridge's and discuss the Irish crisis with him.

[2]William Robert Davidge (1879–1961): architect and surveyor, with an early interest in the garden cities movement; travelled to Australia and New Zealand with Reade in 1913–1914 to popularise town planning; President of the Royal Town Planning Institute 1926–1927.

[3]Charles Robert Wynn-Carrington (1843–1928): Lib. MP Wycombe 1865–1868; succ. as 3rd Baron Carrington 1868; cr. Earl Carrington 1895, Marquess of Lincolnshire 1912; President of the Board of Agriculture 1905–1911; Lord Privy Seal 1911–1912.

[4]Edward Arthur Colebrook (1861–1939): Lib. peer; succ. as baronet 1890; cr. Baron 1906; Lord-in-Waiting (government whip in House of Lords) 1906–1911; Captain of the Honourable Corps of Gentlemen-at-Arms 1911–1922.

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25 March

Greater Excitement in the House this week than I have ever known. The Tory plot to incite officers of the Army to refuse to serve in Ulster comes to a head in a virtual ultimatum of General Gough[5] and the officers of the Brigade at the Curragh to the Government. Seely, Secy. of State for War, seriously embarrasses the Government by adding an unauthorised rider to a Cabinet Memorandum dealing with this question. Liberal members all over the House gathering in gloomy knots and anxiously canvassing the situation. On Friday (March 27th) I find Winston (Churchill) singing blithely to himself in the lavatory behind the Speaker's Chair.

I thank him for his reassuring cheerfulness and he tells me that it is his habit to confront difficult situations with an outward serenity of aspect.

Much talk of a general election and the usual chatter about 'Cabinet dissensions'.

30 March

Fierce debate in the House on the situation in the Army. Resignation of Col. Seely as Secretary for War. The Prime Minister announces that *he* is to be the new Secretary of State!

31 March

First day of the Second Reading of the Home Rule Bill – the third Second Reading under the Parliament Act. An atmosphere of conciliation.

1 April

Still the Home Rule debate. I spend most of the day vainly endeavouring to catch the Speaker's eye – a nerve-shaking process that, often and unsuccessfully repeated, has driven many an

[5]Hubert Gough de la Poer Gough (1870–1963): army officer of Anglo-Irish aristocratic background; Brigadier-General commanding Third cavalry brigade at the time of the Curragh incident; commanded British Fifth Army 1916–1918.

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aspiring Member into permanent silence and obscurity on the back benches.

3 April

H. of C.

Decrepit Horse Bill. Brief speech based on my experiences of last autumn.

8 April
Henley

Adjournment of the H. of Commons for the Easter Recess. Immense number of Blocking Motions put down by our side.

Last day (for the signing of the Report) of the Inshore Fisheries Committee. I am unable to attend it owing to the threatened difficulties in the H of C. over the Motion for Adjournment.

[As a Member of Parliament I spent far too much of my parliamentary time on Committees outside the House – Fisheries Committees, Housing Committees, and others – and, again, as Private Parly. Secy. to a Minister. I hope I did useful work, but the place of a. Member of Parliament is *the House of Commons*. To know the House; the characters and moods of its members; its rules (which not one Member in fifty ever understands); the moods of the House as a whole as distinguished from its individuals; to be on the spot and ready to take part in debates and not to be too timid to do so – to play your part in short as a Parliamentarian, that is the true business of a Member of Parliament. In the arena of the H. of C. the fate of Empires is decided and not in outside activities however interesting and important. (C.H. 23.VI.1936)]

28 April.

Tory Vote of Censure on the Government in connection with the movement of troops in Ireland. Winston Churchill's offer to Sir E. Carson.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960116315000573 Published online by Cambridge University Press

29 April

Second day of the Vote of Censure. Mr. Balfour acknowledges that all his work of thirty years against H. Rule seems likely to prove abortive. Sir E. Carson makes a definite approach to peace.

I dine with the Free Trade Union sitting next to Mr. Henry Gladstone,[6] son of the great Statesman, a fresh, jolly clean-shaven gentleman.

11 May
Luton.

Meeting of workers in the Liberal Club to inaugurate the land Campaign in S. Beds.

21 May

Great row in the House. The Tories refuse to discuss the 3rd Reading of the Home Rule Bill. Bonar Law at loggerheads with Mr. Speaker. Sitting adjourned until Monday.

25 May

In the H. of C. the Tories decline to discuss 3rd Reading of the Home Rule Bill and we proceed immediately after Questions to a Division. Later, Motion for adjournment for Whitsuntide holiday carried.

6 June
Henley.

With us for the week-end – Mr. [Walter Runciman's private secy.] and Mrs. A.D. Sanderson. [. . .] Sanderson and I walk to Wargrave to see the church burnt down by the Suffragettes. A melancholy ruin.

[6]Henry Neville Gladstone (1852–1935): 3rd son of W.E. Gladstone; businessman and financier; cr. Baron 1932.

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9 June

A very full day for me, as thus:

With W.A.W[hite][7] to the Horse Show in the morning after some correspondence. Lunch with the *Country Life* people at the Carlton Hotel then to the opening of their Cottage Exhibition (by Runciman) at the Alpine Club.

House of Commons.

Home to dinner and then to the Royal Ball at Buckingham Palace. Gorgeous scene. The royal circle dancing as awkwardly as ever. Fewer scrubby foreign Princes than usual. H.M. in red uniform of the Black Watch. The Queen healthy and glowing. A blaze of gold plate in the supper-room. Beefeaters, scarlet uniforms, diamonds and splendour. Em delightful in a fashionable mauve dress.

'Mrs. Cecil Harmsworth – Parma violet and silver brocade the bodice softened with tulle and adorned with silver embroideries.'

14 June

To Poynters to see Mother and St. John. [. . .] A great gathering the clan – Harold, Vi and Wilfrid, Leicester, Hildebrand, Christabel and Percy and a crowd of grandchildren of all ages.

6 July

To town by early train. I attend the Memorial Service to Joseph Chamberlain[8] in St. Margaret's Church. Everybody there: Asquith, Balfour, Bonar Law, Lord Roberts,[9] Rudyard Kipling,[10] the H. of Lords and the H. of Commons. A simple, beautiful Service.

House adjourns after a noble tribute from Asquith and speeches from B. Law and Balfour. Balfour astonishingly feeble as he customarily is on these ceremonious occasions.

[7]Probably William Augustus White (1843–1927): an American book collector acquainted with the Harmsworth family.

[8]Joseph Chamberlain (1836–1914): Lib. MP Birmingham 1876–1885, Lib. then Lib. Unionist MP Birmingham West 1885–1914; former cabinet minister and leading tariff reformer, had died on 2 July 1914.

[9]Frederick Sleigh Roberts (1932–1914): Field Marshal.

[10]Joseph Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936): celebrated writer and poet.

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7 July

Government majority today only 23. This was on the Resolution allocating the time for the remaining stages of the Finance Bill. I was among those who abstained. I have an intense objection to the 'Guillotine' and have never yet voted for a Guillotine Resolution.

8 July

Discussion on the Guillotine Resolution continued. The situation being so serious for the Govt. I very reluctantly vote for the Resolution – on the main question being put.

9 July

A rather more than average H. of C. day. On Standing Committee 'B' (Milk & Dairies Bill) at 11.30. On Committee 'C' (Exportation of Horses Bill) at 12 and after an hour or so back to 'B'!

After lunch meeting of Provisional Committee Fisheries Organization Society at the A.O.S. office.

Then to begin the day in earnest at the H. of C.

10 July

Before that to see Harold at Claridge's. Harold is busily engaged with Murray of Elibank in trying to arrange the Ulster difficulty. He has seen the 'P.M.' two or three times, L.-George, Redmond, Carson and Birrell.

13 July

Harold asks me to tell W. Runciman of the Ulster negotiations which I do. W.R. quite unaware of what has been going on. He is greatly impressed.

The Ulster demands for the moment are the exclusion of:

Co. Antrim

Co. Londonderry

Co. Down (except perhaps a small part)

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Co. Armagh (except perhaps a part of the S.)
Co. Tyrone
N. Fermanagh
Londonderry City
(The excluded area to vote as a whole and not by Counties as under the Government's offer.)

Tyrone is the bone of contention. There are isolated groups of Covenanters in considerable numbers whom Carson will not give up. On the other hand 55.4 [per cent] of the population is said to be R. Catholic and returns 2 Nationalist members, the one and only Irish Liberal member (T.W. Russell) and the Orangeman. A.C. Murray tells his Chief Edward Grey of the Ulster negociations. Astonishing that E.G. should have had no knowledge of them!

17 July

W.R. [Walter Runciman] tells me that the Housing Bill is to be taken on Monday.

18 July

Busy again in the morning with preparations for the 2nd reading of the Housing Bill which is set down for Monday.

20 July

Announcement in *The Times* and *Daily Mail* today that the King has summoned a conference of Party leaders at Buckingham Palace. Asquith and Ll.-G., Lansdowne and B. Law, Redmond and Dillon,[11] Carson and Captain Craig.[12]

The House agog with excitement. Ardent Radicals and stalwart constitutionalists all very critical of the King's action.

After all, the Housing Bill does not come on. Tories object to taking so important and contentious a Bill at short notice. We discuss the Criminal Law Amendment Bill instead. A thin House. Members of all

[11]John Dillon (1851–1927): Irish Nat. MP Tipperary 1880–1883, Mayo East 1885–1918.
[12]James Craig (1871–1940): Unionist MP Down East 1906–1918, Mid-Down 1918–1921; leader of Ulster Unionist party and prime minister of Northern Ireland 1921–1940; cr. baronet 1918, Viscount Craigavon 1927.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960116315000573 Published online by Cambridge University Press

parties putting their heads together in the lobbies and in the smoking-rooms and on the Terrace in eager discussion of the new development.

21 July
H. of C.

First meeting of the Buckingham Palace conference.

Report stage of the Budget (1st day) in the thinnest and most listless of Houses. Everybody out in the lobbies and on the Terrace talking about the Conference. Members generally very pessimistic as to its results and Liberals still alarmed at and suspicious of the King's intervention.

22 July

Second meeting of the Buckingham Palace conference. Terms of the King's Speech published today. Greater excitement still among Liberals and, it is said, disapproval of many Tories. The critics fail to discover in the Speech any trace of the Asquithian style. Is it H.M.'s own unaided effort?

In answer to questions the P.M. says that the Speech was in his hands the night before it was delivered, and that he accepts full responsibility for it.

24 July

H. of C. Government' s Housing Bill – 2nd Reading.

30 July

War having been declared between Austria and Servia, Mr. Asquith announces in the H. of Commons that it has been arranged between the Government and the Opposition not to proceed for the time being with the highly contentious Amending Bill to the H. Rule Bill.

The papers today full of rumours of a European War. If Russia comes to the aid of Servia and Germany to the aid of Austria then a general conflagration may ensue. Hence the importance of our presenting a united front as a nation.

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31 July

Mr. Asquith informs the House that Germany has announced a state of martial law throughout the empire. Russia reported to he mobilising on her S.W. frontier with a view, presumably, to assisting Servia. The Germans threaten to mobilise, too, if the Russian movement extends along Germany's frontier. The London and provincial Stock exchanges declared closed. Bank rate raised yesterday from 3 to 4 and today to 8%.

1 August
Henley

Worse news than ever of the European situation. All the armies of Europe, including even Holland and Belgium, said to be mobilising. Bank rate 10%! In the newspapers appeals to well-to-do householders not to buy up stores because of the result on prices and consequent effects on the poor.

2 August
Henley.

To church with the children and Helen Hamilton. In the afternoon (Sir) Charles Nicholson comes in from Phyllis Court with the news that Germany is reported to have marched into Luxembourg and that heavy gun-firing has been heard in the N. Sea. Charles has motored into town for the news. Hears that there have been two Cabinet councils today.

3 August

Sir E. Grey's great speech in the H. of C. explaining our position. It amounts to this that in view of the obligations to France we have already incurred in connection with the Entente Cordiale and our long-standing obligations in regard to the independence of Belgium the Government has found it necessary to make a firm stand. We have therefore assured France that we shall protect the coast towns on her northern and western shores from naval aggression and we have undertaken to protect Belgium. A most remarkable scene in the House. Four rows of chairs in the floor – Questions postponed

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and the 'Moratorium' Bill rushed through both Houses in a few minutes.

4 August

The P.M. announces in the House that the Government have sent an Ultimatum expiring at 12 o'clock tonight requiring that Germany shall respect the neutrality of Belgium. The news comes along in the course of the day, however, that Germany has already penetrated the Belgian frontier.

All the outstanding Votes passed in a few minutes.

Practically all parties in the House are now united. The small group who pleaded for our neutrality yesterday is now silenced. The invasion by Germany of the rights of Belgium has brought everybody into line.

Lord Morley[13] and John Burns have definitely resigned.

Runciman tells me that he has been appointed President of the Board of Trade in John Burns' place. Lord Lucas to be President of the Board of A. & F.

Remarkable crowds in all the chief streets and outside Buckingham Palace.

5 August

The Germans refuse to comply with our ultimatum and we are at WAR. And we are in to the thick of it very soon too. A German liner is sunk today while she is engaged in mine-laying – am not sure where but not far from Harwich. German army held in check at Liege and said to have suffered heavy losses.

Lord Kitchener[14] appointed Secretary of State for War.

The papers full of rumours as to the military and naval incidents all over the vast theatre of war.

The fact that we are at War brought home to us in many ways. Soldiers bustling off in every direction – large holiday crowds patrolling the chief thoroughfares – little Union Jacks and tricolours sold by all the street hawkers – cheering multitudes outside Buckingham Palace – public-houses crammed.

[13]John Morley (1838–1923): Lib. MP Newcastle upon Tyne 1883–1895, Montrose Burghs 1896–1908; cr. Viscount Morley 1908; Chief Secretary for Ireland 1886, 1892–1895; Secretary of State for India 1905–1910, 1911; Lord President of the Council 1910–1914.

[14]Horatio Herbert Kitchener (1850–1916): Field Marshal; cr. Baron 1898, Viscount 1902, Earl 1914; Secretary of State for War 1914–1916.

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The H. of C. meets each day for a few hours – passes emergency Bills through all stages and adjourns early.

6 August

H. of C. We pass three astonishing votes without a murmur in any part of the House.

1. A vote for £100,000,000.
2. A vote for 500,000 more men for the Army.
3. A vote for 67,000 more men for the Navy.

Liege still holds out with immense heroism.

Sinking of H.M.S. Amphion by a mine laid by the German ship destroyed yesterday. Feverish activity at the Board of A. & F. and at the Board of Trade in connection with enquiries as to food-supplies, relief projects, etc.

I spend the day with Arnold Rowntree[15] and Mr. Cross[16] trying to revive our Housing Bill. I interview Walter Long,[17] Lord Robert Cecil, Charles Bathurst[18] and Arthur Henderson[19] chairman of the Labour Party.

7 August

Further negociations in connection with the Housing Bill.

[15]Arnold Stephenson Rowntree (1872–1951): Lib. MP York 1910–1918; Quaker; opposed to the war.

[16]Elihu Richard Cross (1864–1916): Scarborough solicitor; friend and political associate of Arnold Rowntree.

[17]Walter Hume Long (1854–1924): Con. MP Wiltshire North 1880–1885, Devizes 1885–1892, Liverpool West Derby 1893–1900, Bristol South 1900–1906, Dublin County South 1906–1910, Strand 1910–1918, Westminster St George's 1918–1921; Parliamentary Secretary to the Local Government Board 1886–1892; President of the Board of Agriculture 1895–1900; President of the Local Government Board 1900–1905; Chief Secretary for Ireland 1905; President of the Local Government Board 1915–1916; Secretary of State for Colonies 1916–1919; First Lord of the Admiralty 1919–1921; cr. Viscount 1921.

[18]Charles Bathurst (1867–1958): Con. MP Wilton 1910–1918; cr. Baron Bledisloe 1918, Viscount 1935; Governor-General of New Zealand 1930–1935.

[19]Arthur Henderson (1863–1935): succeeded MacDonald as chairman of the parliamentary Labour party on 4 August 1914; Lab. MP Barnard Castle 1903–1918, Widnes 1919–1922, Newcastle East 1923, Burnley 1924–1931, Clay Cross 1933–1935; Labour party secretary 1912–1934; chairman of parliamentary Labour party 1908–1910, 1914–1917; leader of Labour party 1931–1932; President of the Board of Education 1915–1916; Paymaster-General 1916; Minister without Portfolio in War Cabinet 1916–1917; Home Secretary 1924; Foreign Secretary 1929–1931; president of World Disarmament Conference 1932–1934.

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I go with W.R. to the Board of Trade.

The names of the Nord Deutscher Lloyd and Hamburg Amerika lines[20] pasted over at their fine offices in Trafalgar Square.

8 August

H. of C. sits today. Housing Bill Money Resolution and First Reading taken.

While I am sitting in the evening in W. Runciman's room at the Board of Trade John Burns comes in. He is the retiring President having resigned from the Ministry because of his opposition to the War. He has come to remove his dispatch boxes and papers which he does very ruefully. I tell him I hope he will soon be back with us again. Poor JB. He has always been very kind to me.

Harry Verney[21] appointed to the place I looked for at the Bd. of A. & F. – that of Parliamentary Secretary. Runciman has pressed me to go with him to the Board of Trade.

10 August

The H. of C. adjourns for a fortnight after passing the Housing Bill through all its remaining stages.

Early in the morning I attend a conference at the L.G.B. with Herbert Samuel,[22] Lord Lucas, Ld. Robert Cecil, Walter Long and others to agree finally on the details of the Housing Bill.

11 August

We are expecting a great battle in Belgium. It is now privately known that a part at least of our Expeditionary force is over there.

[20] German shipping companies.

[21] Harry Calvert Williams Verney (1881–1974): Lib. MP Buckingham 1910–1918; Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries 1914–1915; succ. as 4th baronet 1910.

[22] Herbert Louis Samuel (1870–1963): Lib. MP Cleveland 1902–1918, Darwen 1929–1935; Under-Secretary of State, Home Department 1905–1909; Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 1909–1910, 1915–1916; Postmaster General 1910–1914, 1915–1916; President of the Local Government Board 1914–1915; Home Secretary 1916, 1931–1932; High Commissioner for Palestine 1920–1925; cr. Viscount Samuel 1937.

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I take the 3 children to the Hampstead Baths in the morning and to Lords Cricket Ground in the afternoon. A surprisingly large attendance at Lords (Surrey v. Kent the Oval having been requisitioned for military purposes), our 'flannelled fools' delighting an appreciative crowd just as highly as if the fate of Europe were not in the balance.

I decide after a most pressing request from Runciman to go with him to the B. of T. as his Parliamentary Secy.

12 August

We are on the eve of what may prove to be as great a battle as Waterloo. [. . .]

The fate of Europe trembles in the balance. Yet we take it very calmly. There is an extraordinary bustle about the War Office and recruits are drilling in the Temple Gardens and in every vacant space. A brisk demand for newspapers and unusual holiday-like crowds in the streets. On the Admiralty arches, and, I think, on the Foreign Office high-angle guns have been mounted behind screens so coloured as to attract as little notice as possible. Yet, I say, we are wonderfully quiet. Perhaps we rely too confidently on our fleets in the N. Sea and on our Allies and our Expeditionary Force in Belgium. What ever happens we cannot believe that Germany will ultimately prevail. I see no signs of boastfulness or swagger anywhere but only the orderly mobilising of a whole nation to resist German arrogance to the death. I attend meetings with shipowners at the Bd. of T. and at the L.G.B. a meeting to decide how best to make use of the provisions of the Housing Act during the bad period of unemployment that may be coming.

13 August

I am busy all day at the Bd. of Trade. One deputation after another dealing with shipping risks, the cotton trade, the corn supply, Argentine Beef and the national commissariat generally. Later to confer with Mr. Betham[23] in regard to Rural Housing under the new Act.

[23]Ernest Burton Betham (1864–1938): involved in the Garden City movement and published on topics related to housing; one of the architects of the Tatchbrook Estate, Westminster, which opened in 1935.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960116315000573 Published online by Cambridge University Press

14 August

Another day without *new* news. The newspapers industriously furbish up for us again the accounts of the fighting round Liege. I spend the day finding out for Runciman at the Custom House and of the Admiralty Marshal what exactly is the jurisdiction in the matter of Prizes. It appears that the Marshal has full control, making use of Collectors of Customs as local agents or substitutes. The Board of Trade has no jurisdiction at all. Shipping and food supply Conferences at the Bd. of T. all day.

The Bd. of T. is now in control of all the railways of the country. The Government has bought vast quantities of sugar (for the general consumer and not merely for the W.O. and Admiralty) and quantities also of Canadian wheat.

15 August

Henley in the afternoon. A delightful day. The Babes and I indulge in an evening bathe. Such is the spirit of the times that one cannot altogether avoid a sort of guilty feeling in deserting the post of duty in London and taking refuge in the country even for a short week-end.

24 August

News this afternoon of the fall of Namur. This fortified place seems to have been expected to give a better account of itself even than Liege and its surrender is a serious matter.

It is now certain that our Expeditionary Force has been operating in the neighbourhood of Mons and has been obliged to fall back to lines of defence on the French frontier in company with our French Allies. The Prime Minister announces in the House that the retreat has been accomplished in good order but with 2,000 casualties to our troops.

The House meets after its brief recess and rises for the day after a number of urgency Bills have been given a Second Reading.

Conferences all day at the B. of Trade in respect of shipping, food-supplies, finance of industries, etc.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960116315000573 Published online by Cambridge University Press

26 August

In the House today a batch of small emergency Bills are introduced and advanced various stages. There is a discussion as to the action of the banks – some are described by Ll.-G. as behaving well in the matter of providing credit to traders, others as deserving censure.

28 August

Short gloomy day at the H. of C. The P.M. announces that our soldiers on the Cambrai–Le Cateau lines have been fiercely engaged with 5 German Army Corps, 2 Cavalry Divisions, 1 Cavalry Reserve and 1(second) Cavalry Division and that our casualties have been 'very heavy'. What is to be the end of it all? It is pretty clear that ever since Namur and Mons we have been fighting a series of terrific rear guard actions. We seem to have fallen back some forty miles in a few days.

British marines land at Ostende to guard the town. Lord Crewe[24] in the Lords announces that we are bringing Indian troops to fight in France – which I greatly regret in spite of the circumstances.

29 August

I spend the morning at the Bd. of Trade and carry a message for Runciman to the War Office. Proud boy scouts as messengers everywhere in the great Dept.

The 12.5 to Henley. Our garden brilliant with flowers. This lovely riverside scene seems almost unnaturally remote from the tremendous events taking place not more perhaps than 150 miles from so tranquil a spot. How did our ancestors comport themselves just before Waterloo? I cannot avoid a sort of guilty feeling that I should be rusticating so easefully here while our men *out there* are struggling against terrific odds for the liberties of Europe.

[24]Robert Offley Ashburton Crewe-Milnes (1858–1945): Lib. peer; succ. as 2nd Baron Houghton 1885; succ. as 4th Baron Crewe 1894; cr. Earl of Crewe 1895, Marquess 1911; Lord Lieutenant or Ireland 1892–1895; Lord President of the Council 1905–1908; Leader of House of Lords 1908–1916; Secretary of State for Colonies 1908–1910; Secretary of State for India 1910–1915; Lord Privy Seal 1910–1911, 1912–1915; Lord President of the Council 1915–1916; President of the Board of Education 1916; Secretary of State for War 1931; leader of the Liberals in the House of Lords 1908–1923, 1936–1944.

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31 August

To town by early train. The official news today is reassuring. We and our Allies are firmly established in our new lines nearer Paris. A persistent rumour that a large body of Russian troops (via Archangel, no doubt) have passed through Scotland and England on their way to the Continent.

Mischievous discussion in the H. of C. on Ireland, and Welsh Disestablishment. With Runciman and McKenna on discussions relating to the supply of wheat and meat.

I offer myself as a veteran to the C.O. of the Artists, 8th London Rifles.

1 September

Busy with W.R. at the Bd. of Trade. Mr. Neville Chamberlain[25] (a son of Joe's and much more like him in appearance than Austen)[26] comes along to advocate the spending of Govt. money on improving Canals in order to find employment.

2 September

Deputation to W.R. today of East End women workers headed by Miss Sylvia Pankhurst,[27] the younger of the formidable militant sisters.

[25]Arthur Neville Chamberlain (1869–1940): younger son of Joseph Chamberlain and half-brother of Austen; businessman and industrialist; Birmingham City Councillor from 1911, and Lord Mayor 1915–1916; Director-General of National Service 1916–1917; Unionist MP Birmingham Ladywood 1918–1929, Birmingham Edgbaston 1929–1940; Minister of Health 1922–1923, 1924–1929; Chancellor of the Exchequer 1923–1924, 1931–1937; leader of Conservative party and Prime Minister 1937–1940.

[26]Joseph Austen Chamberlain (1863–1937): elder son of Joseph Chamberlain and half-brother of Neville; Unionist MP Worcestershire East 1892–1914, Birmingham West 1914–1937; Civil Lord of the Admiralty 1895–1900; Financial Secretary to the Treasury 1900–1902; Postmaster General 1902–1903; Chancellor of the Exchequer 1903–1995, 1919–1921; Secretary of State for India 1915–1917; Lord Privy Seal 1921–1922; leader of the Conservative party 1921–1922; Foreign Secretary 1924–1929; First Lord of the Admiralty 1931; knighted 1925.

[27]Estelle Sylvia Pankhurst (1882–1960): daughter of Emmeline Pankhurst; suffragette; broke with the Women's Social and political Union in 1914 to form the East London Federation of Suffragettes, which later became in turn the Women's Suffrage Federation, the Workers' Socialist Federation and finally, in 1920, the Communist Party (British Section of the Third International); the last joined the Communist party of Great Britain in 1921 but Pankhurst was expelled soon afterwards.

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The discussion is mainly about the cost of food in the East End and the competition of amateur lady needlewomen with the shirt-makers, etc. Sylvia states the main case with admirable precision and force and, later, when W.R. has left the room one of the women lectures the astonished permanent officials on the advantages of Woman Suffrage.

3 September

W.R. assures me today that there is not a word of truth in the rumour about Russian reinforcements coming from Archangel and passing through Scotland and England. He suggests that the supposed Muscovites must have been Lord Lovat's Gaelic-speaking gillies who have been enrolled for the War! Thus perishes one of the most widely and persistently circulated rumours in history.

4 September

Great speeches by the P.M. and Bonar Law at the Guildhall. Kitchener's new army already between 200,000 and 500,000 men.

I receive a letter from Lt. Col. May[28] of the Artists (28th London) Battn. saying that he fears I am too old to rejoin and asking me to visit the Headquarters which are now at Lords Cricket Ground.

7 September

Em and I go at night to meet Larry at Victoria Park station, N.L.R., beyond Bethnal Green. The Leinster Regt. has been stationed provisionally for some time at Cambridge and later at Newmarket. Now on its way by this unobtrusive route to the South Western Ry. and so to Southampton. The N.L.Ry closed to ordinary traffic but the station officials at Victoria Park allow us on to the platform. Larry's train, packed with cheering Tommies in their shirt sleeves, is even before its time. We are able to give him a latest pattern service revolver obtained by special permit from the Tower of London.

[28] Henry Allan Roughton May (1864–1930); commanded the 28th Battalion of the London Regiment (Artists Rifles) from 1912–1915, 1919–1920; in the interval he was Commandant of the Officers' School of Instruction at Tidworth.

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9 September

The H. of C. reassembles alter a brief adjournment. Glowing and picturesque account of the loyal offers of the Princes of India. [It is impossible to describe the emotion and enthusiasm with which this message from India was received by the House.]

10 September

I address with J.O. Hickman, the Tory candidate,[29] recruiting meetings at Luton and Shillington.

11 September

War news today better and better. [. . .]

To Lords Cricket Ground to see my old Corps, the Artists, at their temporary headquarters. They occupy the range of summer-houses round the practice ground. The actual cricket ground itself is left undisturbed. Col. May is good enough to walk round with me. He tells me they have had a wonderful rush of recruits of the best sort – Oxford and Cambridge men, old Blues, public school boys, etc. A slap-up lot.

14 September

This evening Em and I motor round the town to see the preparations that have been taken against attacks by German Zeppelins and other aircraft. They are putting a searchlight on the arches at Hyde Park Corner next to Apsley House. Two very powerful lights on Charing Cross Station that play on the clouds and search every space of the sky. The order has gone forth that all bright lamps, electric advertisements, etc. are to be put out. Even the blinds on the Embankment trains are drawn. Avenues of acetylene lamps in the Parks with a view, it is thought, to deceiving hostile aviators as to the topography of London by night.

[29]Although Hickman had been re-adopted as the prospective Con. candidate for Luton, he did not fight the seat in 1918.

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20 October

Deputation today at the Board of Trade to consider the present gloomy condition of the whole cotton industry of Lancashire. The only helpful suggestion is that perhaps woollen khaki may be woven on some of the Lancashire looms.

21 October

Today Mlle. Ophelie Vertroost[30] of Ghent, a Belgian refugee, comes to stay with us. She got away from Ghent to Ostende by tram – Ghent then being in the hands of the Germans. [Mlle. Vertroost stayed with us all the years of the War and became a great favourite with us and the family generally. We were indeed very lucky in our merry roundabout little Mademoiselle. Many of the Belgian refugees taken hospitably into English homes were terrors.]

24 October

Lamentable news this evening that Larry has been killed in action – on the 21st [on the 20th as we learn from his Colonel (Col. Reeve)[31]]. A telegram from the War Office with this bare information. Poor dear Em in terrible distress. Her favourite brother and one of my dearest friends. How he used to worry me in the early days of the War to exercise influence to get him sent out to the front.

11 November

Opening of 5th Session of this Parliament.

Board of Trade and H. of Commons. I follow Mr. Speaker to the H. of Lords to hear the King's Speech. H.M. husky and very brief. Splendid in his scintillating crown and royal robes. Her M. a fine figure in the famous Cullinan diamonds and other jewels.

[30]No further information on her is available beyond that provided in this entry.

[31]William Tankerville Moneypenny Reeve (*c.*1866–1915): Lt Col., Commander of the Leinster Regiment's Second Battalion.

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23 November

In the H. of Commons we are and have been ever since the outbreak of war a united family. There are no whips on the doors and the Division bells have not sounded for months. It is a joy to be able to get home most days for dinner.

8 December

To Newport (Mon.) with Henry Webb, M.P., G. Hay-Morgan,[32] M.P., and Sir G.H. Pollard,[33] M.P. to consider the question of raising Forest of Dean Battn. of the Gloucestershire Regt. We stay the night at Webb's house Llwynarthen, Castleton, between Newport and Cardiff.

Webb presses me to accept a Commission in the new Battn.

14 December

Down to Newnham on Severn to speak at meetings for the Forest of Dean Battn. My two places are The Sladd and Drybrook. Excellent gathering of miners at the latter.

The Sladd has apparently been drained pretty dry of young men.

21 December

Christmas shopping with Em and the babes in the morning. In the afternoon to the Board of Trade. Conference with Runciman and R. McKenna on the purchases of wheat by the Government.

24 December

Mother's Birthday.

To Poynters to dine with mother. Our dinner party consists of Alfred (Northcliffe), Harold (Rothermere), Leicester and Anne,

[32]George Herbert Pollard (1864–1937): Lib. MP Eccles 1906–1918.

[33]George Hay Morgan (1866–1931): called to the Bar 1899; KC 1913; Lib. MP Truro-Helston 1906–1918; Co. Lib. candidate in the Abertillery by-election 1920.

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St John, Esmond H.,[34] Christabel and Percy [Burton] and Dr. Hall of Hatfield.

I return in Harold's car in a fog that deepens as we get nearer to town. The obscuring of all lights in and about London adds greatly to the fog difficulty. We take refuge in the Hampstead Tube railway and I arrive home very late for filling the children's stockings with Em.

31 December

Board of Trade. I send in my application for membership of the Old Boys Corps.

At midnight Em and I stand at the door steps to welcome the New Year in – conversing at the same time with the policeman on the beat as to the likelihood of a Zeppelin raid. The police have orders to make for the nearest telephone and ring up the Admiralty if they sight Zeppelins or other aircraft.

[34]Esmond Cecil Harmsworth (1898–1978): third son of Harold Harmsworth and succeeded as his heir after both his brothers Vyvyan and Vere were killed; served in the army during the First World War; ADC to Lloyd George at the Paris Peace Conference 1919; Con. MP Isle of Thanet 1919–1929; Chairman of Associated newspapers 1932–1971; succ. as 2nd Viscount Rothermere, 1940.

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