1886

Friday 1 January (Vice Regal Lodge)

The beginning of the New Year; and politically it opens darkly. We as a Government are entering on a course of policy which can only end in failure and may lead to great disaster; and on the other hand I have the deepest distrust of everything which Gladstone will do. Self pervades the whole of his course; but I expect that as death does not come to those who court it, so we shall stay on to follow the unreasoning impulses of men who are wholly ignorant of the facts of the case.

R. Churchill came here to luncheon on his way back to England. We talked for fully two hours and the conversation was very interesting; but I cannot say that I derived comfort from it.[1017] He is very clever and ingenious and has many far reaching thoughts; but he is over-rash and if he guides the chariot of the Sun he may easily set our English world on fire.

He has an attractive side to his character and is open to the influences of counsel and prudence, but—.

Thursday 7 January (Vice Regal Lodge)

I had two conversations today curiously opposite. Capt. Slack, after reporting the state of his district, told me that I am extremely unpopular with the landowners in the South and on pressing him for the reasons he gave me three:

1. My speech in the House of Lords just before coming over here.

2. My seeing the Mayor of Limerick in my bedroom when I was too ill to see him elsewhere, and my "civility" to the Nationalists.

[1017]The following day, Churchill suggested to Salisbury that Lord Wolseley should succeed Carnarvon as Lord Lieutenant (Churchill to Salisbury, 2 January 1886: CP, TNA, PRO 30/6/55, fos 165–166). Churchill had also discussed with Carnarvon the possibility of the latter writing a paragraph in the Queen's Speech on Ireland. Carnarvon, on reflection, wrote to Churchill, 'I doubt, with my ideas of policy, I am the best person to compose the paragraph' (Carnarvon to Churchill, 3 January 1886: CP, TNA, PRO 30/6/55, fo. 173).

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3. My speech at Belfast where after impressing on the tenants to be reasonable I told the landlords to be forebearing.

On the same day old Sir P. Keenan[1018] with whom I had a long conversation as to the future of Ireland said, "One thing I can say that since Your Excellency came to Ireland I have not heard one unkind word spoken against you."

Two curiously opposed speeches made to me on the same day, and both I doubt not correct, but expressing the opinion of different classes.

Wednesday 13 January (London)

Elsie and Margaret and Esmé and I came over today. On the way I saw in the *Standard* the statement in the leading article announcing my retirement at the end of the month.[1019] It is worded in the most friendly terms, and it seems to me to come at a most opportune moment for me. The sky was looking dark. I can plainly see the symptoms of a dead set being made at me: circumstances rather favour it, and I might easily be placed in the position not of retiring according to a bargain with Salisbury and in accordance with my own wishes, but of being forced out of office on the ground of having failed. At this moment comes this statement which places everything in the pleasantest light to me personally and relieves me I hope from all risks of a breach with the Government and Party.

On arriving in London I wrote to Salisbury, but I found that he had gone down to Osborne.

A long talk with Herbert over the whole position. On the whole he agrees with me that it will be perhaps best that S. should for a while stand aloof from the Government, opposing in the House of Lords, and supporting them but not joining.

Thursday 14 January (London)

All or almost all the papers are writing of my retirement in fairly friendly terms, and none of them suggest that it is through a difference of opinion that I am going. Nevertheless these times are personally

[1018] Sir Patrick Joseph Keenan (1826–1894), Resident Commissioner of National Education, Ireland.

[1019] 'The retirement of Lord Carnarvon', *Evening Standard*, 13 January 1886, p. 8.

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unpleasant and it will be satisfactory when the whole matter is concluded, if it is well concluded.

Friday 15 January (London)

Cabinet

A remarkable Cabinet[1020] which began by a reference to the recent announcement in the *Standard* as to myself with an assurance that I thought it well to give that I of course knew nothing of it.

Then we discussed Irish matters, and a very curious discussion it was. R. Churchill proposed that within the next few days before the meeting of Parliament, we should proclaim the National League, arrest all prominent persons, seize the officers of the League and their papers and apply to Parliament for an indemnity. This extraordinary proposal was accepted by the majority of the Cabinet, Cranbrook,[1021] Harrowby, Smith, Cross and several others. Salisbury opposed it and I said that I really could not carry out such a measure, and so ultimately we destroyed the absurd suggestion. Since then I have reason to think that R.C. himself only used it as a sort of feint to cover all proposals, but it was very curious to see how many of the Cabinet swallowed it eagerly.[1022]

The question remains, and this must be discussed tomorrow, whether in the Queen's Speech an intimation will be given that the Government will apply for fresh powers to put down the League.

Saturday 16 January (London)

Cabinet

A preliminary meeting at the Irish Office of Lord Ashbourne, the Attorney General, Dyke, and myself. We discussed the Queen's Speech and the proposed paragraph on Ireland. Ashbourne under

[1020]The Cabinet had met on 12 January with Carnarvon in Ireland. Parliament assembled on 15 January and adjourned until 20 January.

[1021]Cranbrook had received a letter from Salisbury in the morning, offering him the Lord Lieutenancy, but turned it down (A.E. Gathorne-Hardy, *Gathorne Hardy, First Earl of Cranbrook: a memoir*, 2 vols (London, 1910), II, pp. 253–254). Churchill sent Salisbury next day further suggestions for filling the post, including Cranbrook, 'W. H. Smith and (please don't be too shocked), myself' (Churchill to Salisbury, 16 January 1886: Hatfield House Papers, 3M/E).

[1022]See Carnarvon's lengthy letter to Salisbury, written after the Cabinet meeting: Hatfield House Papers, 3M/E.

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the influence of present public opinion hot as any Orangeman for the assertion of most extreme measures.

Afterwards a Cabinet in which there was a great discussion as to whether there should be an intimation in the Speech of an intention to ask for powers to suppress the League, or only that the Government may ask for such, or no mention at all of it. The Cabinet could not agree and it was adjourned to Monday.

I afterwards saw Salisbury and settled (1) that I could not stay for the debate on the opening of Parliament but return to Ireland and wind up, (2) that I did not see any advantage at present of my taking a seat in the Cabinet without Office. He agreed to this and added that if the Government should go on there must be reconstitution and that he could then offer me some Office.

He said Cross was very weak, that Hamilton was also weak.

Sunday 17 January (London)

Elsie and I went to St. Paul's, a refreshing service after all the anxieties and worries and work of the last few days [. . .].

Dyke called this evening, to tell me he had just put his resignation in Salisbury's hands.[1023] Poor fellow, he is sore and out of spirits; for he considers that the attacks on him in the Papers have been got up for the purpose of driving him out; and he is convinced that they have been inspired by some of his colleagues. It is not pleasant to think this; but I suspect that he is not very wrong. But for the opportune publication of my retirement in the *Standard* I feel sure that a dead set was commencing against me in the Papers, proceeding possibly from a different source but practically much the same in effect.

Monday 18 January (London)

Cabinet and my last, I conclude, held at the Foreign Office. The Irish paragraph in the Speech finally settled, containing a clause against Home Rule and one against the National League. I took this opportunity of warning the Cabinet that this would be accepted as a declaration of War, that the National League differed from previous organisations in this that all the Irish members belonged to it, and that the R.C. clergy were now identified with it. I warned them that

[1023]Hart Dyke had informed Salisbury after the Cabinet meeting on 16 January 'that he did not want to go on as Irish Secretary – Carnarvon had never let him know anything that was going on' (Salisbury to W.H. Smith, 16 January 1886: Hambleden Papers, PS9/104).

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a mere bill for the suppression of the League would not suffice: but that there must be a Crimes Bill and a pretty strong one too, and that if they were wise they would set about its composition at once.[1024]

Our parting was very friendly and I hope that I go out in the comparative odour of sanctity. But I welcome my release greatly.[1025]

Friday 22 January (Vice Regal Lodge)

The debate on the Address is interesting. Salisbury's reference to me was a handsome one, and there was no personal or hostile criticism of me as far as I saw.[1026]

Gladstone's speech was evidently an entire change [from] his original purpose: but he left open more back doors of escape. Parnell's was a very striking one, the best I have ever read of his, compressed force and moderation.[1027]

In the evening I had a telegram from Salisbury[1028] saying that he was sorry in the pressure of yesterday not to have announced Smith's appointment[1029] and that Cranbrook goes to the War Office.

Saturday 23 January (Vice Regal Lodge)

A horribly cold day, snow or sleet and rain.

Elsie distributed the prizes in a very cold room for some window gardening and neat cottages, and I made a short speech.

[1024]Lady Spencer, wife of the previous Liberal Lord Lieutenant, commented to her husband on the situation, 'It is curious to read all the papers and see how completely it [the Government] allowed that the attempts to govern without a Coercion Bill have failed. There *never* was so disastrous a policy' (Lady Spencer to Lord Spencer, 20 January 1886: Spencer Papers).

[1025]Carnarvon left by night train to Dublin.

[1026]Salisbury stated, 'It is impossible to exaggerate the care, benevolence, the tact, the skill which my noble Friend [the Earl of Carnarvon] brought to bear on the task of executing the message of reconciliation of which he announced in this House that he was the bearer' (*Hansard*, CCCII, 21 January 1886, col. 66).

[1027]Ibid., Gladstone, cols 100–120, Parnell, cols 151–160.

[1028]CP, BL 60762, fo. 132.

[1029]Carnarvon wrote immediately to Smith, remarking on the latter's 'great self-sacrifice' in accepting the post and offered to discuss matters with him (Carnarvon to W.H. Smith, 22 January 1886: Hambleden Papers, PS9/114). Smith crossed over to Ireland on 23 January (W.H. Smith to Carnarvon, 22 January 1886: CP, TNA, PRO 30/6/53, fo. 231). Cranbrook filled Smith's position at the War Office.

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In the evening I gave a large state farewell dinner in uniform, 37 present. I had asked 50 but the others could not come.[1030]

A rather disagreeable controversy with the Chancellor (Gibson) as to my giving a P.C. ship to Monroe the late Solicitor General and now Judge of Land Court.[1031] He was overbearing and impertinent and so I was obliged to meet his opinion by a very distinct and clear refusal. He has a great deal of the typical Irishman in him.

Sunday 24 January (Vice Regal Lodge)

W.H. Smith, the new Chief Secretary, arrived and came here. Our meeting was very cordial and I had a very long conversation with him.[1032] I spoke to him with the fullest unreserve and told him everything that I thought would be of the smallest use.

I hope I have settled Jekyll with him as Private Secretary. It is apparently arranged that as soon as the debate in the House of Commons permits, a new Lord Lieutenant should be appointed, but that till then I should retain the Office nominally.

Monday 25 January (Vice Regal Lodge)

A deep snow, very cold, and unusual weather for Ireland.

My first and last Levée, I expected there would be a very small attendance owing to the horrible weather, the absence of many in London and political agitations. But it was a large one, 530 attended.[1033]

I thought there were comparatively few peers or great landowners.

I held a Privy Council to swear in A. Kavanagh,[1034] a curious and strange spectacle.

[1030] One leader writer commented on Carnarvon's impending departure, 'Beyond doubt, more regret is felt for his departure than pleasure was experienced for his incoming [. . .]. The character of his Government was greatly affected by his own personality. But he was handicapped too heavily to allow of his doing any substantial or memorable good' (*Freeman's Journal*, 25 January 1886, p. 4).

[1031] John Monroe (1839–1899), Solicitor-General for Ireland (1885), Judge of the Land Court (1885–1895).

[1032] Smith told his wife, Emily, 'I am here, very cordially and hospitably entertained by Lady Carnarvon who seems delighted at the chance of receiving me' (W.H. Smith to Emily Smith, 24 January 1886: Hambleden Papers, A/1064). Carnarvon, for his part, had stated to Salisbury, 'I think Smith's appointment a very good one' (Carnarvon to Salisbury, 22 January 1886: Hatfield House Papers, 3M/E).

[1033] *The Times*, 26 January 1886, p. 5.

[1034] Arthur MacMorrough Kavanagh (1831–1889), Con. MP for Co. Wexford (1866–1868) and for Co. Carlow (1868–1880), Lord Lieutenant of Co. Carlow (1880–1889).

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Tuesday 26 January (Vice Regal Lodge)

Smith left by evening boat for London having been recalled for the purpose of proposing on Thursday a bill for the Suppression of the National League and another measure for the settlement of the Land question. I do not think he much likes his task, and he returns to London very much altered in his opinion after hearing all that he has heard from me and others during the last two days. He is a very honest, straightforward, sensible, moderate man, but I doubt his being very successful with his new charge.[1035]

We held our Drawing Room, the first and last, a large one of over 600, though the weather was very bad. Altogether successful, a rather pretty pageant [. . .]. It is just as well to have thus put a finish on everything.

Wednesday 27 January (Vice Regal Lodge)

Whilst we held our Drawing Room last night, the Government were beaten[1036] and I received late a telegram from Salisbury saying they had unanimously agreed to resign.[1037]

Thursday 28 January (Ireland – Holyhead)

We have made our formal and final departure and the Vice Royalty of seven months is closed. It began with a remarkably warm reception

[1035]Smith was sent to prepare a report on the need for a Coercion Act, in contrast to Carnarvon's attempt to rule by ordinary law. Smith believed that further legislation was necessary (see Douglas, *W.H. Smith*, p. 204). Smith had informed his wife, 'The Carnarvons are very kind and do all they can to make things pleasant for me, but it is dreary work and would be unendurable if it were not necessary' (W.H. Smith to Emily Smith, 25 January 1886: Hambleden Papers, A/1065).

[1036]On 26 January, Hicks Beach gave notice in the Commons that Smith would introduce a Coercion Bill 'for the purpose of suppressing the National League' on 28 January, to be followed by an enlarged Land Purchase Bill. The same day, Jesse Collings (1831–1920), Radical MP for Ipswich (1880–1886), introduced an amendment on the subject of 'three acres and a cow', on which the Government were beaten by 330 to 252 votes (Fourth night of the debate on the Queen's Speech: *Hansard*, CCCII, 26 January 1886, Hicks Beach, cols 525–529). See also J. Collings and J.L. Green, *Life of the Right Hon. Jesse Collings* (London, 1920), pp. 182–191.

[1037]'Cabinet unanimously resolved to resign: am communicating now to the Queen, she is very reluctant to accept' (Salisbury to Carnarvon, 27 January 1886: CP, BL 60762, fo. 133). Carnarvon replied, 'Many thanks for your telegram. I anticipated the decision and have no doubt that it is quite right' (Carnarvon to Salisbury, 27 January 1886: CP, TNA, PRO 30/6/55, fo. 235).

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and it ended with a demonstration quite as cordial. The day was lovely, a bright sun shining, the streets were lined from the Castle to the Station with troops and police, a large escort [. . .] preceded and followed us. Bands at intervals as we passed played God Save the Queen, and there was a very large crowd all the way. As we passed there was a general uncovering of heads and a great deal of cheering, with many cries of God bless, and God speed you, May you live long, Come back to us, etc. I think the feeling was mainly personal, though a part no doubt due to my supposed leanings to Irish self government. But there is great warmth of heart.

When we arrived at the station, a special train took us down to the special steamer and with us went Prince Edward,[1038] Lady Ailesbury[1039] (who as usual turned up a day or two ago) the Hamiltons etc. Here a large crowd followed us to the boat cheering and wishing us God speed, and one poor woman as we steamed away threw herself on her knees to pray for us. It was a striking scene, almost a bit of history; the cheering and the sympathetic crowd, the friends and staff who I believe were most sorry to lose us, the bright scene, the salute of the guns, perhaps more like the departure of Lord Fitzwilliam[1040] last century than anything else.

Before we left the Castle we had a sort of informal Levée of those friends who came to say goodbye to us.[1041]

It is curious how many friends we seem to have made, some of one view, some of another, in politics. The old Provost of Trinity, Redington,[1042] Hamilton, Major King-Harman, Mahaffy,[1043] all representing very different classes of opinion on these troublesome Irish questions.

And so ends the task which when I accepted it seemed to me so full of danger and so utterly impossible. The dangers which I anticipated have not confronted us. The difficulties we have had to meet have been different from what I expected. What I have done has been also different from what I had planned to do. I return with feelings far apart from that with which I went but with this feeling above all others, that I have been wonderfully and most mercifully guided in

[1038]Prince Wilhelm August Eduard (1823–1902) served in the British Army for fifty years and commanded forces in Ireland.

[1039]Lady Maria Elizabeth Ailesbury, widow of the 1st Marquess of Ailesbury.

[1040]William Wentworth Fitzwilliam (1748–1833), 2nd Earl Fitzwilliam (1756), Lord Lieutenant of Ireland (1795), recalled after three months because of his support for Roman Catholic emancipation.

[1041]'The departure of Lord Carnarvon', *Freeman's Journal*, 29 January 1886, p. 5.

[1042]Christopher Talbot Redington, Commissioner on Poor Relief and mining royalties and education.

[1043]John Pentland Mahaffy, Professor of Ancient History, Dublin since 1869.

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everything by the great Ruler and disposer of all things, who through all my life and all my want of faith has never abandoned me. I may say now as I have constantly said like Sir J. Astley[1044] in the Civil Wars, "Lord if I forget thee, yet do thou remember me."

Saturday 30 January (London)

I was busy all the morning with Forster[1045] and Roberts. In the afternoon Sandon called. The Cabinet seems to have been on the edge of dissolution after the last meeting at which I was present, a catastrophe which would have not only been ridiculous but which would have damaged them for many a long day. It seems that after that last Cabinet at which I was present some violent counsels again prevailed and it was decided to take some very immediate measure against the National League, but that Beach declared he would not agree to do this then, that in a fortnight's time he expected some justification would be given and that he would not move without this. Whereupon a complete disagreement ensued and the Cabinet was on the point of breaking to pieces, was adjourned to Monday and that in the interval Salisbury and one or two others patched it up. The Queen's Speech was agreed to in the terms ultimately adopted and so it ended for the time.

I gather that there was and is much bitterness against Beach, and also some anger with Salisbury for not having stated to the Cabinet the fact that I had bargained to go to Ireland only for a time. Altogether there appears to be a good deal of irritation with many persons and on many subjects: but this is the usual concomitant of the dissolution of a Cabinet.

Salisbury I suspect is far from well. I hear he is going very soon to Mentone.

Tuesday 16 February (Porto Fino)

A speech of R. Churchill's in Monday's paper in which he refers to me.[1046] It is not easy to frame a given number of sentences which are

[1044]Sir Jacob Astley (1579–1652), Royalist, major-general in the king's army, and later imprisoned.

[1045]William S. Forster, Carnarvon's solicitor.

[1046]In a speech to his Paddington constituents on 13 February, Churchill claimed that, on the eve of the meeting of Parliament in January, 'that most estimable and nobleman, Lord Carnarvon, threw up the Government of Ireland' (*The Times*, 15 February 1886, p. 10).

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more inconsistent with fact, but it is not of course desirable to take any notice of them. And yet when last he talked to me in Ireland he said to me that the Government were under deep obligation to me and had I chosen to say in public what I had said to him and the rest of the Cabinet on Irish matters, I could, he said, have destroyed the Government at once – !!! And now compare that with his speech.

Tuesday 23 February (Porto Fino)

In the evening papers of Saturday, which arrived today, is a statement with regard to Parnell and communications having passed between him and me, which may lead to some explanations. I wrote to Herbert on the subject and to Hamilton.

Saturday 6 March (Porto Fino)

A disagreeable and awkward letter in Thursday's *Daily News* with regard to myself, signed X.[1047] I do not however think that it would be wise to take any notice of it.

(1) Anything I wrote from here might cross or be crossed by some letter from someone else. It is very disadvantageous to enter into newspaper correspondence when abroad.

(2) Whilst abroad I am not obliged to be thought to see the *Daily News*.

(3) If I must reply it had best be at the end of all attacks and rejoinders that I may make if possible one clear answer to cover everything.

I wrote to Herbert much in this sense.

I also wrote to Eveline about Irish matters. I have for some time been intending to do this in consequence of one from her.

Monday 8 March (Porto Fino)

The political aspect in England is very stormy. Gladstone's scheme is evidently very thoroughgoing. R. Churchill is violent, but I should not be surprised to see him go right round at a very short notice.

[1047]The letter quoted another letter sent by Churchill to an Irish priest claiming that Carnarvon had stated 'that the Conservative leaders had in November 1885 honestly made up their minds to try what they could to introduce Home Rule in Ireland' (*Daily News*, 4 March 1886, p. 5).

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Meanwhile allusions continue to be made to me. In the House of Commons both Gladstone and R. Churchill quoted me in different senses. It looks as if anyhow we are in for a great fight.[1048] But perhaps Gladstone can tie up his land scheme and his home rule proposals so closely that the Irish landlords who are frightened and selfish may compel the House of Lords to accept both. As they say here when I ask them of the weather, "*Ché lo sa*?"

I finished the version of the first 4 books of the *Odyssey* today.

Thursday 25 March (Porto Fino)

In the *Pall Mall* received today to my surprise I saw quoted in one of the short articles an extract from a recent private letter of mine to Stead on the state of politics.[1049] It was no betrayal of any confidence for there was nothing to identify it with me though it was said to be by a Conservative ex-Minister who rendered important public service at former times, or something to that effect.

Sunday 11 April (Porto Fino)

The English papers came today with the report of Gladstone's speech introducing his Home Rule Bill. Whatever may be the expediency or misfortune of the policy the ability of the speech and the extraordinary effort in a man of past 77 years old cannot be gainsaid.[1050] I can see Sir R. Hamilton's hand in a good deal of the plan, and it is impossible also not to see a large amount of Conservative intention in the general outline. Coupled with the Land Bill, of the details of which we know nothing, yet it cannot be said to be a very revolutionary

[1048]Maintenance of Social Order (Ireland), committee stage: *Hansard*, CCCII, 4 March 1886, cols 1919–1998.

[1049]The note began, 'An esteemed Conservative correspondent of high rank, who has rendered distinguished service to the State, sends this lugubrious account of the political position and prospects' (*Pall Mall Gazette*, 22 March 1886, p. 3).

[1050]Government of Ireland Bill, first reading. For Gladstone's speech, see *Hansard*, CCCIV, 8 April 1886, cols 1036–1085. Lasting three and a half hours, it set out an ambitious programme for settling the Irish problem. The imperial parliament at Westminster would deal with foreign policy, defence, customs and excise, and religious institutions, with concessions to Ireland on certain matters (see P. Magnus, *Gladstone: a biography* (London, 1963), pp. 353–354). Edward Hamilton called it 'the most notable day probably in the annals of the present Houses of Parliament [. . .]. My first impression drawn from a sort of pulse-feeling of the House is that though the Bill may be and probably will be read a second time, it will be scotched and killed in Committee or undergo a most radical amendment' (Bahlman, III, p. 34).

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measure, in one sense of the word, though of course involving great change. Trevelyan's speech[1051] reads extremely poor. Parnell evidently as friendly as he dares to be to the proposal.

Monday 12 April (Porto Fino)

A great storm is breaking in England over Gladstone's Home Rule proposals. It is clear that I ought not to be later than 28th. in England, though what my position should be I cannot yet tell. There has been a meeting of our late Cabinet at Salisbury's and I see my absence is commented on and explained by the fact that I am in Italy at the same time, but I have not had one line from any of my late colleagues. Since I have been abroad indeed, the only one that has written is Sandon.

Saturday 17 April (Porto Fino)

The state of feeling in England on Irish matters is a strange one.[1052] It is for the moment a coalition of Conservatives, Whigs and a certain number of Radicals, which is remarkable. It is I think anti-Irish and perhaps also it is anti-Gladstone for there has been a fire smouldering for a long time against him which till now has not dared to break out. This is certainly the case with a part of the Press. Almost everyone seems to be carried away by the general feeling; but whether it will last remains to be seen. If Irish outrages commence it is perhaps possible it may, and in that case be followed by severe repression.

Saturday 24 April (Porto Fino)

This morning I received two letters which made us make a complete change of plans. We had arranged to start on Monday: we now decided to postpone our departure for a week.

The two letters were from Harrowby and Herbert. Harrowby wrote strongly urging me not to return if possible till the Home Rule bill was disposed of, one way or the other, in the House of Commons, and conveying me a message from Salisbury to that effect – and Herbert,

[1051] Sir George Otto Trevelyan (1838–1928), Lib. MP for Tynemouth (1865–1868), for Hawick (1868–1886), and for Glasgow, Bridgtown division (1887–1897), Chief Secretary for Ireland (1882–1884), Chancellor, Duchy of Lancaster (1884–1885), Secretary of State for Scotland (1886, 1892–1895). For his speech, see *Hansard*, CCCIV, 8 April 1886, cols 1114–1124.

[1052] After four nights of debate, the Government of Ireland Bill completed its first reading in the Commons.

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though expecting us back and promising to come and dine quietly at once to talk anything over, wrote in much the same sense, evidently thinking it would be a good thing if I were not in London just now with party spirit running so high. On consideration it seemed impossible to stay away so long as the time when the second reading of the bill would be affirmed or negatived; but we thought that we might take another week, and so we decided.[1053]

Saturday 1 May (Highclere – London)

Short as my time has yet been in England[1054] I can see how all engrossing is this Irish question. Everyone from the Inspector at the Railway to the country gentleman whom I met on the road came up at once to talk to me about it, all dead against the bill.

Tuesday 4 May (London)

Several more or less important conversations.

1st. with Sandon. I told him of my intended attitude as to the Irish bills, but I could see that his apprehension was that if I said that I had ever thought a settlement to be possible it might create some schism. I do not think this and I do not see how I can avoid saying what is really no secret. He said to me in reference to the message which he had lately conveyed to me from Salisbury that Salisbury was unwilling to write it to me himself but had begged him to do so. I asked him why? He did not give any very clear answer but merely said S. did not wish to write. The message was advising me against coming back until the Irish bill was through the Second Reading. I do not understand: if Sandon correctly apprehended Salisbury, why was he unwilling to write himself?

2. Conversation with Captain Ross,[1055] who had seen the Pope and had laid before him and his private Secretary and one or two of the Cardinals the state of affairs in Ireland and the relations of the Irish

[1053]Carnarvon replied to Harrowby that there were 'some very important and serious property questions on hand which no one can deal with but myself to attend to in England. This will I hope enable me to tide over in silence (which I quite recognise to be the best thing) the time between my return and the 2nd reading of the Bill in the H. of C.' (Carnarvon to Harrowby, 24 April 1886: Harrowby Papers, 2nd series, lii, fos 166–167).

[1054]Since 30 April.

[1055]Capt. John Foster George Ross-of-Bladensburg (1848–1926). He had wide experience of Ireland, having served Forster, Spencer, and Carnarvon as private secretary. Secretary to two missions to the Holy See in 1887.

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Members and the Roman Catholic clergy to the National League. The Pope said to him in the course of this conversation, "You were Lord Carnarvon's private Secretary in Ireland?" Ross said yes. The Holy Father said, "Is he not of very high rank among the Freemasons?" Ross said yes, but he added that he had heard me say on the subject that if I thought there was anything in Freemasonry opposed to religion I should give it up immediately. Whereupon the Pope replied, "Lord Ripon was one but gave up the Society."

To which of course Ross replied that Ripon was a Roman Catholic and gave up his office "as an act of obedience."

3. Conversation with Percy Greg[1056] who came to talk to me about Irish affairs. I told him pretty much what I propose saying in public before long, only more in detail than would have been wise, and avoiding generally all criticism on the details of Gladstone's two bills. But the conversation was quite confidential.

Thursday 6 May (London)

An important conversation with Salisbury. I called on him by Sandon's advice and request and *I could see at once that he had learnt from Sandon all that had passed between us* a few days ago. I told Salisbury that I thought it right to let him know what my feelings were as to Irish matters, that he knew my original opinion, that I had not changed that opinion, but that I did not think Gladstone's proposals safe or practicable and that after his appeal to class feeling I was not disposed to strengthen the side of agitation and perhaps disorder as against the Conservative elements of Society, but that my own position was a difficult one and that it was necessary for me before long to define it, that I therefore thought it would be best that I should take some early opportunity of explaining that though I had always "hoped for a settlement of the Irish difficulties I could not accept this bill". He at once said that this would be very inconvenient before the close of the Second Reading of the Home Rule bill, that he should be obliged to reply by stating that he would never be a party to any changes and that if it came about it must be done by others, and he added that there would probably be other explanations. I replied that if this were so I would endeavour to preserve silence for the present, though of course things might be said which would compel me to speak. He

[1056]Percy Greg (1836–1889), contributor to the *Manchester Guardian*, the *Standard*, and the *Saturday Review*, author of *History of the United States from the foundation of Virginia to the Reconstruction of the Union*, 2 vols (London, 1887).

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then suggested that if I made any explanations it would be best to do so by a letter to him which he could answer and that then the correspondence should go to the Papers.

So the matter ended, not perhaps very satisfactorily for me but I felt I could not refuse at his request, as the late Prime Minister, to observe silence for a time. The position however is not altogether pleasant personally, for the manner and attitude of several of my old colleagues in the House tonight was cold and rather unfriendly. This however is not the first time I have had experience of this sort of thing.

Friday 7 May (Highclere)

Herbert breakfasted with us and we had a long conversation upon what occurred yesterday with Salisbury, and as a result of it we came to the conclusion that not only should I if possible preserve silence on Irish questions till the Second Reading of the Home Rule bill is disposed of but that I should as far as possible continue this option of silence afterwards. But on the other hand we agreed that it would be well that I should let it be known in private what my position is, viz. that without going into any details it should be known that though I had always hoped to find some solution of the difficulty, some settlement, and even to agree to some extension of local self-government, I did not approve of the present separatist measure and strongly condemned Gladstone.

So it stands. I hope I may avoid all appearance of breaking with the Party. At the same time I cannot see much likelihood of being able to serve again with any safety or comfort in the same cabinet with my late colleagues. It might be possible in a mixed government, but in a reproduction of the late Government it would be very hard [. . .].

Ross of Bladensburg called on me before I left. I told him that on reflection he must *not* write the letter which he meditated to Rome.

Friday 14 May (London)

Howorth[1057] came to talk to me. He said that I had been frequently found fault with in consequence of the Maamtrasna Debate that he felt sure that it was unjust but that he had determined to ask me. I said it was unjust for it had been against my earnest protest. He asked

[1057]Sir Henry Hoyle Howorth (1842–1923), Con. MP for Salford South (1886–1892).

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if he might tell this to Spencer *privately* as he, Spencer, was very sore. I said yes on condition that it was private.[1058]

I called on Macmillan[1059] and opened the question of publishing my first XII books of the *Odyssey*. We discussed and virtually settled it. He is to send me an estimate of the expense and it is to be published by "Commission".

Saturday 15 May (London)

The Home Rule bill seems doomed. The combination against it by Whigs and Radicals is I think too powerful to be resisted, unless at the last moment Gladstone should by some ingenious artifice outgeneral his opponents. The position is a very curious one.[1060]

Sunday 16 May (London)

Lord Ashbourne called here this afternoon. He was very friendly and cordial, said he had just returned from Ireland and that the feeling there among all classes was one of complete gloom. He said that there was hardly a tradesman of any importance in Dublin who was not in dismay at the bill. He told me that Salisbury's speech yesterday, which I have not yet seen, was "what you and I should call a very strong one", by which I understand he means stronger than he quite agrees with. He expressed his belief in Ulster (of which he said he knew little) being quite in earnest in its resistance.[1061]

Monday 31 May (London)

A curious fact as to Salisbury has come to my knowledge.

[1058]See L.P. Curtis, *Coercion and Conciliation in Ireland, 1880–1892: a study in Conservative Unionism* (Princeton, NJ, 1963), pp. 42–43.

[1059]Sir Frederick Orridge Macmillan (1851–1935), publisher and son of the founder of the firm, Daniel Macmillan.

[1060]Gladstone had introduced the second reading of the Government of Ireland Bill on 10 May, which did little to cheer his supporters. At the beginning of May, it was calculated that 119 Liberals would vote against the second reading (see J. Morley, *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone*, 3 vols (London, 1903), III, p. 332). A meeting was called by Hartington at Devonshire House on 14 May in protest against the proposed scheme for Ireland (see Cooke and Vincent, *The Governing Passion*, p. 421).

[1061]Salisbury's speech was to the National Union of Conservative Associations at St James's Hall (*The Times*, 17 May 1886, p. 6).

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Early in the time of our government he wrote to one or two people letters in the general direction of at all events considering and entertaining some form of Home Rule. It was the time Randolph Churchill was intriguing in the same direction. It was a pity that Salisbury did not give me some better indication of what was passing in his mind.

My informant assures me he had seen the very letters.

Friday 4 June (London)

A rather interesting conversation with W.H. Smith. He is evidently not carried away by the general and popular tide of anti-Irish feeling and is aware that something better than a mere *non possumus* is necessary.[1062] A long conversation also with Greenwood on the same subject. He is I think of much the same mind though he does not see or know as much, and though he writes in his Paper in a different sense. Salisbury's speech, the "20 years' coercion" and the comparison of Irishmen with Hottentots is, as far as anything reaches me, very much disapproved.[1063]

Sunday 6 June (London)

Several long and interesting conversations today, first with Harrowby with whom I talked over the really important question whether I should speak or write anything to make my position as regards Gladstone's Irish policy clearer. At first he was strongly in favour of it and said he could not understand Salisbury binding me to silence. Afterwards when recalling my conversation last year with Parnell he said he thought it better to delay if possible any line such as I meditated till after the Elections if we are in for them.

Next a conversation with Lord Arthur Butler,[1064] mostly on Irish affairs. I explained to him a little what my position as Lord Lieutenant had been, how crippled, and tied down and a great deal of it was quite new to him [. . .].

[1062]See Douglas, *W.H. Smith*, p. 209.

[1063]A phrase used by Salisbury at the meeting on 15 May. As his daughter commented, 'For the next half-dozen years it would be safe to say that there was not one Liberal meeting in ten at which some speaker did not repeat the assertion that Lord Salisbury had declared Irishmen to be on a level with Hottentots' (Cecil, III, p. 209).

[1064]Lord James Arthur Butler (1849–1943), State Steward in Carnarvon's household in Ireland.

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Next a long talk with Froude, who was very cynical as to Irish matters: but said that 60,000 copies of his *Oceana* had already been sold.[1065]

Next an important conversation with W.H. Smith, whom I much like. We spoke at length on Ireland and the present state of things and I asked his opinion as to my own position and whether I should speak or write, and his advice was not to do either unless obliged. I told him of my conversation with Parnell last year and he said that so far from blaming or thinking it unwise he would probably have done the same had he been in my place.

Wednesday 9 June (Highclere – London)

This morning at breakfast I read in the *Pall Mall* the statement that I have made overtures to Parnell and had communicated with him an offer of a statutory Parliament.[1066] After talking it all over with Elsie by her advice I came up to town, having telegraphed to Herbert, who came and met me in Portman Square and talked everything over. At first I think he was doubtful as to any explanations in the House of Lords, but as I explained to him my proposed course he gradually agreed; at last he came to the conclusion that it was the best thing I could do.

Afterwards I saw Sandon, who is so nervous about the Elections and Salisbury's position that he would have persuaded me not to speak. But I said that I really must and that I believed it was the best thing, not only for myself but for the Party and the late Government: and so the matter stands, I shall write tonight to Salisbury to say that I mean to do this tomorrow.[1067]

[1065] *Oceana, or England and her Colonies*, went through two editions on its publication in 1886. It was an account of the Australasian colonies, which Froude had visited in the winter of 1884–1885.

[1066] 'The Tory offer to the Parnellites', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 9 June 1886, p. 9. It stated, 'There is no doubt, I believe, that Lord Carnarvon did express some sort of sympathy with the Home Rule movement, but how far he was authorised to commit his colleagues is another question. There is good reason to believe that he, as well as Lord Randolph Churchill and Mr. W.H. Smith, advised the Cabinet to adopt Home Rule policy.' The paper followed Parnell's revelation on 7 June, during the twelfth day of debate on the second reading of the Government of Ireland Bill, that a senior Conservative minister had offered him home rule. Shortly after one o'clock on the morning of 8 June, the Government were defeated by 311 to 341 votes. See W.C. Lubenow, *Parliamentary Politics and the Home Rule Crisis: the British House of Commons in 1886* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 250–253.

[1067] '[Parnell's statement] reflects too much on me – and indeed on all members of the Cabinet – to allow me to remain silent' (Carnarvon to Salisbury, 9 June 1886: Hatfield House Papers, 3M/E).

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Thursday 10 June (London)

My decision was taken on seeing an article in the *Daily News* which repeated the charge against me of having made this offer to Parnell and went into details.[1068] I called on W.H. Smith and told him I had made up my mind to explain in the House of Lords. He finally agreed that I was right, but telegraphed to Salisbury who came up to London and walked into my room in Portman Square at 2 p.m. He was evidently much disturbed, but I told him that my mind was clear on the subject, that I must speak but that I would take all the responsibility on myself and that he might be sure that I should not commit him or the rest of this Government. But he made various suggestions which if acceded to would have had the effect of defeating or spoiling my intentions. He tried at first to induce me to content myself with a simple contradiction, which would only have provoked Parnell to disclose the conversation with me as an unholy and secret meeting, then he proposed I could bring on my explanation on moving the adjournment of the House, when there would not be above half a dozen Peers left in it; then he said that he believed Gorst[1069] to have been the person who had made the communication and that Parnell did not mean to allude to me. However I said I must speak, and he then said, "Pray make it as dry as possible and without any sentiment," to which I replied that "I should be very short and simple but that I always eat my bread with butter": and so we parted.[1070]

I went to the House and found the best possible opportunity and made my explanation.[1071] It was listened to with the utmost attention, but with a frigidity on the part of my late colleagues that was curious. Not one of them said one word; nor when I sat down and remained sitting on the same bench for an hour and a half afterwards did any one of them say one syllable to me.

In the evening afterwards I dined with Eveline and Portsmouth,[1072] a pleasant time after all the worry and anxiety of the last two days. But

[1068] 'Who Was It?', *Daily News*, 10 June 1886, p. 5.

[1069] Sir John Eldon Gorst (1835–1916), Con. MP for Chatham (1875–1892), member of the Fourth Party (1880–1884), Solicitor-General (1885). For his views on Ireland, see R. Hunter, *A Life of Sir John Eldon Gorst, 1835–1916: Disraeli's awkward disciple* (London, 2001), pp. 182–183.

[1070] Ashbourne wrote to Carnarvon the previous day also urging him not to speak 'on the eve possibly of a general election [. . .]. Statements in public from you [. . .] would to some extent involve saying what your own general views were, and would also be regarded in *some* quarters as *provocative*' (Ashbourne to Carnarvon, 9 June 1886: CP, BL 60857, fos 114–115).

[1071] The Government of Ireland Bill. The Earl of Carnarvon and Mr. Parnell. Personal Statement: *Hansard*, CCCVI, 10 June 1886, cols 1256–1260. Parliament was dissolved that day.

[1072] Isaac Newton Wallop (1825–1906), 5th Earl of Portsmouth (1854), married Carnarvon's sister, Eveline (1885).

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I feel more at ease now that the statement has been made and that I have anticipated an attack that was sure to be made sooner or later.[1073]

Friday 11 June (Highclere)

The newspapers are generally friendly, the *Telegraph* particularly.[1074]

Saturday 12 June (Highclere)

In this morning's papers is Parnell's reply. I spent the morning in drawing up my answer and I have sent it off to McCraw for him to communicate to the Papers. I hope that I am right in replying but we have been obliged to act without consultation with anyone.[1075]

Sunday 20 June (Highclere)

I received today a letter from Salisbury in answer to one which I had written to him suggesting that it was desirable to make some reply to Gladstone's allegations and questions in regard to my interview with Parnell.[1076] His answer was certainly of a disagreeable and unfriendly nature and will need careful consideration. I hardly see how I can avoid replying or how I can make my reply altogether a pleasant one. "See how this man hath a quarrel against me" is the first idea that suggests itself; but it is well to take time.

[1073]Carnarvon told Harrowby, 'I never doubted the wisdom of my course. As you know, though, it was a disagreeable one to follow in the teeth of remonstrances and opposition from some of my old colleagues. But it was necessary for my own honour, and I am convinced was quite as much a gain to them as it could be to me' (Carnarvon to Harrowby, 11 June 1886: Harrowby Papers, 2nd series, lii, fos 168–169).

[1074]The leader in the paper stated, 'The clear honour, the chivalrous assumption of responsibility, the ingenuousness and fearlessness, the simplicity of purpose and policy – all in short, which we look to find in a member of our historic aristocracy – stand revealed throughout this admirable deliverance in the most brilliant and striking relief' (*Daily Telegraph*, 11 June 1886, p. 5).

[1075]Parnell repeated his claim of Carnarvon's offer of home rule at their interview (*The Times*, 12 June 1886, p. 10). Carnarvon's robust reply was printed in *The Times*, 14 June 1886, p. 10.

[1076]Salisbury's cool reply began, 'I must protest most earnestly against your making any statement of what passed between yourself and me when we were Cabinet ministers together upon official business.' It ended, 'we must leave what has been said where it is' (Salisbury to Carnarvon, 19 June 1886: CP, BL 60760, fo. 97).

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Tuesday 22 June (Highclere – London)

Gladstone in this morning's papers renews his attack and we came to the conclusion that I had better go up to London and talk the whole matter over with Herbert.[1077] I telegraphed to him, went up, found him poor fellow confined to his house by gout, but talked it all over and got home in time for dinner. His opinion is that as the case now stands, silence can do me little if any harm; that it is very foolish of Salisbury when a complete answer can be given in a few words to entrench himself in silence; but that if I, contrary to Salisbury's expressed opinion, enter into fresh explanations, any difficulties or mishaps at the Elections will be laid at my door. So I am inclined to think that it may be on the whole best to write to Salisbury but to do nothing. Herbert's comment upon him was – and truly enough – that he was a selfish and ungenerous fellow to deal with, but that it was desirable to go to considerable lengths, especially now, to avoid a quarrel.

Wednesday 23 June (Highclere)

I wrote my letter to Salisbury. He will not like it much, but I do not see how I could be silent, and if I wrote anything it seemed necessary to say enough to protect myself.[1078] His object has been and doubtless is to put as much as he can upon me and his whole conduct has been very shabby. But one must make the best of the matter.

Thursday 24 June (Highclere)

My birthday – a singular mixture of angry political winds howling outside and very great domestic happiness within. But I value the latter much the most highly, and political ambition and I have so completely parted company that I have personally little care in believing as I do that I have completely ended any connection with official life. I went to Ireland sorely against my will and only because I believed it to be a matter of unquestionable duty, and though I cannot yet see that I

[1077] Gladstone had left London for Scotland on 17 June for his Midlothian campaign. He delivered speeches at Edinburgh on 18 and 21 June and at Glasgow on 22 June. Parliament was dissolved on 10 June and the general election was to begin on 11 July. For the second Edinburgh speech, see *The Times*, 22 June 1886, p. 10.

[1078] Carnarvon to Salisbury, 23 June 1886 (copy): CP, BL 60760, fos 98–100; most of the text is reproduced in Hardinge, III, pp. 227–229.

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did any good by going there I suppose there was some object to be gained by it.

Monday 28 June (Highclere)

I this evening received an answer from Salisbury to my letter.[1079] It was in a very different tone, evading all the real points which I had made in my last letter and which I knew he would feel to be disagreeable and trying to seem friendly. It means, I think, that he does not, as I half thought he did, desire a break. It makes no difference of course in the actualities of the position, but it is pleasanter, as I have no wish for an open quarrel, for having gone through the vexations and troubles of a break with my Party twice in my life I do not desire it a third time. The difficulty may of course recur, but for the present at all events the sky is clearer. The bolder line is always the best.

Parnell has made another attack but I think that can be left unanswered.

Tuesday 29 June (London)

I received this morning a letter from Salisbury saying that on further consideration he thought it would be better to make some reply to Parnell's statements and Gladstone's speeches, that he was to speak tonight, and that he enclosed a memorandum of what he proposed to say.[1080] Would I telegraph or send up by messenger anything that occurred to me. I decided to go to London, telegraphed to him accordingly and came up with Elsie.

He came to me in Portman Square and I went through the memorandum with him. I suggested various alterations to which he

[1079]Salisbury replied on 27 June, 'I must have expressed myself very ill if I appeared to imply that you were seeking to transfer your own responsibility to me or anyone else.' See Cecil, III, pp. 161–162; Salisbury to Carnarvon, 27 June 1886: CP, BL 60760, fos 101–104.

[1080]Salisbury wrote, 'I still shrink from the statement of anything that has gone on in Cabinet. In fact I could not do so without the Queen's permission' (Salisbury to Carnarvon, 29 June 1886: CP, BL 60760, fo. 105). The letter was accompanied by a memorandum that Salisbury had drawn up the previous day, giving an account of his involvement in the Parnell–Carnarvon meeting and denying that Carnarvon had resigned over differences with the Cabinet on Irish policy. Carnarvon discussed the memorandum at the meeting and endorsed it 'Copy of Lord Salisbury's memo. Sent by him to me, with some alterations and suggestions made by me to him when we met on 29 June. He adopted them and made his speech the same evening having regard to them.' The original memorandum is at Hatfield, with a copy in CP, BL 60760, fos 108–111.

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agreed, my chief points being

(1) that his words should cover the fact that I had warned him of my interview with Parnell as well before as after the event: and that I had been perfectly open with him.

(2) that whilst supporting thoroughly the Party I had my own views and must reserve them.

(3) that my resignation had been a matter decided on when we came into Office, that it was to take effect after the General Election but that at the instance of my colleagues I consented to stay on till the meeting of Parliament.

The whole tone was friendly and whether there was anything behind it I cannot tell – but certainly no wish at present to quarrel. But I could say that his look was that of a man in most questionable health. His breathing was very thick and heavy, and there seemed an increase of bulk, which cannot be satisfactory.

Wednesday 30 June (London)

Salisbury's speech appears in today's papers. All that he says of me will I think do: and I hope that things generally now stand on a fairly good footing.[1081] There appears also a letter to me from Money in the papers which I think has given satisfaction, as several people have spoken to me about it.[1082]

As far as I can learn the Party seems rather anxious and out of heart in going into the Elections. There is more *popular* support of Gladstone than was expected. It may easily happen, as I at first expected, that parties will come out much as they went in, a very unfortunate result.

A most curious circumstance has just come to my ears. Attempts have been made by *Parnell and by Gladstone* to extract from W. Forster, my lawyer, what are my views on Home Rule and Irish affairs. He replied that he did not know, and if he did should not tell. But what a commentary on Parnell's statement that I had told him, P., all these views in our conversation!

[1081] In Salisbury's speech at the annual dinner of the Constitutional Union the previous evening, defending Carnarvon's actions, he stated, 'I defy Mr. Parnell to advance the slightest proof for the slanderous assertions he has made' (*The Times*, 30 June 1886, p. 14).

[1082] An item in *The Times* the same day, headed 'The Conservative Ministry and Mr Parnell', p. 15, included mention of a letter received by Carnarvon from Walter Money, a leading member of the Conservatives in South Berkshire, supporting Carnarvon's actions in his dealings with Parnell.

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Friday 2 July (Highclere)

A summer day of extraordinary beauty. The hay is so cooked by the sun that it is fit to carry almost as it is cut.

The first returns are made of the Elections. At present the general look of the case is a decided preponderance of Unionists over Home Rulers, and a fair holding of their ground by Conservatives, perhaps something more.[1083]

Monday 5 July (Highclere)

I wrote to Herbert and asked him to consider well what my position should be in the event, as seems not improbable, of a Tory majority and a Salisbury Government. In such case the alternatives were clearly two only – either an offer or not an offer of Office. In the latter case the course was simple: a frank statement of opinion and great friendliness to the incoming Government. In the former it was more difficult. Should I accept? To accept would cure the seeming differences of opinion for the time: but if a break were afterwards to come it would be impossible ever again to mend the broken china. And what are the chances of such a break? Against it my extreme wish to avoid it – but then I desired nothing more than this during the last Government. For it, the fact that I am afraid the whole Cabinet must be considered not friendly and some distinctly unfriendly. Their attitude to me personally ever since I came back from Italy has certainly been one of very great coldness. I hardly know what to wish, and I do not know what reason to assign for a refusal if Salisbury should ask me to take Office. On the other hand I dread it much, and if any very natural and quite honourable escape should present itself I should be glad.

Tuesday 6 July (Highclere)

Gladstone has written a letter to me or rather against me which I first read in the Papers – the original arrived 2 hours later.[1084] I have

[1083]There were thirty-three unopposed seats and one contested one declared (*The Times*, 2 July 1886, p. 5).

[1084]Gladstone complained that a letter appearing in the *Daily News* on 29 June was probably inspired by Carnarvon and that it claimed that 'I have construed your speech in the House of Lords [on 10 June] "into an acceptance of my Irish legislation." It discourteously goes on to allege that I have done this "for electioneering purposes"' (Gladstone to Carnarvon, 5 July 1886: CP, BL 60773, fos 34–35, and *The Times*, 6 July 1886, p. 5; see also Hardinge, III,

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replied in as concise a manner as I can and sent it up to London.[1085] He is evidently losing temper as the Elections go against him. He is writing, telegraphing, sending messages in all directions; but the power of speech is fortunately now limited and the great organ of power is from time to time reduced to silence. It is a retribution on much mischief that he has done.

Thursday 8 July (Highclere)

My letter to Gladstone appears in the Papers. I think it is all right, though it will I believe rather irritate him.

The Elections continue to go well.

Friday 9 July (London)

I came up with Elsie for 48 hours of London. The town looks half dead, like London at the very end of the Season.

I had a long talk with Herbert as to the political situation; and after full discussion I think he agreed with me that unless in very peculiar circumstances hardly to be anticipated at present it is safer for me not to take Office if it should be offered. The real risk is the Cabinet – the many on whom no dependence can be placed and the few who for certain reasons are unfriendly.

I find that my letter to Gladstone has created a great deal of talk and is very much liked. This is the curious course of events – the best things one do pass without notice, and some little thing of this kind excites a great deal of attention. It seems somehow to have pleased a great number of people of all kinds.[1086]

Wednesday 21 July (Charlton Cottage)

Events are moving rapidly. Today's papers announce the resignation of the Government and the fact that Salisbury is on his way to England

pp. 230–231). In *The Times* of the previous day, Carnarvon had rebutted similar claims in a letter of 29 June from Gladstone to 'Mr. Tait', but it is unclear whether he was referring to the same letter: *The Times*, 5 July 1886, p. 8.

[1085]The letter was published in *The Times*, 8 July 1886, p. 12.

[1086]After receiving Gladstone's letter of 8 July, with neither man conceding ground, Carnarvon replied, 'I agree with you that there can be no advantage in prolonging this correspondence' (Carnarvon to Gladstone, 11 July 1886: Gladstone Papers, BL 44498, fo. 179).

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from France to form a new one.[1087] I have been a member of 4 Governments and 3 Cabinets and my chief and most sincere wish – if it can be done honourably and conscientiously – [is] to have no part in the new administration which is forming. A short time will show.

Thursday 22 July (Highclere)

Nothing fresh politically except that Salisbury is to be in London this evening and that the town swarms with hungry place-hunters. The papers are full of articles with good advice as to how he is to construct his Government.

Sunday 25 July (Highclere)

I have had some conversation with Howorth, who is here, as to politics generally, the new Government, and Irish affairs, and incidentally as to myself, and the impression which I form is this – that Salisbury does not mean to offer me Office. Howorth is in the habit of writing to S. frequently as to the state of politics in Lancashire and is in considerable communication with him. A. Balfour is member for one of the Manchester divisions and is also in very frequent communication with Howorth, and so I feel pretty sure that he has been made aware of Salisbury's intentions and that when the conversation came round to myself he could not help letting me see it. It remains to be seen how Salisbury will intimate – or as is perhaps more likely not intimate – to me his intentions: but on the whole I am disposed to think that this solution of a possible difficulty is really the best. The risks of joining a Government in which there is perhaps more than one political gambler are too great for me; and though, old times and antecedents considered, an offer would have been graceful but I have for some time felt the extreme difficulty of formulating any satisfactory excuse for refusing Office. I think I am much safer in being outside and free.

Meanwhile I as good as settled with Howorth that I should write him a letter to be published on my general ideas upon Irish matters, etc.[1088]

[1087]At the general election, 316 Conservatives were returned, 77 Liberal Unionists, 192 Liberals, and 85 Home Rulers, an overall Unionist majority of 116.

[1088]Four days later, Carnarvon decided not to proceed with the plan, on two grounds: 'First, I doubt if people are generally ready for any considerations on Irish policy except

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Tuesday 27 July (Highclere – London – Highclere)

This morning I received a letter from Salisbury written from Osborne, a very friendly and frank one, describing the differences of opinion between us on this Irish question and indicating that it would be as difficult for me as for a Cabinet formed on the basis of simple resistance and the "refusal of all national aspirations" that I should join them and adding some sort of hope that the separation was only a temporary one.[1089] Scarcely had I read this when I had a telegram from Kintore[1090] saying that he had been told to inform me of a meeting of the Party at the Carlton. After a hurried consultation with Elsie I threw myself into the train, reached London in time and went to the Carlton. It was full. Salisbury very much cheered and Northcote also when he said a few words later.

Salisbury spoke at length and gave an account of his negotiations with Hartington on two separate occasions, in which he offered to waive the Prime Ministership in his favour.[1091] He then spoke on various other more or less important points but did not go into the question of policy as he said he had formed no cabinet and "had as yet no colleagues". When he ended I got up and said I only wished to offer my best wishes to the new Government, that I made no comment on S.'s speech except to approve entirely of "his wisdom and magnanimity" in his negotiations with Hartington, that I had entertained wishes as to Ireland, but that this was not the time to explain them, that they were not such as had been represented or rather misrepresented, but that my present wishes might be summed up in one word, viz., the formation of a strong Conservative Government, that apart from the Irish question I felt this to be a paramount necessity and that I gave them my best wishes and any support that might be in my power.[1092]

those of the Government – and next I also doubt if it would be fair to the Government to anticipate their programme by any suggestion from one who had recently been their colleague' (Carnarvon to Howorth, 29 July 1886 (copy): CP, BL 60775, fo. 116).

[1089] Salisbury to Carnarvon, 25 July 1886: CP, BL 60760, fos 112–113; Cecil, III, 311–312.

[1090] Algernon Keith-Falconer (1852–1910), 9th Earl of Kintore (1880), Conservative Whip in the Lords (1885–1889).

[1091] Salisbury saw Hartington on 23 July and refused all ideas of a coalition. At a further meeting the following morning, Salisbury offered him the premiership, but this was also turned down. See B. Holland, *The Life of Spencer Compton, Eighth Duke of Devonshire*, 2 vols (London, 1911), II, pp. 169–171. In his letter of 25 July, Salisbury confided in Carnarvon, 'I have tried hard to induce Hartington to take the Prime Minister's place, but he has definitely refused and I have therefore kissed hands today. I think I ought to write to you before I write to anyone else to explain the peculiar position I am in.'

[1092] An account of the meeting was later given by a senior Conservative MP who attended: Sir J. Mowbray, *Seventy Years at Westminster* (Edinburgh and London, 1900), pp. 305–306.

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I can hardly tell how this was *really* received. It lasted only a few minutes and was fairly cheered. My own impression is that my audience was not unfriendly, but not cordial. At the same time I do not think that what I said could do any harm, and I think on the whole it would probably help to put me in the position which I desire to occupy – so far as politics and I have much to do with each other at present – a certain personal independence combined with union with the Party. It is probably recognised that my views are not identical with those of the Government on Irish matters, but that in all other respects I am one of the Party. Perhaps I shall hear more of this later.

I returned here after the meeting.[1093]

Thursday 29 July (Highclere)

The Papers announce this morning the deposition of Beach from the lead of the House of Commons and the accession of Randolph Churchill.[1094] It is a curious and most rapid rise, as curious as but more rapid than that of Disraeli whom he had made his model. It is a *politique de casse-cou*, as the French say, which if Randolph can now develop higher qualities may turn out well, or in the event of a different line of conduct lead to a great smash. Anyhow I feel that there is probably a very new departure and I am sure that I am much better out of the ship. Salisbury is the only one who has ability, experience and force of character, and he sometimes seems to be only the old Robert Cecil grown older. I cannot forget my last conversation with R. Churchill, which was on his side as mad a one as I ever listened to from mortal lips and I am glad not to be tied to him as a colleague. Humanly speaking, I cannot see much probability of my being again in Office.

[1093] Carnarvon wrote to Salisbury, 'I am much obliged to you for your frank and friendly letter. I fully understand the position and appreciate all that you say. I could render you real help in the present circumstances by joining your Cabinet, but as I said today at the Carlton you have my best wishes and may count on any support that I can give' (Carnarvon to Salisbury, 27 July 1886: Hatfield House Papers, 3M/E).

[1094] *The Times*, 29 July 1886, p. 9. Hicks Beach had been leader of the Conservatives in the Commons since June 1885, in succession to Northcote. On 25 July 1886, he wrote to Salisbury stating that he wished to be relieved of the post. He was appointed Chief Secretary for Ireland. Churchill, at the age of thirty-six, became Leader of the House and Chancellor of the Exchequer.

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Sunday 1 August (Highclere)

Salisbury's Cabinet is not yet formed and he must have a not very pleasant time. Randolph is already a rival that can compel or thwart, or drive or hold back. At any moment he can force Salisbury's hand in the House of Commons; and in cabinet-making he is taking a very strong part. It is thought that he opposes Cross going to the India Office, and on the ground of Cross's absolute incompetency he is quite right. Salisbury on the other hand will not give Cross up and the battle seems now to be raging. Matthews,[1095] the new Home Secretary, is probably Randolph's nominee. R. made acquaintance with him lately in his Birmingham [*sic*] and was much attracted by him. Matthews is said to be able as a speaker, a good lawyer, a very good linguist, French, German and Italian, an accomplished and agreeable man and a Roman Catholic. This is the pleasant side of the character, I fancy there is a less agreeable one; but I have learned all this from George Russell[1096] who is staying here with Lady R., and who is himself a very nice and pleasant companion.

Thursday 19 August (London)

In the afternoon I went down to the House of Lords, took the oath and afterwards spoke on the Address.[1097] My speech is *fairly* reported in *The Times* of today though condensed.[1098] The House listened very attentively and the general attitude on my own side was friendly. Salisbury's manner was cordial and as far as I can judge I am inclined to think that it was worthwhile speaking – that my position is somewhat more defined by what I have said than before – and that it is altogether as satisfactory as it can be.

Thursday 23 December (London)

Macdonell[1099] breakfasted with us.

[1095]Henry Matthews (1826–1913), Con. MP for Dungarvan (1868–1874) and for Birmingham East (1886–1895). He was the first Catholic cabinet minister since the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829.

[1096]Sir George Russell (1828–1898), 4th Baronet Russell (1883), Con. MP for Wokingham (1885–1898).

[1097]The new Parliament met on 5 August. In the debate on the Queen's Speech, Carnarvon defended his Irish policy: *Hansard*, CCCVIII, 19 August 1886, cols 51–55.

[1098]For Carnarvon's full speech, see ibid., cols 55–79.

[1099]The identity of this person is not known.

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He had scarcely left us when I opened *The Times* and saw the announcement of Randolph's resignation.[1100] How quiet it has been kept. Clearly the Prince of Wales knew nothing of it when he spoke to me yesterday evening, nor even Lady Randolph. It was for some time obvious that they were quarrelling; but there was nothing to indicate that the disruption was so near at hand. The Government now are quit of a dangerous colleague but it remains to be seen if outside the Cabinet he can make their position untenable. If he can he will. As for the Government themselves they have now only one really able man – all the rest are cyphers in popular estimation. The colour is taken out of the body: but I should fancy that there was no help for it and that Randolph's temper was so imperious that they had little option. But it remains to be seen whether there will be any fresh secessions and how the Cabinet will be repaired.

Tuesday 28 December (London)

An interesting conversation with Mrs Jeune who came to tea today about R. Churchill of whom she has seen much and whose cause she strongly espouses.[1101] She describes him as low, saying that he has no friend in the world, that there was an intrigue in the Cabinet against him, that Salisbury at last joined against him and that then he had no chance. He described the question at issue as only £1,300,000, that this was reduced to £1,000,000, G. Hamilton was willing to give £500,000 but that W. H. Smith stood firm to his £500,000. If so, G. H. was as I have always thought, shallow and weak.[1102]

He complained a good deal about Salisbury, said that he was always ready to conform to his judgement, that if Salisbury had only talked matters over with him it might have been adjusted but that he would

[1100]'Resignation of the Chancellor of the Exchequer', *The Times*, 23 December 1886, p. 9. Churchill had delivered the notice of resignation to the offices of *The Times* in the interval of a theatre visit (see R.F. Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill: a political life* (Oxford, 1981), p. 309).

[1101]Churchill dined with the Jeunes on 26 December. A full account of Churchill's views are described in Susan Jeune's autobiography, *Memories of Fifty Years* (London, 1909), pp. 274–275.

[1102]The immediate cause of Churchill's resignation were the estimates submitted by spending departments, which he considered to be excessive. Smith at the War Office and George Hamilton at the Admiralty were the two main culprits. For a detailed personal account of the immediate events leading to Churchill's resignation, see Lord G.F. Hamilton, *Parliamentary Reminiscences and Reflections, vol. 2: 1886–1906* (London, 1922), pp. 48–53. As Smith wrote in a letter to Cranbrook, 'The real truth is I think that it is not possible for him [Churchill] to yield his opinion or mould it so as to co-operate with his Colleagues. He must rule & my estimates have only been a pretext' (W.H. Smith to Cranbrook, 24 December 1886: Cranbrook Papers, HA3 T501/260).

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not see him, or did not see him. He owned to the existence of a good deal of past friction, but seems to have laid the main stress on the financial difficulty. He said that people complained of his temper but that Lord Salisbury's was not angelic!

The conclusion I drew from it all is that Randolph was overbearing, that his head was turned by success, that he thought he could dictate his terms – that Salisbury on the other hand greatly hating him saw his opportunity, or thought he saw it, and took advantage of R.C.'s impetuosity and got rid of him.

There is a curious account of the Cabinet meeting in today's *Pall Mall*. What does it mean? How did it get there? Is it a hoax or a treachery?[1103]

[1103] 'The resignation of Lord Randolph Churchill: special Cabinet meeting today at the Foreign Office', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 28 December 1886, p. 8.

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