1882

Sunday 26 February (London)

I received a note from Northcote asking me to attend a small ex-cabinet meeting. I went to his house by mistake and was summoned as from there to Salisbury's where the meeting was. Present Salisbury, Northcote, Cross, Smith, J. Manners and Gibson.

We had before us a letter from Gladstone to Northcote proposing to give him an idea of what he, Gladstone, intended to say, that he should express great anxiety to avoid dissension between the Houses and hinting though in a very tortuous manner that if the Committee of the House of Lords would exclude all enquiry into the "judicial administration" of the Land Act he (Gladstone) would drop his vote of censure.[756] Northcote's answer saying that the Committee was now appointed and that he was sure that anything which the Government desired to have avoided would be avoided was also shown. After some discussion the matter was left there. It appeared that Salisbury had had some communications with Granville, but not in writing, and that they had come to nothing owing to the fact that Granville would not or could not define "judicial administration". It is obvious that these words might be made to cover about everything comprised in the Land Act.[757]

So it ended. At the close when the others had gone I had some conversation with Salisbury and suggested my idea of some kind of Literary Committee as part of our party organisation.

Monday 27 February (London)

House hunting all the morning and very tiring work.

[756]The Lords set up a committee to inquire into the working of the Land Act after a debate on 24 February: *Hansard*, CCLXVI, cols 1501–1502. Gladstone protested that it was too soon to decide if the Act was a success.

[757]In fact, Granville had informed Salisbury on 25 February that the Cabinet would accept the proposed committee but not one sitting judicially on the administration of the Act by the Commissioners (Granville to Gladstone, 26 February 1882: Ramm, 1962, I, p. 346). The report, a scheme for land purchase, was very much a landlords' scheme. See J.L. Hammond, *Gladstone and the Irish Nation* (London, 1938), pp. 257–258.

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In the evening at the House. There is evidently a good deal of dissatisfaction and apprehension at the chance of a collision between the two Houses. But there always are a great many who are very timid whenever there is a risk of any trouble.[758] It was so last year in the Irish difficulty. Lamington, Alington,[759] Shaftesbury (who is always very anxious) and several others began to talk to me in this strain. I drove home with Salisbury who does not seem to be at all alarmed. Gladstone had a meeting of the Liberal Party this afternoon and it does not seem to have been altogether unanimous, but one or two men of weight, like Whitbread, urged a support of the Government.

Cairns in the House.

Wednesday 15 March (London)

In the afternoon an important meeting at Northcote's. Present Salisbury, Cairns, Gibson, R. Winn,[760] Smith, Cross. Questions discussed:

1. Course to be pursued as to the Clôture resolutions,[761] generally understood to close debate if possible on Monday week 27th.

2. Serious discussion as to course to be pursued with regard to revival of the Coercion Act.[762] Salisbury very strong on the anomaly and impropriety of keeping men shut up indefinitely without trial. Most of us however very indisposed to take any step to enable Government to say that we had made their system of coercion impossible, which they would immediately do.

[758]Heated debate in the Commons on the Resolution on the Operation of the Land Law (Ireland) Act, first night: *Hansard*, CCLXVI, cols 1729–1798.

[759]Henry Gerard Sturt (1825–1894), 1st Baron Alington (1876), Con. MP for Dorchester (1847–1856) and for Dorset (1856–1876).

[760]Rowland Winn (1820–1893), Con. MP for Lancashire North (1868–1885), Lord of the Treasury (1874–1880), created Baron St Oswald (1885).

[761]Clôture was a process for bringing a parliamentary debate to a rapid end. It was introduced in the Commons in 1881 to overcome the delaying tactics of Irish members over the Coercion Bill.

[762]The Protection of Person and Property (Ireland) Act, more popularly known as the Coercion Act, which came into law on 2 March 1881, gave the Government wide powers of arbitrary arrest and detention. It was strongly opposed by the Irish members. After forty-one hours of debate in the Commons, the Speaker declared a closure, much to the surprise of the House. See T.P. O'Connor, *Memoirs of an Old Parliamentarian*, 2 vols (London, 1929), I, pp. 172–173.

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3. Smith to give notice of a resolution to extend the purchase clauses in the Land Act of last year in such a way as to enable occupiers to become owners and to be just to landlords.

Afterwards attended Grand Lodge where the Prince of Wales made his motion as to the recent attempt on the Queen's life.[763] He did it extremely well, in a very crowded and enthusiastic Lodge. I seconded the motion. My speech was very well received.[764]

We afterwards dined at the Loyd Lindsays.[765] Old Lord Overstone[766] was there, feeble in walking power but as fresh as possible in mind.

Tuesday 25 April (London)

A very busy day beginning with a meeting of the ex-cabinet at Northcote's. Present, Northcote, Smith, J. Manners, Stanley, Cross, Cairns, Cranbrook, Salisbury, Gibson. The discussion was confined entirely to Smith's motion on the Purchase Clauses of the Land Act, and Smith gave us a general notion of what he proposed to say. Cranbrook was opposed to the whole thing. Whether any agreed with him I do not know, for no one said so: perhaps some doubted.

Friday 5 May (London)

A meeting of our old Cabinet at the Carlton to decide as to what should be done.[767] The motion originally drafted by Beach and revised by Cairns agreed to [. . .]. Advised Salisbury (who consulted me) against a debate at present on Irish policy.

[763]An attempt to assassinate the Queen had been made by a deranged man outside Windsor Station on 2 March. See E. Longford, *Victoria R.I.* (London, 1964), p. 446.

[764]A meeting at Queen Street, especially 'summoned to express the sentiments of the craft at the attempt upon the life of Her Majesty' ('The freemasons and the Queen', *The Times*, 16 March 1882, p. 10).

[765]Robert James Loyd-Lindsay (1832–1901), Con. MP for Berkshire (1865–1885), created Baron Wantage (1885), a prominent Freemason.

[766]Samuel Jones Loyd (1796–1883), 1st Baron Overstone (1849), economist and banker, Whig MP for Hythe (1819–1826). Overstone was Lindsay's father-in-law.

[767]The meeting followed on from one at Salisbury's the previous day. Hicks Beach was to call on Gladstone on 8 May to submit the Government's Irish policy to Parliament's scrutiny.

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Sunday 7 May (London)

Horrible news this morning – poor Fred Cavendish cruelly murdered in the Phoenix Park close to the Lodge.[768] I got at breakfast a note from Salisbury asking me to meet him and others at Northcote's at 2.30. On arriving there we heard first for consideration a letter from Gladstone offering to accept Gibson's amendment of a $^{2}/_{3}$ majority in the case of the Clôture, which after discussion was agreed to. Cross was the only one who was not favourable – all the others I think considered it a good bargain. Then we talked a good deal of this horrible murder. It was decided that Beach should not go on with his motion but that it should be accompanied by an intimation that we withdraw only on the understanding that the Government would act with vigour, and that we should instruct also that we are ready to give the Government every possible support in legitimate objects.

I walked away with Salisbury and thought him out of spirits and very much depressed, perhaps physically. He talked more than he has ever done in his old manner, community of danger strengthening the bonds between those who are acting together. I said to him what I said indeed to the others, that in my point of view this is rebellion, and I can see practically only two alternatives, either Irish Independence or very stern repression.

Later I called at the Phillimores. He was much shaken, and even he evidently condemns the Government, though he makes the best case he can for Gladstone. Later some talk with Froude and Lowe, interesting but very few details are known.

Thursday 15 June (London)

A meeting at Northcote's. Most of us, except Sandon, Beach, Duke of Northumberland present. We discussed little except the Arrears bill.[769] On the whole a general disposition to fight it, and an equally general belief that it will not do to put much trust in the Irish landlords.

[768]On 7 May, news came through of the murder of Lord Frederick Charles Cavendish (1836–1882), the newly appointed Chief Secretary for Ireland, and Thomas Burke, his under-secretary, in Phoenix Park, Dublin. See J. Bailey (ed.), *The Diary of Lady Frederick Cavendish*, 2 vols (London, 1927), II, p. 325; T. Corfe, *The Phoenix Park Murders: conflict, compromise and tragedy in Ireland, 1879–1882* (London, 1968), pp. 184–188.

[769]The Arrears Bill was aimed at Irish land holdings valued at £30 and under. Where the tenant paid one year's arrears and could demonstrate an ability to pay more, the Government would pay the landlord half the arrears and the rest would be cancelled. The money for the scheme was to come from the Irish Church Fund and the Exchequer.

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In the House Salisbury made a very vigorous attack on the Egyptian policy of the Government.[770]

Thursday 13 July (London)

A heavy day at the Commission but we are now very near to the end of our work. Meanwhile very terrible telegrams have come in from Alexandria. The town is in flames, the convicts are released and the Christians and Europeans have been massacred almost to a man. There has been no such picture of horror since the burning of Paris.[771]

In the afternoon a Garden Party at Marlborough House. Every one was talking of these horrors, which seem to multiply upon us and (not unnaturally) we go on in the usual course marrying and giving in marriage and eating and drinking whilst the flood is rising round us.

Friday 14 July (London)

Our last formal meeting of the Defence Commission. It has lasted nearly three years, has often been very hard work, sometimes a matter of a good deal of anxiety, often of much difficulty. But we have completed it and I think the work will on the whole stand the test of examination.

Friday 21 July (London)

A meeting of the Peers at Salisbury's as to the Arrears bill. He made an able and very clear speech, saying that between the two views, against the Second Reading and for the bill, he advised amending it in committee in order (a) to make the application a joint one from landlord and tenant (b) to include in the "aspects" the tenant right.[772]

[770] At the end of May, ironclads had been sent to Alexandria and Port Said to protect British lives and property. Riots and massacres took place in Alexandria, resulting in the deaths of fifty Europeans. Salisbury suggested that the British fleet should take action against the perpetrator, Colonel Arabi (see Shannon, *Gladstone*, II, pp. 298–301). For Salisbury's speech, see *Hansard*, CCLXX, cols 1217–1220.

[771] After the Egyptian authorities had refused to dismantle the forts commanding Alexandria harbour, the British fleet bombarded the positions. This was followed by the burning of the city, and serious disorders took place. See P. Knaplund, *Gladstone's Foreign Policy* (New York and London, 1935), pp. 184–185.

[772] After the meeting, Salisbury wrote to Cairns, who was abroad, that two colleagues had sent messages voicing their opposition and that there was only one speaker at the meeting

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The meeting was unanimous in agreeing to this except Leitrim[773] who made a dissentient and not very wise speech.

Thursday 27 July (London)

A long discussion over the Arrears bill.[774] I sat all the evening expecting to have to speak and taking notes: but the debate grew thinner and thinner and finally expired, so that any speech from me was unnecessary. I was the only one besides Salisbury on the Front Bench of the old Cabinet. Richmond and Cairns both absent – not quite right I think.

Friday 4 August (London – Highclere)

Two important conversations with Cairns and Salisbury [. . .]. My conversations with Salisbury and Cairns were on the subject of our amendments on the Arrears bill.[775] When I came into the writing room first Abergavenny[776] drew me aside in great excitement and told me he feared a split in the party if Salisbury persevered in insisting on the amendments. Then Barrington spoke to me in much the same line. On going into the House the first words I heard Salisbury say to Lathom[777] were "I will not eat dirt," so I knew pretty well what was going on. I talked a good deal to him and found him very determined – then he left the House and I had some conversation with Cairns, who said that he from the first had disliked the course taken, that he was in favour of compromise, that he "had a delicacy" in saying all this to Salisbury but that I could do well to use any influence I might have by representing all this to him. I said I thought he had much

who demurred to the amendments as being too strong. 'They, however, consented to my proposals, I pledging myself that, if they forbore to oppose the second reading and carry these amendments, I would, in any event, vote for them to the end' (Cecil, III, p. 52). The bill was read for a third time the same day.

[773]Robert Bermingham Clements (1847–1892), 4th Earl of Leitrim (1878).

[774]Arrears of Rent (Ireland) Bill, second reading: *Hansard,* CCLXXII, cols 1919–1957.

[775]On 31 July, Salisbury had moved his amendment in the Lords. It was agreed to by 169 to 98 votes, as well as a second amendment, by 120 to 45. Derby wrote in his diary, 'The two Houses are now committed to opposite opinions on this bill, & it is certain that the Commons will not give way on the main points at issue. What is to come next?' (Vincent, *Derby*, IV, p. 451).

[776]William Nevill (1826–1915), 1st Marquess of Abergavenny (1876), Conservative Party manager.

[777]Edward Bootle-Wilbraham (1837–1898), 2nd Baron Skelmersdale (1853), 1st Earl of Lathom (1880), Lord Chamberlain of the Household (1885–1886, 1886–1892, 1895–1898).

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better talk it over with Salisbury: but on S. coming in again I told him all that had passed, and the two had some talk afterwards but not I imagine to much purpose. I understood from Cairns that he would not take any open part in dissenting but I doubt if he will vote for the amendments.[778]

It was finally settled that there should be a Peers' meeting on Thursday morning before we consider the amendments in the House.

All this is very unsatisfactory. Salisbury's notion is that the House of Lords had best fight both to show themselves a formidable power and to arrest the habit of compromise which is sapping their moral courage: my doubt is, and it is only a doubt, whether the field of battle is well chosen.[779]

Thursday 10 August (London)

Two very busy and anxious days. Came up to London with Elsie and first saw Northcote.[780] I questioned him as to his opinion on the course we ought to take upon insisting on our amendments. He was very divided in mind as to the policy of the matter but he was quite clear that as regards the House of Commons our men there would not vote again in support of our amendments. Smith he said was of much the same opinion and this in his mind was the great difficulty of the situation.

From him I went to Salisbury who seemed in a very reasonable mood, but his mind evidently made up to fight. I told him that Cairns was leaving London, and I mentioned one or two other depletions and I said that I anticipated a very small majority if any in support. He admitted the risk of this but seemed more sanguine than I quite understood.

The next day, Thursday, we had a meeting of Peers in Arlington Street, nearly 100. A large number spoke after Salisbury but except

[778]Carnarvon told Cranbrook, 'I much fear a desertion in a large body of our men or so large an abstention as to give us a very small majority. Either would be a great blow' (Carnarvon to Cranbrook, 5 August 1882: Cranbrook Papers, HA3 T501/262).

[779]Carnarvon's pessimism deepened in subsequent days. To Cairns he declared, 'I am extremely anxious that if possible you and he [Salisbury] should find a common ground of agreement as to the course to be taken. No evil could be so great for the Party as that the leader in the House of Lords should seem at variance with those whose opinion is regarded as is yours' (Carnarvon to Cairns, 8 August 1882: Cairns Papers, TNA, PRO 30/51/8, fo. 28). Cairns left for Scotland on 9 August 'and thus avoid[ed] the possibility of being a dissentient if present' (Cairns to Carnarvon, 9 August 1882: CP, BL 60768, fo. 54).

[780]Salisbury's amendments were rejected in the Commons on 8 August. The final vote of the Upper House was arranged for 10 August and the Peers' meeting was held at Salisbury's that morning.

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Inchiquin[781] not one was in favour of insisting on the Amendments. I indeed spoke very strongly in support of Salisbury himself, said that I thought that *on the whole* it would be safer to fight than to retreat and that I should certainly vote with him and Cranbrook, whilst indisposed to insist, also spoke strongly for Salisbury. Richmond on the other hand headed an attack on the amendments and Salisbury went out of his way to inform them that Cairns differed from him. The sense of the meeting was so strong that Salisbury at last asked them to divide and it then appeared that about three fourths were against him.[782] He was evidently very much annoyed and later in the afternoon in the House announced that he had been beaten by an overwhelming majority of his own friends, giving an unfortunate appearance of temper.[783] He had no doubt great cause to complain of the change of the opinion on the part of the peers, but he also need never have nailed his colours to the mast in the earlier stages and even now might have retreated without the appearance of a quarrel with his friends. It was a bad business and will damage him and all of us, in the future.

Sunday 13 August (London)

Much interesting talk with Northcote particularly on recent events, which he much deplores. He said to me that he had greatly regretted Salisbury's great disinclination to meet in private conference to talk over matters and ascertain the views of each other. He seems to have founded this disinclination on the fear that we should be known to meet; but what did or does this matter? No one knows what we say or decide on.

The real reason is doubtless a different one, and is to be found in Salisbury's belief that he is more independent by avoiding consultation: but I do not myself think that this is the result.

[781]Edward Donough O'Brien (1839–1900), 14th Baron Inchiquin (1872), Lord Lieutenant of Clare (1879–1900).

[782]Salisbury described the meeting to his wife. 'Carnarvon and Cranbrook said they would vote with me, but – This went on for some time. At last I begged them to divide – those who were for resistance to one side and those who were against it to the other [. . .]. In all about twenty supported me. On the other side there were sixty. Of course, in this state of things it was useless going to a division of the House' (Cecil, III, p. 54).

[783]Instead of a division in the Lords, a voice vote was taken, with Salisbury, Carnarvon, and Cranbrook being among the few peers to call out 'Not-Content' (see A. Roberts, *Salisbury: Victorian titan* (London, 1999), p. 270; *Hansard*, CCLXXIII, cols 1328–1343).

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