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Devonshire

(1892)

from the painting by Sir Hubert von Herkomer in the National Portrait Gallery

THE LIFE OF SPENCER COMPTON

EIGHTH DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE

BY

BERNARD HOLLAND, C.B.

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II

WITH PORTRAITS AND OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS

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LIFE OF THE
DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE

CHAPTER XIX

THE NILE WAR

NOW that the movement on the Nile has been launched, something must be said of Lord Hartington's views and action upon another matter of great importance to the future of the British Empire in North-East Africa. Early in the recess Lord Northbrook had gone to Egypt upon an inquiry connected with the finances of that country and the relative position there, in this matter, of England and the other Powers, especially France. Lord Hartington had taken interest in this question, and was always on the side of as much 'single' and as little 'multiple' control as possible. He made a short visit to Paris, and the impressions which he derived from it are stated in his letter of 3rd June 1884, which has been published in the *Life of Lord Granville.* After long preliminaries an International Conference upon these questions assembled in London at the end of July 1884, and broke down after seven sittings.[1] Lord Northbrook went to Cairo with vague instructions, as the following letters will show :—

[1] See account in *Life of Lord Granville*, vol. ii. p. 334.

Lord Hartington to Lord Granville, September 3, 1884.

'I should much like to know whether you and Northbrook settled anything about his line of policy in Egypt before he left. I understood from him that he got no instructions from Gladstone, and that the latter said very little to him about Egypt. As to inquiring and reporting, what can he find out except that Egypt is bankrupt? What is he going to do? Who are you going to send to Berlin? Did Northbrook give you any message from me as to what I had heard of Bismarck's state of mind, and how convinced he appears to be that we only care about conciliating the French, and nothing about him? Herbert Bismarck is reported to have said, "If the English do not want an alliance, we must look out for other alliances, *not* the French."'

On the 11th September Lord Hartington wrote to Lord Northbrook:—

'I am glad to see that you have made a good start and been well received by the Khedive. I was not, however, much reassured by a letter which I had from Granville from which I gathered that he had not communicated to you anything either new or definite in the way of the policy you are expected to act upon in Egypt. He says a good deal of your functions of enquiry and reporting. I think we have had nearly enough of enquiring and reporting, and that there is not much more to be found out. What we really want you to do, I imagine, is to make up our minds for us, and to propose some definite policy instead of the shifting, hand to mouth sort of way of going on which has prevailed for the last two years. It strikes me that what we have always done has been to look at things as we wished them to be, and hoped they would be, and have always declined to look at them as they were. I think that we should give this up once for all, and admit that, however much we may wish

to come away, it will not be a bit easier to do it by continually impressing on everybody that we wish it, and are going to do it at once. If it is admitted that we cannot come away at once, it is impossible to say when the circumstances will be so changed as to enable us to go away, and instead of saying that we are going away within some limited period, I should say that we are going to remain until we can put things in order, and come away with credit to ourselves. I have not thought much about it since I saw you, but I am inclined to think that the idea which we discussed is the right one, and that the temporary character of our occupation should be connected with the temporary character of the financial expedients necessary under the present circumstances. Temporary occupation, temporary sacrifices by the bondholders, and temporary sacrifices by the British taxpayer will have to go together. No one will suppose that we shall want to continue the sacrifices longer than we can help, but we should make it understood that, so long as they are necessary, we shall impose them on ourselves and on others.

'Whatever you make up your mind to recommend to the Cabinet, I hope you will insist on our taking it or rejecting it; I can hardly recollect a case in which we have taken the advice of Baring, or any of our agents, without some modifications and qualifications which have probably been just sufficient to spoil it. Mr. Gladstone wrote to me the other day that we had only been able to struggle through the Egyptian difficulty, as a Cabinet, by the exercise of the greatest conciliation and marked forbearance. This is very amiable of us, but I don't think that it has produced very good results in Egypt. We had much better make up our minds to do what is necessary if we are going to remain; and let those who do not like the policy leave the Government; I don't think that its collapse would be a great misfortune from any point of view.

'I hope you will keep your mind open about Khartoum and the Eastern Soudan. I know that you have always

been strongly in favour of its complete abandonment by Egypt; and I also know that Baring recommended it. But I have lately had grave doubts whether we were right; and I very much expect that, if the expedition succeeds either morally or physically, we shall find it necessary to reconsider this part of our policy.

'Don't bother yourself to answer this or any letter I may feel moved to write to you. I daresay Granville will show me your letters. What I want to impress on you is that, in my opinion, if you do not invent and insist upon a policy, we are done, not only as a Government but as a country. You know enough of the helplessness of the Cabinet on this question to know that we shall never make up our minds on a mere report.

'I don't undertake to agree with your advice, but I think I can undertake to try to induce the Cabinet either to accept it or reject it, and not to spoil it.'

When Lord Northbrook returned with his report he found that his opinions were not received with favour, or even with decent attention, and he almost sent in his resignation. He wrote on 22nd December to Lord Hartington, 'the time seems to me to be rapidly and almost inevitably approaching when I can no longer remain in the Government and share the responsibility of a course of policy as regards Egypt with which I cannot agree, and which seems to me almost certain to bring about most serious consequences. Mr. Gladstone has paid no attention to the opinions I have given as to what should be done.[1] . . .'

'No one,' Lord Northbrook wrote to another correspondent, 'takes much interest in Egypt here, and the business is looked upon as a troublesome affair which must be got through somehow, the most important thing being to avoid a parliamentary difficulty. I have not

[1] As to all this episode, see Lord E. Fitzmaurice's *Life of Lord Granville*, vol. ii. p. 403, and Mr. Bernard Mallet's *Life of Lord Northbrook*, p. 197, &c.

been successful in inducing Mr. Gladstone to take any interest in the business.' He said also that, on his return, he was treated 'more like a member of the Opposition than as a colleague whose only desire was to extricate the Government from a difficulty.' A month later, as the following letters show, the long battle between the advocates of single control and those of multiple control came to a crisis upon the proposal that there should be an International Committee of Inquiry into Egyptian finance. Lord Northbrook wrote later, 'It was early in 1885' (it was 21st January) 'when Hartington, Childers, and I, by threatening resignation, forced Mr. Gladstone to decline the International Commission of Inquiry, proposed by France, into Egyptian finance.'

Lord Hartington wrote to Mr. Gladstone on the 20th January 1885:—

'I told Granville after the Cabinet, and asked him to communicate to you that I do not think that I can accept the decision of the Cabinet. I should wish to have some further consultation with Northbrook, with whom I have generally acted in this matter; but from a few words I had with him after the Cabinet, I think that he will come to the same conclusion.

'I see the difficulties and even risks of any alternative course; but I feel so strongly the humiliating, and I think impossible position in which we shall be placed, that there is hardly any risk which I would not incur rather than agree to this.'

On the following day he wrote again to the Prime Minister, who had thus been driven into a compromise:—

'I need scarcely say that, though not confident of the success of the proposed procedure, I am very grateful to you and to the majority of the Cabinet for the concession

which you have made to the strong opinions held by Northbrook and myself on the subject of the inadmissibility of the Commission d'Enquête during our occupation of Egypt, which admits for a time at least of our united action in this most difficult matter.'

II

Meanwhile the belated movement for the relief of Khartoum was progressing as swiftly as an energetic soldier, well supported by a determined War Minister, could drive it on. The hands of Wolseley and Lord Hartington were strengthened by the presence of Lord Northbrook in Egypt. The Prime Minister, after his last attempt to apply the brake on the 19th August, allowed matters to proceed as Lord Wolseley advised. In the middle of September he assented to a considerable addition to the force for the Soudan, and then to an advance. The scope of the operations was defined in instructions given to Wolseley on 9th October 1884, viz. :—

'The primary object of the expedition up the Nile is to bring away General Gordon and Colonel Stewart from Khartoum. When that object has been secured no further offensive operations of any kind are to be undertaken. Although you are not precluded from advancing as far as Khartoum, should you consider such a step essential to secure the safe retreat of General Gordon and Colonel Stewart, you will bear in mind that Her Majesty's Government is desirous to limit the sphere of your military operations as much as possible. They rely on you not to advance farther southward than is absolutely necessary in order to attain the primary object of the expedition.'

A British army, at vast expense, was to traverse 1600 miles, not to save a city from barbarians, but to bring away from it two British officers against their will, and

against their sense of honour and duty. One can imagine Gordon's bitter-humorous comments upon these singular instructions had he ever seen them. They were composed in Downing Street, no doubt, with the Radicals in Parliament in mind, and they certainly do not represent the thoughts or wishes of the Secretary of State for War.

Lord Wolseley arrived at Cairo on the 9th September. On the 1st October his headquarters were at Assouan. He moved thence to Dongola, where he arrived on the 3rd November, and subsequently to Korti, which he reached on 16th December. During these two months he was hurrying on the vast collection and transport of supplies and stores, boats and camels, necessary for an expedition far from its base through a country yielding no assistance or provisions. The 'official history' of the campaign shows what immense labour, owing to the lateness of the start, had to be compressed into this short time.[1] From Korti there were two routes, that by the river making its great loop round past Abu Hamed and Berber, and that by land across the base of the loop by the wells of Jakdul and Abu Klea to Metemma on the Nile, 100 miles by river from Khartoum. The distance across the desert from Korti to Metemma is about 150 miles. Lord Wolseley wrote to Lord Hartington from Korti on the 29th December :—

'By next week's post I shall send you an official letter explaining in general terms my plans for movements in advance of this place, and giving my reasons for embarking in this desert expedition. I shall not state one of my principal reasons, as I don't think the Government would like it made known, viz. that this Nile expedition which was proposed in April was only seriously considered in July. Such valuable time was lost that, if I were to adhere

[1] *History of the Soudan Campaign*, by Colonel H. E. Colville, C.B., 1889.

to the Nile route for all the force, I should risk Gordon having to surrender from want of food and ammunition, and I should most certainly extend our operations so far into the heart of summer that the loss of life in the little army would be very great. The Nile route would be the surest, safest, and least expensive, but I find myself in such a position now, with such a short period of fine weather, that I am forced into a land operation on camels for a small part of the troops.'

Sir H. Stewart's camel-mounted force crossed the desert between the 8th and 21st January 1885, and fought at Abu Klea, and again between that place and Metemma. Sir H. Stewart was killed. At Metemma they found waiting for them Gordon's steamboats. In those Sir C. Wilson with an advance party set forth on the 24th January and arrived off Khartoum on the 28th, only to discover, from voices and rifles on the banks, and from a flagless Palace, that the town had fallen.

After the disaster to Gordon's troops at El Fun on the 4th September the tribesmen had gathered thickly round Khartoum, and Krupp guns were brought to bear on the place. The garrison of Omdurman, across the river, had to surrender on 5th January, the city was blockaded on all sides, and food was all but finished, 'and then,' said a witness, Bordeini Bey, 'the inhabitants and the soldiers had to eat dogs, donkeys, skins of animals, gums, and palm fibre, and famine prevailed. The soldiers stood on the fortifications like pieces of wood. The civilians were even worse off. Many died of hunger, and corpses filled the streets ; no one even had energy to bury them. . . . The soldiers suffered terribly from want of food ; some of them deserted and joined the rebels.'

On the 25th January, the day before the final assault, Gordon, looking across the Nile, saw by the Arab move-

ments the advancing doom. That evening Bordeini Bey found him on a divan in the Palace, 'and as I came in he pulled off his fez and flung it from him, saying, "What more can I say? I have nothing more to say; the people will no longer believe me. I have told them over and over again that help would be here, but it has never come, and now they must see I tell them lies. If this my last promise fails I can do no more. Now leave me to smoke these cigarettes."[1] . . . I could see that he was in despair, and he spoke in a tone I had never heard before. . . . All the anxiety he had undergone had gradually turned his hair to a snowy white. I left him, and this was the last time I saw him alive.'[2] In the early dark hours next morning the Arabs rushed the ditch and ramparts which defended the landward side of Khartoum. The fall of the river and the condition of the soldiers, enfeebled by hunger, made the capture easy enough. Gordon calmly confronted the assailants at the Palace, and was killed by their spears. The last entry made in his Journal was on the 14th December, and his closing words were: 'Now mark this, if the Expeditionary Force, and I ask for no more than 200 men, does not come in ten days, the town may fall, and I have done my best for the honour of our country.' Sir Reginald Wingate has said:—

'To innumerable enemies flushed with victory and ardent fanaticism Gordon opposed a skill and experience in savage warfare which few could equal. Ill-provisioned, in a place naturally and artificially weak, Gordon for months preserved an undaunted front. Neither treachery in the besieged nor the stratagems of the besiegers caused the fall of Khartoum. The town fell through starvation and despair at long neglect. . . .

[1] Bordeini notes that there were two boxes full of cigarettes on the table.

[2] Quoted in Wingate's *Mahdism and the Egyptian Soudan*, p. 165, &c.

'There were no elements of chance in the success of the expedition to relieve General Gordon. It was sanctioned too late. As day by day no English came, so, day by day, the soldiers' hearts sank deeper and deeper into gloom. As day by day their strength so wasted that finally gum, their only food, was rejected, so day by day the Nile ebbed back from the ditch it had filled with mud, and from the rampart it had crumbled, and left a broad track for who should dare to enter.'[1]

The storm of Khartoum was followed by six hours of massacre, in which some 4000 soldiers and civilians were thought to have perished.[2] The fairest of the young Egyptian wives and girls were set apart for the False Prophet to enjoy; the rest were divided among his chief followers, 'to every man a damsel or two.' So ended this tragedy. The more or less close investment of Khartoum had lasted 317 days, and, as Major Kitchener said in his report at the time, the 'noble resistance was due to the indomitable resolution and resource of one Englishman.'[3] Lord Cromer sums up this matter, so far as regards the action of the English statesman, by saying—

'In a word, the Nile expedition was sanctioned too late, and the reason why it was sanctioned too late was that Mr. Gladstone would not accept simple evidence of a plain fact which was patent to much less powerful intellects than his own.'

He would not accept the 'simple evidence' because he wished not to accept it. 'Quod vult, non quod est,

[1] Sir Reginald Wingate collected all the evidence that there was to be had, and his book, *Mahdism and the Egyptian Soudan* (1890), is the last word on those facts. The allegation that Khartoum fell by treason inside, and that therefore the delay of the expedition was not material, is entirely disproved by this evidence.

[2] The numbers slain are very uncertain.

[3] Major Kitchener's Report, printed in Colville's *History of the Soudan Campaign*, part ii. p. 273.

credit, qui cupit errare.'[1] Gladstone had the will to believe or not to believe. If he disliked a fact he believed that it did not exist. It must, however, be added that the majority of his Cabinet shared his views, or were carried along by his authority. And it may be said, as some slight palliation, that Gordon, who wrote and acted, not with official caution, but under the inspiration of the moment, did not make things easy for those in England who wished to succour him, and gave specious reasons to those who did not.

III

The telegram announcing the fall of Khartoum reached Lord Hartington on 5th February at Holker Hall, where he was staying with his father. Mr. Gladstone also, it happened, was there, and they deciphered the message together. It was not yet known whether Gordon was dead, or a prisoner, or was still holding out in the Palace at Khartoum. The Cabinet met on the 6th, and had to consider Wolseley's telegram asking for new instructions in the changed conditions of the case. The following letter shows the result of their deliberations :—

Lord Hartington to Lord Wolseley, February 6, 1885.

'I was obliged to leave London last Thursday, and was unable to write to you to congratulate you on the safe arrival of Stewart's force. The news relieved us of an immense anxiety, for though there was perhaps no cause for alarm the long interval between the news of the battle of Abu Klea and that of the arrival on the Nile, in the face of such a determined enemy, made us most anxious. The news received yesterday of the fall of Khartoum has been a terrible blow, and great as is our disappointment

[1] St. Augustine, Lib. II., *de Civ. Dei:* 'He who desires to err believes that which he wills, not that which is.'

and anxiety, I can very well understand that yours is greater still. I, as well as most of the Cabinet, were out of town, and we could not decide on the answer to your request for instructions till this morning. They have been agreed to with great unanimity, and the Duke[1] entirely concurs in the message which has been sent. We considered from your reference to your want of instructions that your impression might be that, after the fall of Khartoum, and the death or capture of Gordon, the reasons for any offensive operations against the Mahdi had ceased, and that we might wish you as soon as possible to fall back, abandon the Soudan, and restrict the defence of Egypt to the Wadi Halfa frontier. We have indicated to you that this was not our intention, and that in addition to the primary object of saving Gordon's life, if it be still possible, we desire to check the Mahdi's advance in the provinces of the Soudan which he has not yet conquered by any means in our power. It is even possible that a subsequent advance and recapture of Khartoum may be necessary. But we judge from the terms of your telegram that you think that such an attempt at the present season would be an extremely hazardous one, and we have distinctly absolved you from the obligation to attempt it. We have not attempted to dictate any military measures to you, feeling confident that you are able to judge much better than we can what you can and what you cannot do with the forces at your disposal.

'We have rather hinted at Berber as the point at which, short of Khartoum, it may be most possible for you to strike a blow in reply to that which the Mahdi has inflicted at Khartoum, but we feel that it is very probable that now that his forces are released by the fall of Khartoum, your communications may not be sufficiently secure to enable you to undertake it. If you do, you will probably require a new base, and a new line of communications, and we have therefore offered to send you troops to Suakin, if you ask for them.

[1] Duke of Cambridge.

'I am afraid, however, that it is not of much use for me to endeavour to explain our meaning and intentions in much detail; and I can only hope that the telegram has given you as much indication of our wishes and of our readiness to support you in whatever you may decide on, as you desire.

'It will not, of course, be a very easy matter to send out a strong force to Suakin, and we shall probably have to send some of the Guards, and perhaps call out some Reserves also; but the affair has become so much larger than we had originally contemplated, and the feeling of the country that we cannot allow ourselves to be beaten is so strong, that I do not suppose that there will be any great objection to these measures.

'I cannot tell you how conscious I am of the great responsibility which we are placing on you and how intense your anxieties must be. But we have all full confidence in you; which has been justified by the complete success which has attended the expedition so far as you could control it, and which cannot be weakened in the least by this unfortunate calamity which no action of yours could have averted.'

The two following, out of several interesting letters from Lord Wolseley to Lord Hartington, show how the military position stood at the moment, and what were the feelings of the army of the Soudan.

Lord Wolseley to Lord Hartington, February 8, 1885.

'This last week has been one of surprises all round—first the sad news from Khartoum, the loss of two of the four steamers I had been counting on, Wilson's critical position on an island near enemy's position, and lastly the decision of the Cabinet to destroy the Mahdi's power at Khartoum. You had as a Government so frequently announced your determination to clear out of the Soudan, that this last piece of news was the most astounding of all.

'To undertake a summer campaign against the Mahdi with British troops would be simply madness. One never can tell what may turn up in war, but unless the luck which has been so steadily against us all through this expedition suddenly turns in our favour, I do not contemplate being able to do more than take Berber, and, the Mahdi having now such large forces at his disposal, even that operation may tax our strength severely, and will doubtless cost us heavily in killed and wounded. Still it must be done. If Gordon has not yet surrendered, but is still holding out in some retrenched position in Khartoum, we must go to his aid and bring him off cost what it may.

'It is perhaps needless for me to point out how completely the fall of Khartoum has altered the position as regards military operations near that city. The Mahdi's troops and his nineteen guns had plenty of occupation in keeping Gordon in. That false prophet could not spare any overwhelming force to fight me until I reached the place, unless he raised the siege. And when I should have reached Khartoum, in my subsequent attack on the Mahdi, which I always contemplated, I should have had the assistance of all Gordon's best and seasoned soldiers and of his powerful artillery to act against an enemy that was, owing to the geographical position of Khartoum, necessarily split up into three divisions, each of which I would have defeated in detail, Gordon's steamers helping me in the work immensely. Now all this is completely changed. The Mahdi can concentrate the whole of his guns and those taken in Khartoum, and all his troops, and those from Khartoum (who are bound to join him) on any side I attack from, and the possession of the many steamers that were at Khartoum will enable him to act on my line of communications and prevent me from using the river for transport of food or of wounded. I confess that with my present force, which was calculated for a very different operation, I should under present conditions view an advance upon Khartoum with no light heart: a repulse would mean annihilation.

'Never did a little army meet with a greater disappointment than we all experienced when the fall of Khartoum was made known. I kept back the news for two days, but I find it leaked out in London immediately—I am anxious to know how, for I allowed no telegrams from the Soudan to go along the wire on the subject. Even now, the natives here don't believe it. The Mudir scoffs at it, and says Wilson's steamers did not go far enough up the river to ascertain more than the fact that Omdurman and Tuti Island were in the enemy's possession. I am still without news about Sir C. Wilson's safety, but expect to learn every day; perhaps I may hear before this goes to-morrow.

'In a few days I shall find out the truth about Gordon. We all rejoice over the fact that you have now as a Government assumed a position in the Soudan that will eventually secure peace to it and to Egypt, which your former policy of "scuttle" would not have accomplished. However, I hope it may be remembered by all members of the Government that the plan of campaign on which we have hitherto been acting was based upon the assurance that the relief of Khartoum was the limit to which the Cabinet would consent, and the force that came here was constituted and its strength fixed on that understanding.

'If Khartoum fell before we could reach it, our military mission fell to the ground; we would then only endeavour to negotiate with the Mahdi for Gordon's release, assuming he had not been killed when the place was taken.

'To besiege Khartoum and take it next autumn will be a very interesting operation, but it will be one of some considerable magnitude. At present we must content ourselves with taking Abu Ahmed and Berber, whilst the force you send to Suakin destroys Osman Digna's power. We can then keep open the Berber-Suakin road, and if the tribes help us, carry across that line to Berber the guns and munitions of war required for the recapture of Khartoum in the autumn. You can perhaps picture to yourself what a cruel disappointment to me and those about me

this fall of Khartoum has been. The prize for which all ranks have been slaving and toiling, I may truthfully say often by night as well as by day, seemed almost within our reach. The coil was being drawn tighter almost daily round the Mahdi, whose position was really becoming desperate; everything looked so bright ahead that one's spirits rose with each succeeding sunrise, all, however, to be dashed to the ground by this disastrous news. In Gordon's little letter of the 29th December he said he could hold out for years; but now it seems his previous dread of a catastrophe was well founded.

'Before this reaches we shall have taken Metemma, and I hope Berber also; at least I hope we shall be in front of the latter place. I hope your force at Suakin may be able to crush Osman Digna by the beginning of April. I shall then open the road to that place from Berber. My chief difficulty in all the operations I now contemplate is food. The men are in excellent health and spirits, but such has been the difficulty of transport that our men in the desert live without tents, a condition of things that cannot go on much longer now as the summer will soon be upon us.'

Lord Wolseley to Lord Hartington, February 23, 1885.

'I have not anything to tell you that has not already been sent to you over the wires. I am getting all the troops back from the desert posts, and upon arrival here they will be distributed in their "summer" quarters along the river. . . . One of my great difficulties during the summer will be to keep my camels alive, for all the green corn stalks upon which they have hitherto lived principally will have disappeared. It is my knowledge of the extreme difficulty I shall encounter in keeping about 3000 camels alive during summer along the river, where there is plenty of water and a settled population, that causes me to suspect the possibility of feeding the thousands of animals that will be required for the construction of the

Berber-Suakin road. I don't think visionary engineers, ignorant of war under all phases, but supremely ignorant of the great difficulties of feeding even a few thousands of men when separated by a desert from the base of supplies, have the faintest notion of what operations along the Suakin-Berber route mean. I sent you a private telegram giving you the views of several of those who have joined us from Gordon's steamers, viz. that under no circumstances could we have saved Khartoum, as the traitors who betrayed it would always have done so when our troops reached within striking distance of it. I think it is quite legitimate that you should have the benefit of this line of argument in your debate on the vote of censure, and I hope you reserved it for your own speech. It was with that intention I telegraphed it to you, for I confess I don't take sufficient interest in what Mr. Gladstone will say to give him any such "tip," especially as in my heart I don't believe a word of the statement. Gordon, in the middle of December, says, "If the steamers with a few British soldiers would only arrive, Khartoum would be saved." (I quote from memory; these are not his exact words.) It is no use now harking back, but for myself I have no doubt whatever that had Mr. Gladstone been able to decide a month earlier than he did the knotty point of whether poor Gordon was "hemmed in or surrounded,"[1] Khartoum would now be in our hands, and I should be employed in arranging for the return journey of this force instead of for hutting them on the Nile in this part of the Soudan. In accordance with the result of all our military experience and the opinion of our medical officers, I shall locate all the troops in positions where the desert touches the river, avoiding all cultivated ground as much as possible.

'I am anxious about the early extension of our Halfa railway to the Nile above Dal, and I think we shall have no difficulty in doing this. The Mudir and others dread a great

[1] This refers to an absurdly subtle distinction made by Mr. Gladstone in the House of Commons.

scarcity of food among the native population, as we have consumed such vast quantities of grain. I don't attach much importance to this, for the people have plenty of our money in return for what they have sold us, and will manage with our gold to find means of bringing up grain from Egypt, where it is very cheap.

'In all this business what hits me hardest is not the fact that my calculations have not been realised — this is a minor and a personal matter—but I do from my heart feel for these splendid troops that I command. They will have their tails down, and the discomforts of a summer in the desert under a tropical sun are not calculated to brighten up their spirits. They cannot but feel that all the extreme labour they have so cheerfully borne on the river in boats, all the hard fighting they have been exposed to, and all the comrades they have lost, has all been in vain. "Too late, too late!" is not a cheering motto to have emblazoned on their banners, and yet the humblest bugler in this army knows *he* is not to blame; that he has done his best for you all at home; that Khartoum is in rebel hands and Gordon murdered is not *his* fault.

'Please forgive this dull letter, so full of regrets, and do not for a moment fancy from its contents that I am less buoyant with hope than ever. Out of evil good comes, and in this instance the good will be I am sure the final settlement of this country upon a sound basis that will secure peace and quiet to Egypt along her borders. I look forward with the utmost interest to our autumn campaign, when, as I shall have but one column, I can be with it myself all the while, and not condemned to the utter misery of sitting in the rear, as I have done here lately. To lead a storming party every morning for a couple of months might be trying as well as monotonous, but it would be preferable to the nerve trial of sitting quietly here, awaiting news from two distant columns whose only means of intercommunication is through you, and over whose movements you can exercise no direct control.'

The feeling aroused in England by the tragic fall of Khartoum was intense and, as Parliament met on the 19th February, it was necessary for the Government to define their policy at the moment when that feeling had the speed and force of a torrent. Lord Granville gave a clear definition of that feeling in the House of Lords :—

'We were bound to tell Lord Wolseley what our political object was. We told him that it was to check the advance of the Mahdi, and for that purpose to destroy his power in Khartoum.[1] As to the means of doing this, and whether at once or in the autumn, we have left full discretion to Lord Wolseley . . . We have given him, at his request, a large force to be sent to Suakin, and a railway is to be made from that port to Berber.'

Lord Salisbury said, in his true and powerful speech—

'There has not only been sympathy and regret, but bitter and burning indignation. General Gordon has been sacrificed to the squabbles of a Cabinet, and the necessities of parliamentary tactics.'

In the House of Commons the Government had to face on the one side a fierce Tory attack, and, on the other, Mr. John Morley's courageous amendment regretting the decision of the Government 'to employ the forces of the Crown for the overthrow of the power of the Mahdi.' Mr. Morley, throughout, had adhered to the view that no attempt whatever should have been made, by sending Gordon to Khartoum or otherwise, to save that city and the other Egyptian garrisons, and, having a logical mind, he accepted boldly all the consequences of this low-spirited policy. He defined the struggle of the 'last five years' as one 'between those who wished to extend

[1] This decision was communicated to Lord Wolseley by Lord Hartington in a telegram of 9th February.

imperial responsibilities and those who wished to limit them but had not had the courage to lay their principle down clearly and carry it into practice.'

Lord Hartington did not wish to 'extend' these responsibilities, but he recognised what already existing obligations involved. Mr. Gladstone steered a cautious course between the Whig and Radical wings of his party. To please the latter he said, in his speech of 19th February :—

'We do not think that the present situation allows of our making any overtures to the Mahdi with any prospect of success. On the contrary, I believe that such overtures, however benevolently and philanthropically intended, would tend to defeat their own object. . . .' Sir Evelyn Baring had, however, been instructed 'that any communication which may proceed from the Mahdi shall be referred home for the consideration of H.M.'s Government.'

'Benevolence' and 'philanthropy' were by no means the true words for this occasion, but Mr. Gladstone had contracted by haranguing good people certain habits of unconscious insincerity. His one desire was to escape from this fatal Soudan where, misled by delusions and false ideas, he had lost his own reputation and the honour of his Government.

Lord Hartington, for one, believed not in overtures to the False Prophet. The Sussex land-owner, poet, nationalist, and horse-breeder, Mr. Wilfrid Blunt, suggested to Mr. Gladstone negotiation with the Mahdi through a certain Arab friend of his own. Lord Hartington, in a letter to Mr. Gladstone dated 20th March 1885, said that the answer to Mr. Blunt seemed to be that Lord Wolseley had already been instructed to forward to the Government any overtures which might be made by the Mahdi, and, he added :—

'I do not like the idea of opening private and secret communications between ourselves and the Mahdi behind the back of Lord Wolseley and Sir E. Baring. Nor do I like the idea of sending a man of whom we know nothing with a safe-conduct, perhaps to carry information and messages of encouragement to the Mahdi. But, unless the decision of the Government to destroy the power of the Mahdi is changed, I do not see what possibility there is of negotiation on such terms as are proposed by Mr. Blunt.'

In a debate of 27th February 1885, on a vote of censure, Mr. Gladstone denounced the idea which was to take form twelve years later, and had been Gordon's, of establishing British control at Khartoum. 'It means,' he said, 'the establishment of a British government over aliens' (had he forgotten the history and character of the Indian Empire ?), 'it means the establishment of Christian government over Mahommedans, it means committing your gallant army to a struggle from year to year in a tropical climate with people who are courageous by birth and courageous by fanaticism. It means a despotic government to be upheld by British hands against those who hate it.' [1]

In speaking of the decision to overthrow the Mahdi at Khartoum, Mr. Gladstone kept the door wide open.

'What we say is that we are not prepared, at the present moment, to say that there is no obligation upon us to use, according to circumstances, efforts, if we go there, to leave behind us an orderly government.' [2]

The sentence, as Mr. Goschen said, contained 'a double negative and three hypotheses.' Mr. Gladstone expressed

[1] The last two lines of this passage seem to be in contradiction with the first two.

[2] A Tory speaker (Gibson) in this debate said, 'The Government in fact say, "We will go to Khartoum to please the Whigs. We will run away from Khartoum to please the Radicals."'

on this occasion a gloomily fatalist view, which also contained an apology to the Radicals.

'We had no alternative in this Egyptian policy. Each step was inevitable ; our decisions, sad and deplorable as they may have been in themselves, were yet inevitable in the circumstances, and at the moment when we were called upon to undertake them.'

He replied in his own way to the question, 'Why did you not at an earlier period make preparations for going up the Nile ?' He said—

'The answer is that the investigations of the proper route for sending a force to Khartoum at 1600 miles of river distance from Cairo, with large tracts of desert to be traversed almost destitute of water—the choice between the Nile route and the laying down of a railway from Suakin across another desert also attended with greatest difficulties as to water—the examination of that question was a problem of the greatest difficulty. . . . We were carefully engaged in obtaining information from the best authorities, naval and military and scientific, upon the question of the Nile route and the Suakin route.'

Superficially true, yet essentially false. A Prime Minister who really wished for a decision on these points could have obtained one in a week in April or May 1885. No one knew this better than Lord Hartington, who wrote, on the day following, to Lord Granville :—

'Gladstone's speech was, of course, very skilful ; but I never heard him more coldly received.

'He has, as I expected, placed me in a position of great difficulty by basing part of his argument on military difficulties and the difference of military opinions. I enclose the passage marked.

'How he can take this line I do not understand, when, on the 26th May, I proposed to the Cabinet, with the full

assent of Wolseley and Stephenson, that immediate preparations should be made for the commencement of the Suakin-Berber line, including the provision of plant for the first fifty-six miles.

'All that I succeeded in obtaining was on the 14*th June* to make some preparations at Suakin for building piers, &c. I have not full records of what passed afterwards; but the enclosed correspondence shows a little how things were going on. Towards the end of July, despairing of any effective movement from Suakin, I determined to try and develop the movement of troops which had gradually been going on towards the southern frontier into something like preparation for a Nile expedition.

'I got a reluctant assent, and the ridiculous vote of £300,000 was the result.

'This operation, which had been recommended by Wolseley in April, ought of course to have been prepared for months beforehand; and it has been a struggle against time throughout.

'I do not know whether, as Secretary of State for War, I can shirk this part of the question altogether; but I can certainly not support what was said on it by Mr. Gladstone.'

Lord Hartington wound up the debate for the Government on the 27th February. He gave the true, not the untrue or official, reason for the delay in the preparations.

'Although the military difficulties were great, and although there was a difference of opinion between the military authorities, I have no hesitation in saying that the justification, or excuse, or whatever term you prefer, of the Government has rested mainly on the fact—which we have never attempted to conceal—that the Government were not, until a comparatively late period, convinced of the absolute necessity of sending a military expedition to Khartoum.'

Lord Hartington did not in his words show that his own efforts had been in favour of much earlier measures,

and that the delay was due to the fact that Mr. Gladstone would not decide, would hardly even consider the question, until he was forced to do so by Lord Hartington's threat of resignation at the end of July. In not publicly dis-associating himself from the sins of omission, since he had not resigned, Lord Hartington chose, as he always did, the path of honour, but, at this distance of time, it is the duty of his biographer to make perfectly clear the facts.[1] Lord Hartington committed himself in this same speech to the full policy of action which the Prime Minister had treated so coldly. He asked if a retreat, even if it could honourably be made, would be a step politically wise.

'That would be a lesson, indeed, which I hope we shall be slow to teach either to the people of Africa or to the world. We owe something to the people of Egypt, and can it be supposed that so great an encouragement could be given to the forces of anarchy without inflicting a heavy blow upon all the prospects of regeneration of that country? We owe something not only to the people of Egypt, but also to the other powers who have an interest in Egypt. We owe something to our ally France. We owe something to our Mahommedan subjects. We owe also something to our Indian Empire. . . . Then we owe something to every one of our own colonies which are brought into contact with savage races, and we owe something to every colony in the world to which the name, the credit, and the honour of England are dear. . . . It would be a new departure, and a new step of a momentous and most disgraceful character.'

[1] Mr. Brett sent to Lord Hartington, in March 1885, an appreciation by William Cory, the once famous Eton tutor: 'The Marquis has risen to the same sort of position as Castlereagh and Althorp held, respected by opponents as much as by supporters. He has shown truly admirable reticence and self-sacrifice in bearing the reproach due to those whom he strove last year to teach their business.'

This was the right spirit in which to treat the issue, although subsequent events, and the failure of the Mahdist attempts to invade Egypt, showed that, outside the Soudan, the effects of the retreat were not so materially injurious as Lord Hartington then imagined. But it was bitter to him, after these words, to eat the dust of a humiliating retreat from the declared intention of vindicating at Khartoum 'the name, the credit, and the honour of England." He said also :—

'It seems to be supposed that, because we have not succeeded in relieving General Gordon, no result has been accomplished. In my opinion a very considerable result has been accomplished. The province of Dongola has been secured; the movement of the Mahdi, which was extending itself towards the frontier of Egypt, has been altogether checked, the frontiers of Egypt itself have been made absolutely secure.'

One object was the protection of the tribes who had assisted us; another was the establishment of an orderly government at Khartoum. He said that Gordon went out 'with the intention of establishing an orderly government at Khartoum, and what was it that prevented the accomplishment of that object? Why, the military insurrection of the Mahdi, by whom he was confronted almost from the first moment of his arrival in Khartoum. Is there any reason to suppose that this end will be difficult or impossible of attainment, after the military power of the Mahdi has been broken ?' As to the Suakin-Berber railway, Lord Hartington said it seemed to be supposed that the Government were 'indifferent to the civilising influences that can be served by a railway—such as the establishment and development of sound trading principles, as opposed to the fanatical, predatory, and plundering habits of the Arabs.

. . . The House may rest assured that we shall use every reasonable effort to make the railway valuable, not only—as it is absolutely necessary it should be—for the military purposes for which it is now being constructed, but for the civilisation and permanent benefit of that part of the world.' Lord Hartington added:—

'These are the objects which the Prime Minister has described, and which every member of the Government, to the best of my belief, has in view. These are our objects, and all of them similar to those General Gordon went to the Soudan to endeavour to accomplish, though he was supported by such authority as the Egyptian Government could give him. We shall attempt to accomplish his objects with the assistance and support of better, and, I hope, purer, means than were at his disposal.'[1]

Had it not been for Lord Hartington's reassurance to the men who thought and felt as he did, the Government would doubtless have been defeated. Probably the same result would have occurred had not the Radicals been satisfied by the speeches of the Prime Minister and Sir William Harcourt that retreat was only delayed for a short time. The Government, as it was, only escaped defeat by a majority of fourteen, and Mr. Gladstone said to a colleague near him, 'That will do.'[2] Apparently he meant, at the moment, that the smallness of the majority would justify resignation. Lord Hartington wrote the next day to Lord Granville:—

'I heard last night that Mr. Gladstone thought the majority small enough to resign on. Except for personal reasons I am afraid I don't see much reason for

[1] These passages show that Hartington had taken a view of Gordon's mission wholly different from that taken by Mr. Gladstone.

[2] *Life of Gladstone*, vol. iii. p. 176.

it. The disappointment and disgust in the party will, I am afraid, be very great; especially among those who have put some pressure on themselves to vote with us, though not satisfied with Soudanese policy.'[1]

The Cabinet were almost equally divided on the question of resignation. In the end the Prime Minister was for holding on until the Redistribution Bill was through.[2]

The army of the Nile now retired into hot weather quarters at Dongola and along the river. Meanwhile troops were being sent, English and Indian, to Suakin, and, by the end of March, Sir Gerald Graham was in command there of 13,000 men. On the 13th March Messrs. Lucas and Aird began to lay the railway to Berber.[3] But Osman Digna was across the track. On the 22nd March a force under Sir J. McNeill encountered this indomitable chief in an action which nearly became a British disaster. The Arabs were, however, defeated and, for the third time, slain in large numbers, at a cost of nearly 500 British killed or wounded, and, after further desultory fighting, the road became fairly clear. But it was once more a 'field with blood bedewed in vain.'

The zeal in England for the recapture of Khartoum was rapidly cooling. Many of those who had been most anxious to relieve Gordon—one of them was W. E. Forster—felt, with very much reason, that there was no sufficient justification in carrying on a costly and dangerous war

[1] Just before this debate began, on 20th February, Lord Hartington was lunching with Lady Granville, who asked him to write something in her album. He took up a Shakespeare, turned over the leaves, and saying, 'this will do,' wrote down the line, 'This is the true beginning of our end.' Mr. Trevelyan lunching there five days later, added: 'When things are at their worst, they oft-times mend.'

[2] *Life of Gladstone*, vol. iii. p. 177.

[3] Colville's *History of the Soudan Campaign*, p. 184.

in order to capture a city which the Government, as they had emphatically declared, *did not intend to keep*. Some communications from Lord Wolseley reinforced this view. In one letter written, perhaps, in a moment of depression, he said that the advance to Khartoum would be the most serious operation since Waterloo, now that the Mahdi was in possession of the place, its stores and arsenal, and had gained so immensely in prestige.[1] He said, officially, in his despatch of 8th March, that large reinforcements would be necessary, viz., twelve extra battalions of British infantry, four squadrons of cavalry, and two batteries of artillery.

Lord Hartington said, in a letter to Lord Wolseley (2nd April), that he had already felt much doubt whether 'the Government, Parliament, or the country would have the resolution to go on with the Khartoum expedition, that many members of the Government disliked it intensely, and only accepted the policy because they thought that to retire in the face of the successes of the Mahdi would imperil the security of Egypt, and because, mainly on Lord Wolseley's authority, they believed that the overthrow of the Mahdi would be easy.' Lord Wolseley's present view, he said, would 'greatly strengthen the hands of those in the Cabinet and out of it, who have detested the enterprise from its very commencement, and have always prophesied that no expedition would ever reach Khartoum.' He ended by asking Lord Wolseley for a full report of his views and requirements. The decision was made, as it happened, without the assistance of any report. An event upon the northern frontier of Afghanistan opened to a willing Prime Minister the door of escape from the Soudan.

[1] This critical letter was not an official letter, but was addressed to a Liberal member of Parliament who communicated it to the Cabinet. It strengthened immensely the hands of those who were for leaving the Soudan at once.

The advance of the Russians in Central Asia had brought them to the Afghan border. A joint Russian-British Commission had been agreed upon to settle disputed points as to what that frontier actually was. The Russians had not behaved amicably, they had kept the British Commissioners long awaiting their arrival, and one day (30th March 1885) their troops attacked some Afghan troops on the debatable ground, and occupied Penjdeh. Attention in England was suddenly diverted from Egypt to Asia. The Amir, who happened to be in conference with Lord Dufferin at Rawal Pindi, did not appear to be much disturbed by this border affray,[1] but in more sensitive London war with Russia seemed probable. Mr. Gladstone, on the day that the news reached England (8th April), wrote to Lord Hartington to say that he had been much 'shocked' by the news and to suggest that, as (though he hoped for arbitration) the contingency of war could not be 'shut out of view,' it would be better to bring Wolseley home from Egypt, and Adye from Gibraltar, in order to secure the best military advice.[2] One of Lord Hartington's colleagues, by the way, had recently written to him to ask whether 'Wolseley had become as insane as Gordon' under the influences of the Soudan climate. The temperature in London and on the Nile is, no doubt, so different that minds can scarcely run together. This is one of the difficulties of a semi-tropical, semi-arctic, Empire.

Mr. Gladstone circulated at this time to the Cabinet the long memorandum which is printed in Lord Morley's *Life*.[3] It is dated 9th April 1885, but most of it must have been prepared before the receipt of the news of Penjdeh. It shows that Mr. Gladstone's mind was entirely made up to

[1] See Sir Alfred Lyall's *Life of Lord Dufferin*, vol. ii. p. 89.

[2] Lord Wolseley had just come down to Cairo to consult as to the preparation for the autumn expedition.

[3] Vol. iii. p. 555.

complete retreat from the Soudan. His argument rests mainly on the ground that Gordon's failure was his own fault, that he had 'worked against' the 'intentions and instructions' of Government, that now Gordon was no more, and the Egyptian garrisons had succumbed, without (he affirmed) much injury to themselves, and that to pursue the war against the Mahdi would be to make 'war against a people who are struggling against a foreign and armed yoke . . . with a very heavy cost of British life as well as treasure, with a serious strain upon our military resources at a most critical time, and with the most serious fear that, if we persist, we shall find ourselves engaged in an odious work of subjugation.'

On the 13th April Lord Hartington announced in Parliament that, in view of the Russian crisis, the Reserves would be called out. On this occasion Lord Randolph Churchill combined with leading Radicals in pressing for the recall of the troops from Suakin and the Soudan. Mr. Gladstone attached an importance to the Russian crisis somewhat surprising in one who had always violently assailed war undertaken on a point of honour or prestige. On the 21st of April he asked the House of Commons in a most impressive oration—that in which he said, 'We cannot close this book and say we will look in it no more'—for a vote of £11,000,000. Of this £6,500,000 was to be used for general preparations; the remaining £4,500,000 to meeting expenditure in the Soudan, inclusive of £750,000 for the Suakin-Berber unmade railway.[1] Government obtained the whole vote without opposition from the

[1] Mr. Gladstone on the 30th April wrote to Lord Hartington asking him to speak on the military situation. He said, 'The gigantic dimensions and menacing aspect of the Russian question seem to me to dwarf everything else, and I hope that you, with Kimberley and Northbrook, will give the whole force of your minds to considering how, and where, we can best apply, in the case of need, such resources as we possess against a big, bullying adversary.'

Conservatives. The Russian cloud then instantaneously dispersed. On the 4th May Mr. Gladstone announced that some points connected with the Penjdeh affair were reserved for arbitration by a friendly Sovereign, that no 'gallant officers *on either side*,' who had been involved in it, were to be put on trial, and that the interrupted proceedings for the deliberation of the frontier were to be amicably resumed. The Russian commanding officer received from the Czar a 'sword of honour.'

From the point of view of a Prime Minister anxious to escape from the Soudan, the Russian attack on Penjdeh was a perfect godsend. Under the stress of the moment not only had the decision to abandon the Soudan enterprise been affirmed, but a huge sum of money to defray the cost of fruitless operations, and of a great railway contract so far as it had been carried out, had been secured almost without a word of criticism in the House of Commons.[1] Never had more splendid skill been shown by this old master of parliamentary tactics. He took at the full the flowing tide of anti-Russian jealousy, and the ebb of the Soudan tide, availed himself of the predisposition of the Conservatives not to oppose grants of money asked for by the Government in a foreign crisis, gratified the Radicals by the revocation of the pledge as to Khartoum, the Whigs by the unexpected spirit with which he opposed Russian aggression, and with wind and tide combined, sailed triumphantly out of the rock-sown sea which he detested. The stroke really was magnificent, of its own kind. In his speech of April 27, 1885, Mr. Gladstone explained that the decision which the Cabinet had come to at their meeting of 6th February was based partly on the idea that Gordon might still be

[1] The railway material was floating off Suakin in twenty-three ships costing £1000 a day in demurrage.

alive; partly on the idea that it would not be wise to retreat at once before a triumphant Mahdi. But now it was known that Gordon was dead; it was also known that the Mahdi was no longer triumphant but was contending with rivals. It was also, he argued, possible to retire now without loss of reputation in the East because the policy became part of the vigorous action contemplated in defence of the interests of the Indian Empire. Further examination of the facts had also shown that the possession of Khartoum would not enable us to impose a serious check on the slave trade. There was also, he said, evidence that Gordon had been under an entire delusion in his idea that the fate of any large part of the population of Khartoum was bound up with his, or that there was any general devotion to him on the part of the population, or that any of that population, except perhaps a few immediate adherents, suffered in person or property in consequence of the capture of Khartoum by the Mahdi. It could not be asserted that the present government of Khartoum was worse than it had been under the Egyptian governors. Lord Salisbury put the other side when he said, in the House of Lords (1st May 1885):—

'We must ask ourselves how much blood has been shed, how much money we have poured out on the deserts of Africa; what we have got to show for the blood of our countrymen and others that has been shed, and the money that has been thrown away; and what we have done for the reputation of England.'

The sentence recalls that of Edward Bulwer Lytton in Parliament many years before, when Gladstone, who had been a member of the Government which entered upon the Crimean War, was violently attacking Lord Palmerston for continuing it:—

'When Mr. Gladstone was dwelling in a Christian spirit that moved them all on the gallant blood that had been shed by England, by her allies, and by her foemen in that quarrel, did it never occur to him that, all the while he was speaking, this one question was forcing itself upon the mind of his English audience, "And shall all this blood have been shed in vain?"'

That Khartoum should be left to the False Prophet was now a conclusion almost generally accepted. But the Dongola province, which he had never held, was that also to be abandoned to his malignant sway? Lord Wolseley had telegraphed to Lord Hartington (14th April) that, if the position was to be exclusively one of defence, he should advise holding Wadi Halfa and Korosko as outposts, with a strong brigade at Assouan. On the following day he telegraphed urging that Dongola should also be held, on the ground that, if it were abandoned, a larger force would, for political reasons, be necessary in Egypt; on the ground also that to abandon Dongola would be a course not consistent with 'national dignity.' Sir Evelyn Baring also thought that Dongola should be held by British troops until black troops could be organised. He said that to retreat from Dongola at once would be 'neither politically wise nor dignified.'[1] Lord Hartington described the political situation at the moment in the following letter to Lord Wolseley, dated 17th April 1885:—

'The decision to give up the Khartoum expedition has come rather sooner than I expected. Although your letter came in very opportunely to support the prevailing view in the Cabinet, I do not think that you need reproach yourself, if

[1] April 1885. *Modern Egypt*, vol. ii. p. 29. Later, however, he thought that the decision to retire from Dongola had been a wise one.

you felt inclined to do so, with being the sole or even the main cause of the decision. It has long been beginning to be felt that the "state of facts before us" on which we founded the decision of February 7th has materially altered, and that there was really no sufficient object to be gained by an enterprise of such magnitude as we gradually began to realise that this was going to be. The army in the desert and on the Nile seemed in February to be in a position of great danger, and the best means of securing its safety appeared to be to enable you to take a strong offensive attitude. Then also it was impossible to tell to what extent, after the fall of Khartoum, the Mahdi might become an aggressive power threatening Egypt. All these circumstances have changed a good deal, and at the same time the enterprise has assumed larger proportions, and the difficulties of effecting any good result after all the exertions that would have been required have increased. You tell us, I have no doubt with perfect truth, that even at Dongola, where we are in force, we have no friends, that the people hate us, and that most of the so-called friendly tribes have probably settled matters with the Mahdi.

'What are we to do when we get to Khartoum? What government are we to set up, and how is it to be supported when we go away? This difficulty and the prospect of being obliged permanently to occupy the Soudan has had great influence on many of us. Then again there is the Russian difficulty. It is absolutely certain that, if we have to fight Russia, we could not go on with the Khartoum expedition. We shall want every man we can spare, and Russia knows it perfectly well and will never believe that our preparations are in earnest so long as we go on with other preparations for another campaign—for another campaign on the Nile.

'Your proposal to hold on to Dongola province while releasing the Suakin force, and, as I understand, relinquishing the intention of going to Khartoum, has been fully discussed. It has not, perhaps, yet been quite completely rejected; but I do not think that there is any chance of its

being accepted. If we were an absolute Government, this would perhaps be possible ; but it would be almost impossible to satisfy the House of Commons what our policy was in taking this course. It is parliamentary exigencies which have compelled an immediate decision on the whole question. We must have a Vote of Credit for the Soudan operations, and for the preparations for war with Russia. The Vote of Credit must be announced before the Budget, and the Budget cannot be delayed any longer. When the Vote of Credit is presented, we must state what it is for, and neither our own party nor the Opposition will let us have it without stating whether the Khartoum expedition is to go on or not, and, if it goes on, with what objects. I do not think, however, that the announcement will be made in quite such unqualified terms as those which I communicated to you in my first telegram. We shall state that the Vote of Credit does not provide for an expedition to Khartoum, or for further offensive operations ; that the greater part of the Nile force will be concentrated as soon as possible in Egypt so as to be available for service anywhere that a portion of General Graham's force will be also made available for general service ; but no determination immediately to evacuate any particular points will be announced. The greater part of the expenditure on the Nile boats and railway has already been incurred. The latter will not necessarily be stopped, and therefore it will be still possible, if the insurrection should on our retirement seriously menace Egypt, to resume the offensive under much more favourable circumstances than those of last autumn. Suakin will also continue to be held, and probably in greater force, and over a larger area of country, than last year, and no immediate decision as to the point at which the railway should stop will be come to.

'This will be, roughly speaking, the character of the announcement to be made : and I hope that it may be possible to give it a form which will not look like precipitate and unconditional retreat. I cannot say, however, that I look forward with much satisfaction to the declara-

tion of such a change of policy, and I wish some other Government could have had to do it.

'I think it very likely that, notwithstanding all this, it may still be desirable for you to go to Suakin, and see for yourself the state of affairs there, but we shall communicate about this by telegraph.'

On the 5th May, the day following the announcement made in Parliament that the Russian trouble was over, Lord Hartington wrote to Lord Granville. 'We must have a Cabinet to settle about Dongola and Suakin. If you have read Baring's telegram you will see that he is entirely with Wolseley, Buller, Wilson, and Kitchener in opposing the evacuation of the Dongola province.' The Cabinet met on the 6th. Lord Hartington, Lord Selborne, Lord Northbrook, and Lord Carlingford were for accepting the unanimous advice of the highest civil and military authorities in Egypt, and for meeting also the desire of the Khedive and his Ministry. The members of the Cabinet who sat in the House of Commons, or almost all of them, were of an opposite opinion, and so were Lord Granville, Lord Derby, and Lord Kimberley. It was resolved that Lord Wolseley should be instructed to carry out the retreat from Dongola. Something was said in Parliament as to the possibility of establishing a native government in Dongola, but further telegrams from Cairo showed that this hope also must be abandoned. 'You know,' wrote Lord Hartington to Lord Granville on 18th May, 'that there is no probability of the establishment of any native government, and that, in spite of the earnest remonstrances of Wolseley, Baring, and the Egyptian Government, the troops are to be brought down the Nile as rapidly as possible without any reference to the attempt to leave a native government behind them.' Sir Evelyn Baring had essayed one more remonstrance.

'Some answer,' wrote Lord Hartington (15th May 1885), 'will have to be sent. But I presume that the decision is final, that no troops are to be kept at Dongola, and that the whole of the Nile valley down to Wadi Halfa is to be abandoned to the Mahdi, if he chooses to take it.' The question arose whether a certain despatch from Lord Wolseley should be published. Lord Hartington wrote to Lord Granville (4th June 1885), with weary disgust for officialism:—

'After all it only contains his opinions on political questions, for which the Cabinet have over and over again professed their supreme contempt. Why are his political opinions to produce so much more effect on other people than on us?'

Lord Hartington's regret for the decision was increased by the information now received from Lord Wolseley that the net gain to the British army elsewhere by the evacuation of Dongola would only amount to two battalions. 'I confess,' he minuted, 'that when I assented to this policy I had not realised how insignificant an addition to our military resources would be the result of this precipitate retreat.' His regret was also increased by news pointing to a decline of the False Prophet's power. This, however, as he admitted, cut both ways, for, if it showed that it would not be a difficult task to hold Dongola and recover Khartoum, it also showed that Mahdism was a less danger to Egypt than had been supposed. But the news seemed to indicate, at least, the adoption of the *via media*, the retention of the Egyptian province of Dongola. A letter from Mr. Reginald Brett shows how keenly Lord Hartington felt the bitterness of the complete reversal of the policy of February, and how near he came at this moment to resignation of office.

15th April 1885.

MY DEAR CHIEF,—I am sincerely glad that you have passed through this fresh crisis, although it must have been a trying ordeal for you, without having found it necessary to break up the Cabinet.

On other occasions I have doubted whether you were wise—in your own interests and those of the nation—to remain in office. But I have not the slightest doubt in this case; and I feel sure that this would be the opinion of every candid judgment to which the whole of the circumstances were submitted.

I never could see how 'upon the state of facts then before you' your decision to go to Khartoum could have been other than it was. The fate of Gordon was unknown, and the condition of the force in the Soudan was perilous in the extreme. It was necessary to show the boldest possible front, both to discourage the enemy and to preserve the morale of our men. An order to retire would have been indefensible at that time. Since then a wholly different 'state of facts' has come to light; and the country has had time to make up its mind upon them.

There is very little doubt what that decision is; and, if you had retired from the Government, you would have found yourself in the position of Athanasius—*contra mundum*.

I cannot see that you are specially more responsible for the *policy* of the campaign than any of your colleagues, though undoubtedly you are more responsible than they are for the *conduct* of it.

Then comes the question of the railway. If we are not to occupy Berber, a railway farther than the hills is useless. It could never be preserved; it being so obviously the interest of the Hadendowas—the carriers of the desert—to destroy it.

But a cardinal and indispensable part of your Egyptian policy is to hold the trade routes from the Upper Nile. For this reason we must hold on to Suakin, as we hold on to Cairo. The power that holds the one should hold the

other. The mercantile interests in this country would never forgive a Government that allowed the trade of the Upper Nile to pass into French or German hands.

It would be indeed a farce, after all the fuss about the Cameroons and Angra Pequena, to allow Suakin, which is the port of Khartoum and the Nile, to pass into the hands of foreigners.

If we are to hold Suakin, we must have a hill station, and a railway to connect the two.

The approval of this policy will be very general throughout the country; and I am sure it will be thought to be the most prudent and advantageous settlement of the Soudan question which could have been hoped for after the events of the last ten months.

The few persons outside the Cabinet who know what has passed within it during the last few days seem to have no doubt that you acted wisely and patriotically in not giving way to the strong and natural feeling which you could scarcely avoid showing in this matter. It is, of course, heart-breaking to have to abandon an object for which so many sacrifices have been made. But I cannot admit, and the country generally will not admit, that those sacrifices have been wholly made in vain. They might have been avoided no doubt; but the fault—which necessitated them—was not committed yesterday. When the history of the past year comes to be written, I doubt whether the part played by this country will be considered a very noble one; but, if the secret history of your relations to the Government ever sees the light, I think you will not need to be alarmed for your reputation. Especially for this last act of self-abnegation.—Yours very sincerely,

Reginald Brett.

No one in England was more strongly opposed than Queen Victoria both to the change of policy as to the advance to Khartoum and to the decision to abandon to the Mahdi even the never-yet-lost province of Dongola. In more than one very strongly and vividly worded and

much underlined letter to Lord Hartington she expressed her valiant soul and her wise mind. In one she said (11th May):—

'The Queen has on several occasions warned and protested repeatedly against the sudden reversal of a policy pursued up to the time by the Government, and the withdrawal of troops actually engaged in a campaign, such as was done after the Zulu War, and again in the case of the Transvaal War in 1881, and after the Egyptian campaign of 1882, though fortunately, in the last instance, the intention was not carried out. . . . Many of the deplorable consequences of the abandonment of our policy in the Soudan could have been avoided by a more direct declaration of our policy at the beginning; and there must be a clear understanding now as to our not relaxing our preparations in any way.'

Lord Hartington replied:—

'Lord Hartington with his humble duty begs to acknowledge the receipt of Your Majesty's letter of the 11th instant. It is quite true that the decision arrived at by the Cabinet last month was a decision to postpone, not to abandon, the expedition to Khartoum. When, however, that decision had been announced, when the intention of concentrating the troops on the Nile and at Suakin so as to make them available for service in any part of the world had been declared, and when the Vote of Credit had been presented to Parliament as containing no provision for an immediate advance on Khartoum or for further offensive operations in the Soudan, it became necessary for the Cabinet to consider whether it was possible to resume the policy of the advance on Khartoum as soon as the state of our relations with Russia appeared to assume a more peaceful aspect.

'Lord Hartington believes that it would have been impossible to resume this policy as if a break had never

occurred in it, and as if no doubt or hesitation as to its practicability and expediency had never intervened.

'Lord Hartington stated in his letter of 15th April some of the reasons which had forced on the Government the necessity of reconsidering the policy, and, although the critical state of our relations with Russia was undoubtedly the most important, he cannot deny that there were others of a very grave and serious character.

'On the one hand, the necessity for the movement on Khartoum and the objects to be gained by it seemed to be diminishing.

'The danger to Egypt of the power of the Mahdi for any purpose of aggression is at least remote and problematical; and the possibility of establishing any settled government in any part of the Soudan appears to become every day more doubtful.

'It never was a part of the policy of the Government to maintain a government in Khartoum, or in any part of the Soudan, by the permanent employment of your Majesty's forces; and no one has yet been able even to suggest what form of native government it would be possible to establish without support of that character.

'Lord Hartington is not aware whether your Majesty has seen a long and very able letter from Sir E. Baring to Lord Granville, dated 3rd April, in which, after weighing all the arguments for and against the proposed policy, he concluded by advising against the prosecution of the expedition.

'On the other hand, as Lord Hartington has already pointed out to your Majesty, the difficulties and magnitude of the expedition were increasing; and Lord Wolseley has himself in the strongest terms impressed upon the Government how great a strain it would produce on the country. It is quite clear that the troops both at Suakin and on the Nile are beginning to suffer from the effects of the climate, and the accounts which Lord Hartington receives show that neither officers nor men continue to have much heart in the undertaking. Lord Hartington feels very deeply

the grave evils which may result from so complete a change of policy in a very short time, but at the same time he doubts whether, under present circumstances, it would be possible, or, if possible, whether it would be wise, to persevere in a course which must entail great suffering and loss on your Majesty's troops for objects which appear every day to be less distinct and less capable of being realised.

'Lord Hartington has some intention of writing a despatch to Lord Wolseley, which would probably be published, setting forth more at length the reasons which have led to the present change of policy.'

In answer to a second letter from Her Majesty he wrote on 19th May:—

'Lord Hartington presents his humble duty to your Majesty, and begs to acknowledge the receipt of your Majesty's gracious letter of the 17th inst. Lord Hartington has shown your Majesty's letter to Mr. Gladstone, whom he understands your Majesty is to see to-day, and who will be able better to explain the views of the Government on the policy which the Cabinet has advised. Lord Hartington does not, however, clearly understand whether your Majesty objects to the abandonment of the expedition to Khartoum, or to the withdrawal of a portion of the force from Suakin, or to the withdrawal of the troops from the province of Dongola, or to both these measures.

'Lord Hartington has already stated to your Majesty the reasons why he thinks that the prosecution of the expedition to Khartoum is now impossible; and, as to the other measures consequent on the abandonment of the expedition, there seems to be much difference of opinion among the military authorities.

'Lord Wolseley has never advocated the construction of the Suakin-Berber railway except in connection with the proposed advance to Khartoum, and he has been at least as anxious as your Majesty's Government to put a stop to active operations and to send away the greater part of the troops from Suakin.

'As to the retention of the troops now on the Nile in the province of Dongola, there appears to be a great difference of opinion.

'Lord Wolseley desires to keep them in their present positions, but apparently with a view to a future advance on Khartoum, for he has expressed his opinion that the possibility of establishing a native government in Dongola under any of the suggested arrangements is a visionary idea. It is true that Sir E. Baring and the Egyptian Government have made urgent representations that Dongola should be held for a time by British troops until some attempts have been made to organise a native administration and a force of black troops capable of repelling the Mahdi's advance; but it seems extremely doubtful whether this plan could ever be realised or within any reasonable time. Lord Hartington admits that there are strong objections to the immediate withdrawal in opposition to the advice of Sir E. Baring; but the Cabinet has taken a different view of the case, and he is compelled to acknowledge that the objects for which a large British force would be retained for an indefinite period in distant positions where their health would undoubtedly suffer severely are not so clear and distinct as could be desired.

'Lord Hartington entertains no doubt that the prolonged occupation of positions in the Dongola province would be extremely distasteful to both officers and men employed in this service. So long as they have a prospect of further active service they bear the hardships and sufferings of the service with admirable patience, but the indefinite occupation of such positions would become almost intolerable to them, and the complaints which would reach home would make it almost impossible to prolong the occupation. There is great reason to fear that any policy founded on such an occupation could not be long maintained, and would have to be abandoned with results as unfortunate as those which are apprehended from the present measures. Lord Hartington proposes almost immediately to present to Parliament all the principal

despatches and telegrams which have been received from Lord Wolseley since the present policy was adopted, so that Parliament will have the means of forming its own judgment upon it.'

Lord Hartington, who, though he put the case of the Cabinet, agreed in his heart with the Queen, and was tired of all things, had succeeded in resisting his desire to resign, but now the Government itself resigned on account of a defeat upon an unimportant subject in the House of Commons on the 8th June. Lord Salisbury's Cabinet might still have countermanded the retreat from Dongola. After a day or two of hesitation they decided not to reverse the policy; they were in a minority in the House of Commons, and they had no desire to expiate the errors of their predecessors. Yet these political reasons are not sufficient justification for abandoning to savagery and destruction a province which the soldiers and civilians on the spot had advised our Government to defend in the interests of Egypt. The troops fell back down the Nile.[1] Soldiers remember the wailings of the people as our men marched away,[2] and those who took part in the recovery of the province found a scene of desolation, adorned here and there with a pile of skulls.

The dervish power was 'smashed' by Lord Kitchener at the vast slaughter of Omdurman on 2nd September 1898.[3] Between the fall and recapture of Khartoum the whole Soudan was a prey to savage anarchy under the mask of despotic theocracy. It has been estimated that, in the few years from 1883 to 1898, the population was

[1] The last British troops left Dongola on 15th June 1885.

[2] I have been told this by a distinguished officer who was there. It does not, however, seem to agree with Lord Wolseley's opinion quoted by Lord Hartington, *ante*, p. 34.

[3] Some 11,000 Arabs were killed and 16,000 wounded in about fifteen minutes at Omdurman.

reduced by war, murder, pestilence, and famine from some eight millions to about two. Only on the principle of 'all's well that ends well' (ends well, that is, years later and in other hands) can this be said not to matter. The lesson for statesmen is that, in case of doubt, it is best to take the boldest and strongest course. If the British Government, after the Hicks disaster, had resolved, as Lord Dufferin had advised and as Lord Hartington desired, to assist Egypt to hold Khartoum and the whole line of the Nile, instead of compelling the Khedive and his Ministers against their will to assent to its abandonment, the Mahdi's power might have been destroyed, or, at least, kept within narrow limits, before it had ruined the whole Soudan, and incalculable miseries might have been saved. Why was this action not taken? Because it was opposed to principles false in themselves, or, if not that, yet certainly false in their application, which had been preached to the people for years. A question had to be swiftly decided, and these principles decided it.

Mr. Gladstone's conduct in these affairs half destroyed —and with the utmost justice—his reputation and popularity, and, had it not been for the timely admission of nearly two million new and grateful electors to the franchise, the Liberal party would have suffered utter shipwreck at the next election. Patriotic and well-informed Englishmen had been alienated from Mr. Gladstone before he finally broke up his party. Lord Northbrook said many years later that he had then made up his mind that he would never serve under Mr. Gladstone again.[1] Lord Hartington did not formulate a resolve so clearly to himself, but this must have been his own feeling. The War Office chapter of Lord

[1] *Modern Egypt*, vol. i. p. 592.

Hartington's history may be fitly concluded by his farewell letter to Lord Wolseley and the reply :—

Lord Hartington to Lord Wolseley, 26th June 1885.

'I have just concluded bidding good-bye to every one here; and though I hope soon to see you back, and to be able to combine a welcome home with an official farewell, I do not like to leave the office without a word of thanks to you for the constant support and assistance which you have given to me here, as well as for all the efforts and exertions you have made to carry the Nile expedition to the successful conclusion which it deserved.

'As to our present military system and organisation, I know that you think that a good deal remains to be done, especially in the administration of the new system and in the fuller adoption of its principles, and to a great extent I am inclined to agree with you.

'I am sorry that the incessant difficulties and perplexities in which we have been involved ever since I came here, and the large amount of time I have been obliged to give to parliamentary and political business, have prevented my taking up questions of military administration as actively as I could have wished, or giving you as much support in some of your ideas of military reform as they may have deserved. But though it is possible or probable that I may never return to this office, I hope that my experience here may perhaps enable me to give some assistance to others who may have more time and ability to devote to these subjects.

'As to your recent campaign, you know, I think, that although we just missed success, I had never had the slightest thought of attributing our failure to any fault either of design or execution on your own part, or on the part of your officers and men. I shall always feel most grateful to you for the advice and assistance which you gave me last summer and autumn, and also for the way in which you at once, at my request, undertook the

responsibility and labour of the command of so novel and uncertain an enterprise. I believe that, since that time, everything has been done which could have been done to ensure its success; and it is satisfactory to think that, though the actual object was not attained, there was not, as far as I know, a single failure either in the administrative arrangements for the despatch of the expedition or of the military dispositions in its execution.

'I can very well understand and sympathise with your disappointment on account of the change of policy on the part of the Government which has prevented the renewal and, I have no doubt, the successful issue of the expedition; and of course, as the minister principally responsible for the military policy, I know I have shared in this disappointment. I can also conceive that the refusal of the Government to accept your opinion on matters of policy respecting which, though not purely military, you had much opportunity of forming an opinion, may have been disagreeable to you, and that the necessity of giving effect to a policy of retreat must have been painful to you. These, however, are political and not military questions, and at present there is no reason why I should say anything more upon them. It is in your military capacity, first as one of my principal military advisers here, and next as Commander-in-Chief of the Nile Expedition, that I have now, in taking official leave of you, to thank you for the assistance and support you have given me, of which I shall always retain a very lively recollection.'

Lord Wolseley to Lord Hartington, 2nd July 1885.

'The English post just received brought me your letter of the 26th ultimo, and although I shall leave for England next week, I cannot quit Egypt without sending you a few lines to thank you most sincerely for it.

'It has been to me a real pleasure to serve under you—all my wishes were complied with, indeed you were always willing to give more than I asked for, and if I failed to save

General Gordon I am fully aware that you are not to blame, and that if you had had your own way the course of events and the whole aspect of affairs here and in home politics would now be very different from their present position and aspect. However, there is no use in crying over spilt milk. I have already begun to forget that I was ever in the Soudan, and I don't intend to be "*drawn*" about Khartoum affairs upon my return home. We all hope and pray that when the Liberals come again into office we may have you at the head of affairs: my only regret to the arrangement will be, that we shall not have you at the War Office. I appreciate most deeply all your personal kindness to me, and my only regret now is that I did not succeed in bringing to a successful end the mission you confided to me: I worked hard, however, in the attempt. The political future looks very dark for us all, and it seems to grow more threatening every day: when and how it is to end, God only can tell.'

Photo: R. Keene, Derby

CHATSWORTH

CHAPTER XX

THE FRANCHISE AND REDISTRIBUTION BILLS AND IRISH POLICY

THE main distraction which prevented the Cabinet in the summer of 1884 from attending to the question of the Soudan was the conflict with the House of Lords on the reform of the franchise. Lord Hartington, in the autumn of 1883, held that the two closely connected measures of the extension of franchise and the redistribution of seats should be passed in the same session. Only with the greatest possible reluctance had he given way to the opinion of the Cabinet that they should be passed in two consecutive sessions. The compromise effected was that the Prime Minister in introducing the Franchise Bill should sketch in dim outline the Redistribution Bill which was to follow, so that in some degree he should be pledged as to its character. The Conservative party took in Parliament the same position as that taken in 1883 by Lord Hartington in the Cabinet. Lord John Manners moved, on 24th March 1884, an amendment to the effect that the 'House declines to proceed further with a measure having for its object the addition of two million voters to the electoral body of the United Kingdom until it has before it the entire scheme contemplated by the Government for the amendment of the representation of the people.' Lord Hartington, in this debate, admitted that without redistribution the scheme was incomplete, and that it would have been better

to deal with the whole subject in one session. But this, he said, could not be done without a general agreement of parties, and the Opposition had given no indication of a desire to co-operate.

'Speaking for myself I may say that, if I believed that the Franchise Bill were introduced merely as a step to prepare the way for a total reconstruction of all our electoral areas, for a total reconstruction which would involve the destruction of the separate political existence of all but the largest cities and counties, by a measure involving the redistribution of political power between the inhabitants of the great cities and the rural populations scattered over areas of great extent—if I believed this, and that an attempt would be made to introduce some uniform system, such as that of equal electoral districts, then I would not be prepared to support this Bill. I certainly have no desire to see introduced into our electoral arrangements either mathematical exactness, or any attempt at theoretical perfection. We have not endeavoured thus to mould our system in the past, and we are not likely to do so in the future.'

He said that the declaration made by the Prime Minister as to the outline of the coming redistribution proposals was made with the 'assent and concurrence of his colleagues, not necessarily as embodying the actual definite intentions of the Cabinet—not perhaps expressing the personal wishes and desires of every member of the Cabinet, but still being a declaration generally accepted by, and concurred in by, the members of the Cabinet.' Lord Hartington proceeded to defend with coldness the proposal to extend the franchise in Ireland and the indefensible proposal to retain the existing number of Irish representatives. He put it chiefly on the ground, so often vainly occupied by Liberal reformers, of not allowing the Irish to have a grievance. Schemes of minority repre-

sentation had been suggested. But, he said, 'the real representation of the loyal minority in Ireland is to be found not in any artificial devices . . . but in the 550 members for England and Scotland, the vast majority of whom agree more closely with the minority in Ireland than they do with the majority of the Irish members here. The real protection and the real safety of the minority in Ireland will be found in the English and Scotch representation in this house.' It was difficult for him to speak on this point at all, for only a few months before he had publicly declared against the inclusion of Ireland. A Conservative speaker on the 16th May said that 'the noble Marquis has been conspicuously absent during the debates on the Irish part of the Bill.' Lord Randolph Churchill and others had warmly supported the inclusion of Ireland.

The Franchise Bill passed the second reading by a very large majority on 7th April. In the House of Lords it was held up by an amendment corresponding with that which Lord John Manners had moved in the House of Commons. This was the position when the session ended, and in the autumn recess began a violent agitation in the country against the action of the House of Lords. Mr. Gladstone, though he made some strong speeches in a Scottish campaign, conducted the matter with prudence and moderation. He was himself rather a Conservative as to the method of redistribution of seats, was opposed to the idea of nearly equal electoral districts, and wished to preserve small boroughs with great historical associations. Radical leaders, of course, raged against the hereditary House for opposing the 'will of the people.'

The first suggestion which led to the ultimate compromise was made by Lord Cowper. It was that when the Government's Redistribution Bill had been *introduced* the

Lords might then pass the Franchise Bill. Mr. Gladstone, on the 20th August, wrote to ask Lord Hartington whether in his opinion, 'the Tories would come into such an arrangement.' If so, he thought that Government should make an effort to meet them by introducing a Redistribution Bill in November. 'I can,' he added, 'hardly look upon the matter as practical. But, if men want a bridge for retreat in argument, they are not always fastidious as to logic.' Lord Hartington was very willing to assist in building the bridge. He replied to Mr. Gladstone:—

'WAR OFFICE, *21st August* 1884.

'I have read again Cowper's letter. I think that his meaning is what you describe.

'It is just possible that if the Lords do not wish to push matters to an extremity they might come into such an arrangement. I think that John Manners and others said in debate that all they asked was to see our Bill.

'I do not suppose that the Tories or any considerable number of them would pledge themselves beforehand to pass the Franchise Bill on our introduction of the Redistribution Bill, irrespective of what the latter Bill might be. But its introduction might give to many of them the opportunity of saying that, without committing themselves to the details, its principles were such as might be made the foundation of an acceptable measure, and therefore they might pass the Franchise Bill.

'I asked Dilke what he thought of it. He says that he does not think it impossible to have a Redistribution Bill ready in November. He thinks that our people will be very angry, and look upon it as a concession to the Opposition. I did not gather, however, that he is strongly opposed to it himself. My own opinion would be quite in favour of what I understand you to propose to say in Midlothian.

'I am not quite sure, however, that I understand your condition, "if the Tories or any considerable number of

them were willing to come into such an arrangement." As I have said, I do not think they will undertake beforehand to pass the Franchise Bill; but I think that very probably, without any previous pledge, they will actually do it.'

The supposition was that the House of Lords would in the autumn session pass the Franchise Bill with the addition of a clause postponing the date of its coming into operation until after the Redistribution Bill had been passed. In September the prospect was overcast by clouds. Lord Derby wrote, on the 18th, to Lord Hartington:—

'I am afraid we are in for a good deal of trouble in regard of home politics. From all I hear the Lords will certainly not give way, and what then? An agitation directed against the House of Lords will split the party; yet it seems difficult to avoid it. I agreed with Granville in July that, when we lost the Franchise Bill in the Lords, we had better have dissolved at once, and taken a new departure.'

The following letter, ten days later, shows the view taken by Lord Hartington:—

Lord Hartington to Mr. Gladstone, 29th September 1884.

'I have seen the correspondence which has passed between yourself and Sir H. Ponsonby on the subject of the Franchise Bill, which I understand you intend to circulate. The second suggestion is, I think, the same as one which I referred to with some favour in a letter to Granville which has, I believe, been forwarded to you. I see the force of many of your objections to it, but the question presents itself to me in this way. If the Lords should pass the Bill with a clause postponing its operation till January 1, 1886, or till the Redistribution Bill is passed, could we by insisting on the rejection of this clause wreck

the Bill? I should say not; and, if not, would it not be better to come to terms on the point with the Opposition in the House of Commons than to accept it when forced on us by the House of Lords? I agree with you that a much better plan would be that we should endeavour to come to terms on the principles of Redistribution. I believe that Ponsonby has made some suggestion on this point (as coming entirely from himself) to the Opposition.

'I fear, however, from Lord Salisbury's article that no such agreement is very likely. The only way in which, as far as I can see, we could at all meet him would be by giving in Dilke's plan greater prominence to the rearrangement of boundaries, so as to include in parliamentary boroughs the whole urban population belonging to them, and having regard in the new county divisions as much as possible to the urban or rural character of the population.'

Lord Hartington, after his visit to Balmoral, suggested, in a speech at Hanley on 4th October, an arrangement, or compromise, on the lines of Lord Cowper's proposal. The first response of the Tory chiefs was not encouraging. Lord Salisbury still held to the position that the Redistribution Bill must not only be brought in, but passed, in the same session with the Franchise Bill. Between Lord Salisbury, entrenched in this position, and the Radical leaders, thirsting for battle with the peers, and suspicious of compromise, the steering of an intermediate course was delicate. The difficulty was solved through the intervention of the Queen, assisted by her able secretary, Sir Henry Ponsonby, by the moderation and tactical skill of Mr. Gladstone, and by the sound common sense of Lord Hartington and Sir Michael Hicks Beach. The Queen had already been in touch with Lord Salisbury, and, a few days after the Hanley speech, she suggested that Lord

Hartington should enter into communication with the Tory leader. Lord Salisbury still showed reluctance, but these overtures led to a meeting between Lord Hartington and Sir Michael Hicks Beach at the end of October. The following memorandum by Lord Hartington shows the lines upon which the question was treated by these leaders :—

WAR OFFICE, *October* 29, 1884.

Notes of Conversation with Sir Michael Hicks Beach.

'Sir M. Hicks Beach began by stipulating that our conversation should be confidential and absolutely without prejudice.

'What he was about to say would be the expression of his own views and would commit no one else; but he would not have thought it worth while to say it if he had not been of opinion that his views were largely shared by the leaders of his party.

'Sir S. Northcote and one or two others were aware that he intended to have this conversation; they had not encouraged it; he had himself hesitated about proposing it; but they had not opposed it.

'What had determined him to propose it was the idea that perhaps there was no vital difference of principle between us. There were, no doubt, many of his party who detested the whole question of Parliamentary Reform, who would be delighted if they could get rid of the Franchise Bill and the Redistribution question together if they could; that, however, he did not believe that this was possible. What he did believe to be possible was to prevent the passing of a Franchise Bill either without Redistribution or coupled with an unfair or inadequate Redistribution.

'What he was most anxious for was that, if there existed any possibility of an agreement between us on the principle of Redistribution, nothing should be said in the debate on the second reading of the Franchise Bill

which would commit the Government to principles of Redistribution which they could not accept.

'He then went on to explain the principles on which he thought Redistribution should be based. He did not desire a small measure, and he did not shrink from a great disturbance of existing arrangements. He might have preferred no change at all; but if there was to be a change he would prefer one, if based on fair principles, which would probably be a permanent settlement. The main principles of his scheme were:—

'1. That no borough should retain separate representation below a high limit of population: 25,000 should be the very lowest population which should entitle a borough to return a member. And no borough under at least 80,000 should return two members.

'2. There should be a complete separation between urban and rural districts. The large agricultural boroughs should be converted into county divisions. But all towns above a certain limit of population (probably 10,000) should be grouped so as to form constituencies of not less than 25,000, and as nearly as possible of 50,000.

'Existing boroughs under 10,000 might either come into the grouping arrangement or be merged in the counties, as they might appear to prefer.

'The grouping of boroughs should not, if possible, extend beyond the limits of a county; but the groups should furnish a constituency of at least 25,000.

'3. There should be a real revision of boundaries of boroughs, existing and to be created.

'For this purpose there should be a Commission, to be agreed on by both parties, with statutory powers.

'4. All constituencies entitled to more than one member should be divided into single-member districts. This would apply to both counties and boroughs, but it is urged more especially as to counties.

'5. On these conditions representation should be given both to counties and large towns as nearly as possible in proportion to population.

'6. As to Ireland, he dissents altogether from the principle of representation in proportion to distance.[1] They will oppose to the utmost the retention of the present number of Irish representatives unless some provision is made for the protection of the loyal minority. Ireland has been treated exceptionally in other matters, and if it is to be treated exceptionally in the matter of representation, let such treatment be accompanied by the creation when possible of three-cornered constituencies with the minority vote; or, if this is impossible, let its representation be reduced, and let it be divided, as in the case of England, into single-member districts.

'(I believe he would group boroughs of somewhat smaller size in Ireland than in England.)

'The plan which Sir M. Hicks Beach thus sketched out is so much larger than anything which I have ever contemplated that it was impossible for me, though we had a long conversation for the purpose of explanation, to discuss its merits, even if there had been any advantage in doing so.

'I asked what, in the event of its being ascertained that there was any possibility of agreement as to the principles of Redistribution (as to which it was, of course, impossible for me to express any opinion), the House of Lords would be willing to do. He said that he did not think that in any case the Lords would pass the Franchise Bill without some suspensory provision, and that they would not accept a mere scheme without some security for its becoming law. I suggested (and I think this was almost the only suggestion which I made) that, if the Government pledged itself to introduce a Bill founded on certain principles and to carry that Bill in the next session, the failure to carry the Bill would involve the resignation of the Government, and would either leave the Redistribution in their hands, or would give them the option of dissolving on the present

[1] This refers to the singular defence which Mr. Gladstone had put forward for retaining the great over-representation of the Irish population, viz.: that constituencies remote from the centre, having less influence otherwise, should have larger representation in proportion to numbers.

register. The Lords might thus safely pass the Franchise Bill in the present session without any suspensory clause. This seemed to appear to him to be possible. I should have mentioned that he had previously expressed an opinion that it might be possible to proceed in the present session by means of resolutions without the actual introduction of a Bill.'

After this interview the negotiations were gradually extended. Lord Hartington wrote (12th November) to the Queen that Sir Michael Hicks Beach had 'shown a most admirable and conciliatory temper in the communications which have passed.' These preliminaries (the Queen still supplying the impulse to conciliation and the means of compromise without loss of dignity or consistency) led to those larger meetings in November between the chiefs of the two parties, in which Mr. Gladstone discovered that he was, in reality, more Conservative than Lord Salisbury.[1] Lord Hartington had already made the same discovery with regard to himself and Sir Michael Hicks Beach, and one hero of the Tory camp, Lord Randolph Churchill, was far more advanced in these matters than any other leading statesman except Mr. Chamberlain. The Conservatives sacrificed their convictions as to the over-representation of Ireland and the necessity of preventing the minority there from being swamped. The general lines of the Redistribution Bill were agreed upon in these Conferences before the end of November, and the Franchise Bill then reached port successfully after its stormy and dangerous voyage. An inevitable change had been accomplished; one laden with immeasureable consequences, slowly to be unrolled in history. 'Upon the matter of regulating the suffrage,' says Montesquieu, 'depends the destruction or salvation of States.' The first and most immediate con-

[1] See Lord Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, vol. iii. p. 138.

sequence, as Lord Hartington had foreseen, was the great force added to the leaders of the movement in favour of Irish national independence. It was clear in what way it would be used. Charles Parnell said at Cork on the 21st January 1885 :—

'We cannot ask for less than the restitution of Grattan's Parliament, with its important privileges, and wide, far-reaching constitution. We cannot, *under the British Constitution,* ask for more than the restitution of Grattan's Parliament. *But* no man has a right to fix the boundary of the march of a nation.'

The last fourteen words are cut upon the base of the monument now (1911) in course of erection as a memorial to Parnell in the centre of Dublin, in order that this limitless claim may never be forgotten, even if smaller concessions by the English are accepted.

II

In the spring of 1885, the Liberal Cabinet was once more divided upon rival claims to precedence of 'coercion' and 'remedial measures' for Ireland. The existing Coercion Act was to expire in August 1885. Was it, or any part of it, to be renewed in the present sesssion? Lord Morley, in his *Life of Gladstone,*[1] says that—'The Whig wing of the Cabinet, adhering to Lord Spencer, were for a modified renewal of the Coercion Act, with the balm of a Land Purchase Bill and a limited extension of self-government in local centres. The Radical wing were averse to coercion, and averse to a Purchase Bill, but they were willing to accept a milder form of coercion, on condition that the Cabinet would agree, not merely to small measures of self-government in local areas,

[1] Vol. iii. p. 190.

but to the creation of a central board clothed with important administrative functions for the whole of Ireland.'[1]

The scheme of a central board was discussed in Cabinet on the 9th May 1885. 'All the Peers except Lord Granville were against it. All the commoners except Lord Hartington were for it. As the Cabinet broke up the Prime Minister said to one colleague, "Ah, they will rue this day," and to another, "Within six years, if it please God to spare their lives, they will be repenting in sackcloth and ashes."'[2] Lord Hartington now, and throughout these discussions, held to the position that there should be no extension of local self-government in Ireland which was not also made in the rest of the United Kingdom. There were not as yet, it must be remembered, elective County Councils in any part of the United Kingdom. A few days later the Prime Minister gave notice of the introduction of a Land Purchase Bill. Mr. Chamberlain and Sir Charles Dilke at once sent in their resignations. They would not assent to a Land Purchase Bill unless it were coupled with extension of local self-government. The resignations were not at once accepted, but the two Ministers remained in a state of suspended official animation. On the 30th May the Prime Minister wrote to Lord Hartington the remarkable letter which is given in full by Lord Morley.[3] After reviewing the Egyptian and Soudan events he wrote :—

'Now as regards the immediate subject. What if Chamberlain and Dilke, as you seem to anticipate, raise the question of a prospective declaration about local government in Ireland as a condition of their remaining in the Cabinet? I consider that question as disposed of

[1] As to Mr. Chamberlain's plan of a central board (in addition to county boards), see *Life of Gladstone*, vol. iii. p. 193.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 194.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 196.

for the present (much against my will), and I do not see that any of us, having accepted the decision, can attempt to disturb it. Moreover, their ground will be very weak and narrow; for their actual reason of going, if they go, will be the really small question arising upon the Land Purchase Bill.

'I think they will commit a great error if they take this course. It will be straining at the gnat. No doubt it will weaken the party at the election, but I entertain no fear of the immediate effect. Their error will, however, in my view, go beyond this. Forgive me if I now speak with great frankness on a matter, one of few, in which I agree with them, and not with you. I am firmly convinced that on local government for Ireland they hold a winning position, which by resignation now they will greatly compromise. You will all, I am convinced, have to give what they recommend; at the least what they recommend.

'There are two differences between them and me on this subject. First as to the matter; I go rather further than they do; for I would undoubtedly make a *beginning* with the Irish police. Secondly as to the *ground;* here I differ seriously. I do not reckon with any confidence upon Manning or Parnell; I have never looked much in Irish matters at negotiation or the conciliation of leaders. I look at the question in itself, and I am deeply convinced that the measure in itself will (especially if accompanied with similar measures elsewhere, *e.g.* in Scotland) be good for the country and the empire; I do not say unmixedly good, but with advantages enormously outweighing any drawbacks.

'Apart from these differences, and taking their point of view, I think they ought to endeavour to fight the Election with you; and in the *new state of affairs* which will be presented after the dissolution, try and see what effect may be produced upon your mind, and on other minds, when you have to look at the matter *cominus* and not *eminus,* as actual, and not as hypothetical. I gave Chamberlain a brief hint of these speculations when endeavouring to

work upon him; otherwise I have not mentioned them to any one.'

Now came on for decision the question of the renewal of the Coercion Act. Lord Hartington had, on the 14th May, written to the Prime Minister:—

'I find it rather difficult to express what I feel about the pressure to which Spencer is being subjected in regard to the renewal of the Crimes Act.

'When we consider under what circumstances Spencer accepted his present office, what he has with the assistance of this Act been able to accomplish, and what he has been exposed to in the performance of his duty, the attempt to wring from him concessions, which he does not think ought to be made, by putting on him the responsibility of breaking up the Government and the party, appears to me in the last degree unfair.

'What do Chamberlain and Dilke know about the government of Ireland? I do not suppose they profess to know anything; and they ground their opposition to the Crimes Act rather on party and political considerations than on reasons of Irish administration. If we believe that Ireland can be governed without coercion, let us try it, and get rid of Spencer; but, if we are to have coercion, surely it is only fair to him to ascertain from him what are the smallest powers which he thinks necessary, and to support him in obtaining them. It seems to me no subject for a compromise such as Chamberlain is endeavouring to extort.'

At the end of May, Lord Hartington visited Lord Spencer at Dublin. At a Cabinet held on June 5th it was agreed that notice should be given of a Bill to take the place of the expiring Crimes Act. The exact character of the Bill was again discussed at a Cabinet meeting held on the morning of June 8th. On the evening of that day the Government were defeated by a

Tory-Parnellite combination in the House of Commons, on a minor question of taxation, by twelve votes. The real reason of the defeat was the schism on Irish policy, and the alienation of the two Radical chiefs. An inadequate number of supporters responded to the Whip. On the following day Mr. Gladstone tendered his resignation to the Queen. The passing of the Redistribution-of-Seats Bill had just been completed, and for technical reasons there could not be a General Election until the late autumn. Lord Salisbury, therefore, took office, after obtaining more or less definite pledges that the Liberal leaders would not prevent him from carrying on necessary business during the rest of the session.

'If,' wrote Lord Hartington to Lord Granville on June 16th, 'Lord Salisbury asks for any promise of support, I quite understand that it is impossible for Mr. Gladstone to give any such pledge on behalf of the whole of the present Government, and also that he may be unwilling to commit himself or anybody beforehand. But I hope that any refusal of such a request may not be made too positive or wide.

'Certainly, so far as I am concerned, I should feel both inclined and bound to give the new Government all the support I possibly could, so long as they do not make any great or unnecessary changes of policy.'

Probably no man in the Liberal Government was more relieved by its termination than was Lord Hartington, and he must have enjoyed more than usually, this same week of June, the Ascot races, and his visit to sweet Temple, near Marlow, on the Thames, free now, and, as it proved, for ever, from the distractions of a Whig-Radical Cabinet, and from the worries peculiar to the War Office. Ascot week is a good moment for release.

CHAPTER XXI

LORD SALISBURY'S FIRST ADMINISTRATION, JUNE 1885 TO JANUARY 1886

THERE were signs in the summer of 1885 that the Tory-Parnellite combination which had overthrown the Liberal Government might continue. Men remembered that the Tories, after defeating the Liberal schemes of reform in 1866, had carried a larger measure. Randolph Churchill's influence was in favour of bold advance in all directions. The Earl of Carnarvon, the new Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, announced in the House of Lords (6th July) the decision of Government not to renew the existing Coercion Act, and in so doing used remarkable language. He referred to his experience as Colonial Secretary, and said: 'Just as I have seen in English colonies across the sea a combination of English, Irish, and Scotch settlers bound together in loyal obedience to the law and the Crown and contributing to the general prosperity of the country, so I cannot conceive that there is any irreconcilable bar here in their native home to the unity and amity of the two nations.' Lord Carnarvon's name, both in Canada and South Africa, was associated with the promotion of a federal policy. It was about this time that he had an interview with Mr. Parnell, and discussed the possibilities of some kind of Irish self-government. On 7th October, at Newport, Lord Salisbury made a speech containing expressions thought by some to be capable of inter-

pretation in a sense similar to those used by Lord Carnarvon.

Mr. Gladstone was now in his seventy-seventh year. Age had added to the always impressive effect of his appearance and manner, but his wonderful brain-strength and vigour, as he himself admitted, had for some years been declining. Often, since 1880, he had intimated his desire to withdraw from the field, and, with the fall of his Government, the question whether he should do so was again pressing. The standing difficulty of holding together without him the discordant Whigs and Radicals had been intensified by their increasing feud. Mr. Gladstone during August went for a yacht cruise. Before leaving, he promised Mr. Childers to let him know upon his return what course he proposed to take as to leading the party. When he returned he told Lord Hartington (2nd September) that he was as yet 'free to take a share or not in the coming political issues.' A month later Sir Henry Ponsonby wrote to Lord Hartington that the Queen had thought that Mr. Gladstone did not intend to take any further part in political events, but now found that 'he considers himself bound to continue to lead the Liberal party.' She had, therefore, written to him not to excite, but to allay passions, and, rather needlessly, recommended Lord Hartington to do the same. On the 7th October, at a dinner party at Brooks' Club, Mr. Gladstone said, according to one of the *convives*, that he thought that Home Rule for Ireland would be 'a matter for serious consideration before ten years were over.'[1] On October 9th Lord Granville informed Lord Hartington that 'Gladstone has seen Chamberlain. The latter, notwithstanding Gladstone's protests, assumed that he would be Prime Minister.' On the following day, 10th October, Mr. Gladstone wrote to Lord Granville a letter

[1] *Recollections of Sir Algernon West*, vol. ii. p. 151.

which the latter transmitted to Lord Hartington. This letter shows that in October 1885 there was some kind of idea as to a 'moderate but substantial' policy, half-way, it may be presumed, between the desires of the Radicals and the antipathies of the Whigs, and not, certainly, including the establishment of a separate Parliament for Ireland. Light is thrown upon the character of this policy by Mr. Gladstone's letter of October 8th to Lord Granville, describing his conversation with Mr. Chamberlain on the 7th, given by Lord Morley in his *Life*.[1] Mr. Gladstone, however, in an earlier letter to Lord Granville (October 5th) had reserved decision as to his own action in case there should arise a question of 'commanding imperial necessity, such as that of Irish government may come to be after the dissolution.'[2] Lord Morley considers that Mr. Gladstone's position at this moment was that he 'would take office to try to settle the Irish question, but for nothing else.' Until after the General Election all the factors in that question would obviously not be in the possession of statesmen. The elections took place in the second half of November. Mr. Gladstone, in his address to his constituents and in his election speeches, used wide phrases with regard to Ireland. These, as Lord Morley says, 'were undoubtedly open to more than one construction, and they either admitted or excluded Home Rule, as might happen.' While intimating the importance of maintaining the integrity of the 'empire,' and even of the 'United Kingdom,' he alluded to the necessity of giving to Ireland that which she might desire in the way of self-government consistently with this. He had said as much as this five years earlier in his election address in 1880. In one speech of 1885 he said: 'It will be a vital danger to the country and to the empire if, at a

[1] *Life of Gladstone*, vol. iii. p. 224.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 222.

time when a demand from Ireland for larger powers of self-government is to be dealt with, there is not in Parliament a party totally independent of the Irish vote.' In a humorous repetition of the same warning he said that he could not answer for the virtue of the Liberal party if exposed to the temptation of relying on the Irish vote for power. His letter of the 13th November to Lord Rosebery,[1] just before the elections, shows conclusively that he had by now fully accepted the principle of the grant of a national legislature to Ireland, but thought that it would be vain to launch the project until the result of the polls had shown that there was an overwhelming majority in Ireland in favour of the change. The only 'leverage,' he thought, which would carry the 'two British nations,' and the Liberal party, was to be found in their 'equitable and mature consideration of what is due to the fixed desire of a nation clearly and constitutionally expressed.' This line of action exposed him to the charge afterwards made that, the Irish policy not having been declared, the General Election was fought and won under false pretences. To be fair to the electorate he should have said plainly that which he thought, viz. 'If the coming elections show unmistakably the overwhelming desire of the people of Ireland for a separate legislature more or less on the Colonial basis, I shall be prepared to accede to it.' Meanwhile a confused and confusing warfare went on between Whigs, Radicals, Nationalists, and Tories. Charles Parnell spoke at Dublin on the 24th August. It was not now, he said, a question whether Ireland should have self-government at all. That was virtually settled. It was merely 'a question as to how much of self-government they will be able to cheat us out of.' He hoped that the Irish party would have 'a platform with only one

[1] See *Life of Gladstone*, vol. iii. p. 239.

plank, and that one plank National Independence.'[1] Lord Hartington replied, at Waterfoot, on 29th August, that Parnell had 'for once committed a mistake by proclaiming that Ireland's sole demand was an Irish Parliament.' He added:—

'I cannot believe that there exist in this country any political leaders, or, if there exist political leaders, I am confident there exists no political party, which will consent either to acquire or to retain office by conceding the terms by which alone Mr. Parnell says his alliance can be purchased.'

Even were Parnell to return to Parliament at the head of eighty or ninety followers, he would be far from success.

'His action may result in a series of short Governments; it may result in some uncertainty and change of policy. It may result in the postponement of necessary and wished-for reforms. But the time will come, after these inconveniences have been endured for a time, when, in consequence of such actions of the Irish party, minor political differences which may exist among the parties in this country will be comparatively obliterated, and means will be found by which a practically united parliamentary representation—a practically united country—will impose a firm and decided veto upon proposals which are in their opinion so fatal and so mischievous.'

Mr. Chamberlain also said at Warrington, on 8th September, 'If these, and these alone, are the terms upon which Mr. Parnell's support is to be obtained, I will not enter into the compact.' At a Mansion-House banquet in Dublin, on 1st September, the Irish leader fiercely replied to Lord Hartington, in whom he knew his real and unconquerable foe:—

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[1] Parnell said at Wicklow, on 5th October, that he meant complete control of Irish affairs, including the right to levy protective duties on English and other imports.

'I believe,' he said, 'that if it be sought to make it impossible for our country to obtain the right to administer her own affairs, we shall make other things impossible for those who strive to bring that about. And who is it that tells us that these things are impossible? It is the same man who said that local government for Ireland was impossible without impossible declarations on our part. These statements came from the lips that told us that the concession of equal electoral privileges to Ireland with those of England would be madness, and we see that what was considered madness in the eyes of the man who now tells us that Ireland's self-government is an impossibility, has now been conceded without opposition.'

He predicted that the English would either have to

'grant to Ireland the complete right to rule herself, or they will have to take away from her the share—the sham share—in the English constitutional system which they extended to us at the Union and govern us as a Crown colony.'

In a speech on the 10th November, Parnell congratulated Mr. Gladstone upon the progress towards light shown by previous utterances, and invited him to frame a constitution for Ireland. But the Liberal chief, warily entrenched in generalities, declared that nothing definite could be said before the results of the imminent elections were seen, and maintained his old position of 1880 that 'every grant of self-government should be made to portions of this country consistent with maintenance of the supremacy of the Crown, the unity of the Empire, and the authority of Parliament necessary to maintain that unity.' Thereupon, on the 21st November, the Irish leader issued a manifesto summoning the Irish voters in Great Britain to vote against the men 'who coerced Ireland, deluged Egypt with blood, menaced religious liberty in the school, the freedom of speech in Parliament, and promise

to the country generally a repetition of the crimes and follies of the last Liberal Administration.' The facts of the Liberal tyranny in Ireland were stated in detail. It was an affair of tactics. By reason of the new electorate the Liberals seemed certain to have the best of the encounter in Great Britain, and it was not Parnell's interest to assist in the realisation of Gladstone's expressed desire that they should be returned sufficiently strong to settle the Irish question independently of Irish assistance. He had always said that he expected to obtain nothing from any English party except what they were compelled to give.

The electoral fight in England and Scotland turned upon issues affecting those countries. Except in towns where there was an Irish vote the Irish question was of small account. Most Liberal candidates, following the Midlothian lead, pledged themselves to maintain the integrity of the United Kingdom and to extend local institutions. The summer flirtations of Tory leaders with Nationalism were taken to be the ordinary tactics of politicians manœuvring for all the wind they could get to fill their sails. The last addition to the electorate brought to the front social questions, chiefly those concerned with the distribution of land. There was a cry of 'the Church in danger,' and in some places the fight was really almost entirely on the time-honoured lines of 'Church *v.* Dissent.' Lord Salisbury, in one of his speeches, made this the main field of battle.

Mr. Chamberlain, free from restraints of office, brought all his force into the field, and in a series of frank and vigorous speeches advocated ideas many of which have since then been more or less realised. Education, he said, should be made free. 'I hope that working men will insist that in this as in other countries the system shall cease which is only defended in deference to false and pedantic

notions of political economy and in the supposed interests of denominational schools.' He did not disguise his desire for the disestablishment of the Church. He was in favour of triennial Parliaments. He advocated the equalisation of death duties on real estate, the graduation of income tax, judicial rents and right of sale of tenants' interest for British farmers, and decent cottages and allotments for labourers. 'Where,' he said, 'the landlord will not do his duty, the local authority should have power to step in.' Increased power to local authorities was a main feature of his creed. 'By such means alone we shall repair the mistakes of past generations and repeople the rural districts of England, and re-establish on the land that hardy and industrious peasantry which has almost disappeared under the withering influence of mistaken laws.' In his speech at Warrington (8th September) he said :—

'The great problem of our civilisation is unsolved. We have to account for and grapple with the mass of misery and destitution in our midst, contrasted as it is with evidences of abundant wealth and teeming prosperity. It is a problem which some men would put aside by reference to the eternal laws of supply and demand, to the necessity for freedom of contract, and to the sanctity of every private right in property. These phrases are the convenient cant of selfish wealth. They are no answers to our questions.'

The essential soul of the man is in these speeches, the Chamberlain of 1903 as much as the Chamberlain of 1885. Then they seemed far more 'advanced' and 'radical' than they do now, so much the spirit of the age has changed.

Lord Hartington, before the autumn campaigning began, had written to Lord Granville, on August 5th :—

'I had some talk with Chamberlain yesterday. He seems inclined to drop the Irish proposals altogether for the present.

'He is going to devote himself chiefly to land questions, and seems to be most keen about giving power to local bodies to acquire land compulsorily, to be let or sold to labourers as allotments. I do not so much object to the experiment being tried, though I don't believe it will answer, as to the putting it forward as a large measure. It will certainly give rise to vague expectations that in some way or other land is to be provided by the State for the working classes, gratuitously.

'He also says that he is going for graduated taxation, and that Mr. Gladstone is in favour of it. He saw Mr. Gladstone yesterday, and says that Forster and Goschen have misrepresented him in saying that he is opposed to it. He has spoken against the differential taxation of various forms of property, but not against graduated taxation, applied, *e.g.*, to death duties or a house tax.

'He (Chamberlain) is also for free schools. In short, we are going as fast as we can in the Socialist direction.'

Lord Hartington would not go further than the establishment of more complete free trade in land by the abolition of the law of primogeniture in case of intestacy, and similar measures. In his speeches he defended feudalism against socialism, that is, the administration of land by landowners against the proposed gradual transfer of administration to elected authorities. 'The worst of Chamberlain's speeches,' he wrote to Sir Henry James,

'seems to me to be the enormous difference between the general declarations of what has to be done and the measures which he proposes. It is rather hard that these particular measures should be forced on us almost without discussion, but, if they are carried, how far should we have got towards reducing the difference between the conditions of the rich and the poor which shocks him so much, and what will the poor say when they find out how far short of the end promised the remedies fall?'

Lord Hartington wrote from Bolton Abbey, on the 20th September 1885, to Mr. Goschen :—

'I think that the prospects of the moderate section of the party are improving ; at all events after your and my speeches, and Mr. Gladstone's address, the moderate men cannot reasonably complain, as they were inclined to do, that they were being abandoned to the leadership of the most extreme members of the party.

'I think that Mr. Gladstone's manifesto on the whole bears out the character which I had heard of it, and leans to the side of moderation. Even about Ireland, though, knowing his real opinion, I can read between the lines, there does not seem to be anything alarming. I must admit, however, that it seems to me to be rather a weak production, and, if it were not that the party are ready to take anything from him, I think it would fall rather flat. Chamberlain's last speeches are, I think, very able, and he has the advantage over us of greater definiteness in his programme.'

Lord Hartington urged indolent Whig colleagues to exert themselves in the anti-Birmingham campaign. He wrote on October 3rd to Lord Granville :—

'Where are the Whigs ? *Vide Times*, p. 10.

'Also where are the Peers ?

'I thought you were going to make a speech. When is it coming off ? So far as I know not a Liberal Peer has made a speech since the session except Rosebery. Are we to understand that the "coronetted Socialist"[1] represents them. When the elections are actually in progress of course they cannot speak, but there is nothing to prevent them now. There is one thing, and I believe only one, in which I agree with Harcourt, which is that the Peers, who never do a day's work out of office, can't expect half the places in another Liberal Cabinet. If I cared a rap about my

[1] Lord Rosebery had humorously so been called.

political prospects, or if I thought that there was any possibility of a united Liberal party being again formed, I should be disgusted at the want of support I have received. It is more than a month since I spoke, and, except Goschen, I do not think that a single colleague has said a word on my side, though I know that most of the Peers, if not the Commons, agree with me more than they do with Chamberlain. I think I shall take an early opportunity of making as definite a declaration of my position as Chamberlain has done of his. I am to see Harcourt to-morrow, but he appears to have definitely decided to go with Chamberlain.

'I have a small, scarcely political, speech to make on Thursday and a short political one on Saturday. The latter, however, will not be a bad opportunity for a formal declaration. Knowing Mr. Gladstone's ideas about Ireland, I was thankful that the address was no worse on that subject. On all the other points of difference among us, his attitude seems to be one of absolute neutrality. Of course in the long run the active men will have their own way, and the future Liberal party will be Radical. I see nothing for the Whigs but to disappear or turn Tories. I think I shall prefer the former.'

Lord Granville replied: 'I do not think it has hitherto been the custom for the Peers to stump the country, as Commoners are bound to do, before a General Election.

'When you and Harcourt complain of the Peers not doing so sufficiently I imagine you start from opposite sides. He would like us strongly to support Chamberlain, you would like us to make Conservative speeches against him. I am not prepared to do the first, and I doubt whether it would have much effect, and whether it would be advantageous for the House of Lords, of which we are members, to do strongly that which you wish.

'I trust that when you begin ostracising the Peers you will put me at the top of the list. . . . I strongly deprecate, not so much for your sake as for that of others, any notion (which you will find impossible) to give up your political

prospects. You can injure them, but you cannot abandon them.

'Gladstone has made an honest and successful attempt to unite the party for the purpose of the General Election. I should be sorry if you were to expose yourself to the reproach of being, like Chamberlain, a dissolvent—particularly if the result is to place him on a pedestal.'

Lord Hartington made a series of pre-election speeches which were, in his own opinion, as he wrote to his father, 'very long and very dull.' Not only had he to hold his own against Parnell on one side and Chamberlain on the other, but also to meet in Lancashire the reviving doctrine of 'Fair Trade,' preached with some success by his Tory opponent, Mr. Farrar Ecroyd. He crossed to Ireland, and spoke at Belfast on November 8th. There he said that an offensive and defensive alliance between the Conservatives and the Parnellites had for some time existed, and seemed likely to continue, and was fraught with great danger to the best interests of Ireland. The Conservative Government, he said, could not obtain an independent majority at the coming elections, they could only obtain one by the assistance of the party which followed Mr. Parnell. If therefore the nation did not desire that the Parnellites should be practically masters of the next Parliament and of the English Government, their best hope lay in returning the Liberals to power 'in a strong and united party.' He quoted recent passages from speeches by Lord Salisbury and Mr. Gladstone to show that neither 'were opposing an absolute and unconditional negative to Mr. Parnell's demand,' but that both asserted that in its present shape it was impossible. He himself, he said, would not go beyond administrative reorganisation and the establishment of County Councils on an elective basis. 'The extension of Irish management over Irish affairs

must be a growth from small beginnings; it must be a superstructure raised on sound foundations.'

II

The General Elections of 1885 gave to the Liberals a majority of eighty-two over the Conservatives. This result was due to a strong Tory reaction in English towns meeting a wave of Liberal victory throughout the newly enfranchised rural districts. Tories lost more seats in the country than they captured in the cities. But great centres of life, intelligence, and business, London, Liverpool, Manchester, declared against the Liberal party. Birmingham, it is true, followed the lead of Mr. Chamberlain. Lord Hartington won his seat in the Rossendale division by 1832 votes. The victory proved, he said in a letter of thanks, 'the adherence of the people of this important district to the principles of Liberalism and of Free Trade.' His majority was not, however, as he wrote to Mr. Gladstone, so large as he should have expected a few months earlier. 'There is no doubt that Fair Trade has made a considerable number of converts in Lancashire.' He added that the seat of his brother, Lord Edward, at Matlock, was endangered by 'Chamberlain and the Church cry.' In Ireland not one Liberal candidate survived the battle. Ireland had sent fourteen Liberals to the last House of Commons, but was now represented by eighty-five Nationalists, all pledged to follow Parnell, and by eighteen Tories. In every victory almost the Nationalist majorities had been overwhelmingly great. After the elections the Conservatives and Nationalists together just outbalanced the Liberals. From a purely strategic point of view it was hardly worth while for the Conservatives to retain office at the cost of an Irish alliance, for

they would not have had a working majority. On the other hand, with Irish assistance, the Liberal majority would be a large one.

Certain newspapers published on 17th December a statement that Mr. Gladstone had made up his mind to the grant of a National Legislature to Ireland. The statement was based upon an interview with Mr. Herbert Gladstone. His father published a statement to the effect that the report was not an accurate representation of his views. This was evidently a diplomatic denial. Lord Hartington, on the 20th December, wrote a letter for publication, stating that no such scheme had been communicated to him, and that he stood by the declarations which he had made before the elections. The story of the widening breach between the older Liberal leader and the younger can be most vividly realised through the following correspondence. It will be remembered that the elections were fought during the latter half of November.

Lord Hartington to Lord Granville.

'DEVONSHIRE HOUSE,
'*8th August* 1885.

'I never can understand Mr. Gladstone in conversation, and I thought him unusually unintelligible yesterday; so I am afraid I cannot throw much light on the enclosed.

'It will be of no use for you to answer it, as he sails to-day, and I see will not have his letters forwarded. However I understood him to be under the impression that both you and Lord Derby would prefer a larger scheme, which would take the Irish representatives out of the House of Commons, to the Central Council plan which would leave them in it. I do not know whether he is right in this. I don't think you will get any support for the Provincial Councils. I think Mr. Gladstone's state of mind about Ireland is extremely alarming. He seems to consider the

Central Board plan the minimum which might have sufficed; but that, as that plan appears to have collapsed, a separate legislature in some form or other will have to be considered. Resistance to any further demands for separation, and equal treatment with England and Scotland, he does not seem to consider a practical policy.

'I suppose that, as a united party under such conditions is an impossibility, he will not go on. This I should not much regret, but he will probably say something before he retires which will greatly strengthen the Irish demands. On other questions he seems to be tolerably reasonable, though vague. I should expect that if he spoke he would discourage a good many of Chamberlain's proposals. . . .'

Mr. Gladstone to Lord Hartington, September 3, 1885.

'I have returned to terra firma extremely well in general health, and with a better throat: in full expectation of having to consider anxious and doubtful matters, and now finding them rather more anxious and doubtful than I had anticipated.

'As yet I am free to take a share or not in the coming political issues, and I must weigh many things before finally surrendering this freedom.

'I have read with much admiration and concurrence your opening speech, but I own my regret that you have found or felt it necessary at this very early period to join issue in so pointed a manner with Parnell and his party. I speak thus freely, because, in the present state of things, whatever either of us says bears upon the position of the other, and I have now to determine what to say, and what is the best manner of saying it.

'Parnell's speech, which drew forth your remarks, is as bad as bad can be; and his language admits of but one reply. Quite apart indeed from its demands upon England, his promises to all and sundry in Ireland are monstrous, and could only end in confusion to himself were his first purpose gained.

'My reasons for regretting are not connected with any

doubts as to the "legislative independence" of Ireland. But it seems to me that—

'1. It is the duty of the Government and not the Opposition to lead in this matter.

'2. Premature or early declarations from us supply a new point of departure for R. Churchill and his party in their tricks.

'3. The whole question of the position, which Ireland will assume after the General Election, is so new, so difficult, and as yet, I think, so little understood, that it seems most important to reserve until the proper time all possible liberty of examining it.

'4. It is not what Parnell says now, but what Ireland will say and do at the election, that forms the call upon us for definite declarations.

'5. The whole hope of the Tories lies in the Irish party, without whom they do not consider themselves to have a chance of winning. They will not surrender the alliance without a struggle; and all words of ours, which help them by compromises to maintain it, are injurious to Imperial interests; which have already been so heavily damaged by their conduct as to Spencer and as to the Cairns Act.

'6. Every object is, I think, gained for the present, by declaring substantively our views as to the unity of the Empire.

'7. Parnell's language is even more doubtful and fluctuating, and the *Times* of August 26th was, I think, prudent in endeavouring to draw him out into fuller explanations.

'8. I wish there were good hopes of effecting a disintegration in the new Parliament like that of 1880.[1] But the anti-Parnell section had then a leader; Shaw, in his latest utterance, declared that a great Irish question still stands for solution: the seceders will all receive a treatment such as not to encourage imitation; and the new attitude of the Tory party shifts the poles of the problem.

[1] *i.e.*, Disintegration of the Irish party. See *ante*, vol. i. p. 392.

'I cannot expect that you will see much in these ideas, but I thought it only fair to state them.

'With regard to my own conduct, I hold to the intention I named before leaving England. The subject of Ireland has perplexed me much even on the North Sea. You may at any rate depend on my saying nothing without the fullest consideration I can give it.'

Lord Hartington to Mr. Gladstone.

'MENTMORE, LEIGHTON BUZZARD,
'*September* 6, 1885.

'I am very glad to hear of your return in improved health, and have to thank you for your most kind letters of the 3rd and 4th.

'The anti-Parnellite declarations in my speech which you criticise are not those which have hitherto met with much hostile comment, and I believe that you will find in a few days language of the same kind from many quarters in the party.

'If any considerable new departure in Irish politics were in contemplation, I should agree with you that it would have been unwise to take the earliest opportunity of joining issue with Parnell's present demands, in the most decided form. But so far as I know, the Local Government scheme, which might possibly have formed a new point of departure, will not now be entertained by any section of the Liberal party. In its absence, I know of nothing that we have to offer, and whatever the Tories may do, there seems to be no course open to that portion of the Liberal party with which I am especially connected but to disclose as early as possible an uncompromising resistance to the present demands. But, although you have taken exception to only one portion of my speech, I have learned, though not directly, that there are others which have given considerable offence to Chamberlain and Dilke. The paper with which Chamberlain is connected has commented on the speech

with some severity, and it is possible that in speaking on Tuesday next Chamberlain will make some reply. It seems to be of the utmost importance that your decision as to the part which you intend to take in the approaching election should be formed and announced as soon as possible.

'I do not say that under your leadership unity in the party could be certainly secured. On the one hand, I feel that I do not know enough of your ideas with regard to Ireland to say whether it would be possible for me to accept them; on the other, I am not aware how far Chamberlain would be willing to give up any part of the projects with which he now seems anxious to identify the party. The unity required even for the purpose of the general election may be impossible of attainment; but it certainly seems to be quite impossible under any other conditions than those of your leadership, and of your early announcement of policy on some main questions. You may, perhaps, under these circumstances consider it desirable to have some meeting and discussion on these points at an early date. If this is not done, I apprehend that the differences among us are likely before long to become quite irreconcilable.'

Mr. Gladstone to Lord Hartington, September 8, 1885.

'I am of opinion with you that your views and declarations upon Ireland will carry with them the great mass of British opinion. It would be strange if, when you have thought it necessary to declare, the world in general should deem it necessary to hold back. I am not in favour of offering any measure, but strongly in favour of waiting. And if, as I expect or think likely, very serious embarrassment arises after the Dissolution in connection with demands purporting to come from the Irish nation, and if the way to deal with them is then found to have been in any way hampered by rapid

announcements, the people who now applaud you will, by a perfectly natural process, turn round upon you and charge you with imprudence.

'However, I am too sensible of the tremendous difficulties of the whole subject to be over confident in my own opinion. To choose among great evils and inconveniences is the only course open to us.

'Now about a meeting. Have you considered: 1. the notice it would attract; 2. the difficulty of choosing who should attend it; 3. the risk of its bringing matters to a hostile issue then and there—for we could not adjourn to another day as with a Cabinet. 4. The effect it would have in binding you and the party to such opinions as I might afterwards emit. (Also the delay.)

'Upon the whole I consider that there is but one question for such a meeting to decide, namely, whether it is their united desire that I should take a share in the election. And this, especially after what you have said in your letter, I am disposed to take for granted. If this be so, the only course is to let me, knowing as I do your position and as I am to know Chamberlain's, deliver my opinions, in a personal way, with such degree of weight as any one may think proper to give them. This will be more practicable because I have almost made up my mind that my address, if it is to be in the sense of going on, must be rather in the nature of a pamphlet. Of course it will be my duty and my effort to avoid all conflict with any declared Liberal opinion entitled to weight, especially with yours.

'R. Grosvenor will be here to-day, or possibly to-morrow, and I will go over the whole thing with him.

'As I cannot get at you before Friday, I may probably send this through Rosebery. I do not know whether I shall see him, but I wish him to know the whole case, especially with a view to Midlothian.

'In conclusion, I earnestly hope that you and that our friends will give to the Irish case a really historical consideration. Depend upon it you cannot *simpliciter*

fall back on the important debate of 1834. The general development since that time of popular principles, the prolonged experience of Norway (I might perhaps mention Finland), and the altogether new experience of Austro-Hungary, along with them the great power we have placed in the hands of the Irish people, require the reconsideration of the whole position. And in *one* point Parnell gives some ground of hope, for he seems to contemplate a constitution for Ireland *octroyé* by Parliament.[1]

'I have laboured very hard at the Irish portion of my (possible) Address.

'R. Churchill has, it seems, as I expected, left you in exclusive possession of the foreground of the fight.'

Lord Hartington to Mr. Gladstone.

'HOLKER, 10*th September* 1885.

'I have to-day received your most important letter of the 8th, forwarded by Rosebery without any comment. I hope you will allow me to say as frankly as possible what occurs to me upon it.

'You say that the only question which a meeting could decide would be whether it is our united desire that you should take a share in the election. (That share, of course, would be the leadership.) This desire, especially after what I have said in my letter, you are disposed to take for granted; and you propose, after communication with Mr. Chamberlain, to deliver your opinions in the form of an Address.

'I should be inclined, in the first place, to make some demur to your statement of what a meeting would have to decide. I consider that you are the leader of the party, and that you are the only person who can declare the policy of the party. The object of a meeting would be, I think, to ascertain whether, in the comparative liberty

[1] He means as compared with a repeal of the Act of Union, 'pur et simple.'

which we have acquired through the resignation of the late Government, the various sections of the party can acquiesce in the policy you propose to adopt.

'What I said in my previous letter was that I did not know whether unity could under any circumstances be secured, but that I felt certain that it could not be secured under any other condition than that of your leadership. Whether I desire that such unity should be secured must depend on what the party is likely to do, if in a majority after the election.

'You do not refer to the attitude which you would take in regard to Chamberlain's projects relating to Land, Education, and Taxation, but I assume that it would be generally in the direction of restraint and moderation. It would, however, be difficult, if these matters are dealt with at all, as I assume they must be, to avoid all conflict with the declared opinions of either Chamberlain or myself.

'But passing by this for the present, I come to Ireland. I assume that your Address would not indicate any new Irish policy; as in your former letter you said "that every object is gained for the present by declaring substantively our views as to the unity of the Empire," and in your last that you "are strongly in favour of waiting." But I find some difficulty in reconciling this with what you say of the labour you have given to the Irish portion of your (possible) Address. But, however this may be, I must acknowledge that the references in your letter to Norway, Finland, Austria-Hungary, and to one point in Parnell's speeches, give me the greatest uneasiness, and lead me to fear that the return to power of the Liberal party, whether pledged or not beforehand, would involve the adoption of an Irish policy for which I at least am not prepared. I acknowledge that the danger of what the Tory party may do under the inspiration of R. Churchill is considerable; but I doubt whether he can carry his party with him in any very serious concessions; and in any event the fear of what the Tories may do on their responsibility would be no justification to me for doing what I disapprove of on

my own. My desire, therefore, for the unity of the party under your leadership is, under present circumstances, subject to very serious qualifications. Whether these difficulties can be removed I do not know; but without some meeting and discussion it seems impossible.

'You refer to the effect which a meeting would have in binding me and others to such opinions as you may afterwards emit. Whether personally bound or not, I fear that the party will practically be committed to any opinions which you may announce, and I should have thought it better to endeavour to ascertain whether agreement is possible before the party is committed.

'I am sure that you will believe that in writing thus I have no unexpressed personal object as to my own position, unless it be that the present state of affairs may lead to my withdrawal from active political life, for which in many ways I feel myself unfitted. If you do not continue as leader, I do not believe that my leadership is possible, and I have no desire to attempt it. Indeed, there is nothing which I look forward to with so much dislike as the prospect of returning under any circumstances to office, especially to office with colleagues among whom there must be so much difference of opinion upon almost every conceivable subject.'

Lord Hartington to Lord Granville.

'HOLKER HALL, *September* 10, 1885.

'I have had two letters from Mr. Gladstone since his return; the last this morning. I gather that his Address is ready, and in the form of a pamphlet. He appears to be chiefly occupied with Ireland, and though I do not know his views in detail, there are indications which, in my opinion, are most alarming.

'I had proposed a meeting of some of the late Cabinet; he gives various reasons against, and says that the only thing it could decide is whether we wish him to take a share in the election. This, especially after my (first)

letter, he is disposed to assume; and, if so, the only course is for him, knowing my views and being about to know Chamberlain's, to express his own opinions formally for what they are worth, &c.

'I agree with you that, if we want a Liberal majority, we should keep Mr. Gladstone as leader, but I have had to tell him in my letter to-day that, if his opinions about Ireland are what I infer them to be, my desire for unity in the party under his leadership is subject to very serious qualifications. I have offered to go and see him; but am in hopes that he won't accept this offer; as I never can get on with him in conversation.

'I am in great hopes that, between him and Chamberlain, I may shortly be released from active politics.'

Mr. Gladstone to Lord Hartington, September 11, 1885.

'My first impulse was to telegraph, as I think you wish; but I found the *matter* of my reply ill suited to the wire—it is that we should be most happy to see you, but that my draft is gone to London to be put in type, so that you could not see the *corpus delicti* before Sunday or Monday: on Monday Grosvenor will be here, perhaps Rosebery.

'I am unable to surmount the difficulties connected with my calling a meeting, which must be at the least an epitome of the late Cabinet. But do not let me in the least interfere with your liberty of action. I hope indeed that you are in communication at any rate with Granville, and any others who like him have an uniting faculty.

'I entertain none of the suspicion of you, which you think possible, with regard to an unexpressed personal object! I wish I could as easily dismiss the suspicion from your mind—which I own surprises me—as to my intention in asking you to inform yourself thoroughly on certain historical cases. I had no other purpose than that of promoting, what I think dangerously deficient in many quarters, an historical and therefore a comprehensive view of the Irish question.

'Which of the following methods of proceeding seems to you preferable?

'(*a*) That my Address should be brought in draft under the view of the men who would form an epitome—so brought by you. I do not advise this on the whole.

'(*b*) That I should publish my Address, abating none of its cautions, but stating explicitly that it is mine, and binds nobody else. To this I am not averse, and indeed I have already inserted words in this direction, which might be widened.

'(*c*) Of course, I might retire, and plead my fifty-three years: but I am afraid that, with my sense of the obligations I owe to the party, I should be obliged also to make some mention of the difficulties arising from divergences.

'(*d*) You may have some modes better than any of those to suggest.

'I think that in the main your apprehensions arise from this, that you and I are considering different things: you on what footing a new Liberal Government should hereafter be formed: I, on what footing, far more free and open, the Liberal party should now go to the election. The former of these is, I think, premature, and, I am certain, far beyond my power. The latter I think to be within reasonable compass, and not to entail detriment at present to any one.

'I had hoped that, before my leaving London, we were further advanced than now seems to be the case, on the basis of my rough memorandum of August 6th. To it, in my Address (with immense expansion) I have, I believe, strictly adhered: the main deviation is a discussion on gratuitous education, which is not in the Radical sense. What I say on Ireland is simply an expansion and adaptation of what I have already said often, namely, that Ireland may have all that is compatible with the unity of the Empire. When I said it would have sufficed for you to declare the unity of the Empire, I meant it would have sufficed for *your* purpose. But I have had to say much more than you on the Irish

question, and could not now hold back from what I have frequently promised.

'Your letter obviously sets you free with regard to me and my proceedings. I hope that what I have now written may do something in the way of enabling you to define your course.

'Nothing can be more unlikely according to *present* appearances than any effective or great legislative action for Ireland.'

Lord Hartington to Mr. Gladstone.

'HOLKER, *September* 12, 1885.

'I am extremely obliged to you for your kind letter of yesterday, and quite understand the reason for which you did not wish to see me. I am much relieved by what you say of the Irish portion of your Address. I certainly thought it possible that, as your mind was turned towards certain historical cases which seemed to point to separation in a greater or less degree, the Address might contain some indications in that direction. Of course, I know that you are, and have long been, in favour of granting to Ireland a larger measure of self-government than I think I could ever agree to. The knowledge that you do hold such opinions, and of the immense weight which they are likely to carry with them in the next Parliament, must be a source of anxiety to me; and I find it difficult to separate the question of the footing on which a new Liberal Government should be formed from that of the issues on which the Liberal party should now go to the country. But having made my protest, both in public and private, as to Ireland, the only point on which, as far as I know, there is likely to be great difference of opinion between us, I do not know that I need say more.

'As to the method of proceeding with regard to your Address, I have very little to say. I adhere to my opinion that it is for you, as the leader of the party, to decide on the mode of declaring your policy as well as on the substance of it. Under ordinary circumstances it would probably

have been desirable that there should have been some previous discussion, and an attempt to arrive at a common understanding. If there are reasons which make this impossible, the next best procedure seems to be that, while I hope we shall all be able to find in your declarations a common ground of action, we should retain our own liberty of action. Certainly I should not advise that the draft of your Address should be brought under discussion by any one except yourself. The only suggestion which I would make is that, perhaps, as the intended issue of the Address has been made known to a few, it should be communicated to some others of the late Government.'

Mr. Gladstone to Lord Hartington, September 13, 1885.

'Your letter, for which accept my best thanks, does much for my difficulty on your side; as, if I understand it right, the protest which you register signifies that you are not willing to be bound to the *extent* to which I bind myself in regard to Ireland, but that you do not on that account withdraw from the general opinion that under all the circumstances it is desirable that I should issue an Address, directed in my view to the election, and so framed as by no means to imply that I hold the party ripe for action, except upon the four subjects which I named to you in London and wrote down in my memorandum.'

Mr. Gladstone to Lord Granville, October 22, 1885.

'I return Hartington's letter. It is all that could be reasonably expected. As to Ireland I have reserves myself, for I do not pretend as yet to see my way to a due protection for the landlords; against them Parnell seems to have issued a new proclamation of war, and how can we make over the judicial rents to his mercy? I am trying to familiarise my mind with the subject and to look at it all round, but it still requires a good deal more looking at before I could ask *myself* to adhere to anything I had conceived. I adhere, however, to this one belief: there

is great advantage in a constructive measure (which would be subject to change or recall) as compared with the Repeal of the Union.'[1]

Lord Hartington to Mr. Gladstone.

'CHATSWORTH, *November* 8, 1885.

'Although I do not like troubling you, there are one or two things which I should wish to say before you begin your speeches in Scotland.

'I feel that my position in the party is becoming every day more difficult. I have tried as much as I could to minimise the differences between Chamberlain and myself in the hope—I believe a vain one—of avoiding an open split in the party or incurring the responsibility for causing it. But I feel that the only effect of this has been that, while I have incurred the violent abuse of the Tories and the patronising protection of Chamberlain and Dilke, which is more difficult to bear, my own friends are losing confidence and are slipping away from me. They are probably right, and the Radicals are so forcing on their opinions that there will soon be no place in the party for less extreme men, who will have to be either for or against the new doctrines.

'The only possibility of keeping the moderate men in the party seems to lie in your taking a strong and decided line against the Radicals. If you are unable to do this, my firm belief is that they will go; and whether I go or not does not much matter, as I shall be left alone.

'The other point is that, if you are determined not to resume office, it seems hardly fair to allow this to be left secret. Thousands of votes will be given under the impression that you will come back as Prime Minister, which

[1] It seems hardly credible that Mr. Gladstone can have ever regarded a mere repeal of the Act of Union as even a thinkable alternative. What would happen, in a hundred ways, if a short Act were passed simply repealing the Act of Union makes the imagination reel. Perhaps he thought it conceivable because he had, in his youth, heard 'Repeal' used by O'Connell as a war-cry, and had never thought out the question.

would not be given if it were known that after the election the Liberal party would fall into the state of disruption which it inevitably will on your retirement. I hope you will excuse my making these observations. I do not at all wish to try to influence you in the line you are going to take. More than ever it would be the happiest moment of my life if I could see the prospect, as I begin to see it, of the possibility of my giving up any further part in politics.'

Mr. Gladstone to Lord Hartington, November 10, 1885.

'I have not to excuse, but thank you for, your letter.

'Either directly or through Granville you know all my mind down to a certain date. Latterly I have been considering my general line of action in Scotland. I do not think I have anything to say here which can create difficulty for you. The question in my mind rather is up to *what* point, in general politics, I ought to go in your sense.

'I made a beginning yesterday in one of my conversation-speeches, so to call them, on the way, by laying it down that I was particularly bound to prevent if I could the domination of sectional opinion over the body and actions of the party.

'I wish to say something about the modern Radicalism. But I must include this, that, if it is rampant and ambitious, the two most prominent causes of its forwardness have been—

'1. Tory democracy.

'2. The gradual disintegration of the Liberal aristocracy.

'On both these subjects my opinions are strong. I think the conduct of the Duke of Bedford and others has been as unjustifiable as it was foolish, especially after what *we* did to save the House of Lords from itself in the business of the franchise.

'Nor can I deny that the question of the House of Lords, of the Church, or both, will probably split the Liberal party. But let it split decently, honourably, and

for cause. That it should split now would, so far as I see, be ludicrous.

'I am sorry that Chamberlain raises and presses his notion about the compulsory powers for the local authorities. I should have said, try freedom first. But when it is considered how such a scheme must be tied up with safeguards, and how powerful are the natural checks, I hardly see, and I am not sure that you see, in this proposal *stuff* enough to cause a breach.

'I am no partisan in fine of Chamberlainism, but I think that some 'moderate Liberals' have done much to foster it; and that, if we are men of sense, the crisis will not be yet.

'With regard to your withdrawal and my taking office, a very few words will in all likelihood supply conditions of judgment which we do not at this time possess. At present things look as if at first Ireland would dominate the situation.

'So far I have been writing in great sympathy with you: but now I touch a point when our lines have not been the same.

'You have, I think, courted the hostility of Parnell. Salisbury has carefully avoided doing this, and last night he simply confined himself to two conditions, which you and I both think vital, namely, the unity of the Empire, and an honourable regard to the position of the "minority," *i.e.* the landlords. You will see in the newspapers what Parnell, *making* for himself an opportunity, is reported to have said about the elections in Ulster, now at hand.

'You have opened a vista which appears to terminate in a possible concession to Ireland of full power to manage her own local affairs. But I own my leaning to the opinion that, if that consummation is in any way to be contemplated, action at a stroke will be more honourable, less unsafe, less uneasy, than the jolting process of a series of partial measures.

'This is my opinion; but I have no intention, as at present advised, of signifying it. I have all along, in public declarations, avoided offering anything to the

Nationalists beyond describing the limiting rule which must govern the question. It is for them to ask: and for us, as I think, to leave the space so defined as open and unencumbered as possible. I am much struck by the increased breadth of Salisbury's declaration last night: he dropped the "I do not see how."

'We shall see how these great and difficult matters develop themselves. Meantime be assured that, with a good deal of misgiving as to the future, I shall do what little I can towards enabling all Liberals at present to hold together with credit and a good conscience.'

Lord Hartington to Mr. Gladstone.

'CHATSWORTH, *November* 15, 1885.

'I think that you may like to see the two enclosed letters from Powerscourt, as his views on the Irish question seem to be much more in accordance with what I understand to be yours than with mine.

'I should be quite ready to consult Irish opinion as far as possible about denominational education, but I suppose that the Nonconformist difficulty would be great. I believe, however, that Spencer thought it might be possible to create an Irish representative body which should have the control of Irish education, and of all funds granted by Parliament for that purpose. I confess, however, that I feel as much opposed as ever to the attempt to create a great central body dealing with local government in Ireland; and that I do not see how such an attempt could be anything but a long step in the direction of complete legislative independence. Nor do I see how it would be possible sufficiently to guard the interests and rights of the minority, which consists, in my opinion, not only of the landlords, but of a large part of the inhabitants of Ulster.

'I can form no opinion as to the probable results of the election; but the state of things seems to me more like 1874 than 1880. There is no doubt that the "moderate Liberals" are seceding in considerable numbers, but I do not know

what their strength may be. On the other hand, the Radical enthusiasm which had been roused by Chamberlain has been a good deal damped, and I imagine that many of them are not now working with much heart. I hear that we shall lose many Lancastrian boroughs, and the Conservatives are confident of winning many of the Lancastrian county divisions, including mine, which, however, I cannot think likely.'

Mr. Gladstone to Lord Hartington, November 18, 1885.

'Many thanks for Powerscourt's letters, which are noteworthy signs. I have shown the longer and more important one to Lady Spencer. Have you seen Dickson M.P.'s Liberal Programme for Ireland (now some months old)? It is of use, I think, as recognising the greatness of the coming epoch or crisis, but of no value as to means of meeting it. It represents the work of improvement in Ireland as a work only begun, and seems to claim for her the time of the coming Parliament to the immense detriment, once more, of Great Britain. The difficulties of one decisive measure for Ireland are indeed formidable; but those of another long series of parliamentary operations seem to be heart-breaking, though I should wish well to any one engaged in the arduous undertaking. As one example, the Education question never can be solved satisfactorily in London. Spencer's plan gave me no hope whatever. The whole question is so complex that I am not surprised at your or any one's shrinking from any particular solution of it, only thankful when any one seems able to cast upon it a ray of hope.

'The main questions are, does Irish Nationalism contemplate a fair division of Imperial burdens, and will it agree to just provisions for the protection of the landlords. I do not think that, on the other hand, sufficient allowance has been made for the *enormous* advantage we derive from the change in the form of the Nationalist demand from Repeal of the Union (which would reinstate a Parliament

having *original* authority) to the form of a Bill for a derivative Chamber acting under imperial authority. The whole basis of the proceeding is hereby changed.

'Yesterday I had a good meeting at West Calder. I declined Parnell's request for a plan, put in a word for Spencer, and complimented Scotch Liberalism on its avoidance of extremes. I may say something more about Radicalism before you go.

'I have no means of judging between you and others who are more sanguine as to the elections. Here there is a great revival of confidence. Hamilton writes very cheerfully. R. Grosvenor has reduced his expectations, but they are still sufficiently high.'

Lord Hartington to Lord Granville.

'CHATSWORTH, CHESTERFIELD,
'*November* 29, 1885.

'Thanks for your letter, and Derby's words of wisdom. You may imagine that my heart is not broken. I see plenty of difficulties before us, but none, I think, so great as would have been those of an attempt to get our miscellaneous team into harness again.

'I am dying to ask Harcourt what he thinks of the infallible Schnadhorst now.[1] I fully expect that he will say that it is all my fault.

'I am sorry to say that I have three more speeches to make this week; the first on Tuesday. I am rather puzzled what line to take. The independent majority, of course, has gone to smash. Perhaps Mr. Gladstone yesterday will have given us a lead. I hope that he will have indicated that (unless a miracle should take place) any prospect of the Liberals coming back into office is at an end, and that the duty of the Opposition will be to try to prevent the Tories and Parnellites doing more mischief than can be helped.'

[1] The 'infallible Schnadhorst' was a great Liberal organiser who appears to have foretold a sweeping Liberal victory.

Lord Hartington to Mr. Goschen.

'CHATSWORTH, *December* 6, 1885.

'I congratulate you, though rather late in the day, on your success in Edinburgh. I finished my performances yesterday to my intense relief. I hope never to go through anything of the sort again. Making bricks without straw, or dancing on the tight-rope, would be a joke to the sort of tasks I have been trying to accomplish during the last six weeks.

'What do you think of it all? It appears to me the most inextricable mess which any unfortunate country ever got itself into, though Mr. Gladstone and Harcourt appear to be as pleased as possible.

'From something I heard the other day in London I am inclined to think that there was something in the *Times* articles early last week, and that some sort of overtures will be made by Lord Salisbury to you, me, and others supposed to be moderate Liberals. I do not think that anything in the nature of a coalition could be entertained; but I am not at all sure whether some promise of independent support to the Government, if it discards the Parnell alliance, would be out of the question. It would, of course, be necessary first to ascertain what line Mr. Gladstone intends to take; but if it is, as I expect, one of strong hostility to the Government, whatever their policy may be, I think it is a question whether they should not be supported. A Liberal Government seems nearly an impossibility at present. I expect that Mr. Gladstone has ideas about Ireland which neither you nor I would agree to. Chamberlain evidently has no intention of making things easy for a Liberal Government, and, after his speech on Thursday, I confess that I should have great difficulty in sitting in the same Cabinet with him.

'Harcourt thinks that the Government will try to go on with the Parnellite alliance, and is looking forward to their discrediting themselves for ever in the country. I don't

expect they will do anything of the sort. I anticipate that they will first make overtures to us, and then, when they are refused, either resign, or wait till they are beaten.'

Mr. Gladstone to Lord Hartington, December 15, 1885.

'. . . So far as I can learn, Salisbury and Carnarvon are rather with Randolph, but are afraid of their colleagues and their party.

'It seems not doubtful that the urgency and bigness of this Irish question are opening to men's minds from day to day.

'I am glad to learn that the Cabinet remain where they are, though I hardly understand the plan of asking a Vote of Confidence. Are we to vote it in order that they *may* introduce a measure of Home Rule, or in order that they may not?'

Lord Hartington to Mr. Gladstone.

'CHATSWORTH, *December* 16, 1885.

'Many thanks for your letters and for the telegram which I have received on coming in from shooting this afternoon. . . . .

'I am anxious to take this opportunity of asking you, as I have for some days been intending to do, whether it is possible for you to give me any information as to your own views and intentions on the Irish question as developed by the general election. I think I know pretty well what your ideas were previous to the elections; but I imagine that the results, both here and in Ireland, have not been such as to offer what you would consider to be the most favourable prospect of dealing with the question. I also know from Granville, and through Spencer and Northbrook, that you have continued to give much attention to the subject, and in the direction of some considerable concessions of local self-government.

'But the rumours in all the newspapers, and in private

letters which I receive, about the existence of some plans which you have in preparation, and of communications with Parnell or others, are so numerous and persistent that it is difficult to believe that they are entirely without foundation; but, as I am entirely ignorant of what may be going on, I am naturally somewhat embarrassed as to the line I should take when I am forced to discuss the subject.'

Lord Hartington to Lord Granville.

'CHATSWORTH, *December* 17, 1885.

'I received the enclosed yesterday. Please return Mr. Gladstone's letter to me, and forward the other papers to Spencer as he wishes.

'I took the opportunity of asking him whether he could give me any information as to his present views on the Irish question as developed by the result of the elections; and hinted that I found myself considerably embarrassed in anything I might have to say about Ireland by the persistent reports in the newspapers and elsewhere about his expressed opinions and communications. I don't know whether this will produce any result.

'From all I can hear he appears to be acting in a most extraordinary manner, and I should think will utterly smash up the party. I don't know who is going to support him in proposing a Home Rule policy for Ireland. Chamberlain and Dilke, as at present advised, are, I hear, entirely opposed to it; but they may come round.

'Northbrook and Harcourt are here. The latter is in the depths of despair; not about Ireland, but about the prospects of the party. He considers Gladstone, Chamberlain, and me, equally responsible for its destruction, and says with some truth that there does not appear to be any desire for common action or for co-operation. I cannot regret it very much, for, as far as I can see, the party has now no common objects in

view. But I cannot understand Mr. Gladstone, who, after all the sacrifices he has made and the trouble he has taken to keep the party together, seems now bent on destroying it, by putting forward an Irish policy for which he has obtained nobody's assent.'

Mr. Gladstone to Lord Hartington, December 17, 1885.

'The whole stream of public excitement is now turned upon me, and I am pestered with incessant telegrams which there is no defence against, but either suicide or Parnell's method of self-concealment.

'The truth is I have more or less of opinions and ideas, but no intentions or negotiations.

'In these ideas and opinions there is, I think, little that I have not conveyed in public declarations; in principle, nothing. I will try to lay them before you.

'I consider that Ireland has now spoken; and that an effort ought to be made by the *Government* without delay to meet her demands for the management by an Irish legislative body of Irish, as distinct from Imperial, affairs.

'Only a Government can do it, and a Tory Government can do it more easily and safely than any other.

'There is first a postulate—that the state of Ireland shall be such as to warrant it.

'The conditions of an admissible plan, I think, are:—

'1. Union of the Empire and due supremacy of Parliament.

'2. Protection for the minority—a difficult matter, on which I have talked much with Spencer, certain points, however, remaining to be considered.

'3. Fair allocation of Imperial charges.

'4. A statutory basis seems to me better and safer than the revival of Grattan's Parliament, but I wish to hear much more upon this; as the minds of men are still in so crude a state on the whole subject.

'5. Neither as opinions nor as intentions have I to

any one alive promulgated those ideas as decided on by me.

'6. As to intentions, I am determined to have none at present—to leave space to the Government—I should wish to encourage them if I properly could—above all, on no account to say or do anything which would enable the Nationalists to establish rival biddings between us.

'If this storm of rumours continues to rage, it may be necessary for me to write some new letters to my constituents, but I am desirous to do nothing, simply leaving the field open for the Government, until time makes it necessary to decide.

'Of our late colleagues I have had most communication with Granville, Spencer, Rosebery. Would you kindly send this on to Granville?

'I think you will find it in conformity with my public declarations, though some blanks are filled up. I have in truth thought it my duty, without in the least committing myself or any one else, to think through the subject as well as I could, being equally convinced of its urgency and its bigness.

'If H. and N. are with you pray show them this letter, which is a very hasty one, for I am so battered with telegrams that I hardly know whether I stand on my head or my heels, and am sure to commit some *bêtise*.

'With regard to the letter I sent you, my opinion is that there is a Parnell party and a separation or civil war party, and that the question which is to have the upper hand will have to be decided in a limited time.

'My earnest recommendation to everybody is not to commit himself. Upon this rule, under whatever pressure, I shall act as long as I can. There shall be no private negotiation carried on by me, but the time may come when I shall be obliged to speak publicly. Meantime I hope you will keep in free and full communication with old colleagues. Pray put questions if this letter seems ambiguous.

'Pray remember I am at all times ready for personal communication here should you think it desirable.'

Lord Hartington to Mr. Gladstone.

'CHATSWORTH, *December* 18, 1885.

'Many thanks for your letter of the 17th, and for the permission to put questions if it seems ambiguous.

'My chief difficulty is this: how to reconcile the advice which you give that we should not commit ourselves with the position which has been created by the rumours of which you complain, which, though perhaps inaccurate, appear not to be very far from the truth.

'When you say that you are determined to have no intentions at present, I understand that you do not desire to take or to prepare any action before the Government have had an opportunity of acting. But the fact that you have formed the opinion that an effort should be made by the Government to meet the Irish demand, and that this opinion has been allowed to be made known and cannot be contradicted, amounts in my view to action of enormous importance. It has brought the question into the front rank; nothing else will be discussed till Parliament meets, and it will be discussed with the knowledge that in your judgment the time for action has arrived, and that action is practicable.

'I cannot conceive action of a more practical or more important character, and it is very difficult for those who, like myself, are unable to share your opinions to refrain from committing ourselves while this most vital question is being discussed with the knowledge, not indeed of the details of the Home Rule scheme which you think should be given, but that a scheme of Home Rule should be proposed by this or by some other Government.

'I am going to-morrow to London to see Goschen, who is as much alarmed as I am at the position which

has been created. I do not suppose that it will be possible for us to take any action; but as I believe our opinions on the subject agree very closely, I acceded at once to his suggestion that we should meet.

'I may perhaps avail myself of your kind offer of personal communication in the week after next; but I am afraid that matters have now gone so far and that our views are so widely separated that there would be little advantage in such communications.'

Lord Hartington to Lord Granville.

'Devonshire House,
'*December* 19, 1885.

'I enclose Mr. Gladstone's letter. Please return it to me at Kimbolton, where I go to-morrow or Monday. I have told him in reply that my difficulty is to reconcile the advice which he gives us, to abstain from committing ourselves, with the position which has been created. He appears to desire to take no action until the Government have had their opportunity; but he has allowed it to be known publicly, not that he has settled the details of a Home Rule plan, but that he is of opinion that the time has come when the demand for Home Rule must within certain limits be conceded. This cannot be contradicted, and in my opinion constitutes action of the most important and decisive character. It is difficult for those who do not agree with him to remain perfectly quiet while the question is being discussed, with this knowledge of his opinions which constitutes a most important element in the discussion. I do not know whether I can or ought to do anything; but I cannot admit that he has, as he seems to imagine, done nothing. . . .'

Mr. Gladstone to Lord Hartington, December 20, 1885.

'I kept mine of yesterday back as there was no post.

'On Tuesday I had a conversation with Balfour at

Eaton which, in conformity with my public statements, I think conveyed informally a hope that they would act. As the matter is so serious, and as its becoming a party question would be a great national calamity, I have written to him to say, without committing others, that, if they can make a proposal for the purpose of settling definitively the question of Irish Government, I shall wish, with proper reserves, to treat it in the spirit in which I have treated Afghanistan and the Balkan Peninsula.

'I think the situation has been made *for* us by the election of 85 Irish members. Next to this, by the uncontradicted statements as to the opinions of several, and those most important members of the Cabinet.

'If Parnell gets a negative from them, and thereupon splits, the question of confidence appears to rise.

'We ought soon to be informed on what day they mean to proceed to business.'

Lord Hartington to Mr. Gladstone.

'DEVONSHIRE HOUSE,
'*December* 21, 1885.

'I have received this morning your letters of the 19th and 20th.

'I cannot expect that you will approve of my letter which has been published this morning. But as to the contradiction of the reports which have been circulated, I believe that it is strictly accurate and does not go beyond Chamberlain's statement in his speech of last week.

'There may be doubts as to the necessity for reaffirming my declarations and expression of opinion in recent speeches; but it appeared to me that the announcements of last week had created a new position, and that there was sufficient cause for me to let it be known by those who attach any importance to my opinion that my own views remain unchanged.'

Mr. Gladstone to Lord Hartington, December 23, 1885.

'I think I had better pass by your published letter. In this big business, which is likely to dwarf every other, my duty and desire are to look for points of agreement, actual or possible, and not of difference.

'As to these, notwithstanding all that has occurred, I by no means despair.

'*If* the Government refuse to act, and split off from their Nationalist supporters, that will bring a grave responsibility upon the Liberals, anterior to and apart from the Irish question.

'You will probably have seen R. Grosvenor, and both he, and Granville at Chatsworth, will probably have spoken to you on this matter.'

Lord Hartington to Lord Granville.

'KIMBOLTON CASTLE, ST. NEOT'S,
'*December* 25, 1885.

'I think that perhaps you had better see the enclosed letters from Harcourt; because if any one should undertake to press upon Mr. Gladstone a meeting of the ex-Cabinet, I think that it should be you. I don't feel in a position to make any such request to him. I have told him that I altogether differ from him in his opinions on the Home Rule question, and (this was before the publication of my letter) that I was going to see Goschen and to consider whether there was anything which those who differed from him could do in the circumstances which had arisen.

'I cannot understand your argument on this point. Mr. Gladstone may say as much as he likes about our not committing ourselves; but he has committed himself up to his chin. He may not have formed a complete scheme; but he has allowed it to be known that in his opinion Home Rule, including an Irish Parliament, must be granted

either by this, or by some other Government. This has not been denied and cannot be denied. Is it possible to conceive anything more absurd than that he should allow these opinions of his to be made known, constituting as they do a most important element in the discussion, and then ask us not to be in haste as to any decision?

'I do not see how it is possible that Mr. Gladstone and I should agree at any meeting which might be held, and I think I should hardly like to address to him the request which Harcourt suggests.

'I have had a strong letter from Derby against the Gladstonian policy.'

Lord Hartington to Lord Granville.

'DEVONSHIRE HOUSE,
'*December* 28, 1885.

'I have seen Harcourt to-day, who has had several letters from Chamberlain. The latter has proposed that he, Harcourt, Dilke, and I should meet and see whether we can agree and can resolve on some way of bringing Mr. Gladstone to book. I saw no reason to decline this, and have suggested Friday or Saturday or both. I should think that if the meeting comes off you had better join us; if you see no objection. Chamberlain, who has written very definitely to Mr. Gladstone, can get no answer from him, and, as you know, he has not told me much. It will not do for us to be taken entirely unprepared when Parliament meets.

'I will write or telegraph to you when our meeting is fixed. I think I may very likely go to see Spencer on Wednesday, but I will keep you informed as to my movements.

'I should think this preliminary meeting had better not be too large; but you are the only person who has any influence with Mr. Gladstone; and if anything is to be done I think your presence would be necessary.'

Lord Hartington to Lord Granville.

'DEVONSHIRE HOUSE,
'*December* 29, 1885.

'Chamberlain is coming up on Friday, and will be here at 4 o'clock. I have seen Goschen to-day, who quite concurs in the necessity of trying to obtain from Mr. Gladstone some further explanation of his intentions.

'So far as we can gather from his letter and from what Grosvenor has told me, he wishes, if the Government, as is now certain, make no Home Rule proposals, and break with the Parnellites, to move a vote of want of confidence on the ground of the unconstitutional nature of an attempt to govern the country by a party in a minority of only 250.

'But none of us as at present advised are disposed to join him in such a course without knowing what is to follow.'

Lord Hartington to Mr. Gladstone.

'DEVONSHIRE HOUSE,
'*January* 1, 1885.

'Harcourt, Chamberlain, Dilke, and I met this afternoon and had a good deal of discussion on the Irish question.

'I think that the only definite conclusion at which we arrived was that it is of great importance that as early an opportunity as possible should be given, in the first place to the leaders, and subsequently to the party itself, of hearing what are your views and intentions on this subject, and what course is to be taken on the meeting of Parliament. I had heard from Granville that you did not propose to come up before the 12th, and that you thought that the interval between the election of the Speaker and the commencement of business would probably be sufficient for the necessary consultations. It was pointed out, however, that the Government are about to meet Parliament in a small minority; that, either by their own act or by ours, in a combination with the Parnellites which it may be impossible for us to prevent, they may at any moment

be defeated and may resign office; and that you would then be called on to form a Government. The possibility of your doing this would depend mainly on Irish policy. If, instead of being a possible, you were the actual Prime Minister, and had this great difficulty to deal with, your main proposals would have been placed before your colleagues in November. At all events, they would not have been called on to decide upon them in a week, or in the hurried interval which would elapse between the resignation of the present Government and your own acceptance or refusal of office.

'Without attaching any special importance to the reports which have appeared in the newspapers as to your opinions, the difficulties of any mode of dealing with the Irish question are so great, and so little is yet known of the opinions of the leaders of the party as to its treatment, that it seems very necessary that more rather than less time than usual should be given for the purpose of ascertaining if possible what those opinions are, and whether differences are capable of being reconciled.

'These considerations seem to have some weight if the precarious position of the Government is alone taken into account. But, in addition to this, we are aware that you have thought that it may be necessary to raise the question of confidence, in the event of the Government making no proposals on Ireland, or breaking with their Irish supporters. (This contingency may now, according to all that we hear, be regarded as certain.) The responsibility which would be incurred by a decision to eject the Government on the earliest occasion without some knowledge of what would follow seems to strengthen the necessity for the fullest previous consultation that the circumstances admit of.

'So far, I believe, I have expressed the unanimous opinion of those I have named. We had, naturally, a good deal of discussion on the merits of the various Irish policies which have lately come under discussion. I could not attempt to describe the opinions of any one except

myself; but while I concur in all that was urged in favour of exhausting all means of arriving at an agreement, and also as to the necessity for giving as much time as possible for this purpose, I should not wish you to suppose that my own opinions have changed, or that I see any way in which I could be a party to a policy involving the creation of an Irish Legislative body. That, however, is a matter which chiefly concerns myself, and does not, I think, at all weaken the sense which I share with others as to the extreme importance of ascertaining and discussing as soon as possible the opinions—first and principally of yourself, but also of others, on this most important subject.'

Mr. Gladstone to Lord Hartington, January 2, 1886.

'Unfortunately the subject of your letter makes it impossible to reply by telegram, and I receive it on the evening when there is no post to London.

'I. On the 17th of December I communicated to you *all* the opinions I had formed on the Irish question; but on the 21st you published in the *Times* a reaffirmation of the opposite opinions.

'On the Irish question I have not a word to add to that letter; I am indeed doing what little the pressure of correspondence permits to prepare myself by study and reflection. My object was to facilitate study by you and others—I cannot say it was wholly gained. But I have done nothing and shall do nothing to convert those opinions into intentions, for I have not the material before me. I do not know whether my "postulate" is satisfied. Nor do I know whether you are right in supposing there is a breach, by which I mean a breach to become public on the Address, between Tories and Nationalists. The imperfect information which I possess rather looks towards the opposite conclusion.

'So that I am totally unable to submit any proposal for consideration; and desirous of gaining whatever lights intervening time may possibly afford.

'I admit that the incessant and incurable leakages of the late Cabinet supply me with an additional reason for circumspection.

'But I have taken care by my letter of the 17th that you should know my opinions *en bloc*. You are quite welcome to show it if you think fit to those with whom you meet. But H. has, I believe, seen it, and the others, if I mistake not, know the substance.

'II. But besides the question of legislation for Ireland, there is the question of parliamentary procedure. For considering this the time in London will, I think, be ample. I have, through R. Grosvenor, put you in possession of my ideas; but they are floating ideas only. In mine of the 23rd I stated my view, which you wrote down accurately in your letter but have made inaccurate by a correction. There is no doubt that a very grave situation is before us, a little sooner or a little later. All my desire and thought are how to render it less grave; for next to the demands of a question far larger than all or any party interests is my duty to labour for the consolidation of the party.

'Should I see cause to anticipate the breach you expect (of course this might happen), I will at once let you know.

'What, I find, Granville has written you may be found to be of weight.

'Pray show this letter if you think fit to those on whose behalf you write.

'I propose to be available in London about 4 p.m. on the 11th for any who wish to see me.

'As to my "postulate" (*q.v.*), I have doubts whether it can be dealt with by an Opposition. A meeting of the party is a serious matter, but may be found requisite.'

Lord Hartington to Lord Granville.

'DEVONSHIRE HOUSE, *January* 2, 1886.

'The communication decided on was a rather urgent appeal that Mr. Gladstone would give the earliest opportunity of consultation in the first instance with the leaders,

and subsequently with the party itself, especially if any question of a motion of want of confidence were likely to arise.

'It was suggested that the 12th would be very late for any such consultation. I added on my own part only a reservation as to the improbability of my being able to assent to any policy in the Home Rule direction.

'Considering the nature of the communication, and that its essence was to clear ourselves from responsibility for delay, I did not think there could be any reason for waiting and sent it as soon as I could write my letter, by late post last night. I am rather glad that I did so, because, if it had been sent after the receipt of your letter, it would have looked more like a remonstrance against his decision.

'The letter to you has partly been produced, I think, by an intimation which he has had from E. Hamilton that some of us are perfectly aware, and think we have reason to complain, of H. Gladstone's proceedings with the Press. It is useless to expect him to be intelligible; but to whom do you understand him to refer as "those of whom he speaks" who "not only ought but in principle would assent to and even desire"—"what he will do of himself"?

'I don't suppose our communication will produce any acceleration of his movements, but we have to some extent liberated our minds. I do not think there was any general agreement among us on the merits, but we were very amicable. Chamberlain and Harcourt are as much opposed to Home Rule as I am. The former thinks Gladstone's scheme (for there is practically a scheme) quite impossible and prefers another. But both of them are more impressed than I am with the hopelessness of resistance, in present circumstances, or of governing Ireland by repression.

'Of course Mr. Gladstone's announcements are an important factor in the case, and their effect can never be done away with.

'Did any leader ever treat a party in such a way as he has done'?

Lord Hartington to Lord Granville.

'HARDWICK HALL, CHESTERFIELD,
'*January* 10, 1886.

'I have got some people here and shall not come up till Tuesday evening. Grosvenor told me that Mr. Gladstone wished to see me on Tuesday at 11, but I have asked him to arrange for the afternoon instead. I suppose you will see him to-morrow. Harcourt is asked to see him to-morrow afternoon and Chamberlain on Tuesday morning. I do not think that any of us like much these separate interviews. We cannot very well decline to see him separately, but I expect that he will find us all rather reticent. I hope you will try to induce him not to allow these interviews to exclude a more general collective consultation.

'If the *Times* account of the Parnellite policy is correct, it seems as if there might be no immediate breach between the Government and Parnell; and in that case I suppose the question of a vote of want of confidence would not arise.'

Lord Hartington to Mr. Gladstone.

'DEVONSHIRE HOUSE, *January* 15, 1886.

'I am afraid that, if I gave you reason to think that I attached importance to the National Press statement on account of any idea that I had that it was an accurate statement of your opinions, I failed to express my meaning.

'The importance which belongs to it seems to be due to the fact that it was written after an interview between the manager of the National Press agency at his office with your son. This, I believe, is true. Further the manager of the agency asserts, in a letter which I have seen and which probably others have seen, that he and the editor-in-chief, who was present at the interview, "considered that they were giving expression to Mr. Herbert Gladstone's personal opinion of his father's views."

'However inaccurate this impression may have been, it seems to me impossible to treat the statement, as I understood you to intend to treat the Press statements generally, as unauthorised attempts to extract from you your opinions on a question on which you had declined to make any addition to your public utterances. Grosvenor will have told you that I had reason to believe that an amendment will be moved to the Address censuring the Government for having failed to maintain the authority of the law. I had heard this from two sources which I thought likely to be well informed. On the other hand, Goschen, whom I have seen since and would be likely to know, has heard nothing of it.

'But I can scarcely doubt that in some form or other an Irish debate will arise on the Address, which will make it impossible for those who are in favour of maintaining the legislative union as it exists to abstain from reasserting their opinions.

'The question of Home Rule may not be in a parliamentary sense before the House. But it is now in the most distinct manner before the country, and I fail to see how any political party can avoid expressing its opinions upon it.'

Mr. Gladstone to Lord Granville, January 18, 1886.

'Hartington writes to me a letter indicating the possibility that on Thursday, while I announce with reasons a policy of silence and reserve, he may feel it his duty to declare his determination "to maintain the legislative union," that is to proclaim a policy (so I understand the phrase) of absolute resistance without examination to the demand made by Ireland through five-sixths of her members. This is to play the Tory game with a vengeance. They are now, most rashly, not to say more, working the Irish question to split the Liberal party.

'It seems to me that if a gratuitous declaration of this kind is made, it must produce an explosion; and that in

a week's time Hartington will have to consider whether he will lead the Liberal party himself or leave it to chaos. He will make my position impossible. When, in conformity with the wishes expressed to me, I changed my plans and became a candidate at the General Election, my motives were two. The *first*, a hope that I might be able to contribute towards some pacific settlement of the Irish question. The *second*, a desire to prevent the splitting of the party, of which there appeared to be an immediate danger. The second object has thus far been attained. But it may at any moment be lost, and the most disastrous mode of losing it perhaps would be that now brought into view. It would be certainly opposed to my convictions and determination to attempt to lead anything like a Home Rule Opposition, and to make this subject—the strife of nations—the dividing line between parties. This being so, I do not see how I could as leader survive a gratuitous declaration of opposition to me such as Hartington appears to meditate. If he still meditates it, ought not the party to be previously informed?

'Pray consider whether you can bring this subject before him less invidiously than I. I have explained to you and, I believe, to him, and I believe you approve, my general idea, that we ought not to join issue with the Government on what is called Home Rule (which indeed the social state of Ireland may effectually thrust aside for the time); and that still less ought we to join issue among ourselves, if we have a choice, unless and until we are called upon to consider whether or not to take the Government. I for one will have nothing to do with ruining the party if I can avoid it.'

III

Times have changed, and we with them. No man below the mid-line of life can well remember 1886. It is difficult, even for those old enough to remember, to recall in all its vividness the state of feeling when Glad-

stone plunged into his last great adventure. Then, not four years had passed since the release of Parnell from Kilmainham coincided with a terrible event. Agrarian terror, murders in every part of Ireland, hangings, stern repression—all this was fresh in memory. Legislative and executive power were now, it appeared, to be transferred to the men who had instigated, or acquiesced in, a blood-stained peasant revolt, and had urged the Irish people to claim national independence limited, at most, by the slender link of the Crown.

Few of Mr. Gladstone's followers had imagined that he would go so far. Liberals had for years denounced the rule of men of one race or religion over those of another in Greece, Poland, Italy, Hungary, Turkey, without admitting that these principles could be used against the government of Catholic Irish by Protestant Anglo-Saxons. Had the comparison been suggested they would have said, 'But our rule is quite a different thing; besides the Irish are represented in Parliament.' But whether alien rule is good or bad, and whether or not the ruled can make themselves heard, as a minority, in a common Legislature, the will of a distinct race to live its own life may remain unsatisfied. On the immense assumption that these Liberal principles are true, *semper et ubique*, the logical argument from the Irish elections of 1885 was one of tremendous force. According to these principles that which the majority of a national electorate desire ought to be done. If Ireland could, by a second assumption, be taken as a distinct nation, then, on these principles, the vote of 1885 was decisive.

Gladstone, born and bred a Tory, an intellectual or sentimental convert to Liberalism, accepted and applied, as converts often do, the fundamental principle more logically and boldly than did men born in Liberal families.

He was, compared to the Whigs, that which his former friend Manning became to the born English Catholics. Throughout his life, before and after he definitely belonged to the Liberal party, the freedom of nations had been his inspiring passion. He had in his earlier day belonged to the Canning school of Tories, and the foreign policy of this school was Liberal and anti-imperial, opposed, that is, to the extension or maintenance of non-English empires. His political character was moulded, not during the era of conscious formation of empires, but during that of unification and emancipation of races, which may be a step, in the order of Providence, towards the formation of greater and nobler unities. In the British Empire the stream of tendency during the best part of Gladstone's life set towards full self-government in colonies inhabited by men of European race. Not till this movement was nearly completed did the tide towards imperial co-operation and common organisation set in.

Mr. Gladstone applied Liberal principles honestly, sincerely, and, above all, logically, to the case of Ireland, but, after his wont, allowed too little weight to actual facts, or, rather, looked at facts from a point of view determined by his will to believe.[1] Ireland was not one in race or religion. The dead wills of the Tudors, of Oliver Cromwell, of William III., thwarted the living will of Gladstone. Arguments used against the government of Ireland from London could also be used against the government of Ulster from Dublin, and with more deadly

[1] Pascal says, with his incomparable terseness and lucidity, 'La volonté est un des principaux organes de la créance; non qu'elle forme la créance, mais parce que les choses sont vraies ou fausses, selon la face par où on les regarde. La volonté, qui se plaît à l'une plus qu'à l'autre, détourne l'esprit de considérer les qualitiés de celles qu'elle n'aime pas à voir; et ainsi l'esprit, marchant d'une pièce avec la volonté, s'arrête à regaider la face qu'il aime, et ainsi il en juge par ce qu'il y voit.'

effect. For armed revolt of the Catholic and Celtic Irish against English rule had been proved by long experience to be impracticable, but nothing was, or is, to this day, more probable than armed resistance by the Protestant Saxons of Ulster to an Irish Catholic Government. This difficulty was lightly passed over by Mr. Gladstone, as it is by his successors. A similar division existed throughout the three other provinces between the territorial aristocracy and the people. This last difficulty Mr. Gladstone did not ignore. He proposed to meet it by a scheme of land purchase to operate on a large scale and rapidly; but this was a difficult undertaking.

Gladstone carried with him the larger part of the Liberal party in Parliament by the entraining fascination of his personality, and by strength of party feelings and organisation. This achievement was due also to special circumstances of the time. More than half the Liberal members had virtually been returned in 1885 by the newly enfranchised two million of electors, in whose eyes, as a Yorkshire correspondent wrote to Lord Hartington, 'Whatever Mr. Gladstone proposes must be right and to differ from him (even in company with Bright) is deadly sin.' A Norfolk gentleman wrote, 'The electors in the east of England care very little about Home Rule one way or the other, but the new elector believes intensely in Mr. Gladstone.' Also the English rural labourer voted in mere opposition to squire, farmer, and parson. Little he cared, as yet, for imperial questions, and he wished to prove his new-won power.

After the December revelation the leading men of the party were torn by inner conflict, until, by acceptance or refusal of office at the beginning of February, the final choice had been made. On one side stood the old insistent Gladstone, a strange heroic-seeming figure, armed with the

weight of age, with the fascination of genius, with subtle skill, with appeals to Liberal first principles, and with temptations of office; on the other, the unyielding Hartington, armed with the sword of consistency and the shield of prudence, and standing for the power of England and the real unity of the United Kingdom. Between these strong opposites were hesitations and movements to and fro.

Mr. Chamberlain said, in a speech at Birmingham on December 17th, that he did not doubt that, if Mr. Gladstone were able to propose some arrangement, he should be able to give it his support. 'But,' he added, 'it is right, it is due to the Irish people, to say that all sections of the Liberal party, Radicals as much as Whigs, are determined that the integrity of the Empire shall be a reality and not an empty phrase.'

Sir William Harcourt, a man built mentally, as well as physically, on the large scale, was a most reluctant convert to Mr. Gladstone's policy. Early in December, in a speech made at Lowestoft, he had denounced the supposed continued alliance between the Tories and the Irish Nationalists, and used one strong and disagreeably picturesque phrase long remembered and cited against him. His letters to Lord Hartington, after the Hawarden manifestations of mid-December, show that he still saw with all the lucidity of his powerful intellect the reasons against any scheme of Home Rule. On the other hand, he represented the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of resistance, and that of carrying on government in Ireland on the existing basis, now that Mr. Gladstone had thrown his immense influence over the Liberal party into the Home Rule scale.

The time allowed for choice was short, and many Liberals acted under the influence of a kind of panic, or

depression of spirit, confidence, and hope. These conversions recall Shakespeare's heart-piercing lines :—

> 'Mistrust of good success hath done this deed—
> Oh, hateful Error, Melancholy's Child !
> Why dost thou show to the apt thoughts of men
> The things that are not ?'

Another old and distinguished friend and colleague, who knew Ireland well, and yet eventually followed Mr. Gladstone, wrote to Lord Hartington :—

'You say that we ought to fight until we are beaten into a cocked hat. I think we are that already—I do not see a chance of our holding our own. If one feels that, the sooner one takes the horrible plunge the better. . . . But I get at times sick of the idea of giving up to such men with such a history belonging to them.'

Lord Granville wrote that—

'Whatever is decided upon by the Government, or the Opposition, whether coercion, concession, or leaving things alone, may probably lead to a great catastrophe. . . . To me the two great difficulties are how the rights of minorities and of landlords are to be saved. The great bribe to me and, I suppose, to England and Scotland, would be to get rid of the Irish M.P.'s here, who are introducing the dry rot into our institutions.'[1]

Lord Hartington was not moved by these counsels of despair. He had the coolness of brain in a crisis which aided Wellington on the field, and enabled him to confront serenely even the terrors of Napoleon in person. The witch, Imagination, had no power over him, nor did

[1] In a letter to Mr. Gladstone, of December 28, 1885, Lord Granville said that 'at present the current of feeling is very strong, not only Chamberlain and Hartington, but Harcourt and other colleagues,' and adds, 'my own opinion is that the safeguard for the minority must be very efficient, and that the bribe necessary to satisfy Great Britain, whether logical or not, would be to get rid of the Irish members ; the dry rot of the House of Commons.'—*Life of Lord Granville*, vol. ii. p. 423.

Ambition secretly sway his judgment. He had always said that the difficulty of governing Ireland in opposition to the apparent, or even to the real, wishes of the majority of its inhabitants, was exaggerated, nor did he see much objection in principle to doing so, as long as Irish facts remained what they were. He was not influenced by abstract theories, nor was he in the least degree moved, like Mr. Gladstone, by the unquestionable fact that the methods by which Pitt and Castlereagh carried the Act of Union through the Irish Parliament nearly resembled those of strong-handed annexation.[1] The difficulties in the House of Commons seemed to him to be vexatious, but by no means insuperable, provided that the two British parties showed some sense of unity in enforcing fundamental obligations. In a letter of 29th November 1885, one of his colleagues, who a month later had accepted the Gladstone policy, had said that the two parties should combine 'to settle a policy for Ireland, and present a united front against the Parnellites. If that could be done, and I don't see why it should not be done, the Irish would worry and tease, but would have no effective power.' Lord Hartington was of the same opinion. No doubt, and he fully recognised the fact, Mr. Gladstone's manifestation destroyed the effective co-operation of the two parties, as two wholes, and the Tory leaders by their previous action and non-action had also, by provoking a manifestation, done their part in destroying this prospect. But, if the Legislative Union and British Government in Ireland could not be maintained by the co-operation of the Conservative and Liberal parties, it might still be

[1] One reply to this argument from history might be that 'Grattan's Parliament' achieved its independence by something like armed rebellion. The biographer of Parnell relates that his hero remained entirely unmoved and indifferent upon an occasion, at a private dinner-party, when Mr. Gladstone was violently declaiming to the table about Irish history.

maintained by the action of a part of the Liberal party co-operating with the Conservatives. The mist hanging over the Tory camp rose, and their line of battle became clear, after the Hawarden revelation; they declared for unyielding resistance. It also became clear that the Liberal party was divided; and that the Unionist section would be a minority was soon apparent. Would it be a minority large enough to give a Unionist majority in the House of Commons? This was the uncertain and exciting question which convulsed the political world during the first half of the year 1886.

Lord Hartington's attitude was at this moment of supreme importance. Lord Derby wrote to him, on 1st January 1886, 'very much depends on you. Your abstention will make the adoption of a dangerous policy impossible. Your acquiescence would make resistance useless, though, for myself, I don't think any consideration would make me swallow the dose.'

Lord Hartington and those who went with him took the right line. Few now would say that Mr. Gladstone steered on the true course, though many may deem him right in thinking that some modification of the constitution of the United Kingdom was necessary. The day had not come for even a far more moderate form of provincial self-government than that which he proposed. The storms of passion had not sufficiently subsided; the agrarian question was still too little settled. Most of those who followed him knew this well in their inner mind. But to break with an old, renowned, and magnetic leader is the most difficult thing in the world; it is in itself almost a heroic deed; and it is rash and uncharitable to blame those who are not able to cross this terrible pass. It must be remembered, too, that most of the Liberal candidates for Parliament had committed

themselves to vague declarations in favour of some kind of representative local government in Ireland. Thence to acceptance of the still abstract propositions of December was one step, to the overthrow of the Conservative Government in February was a second, to the acceptance of the Bill proposed in March, subject to possible modifications in Committee, was a third. *Facilis descensus Averni.* Moreover, the still real existence of the House of Lords made it certain that the measure, even if it went through the Commons, would not become law until, at any rate, it had been submitted to the country at a General Election. The process was gradual, and the intellect could furnish fairly good reasons to the will in those who desired to adhere to the party and its leader. In Lord Hartington, in consequence of his character, position, and previous relations to the party and chief, this desire was not so strong as to seduce his judgment.

Parliament heard, in the Speech from the Throne on 21st January 1886, a strong and defiant Tory declaration in favour of maintenance of the Legislative Union, and an intimation that a new Act giving special powers for enforcing the law in Ireland would probably be necessary. On the 26th, the Government asked leave to introduce a 'Coercion Bill.' It was for this manifestation that Mr. Gladstone was waiting. On the 27th, he overthrew the Government, with Irish aid, on an amendment to the address by Mr. Jesse Collings, which had nothing to do with Ireland. Debaters talked of small holdings for rural labourers, but this, they all knew, was not the real question. In the division, Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Chamberlain, and the mass of British Liberals voted against the Government, while Lord Hartington and a few other Liberals went into the opposite lobby. The amendment was carried against the Government by

seventy-nine votes.[1] On the 29th, Lord Salisbury's Government resigned. On the 30th, Mr. Gladstone wrote to Lord Hartington, 'Please to come to me as soon as you can. The Queen has sent me her commission.' He enclosed this memorandum:—

'I propose to examine whether it is or is not practicable to comply with the desire widely prevalent in Ireland, and testified by the return of eighty-five out of one hundred and three representatives, for the establishment by statute of a legislative body, to sit in Dublin, and to deal with Irish as distinguished from Imperial affairs; in such a manner as would be just to each of the three kingdoms, equitable with reference to every class of the people of Ireland, conducive to the social order and harmony of that country, and calculated to support and consolidate the unity of the Empire on the combined basis of Imperial authority and mutual attachment.'

Lord Hartington's interview was short and decisive. He wrote to his father that Mr. Gladstone—

'sent for me this morning and I have declined. . . . He was very civil, and we parted apparently very good friends. He asked me to write him a letter to show to the Queen, which I have done. I hope that I have not made it too civil. I have not promised him any support, but I think that now that the thing has gone so far, he ought to have a fair trial and let the country see what he has really got to propose.'

The following is the letter intended for the Queen's information:—

DEVONSHIRE HOUSE,
January 30, 1886.

MY DEAR MR. GLADSTONE,—I will endeavour to state in as few words as I am able the main reasons which make

[1] 257 Liberals and 74 Irish Nationalists composed the majority; 234 Conservatives and 18 Liberals the minority. 76 Liberals were absent.

it impossible in my judgment for me to accept the office which you were so good as to make to me this morning in such friendly terms.

You stated that, in the policy of a new Government, the measures to be adopted in regard to Ireland must be the dominant and paramount consideration; and in this I think that all will agree with you. I understand your opinion to be that the time has arrived for an examination of the Irish demand for increased powers of self-government, with the view, if certain preliminary conditions can be satisfied, of creating by statute a legislative body for the management of local Irish, as distinct from Imperial, affairs. I am unable to attach great importance to a distinction between examination and the actual conception and announcement of a plan. The hopes which will be raised in Ireland by the consent to examine the demand on this basis will be such as to make it almost impossible for any Government to take the responsibility of disappointing them, by an admission that the examination has led to no practical result. Parliament or the country may reject a plan; but the Government which has undertaken to enter into such an examination can scarcely stop short of proposing a policy founded upon it.

In the discussion which has recently been carried on I have seen nothing to weaken the objections to the establishment of an Irish Legislature, whether independent or subordinate, which have up to this time been deemed insuperable by every English statesman who has examined the question, when the demand has been put forward by Irish parties of less advanced views, and less animated by hostility to this country, than the party now led by Mr. Parnell.

But without further discussing the possibilty or expediency of such a concession as is the ultimate object of this examination, I feel that every public utterance which I have ever made in or out of Parliament has pledged me too deeply against it to enable me, without a loss of honour, and therefore of all possibility of any

future influence for good in public affairs, to take a part in a policy directed to this object. I could not, even if I desired it, bring to the support of your Government that section of the Liberal party with which I have been mainly connected. My departure from my previous declarations would be too great; the confidence of my friends, already weakened by the impression which justly or unjustly prevails that I have already too frequently surrendered my own judgment for the maintenance of unity in the party, would be entirely destroyed, and those who, like myself, wish to maintain the legislative union with Ireland would, under some other leadership, assume a more hostile position towards your Government than may perhaps be the case if I remain in an independent position.

For greatly as I regret much that has occurred, the declarations which have already been made, and the further encouragement now to be given to the Irish National party by the undertaking to examine their demand, I am now of opinion that, these declarations having been made, it is necessary that they should assume a practical shape. The country must now understand what concession of legislative independence is considered safe and practicable by any responsible party, and it must now be proved whether it is, or is not, possible to reconcile the demands of the Irish Home Rule party with the deliberate opinion of the majority of Englishmen and Scotchmen.

While, therefore, I reserve full liberty to form the best judgment I can on your proposals when they may assume a definite shape, and can in no way commit myself to their support, I hope and believe that it may be possible for me, as a private member, to do something to prevent obstacles being placed in the way of a fair trial being given to the policy of the new Government.

I am fully convinced that the alternative policy of governing Ireland without large concessions to the national sentiment, presents difficulties of a tremendous

character which, in my opinion, could now only be faced by the support of a nation united by the consciousness that the fullest opportunity had been given for the production and consideration of a conciliatory policy.—I remain, yours sincerely,

HARTINGTON.

Lord Hartington heard, a few days later, from a moderate Liberal that 'the Gladstone party have put it about that you agree with him generally upon his Irish policy, and that you are prevented joining him simply because you have committed yourself to your constituents. In point of fact they say that you do not intend to oppose the Government even on Home Rule.' This, and other communications, made Lord Hartington write the following letter :—

DEVONSHIRE HOUSE,
PICCADILLY, W.,
February 5, 1886.

MY DEAR MR. GLADSTONE,—I have heard within the last day or two from several sources that some use has been made (I do not think by yourself) of my letter to you of the 30th January in the communications which have been going on for the formation of your Government. I have been told that I have been represented as having been in general agreement with you on your Irish policy, and having been prevented joining your Government solely by the declarations which I had made to my constituents; and as not intending to oppose the Government even on Home Rule.

On looking over my letter I think that the general intention is sufficiently clear, but there is perhaps part of one sentence which, taken by itself, might be understood as committing me beyond what I intended or wished. The words I refer to are those in which I say that it may be possible for me as a private member to prevent obstacles being placed in the way of a fair

trial being given to the policy of the new Government. But I think that the commencement of the sentence in which those words occur sufficiently reserves my liberty; and that the whole letter shows that what I desire is that the somewhat undefined declarations which have hitherto been made should now assume a practical shape; and that it should be ascertained, on the one hand, whether Mr. Parnell will accept anything which any English party can offer him; and, on the other, whether the English and Scotch people will concede what is necessary to satisfy his demands. I do not ask for any reply to this letter which I have only thought it necessary to write to prevent any misconception as to my position.—I remain, yours sincerely,

HARTINGTON.

As an offset to these troubles and misunderstandings, it is pleasant to be able to give a second and more private letter, which Lord Hartington sent to his old chief on 30th January:—

'I feel that I ought to have tried, both in my interview with you this morning and in my letter, to have thanked you for the extreme kindness of your manner towards me, and for the way in which you have received my reasons for declining to offer to you again the slight assistance which I may have been able to give you on former occasions.

'Although I cannot truly say that exclusion from office is unpleasant to me, I can assure you that I feel most deeply how great a burden of responsibility is about to be cast upon you, and that it would have been a duty, if I could have felt it in any way compatible with honour and consistency, to have attempted to do anything in my power to relieve you of any share of it.'

Lord Hartington wrote on 17th February to his faithful friend, Mr. John Fell of Ulverstone:—

'It has, as you may imagine, been a very anxious time for me, and I have felt much regret at having had to separate myself for a time from Mr. Gladstone and many of my friends. I cannot, however, feel any confidence, judging from the tone of his recent speeches, in the policy which he seems likely to adopt towards Ireland. It would, perhaps, have been better, as matters have turned out, if I had spoken out at once on the Irish question, as the great bulk of the party seem now likely to drift into acquiescence with anything which Mr. Gladstone may propose. But the responsibility of provoking an open split in the party, so long as there seemed any chance of averting it, was too great; and, on the whole, matters have gone so far that it is perhaps best that Mr. Gladstone should have full opportunity of disclosing his policy.'

Now was consummated the great schism in the Liberal party. Mr. Gladstone was followed, with reluctant fidelity, by Lord Granville, Lord Spencer, Lord Kimberley, and Lord Rosebery. Sir William Harcourt became Chancellor of the Exchequer, with almost certain succession to the leadership. Lord Herschell became Lord Chancellor, after that high post had virtually been declined by Sir Henry James, who thought that he could not, in honour, go back upon declarations made to his constituents. Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Trevelyan joined the Cabinet conditionally, and upon the basis of the suggested 'inquiry'; Mr. Childers and Mr. Campbell-Bannerman accepted office with conviction. The Irish Secretary was Mr. John Morley, an influential political writer, who now held office and sat in the Cabinet for the first time.

Lord Hartington was followed by Lord Derby, Lord Northbrook, Lord Selborne, and Lord Carlingford, members of the late Cabinet. Sir Henry James was his faithful and useful adherent. John Bright declared against Home Rule. Mr. Goschen was a strong Unionist, and so was the

Duke of Argyll. Minor characters in the play went this way and that, as fears or hopes prompted them, while Reason, limping behind, discovered to each the arguments for his choice. One gentleman, who had written a few weeks previously to Lord Hartington urging undying resistance to the Irish Nationalists, succumbed to the magic influence of the Prime Minister and accepted an Under-Secretaryship. Another acceptant of office, stung by remorse, wrote to say that he had thrown it up, and would henceforth be a faithful Unionist. The fight for the capture or possession of the rank and file of the Liberal party in Parliament went on down to the very eve of the rejection of the Home Rule Bill. Gladstone avoided party meetings and saw individuals separately. In the magical art of persuasion by will-power Lord Hartington was, of course, quite outmatched by his old chief.

De Ségur, in a chapter worthy of Thucydides, narrates the arguments used by himself and others in the winter of 1811-12 to dissuade Napoleon from the Russian War, and Napoleon's replies. He then says :—

'Ainsi Napoléon répondait à tout ; son habile main savait saisir et manier à propos tous les esprits ; et, en effet, dès qu'il voulait séduire il y avait dans son entretien une espèce d'enchantement dont il était impossible de se défendre ; on se sentait moins fort que lui, et comme contraint de se soumettre à son influence. C'était une espèce de puissance magnétique, car son génie ardent et mobile est tout entier dans chacun de ses désirs, le moindre comme le plus important. Il veut ; et toutes ses forces, toutes ses facultés se réunissent pour accomplir ; elles accourent, se précipitent, et dociles, elles prennent à l'instant même les formes qui lui plaisent. . . . Dans cette occasion, il n'y eut pas de teintes si variées dont sa vive et fertile imagination ne colorât son projet, pour convaincre et entraîner. Le même texte lui fournissait mille arguments

divers : c'est le caractère et la position de chacun de ses interlocuteurs qui l'inspire ; il l'entraîne dans son entreprise, en la lui faisant envisager sous la forme, avec la couleur, et du côté, qui doit lui plaire.'

Men differ much in regard to susceptibility to magnetic power, and it was along the lines of this natural division of character that the division between the Gladstonian Liberals and the Liberal Unionists developed. The less susceptible, as a rule, followed Hartington. The rest, including most of those who had, even though unsusceptible by nature, gradually become magnetised by long official contact, followed Gladstone.

Lord Hartington, some thought, treated with too visible a want of sympathy, not being an adept at disguising his feelings, those of his colleagues who had forsworn their former opinion and gone down the main stream. He had, indeed, every reason to suppose, almost to the last moment, that the Whig leaders, Lord Granville, Lord Spencer, Lord Kimberley, and Sir William Harcourt would have followed him, and not have gone with Mr. Gladstone. Lord Edmund Fitzmaurice, in his *Life of Lord Granville*, says that that nobleman, 'like Perithous in the Athenian legend, plunged after his king into the gulf.' It was, perhaps, to the good of the commonwealth that some men of this kind should have followed Gladstone (who would probably have formed a Government whether they followed him or not), so that the greater offices might still be administered by men of rank and experience. But most Whigs not of official rank followed Lord Hartington. It was the end of the Whig party. Until this moment the word 'Whig' was still in common use to denote a connection loosely bound together, the moderate Liberals, led by the chiefs of certain families of long standing. Since 1886, the word has been used in a purely historical sense,

while 'Tory' has still a living meaning. The Whig party as a concrete reality, had a history of as nearly as possible 200 years.

Time, with its changes, softens the sense of grievance, and, when it is proved that a separation is final and complete and irrevocable, those who are separated can regard each other more serenely. In a speech made in November 1890, Lord Hartington referred with kindness and regret to these events, and Lord Rosebery wrote to him:—

'I read your words about the separations caused by politics with great pleasure; they were both kind and true. For myself I can sincerely say that the greatest sorrow I have ever known in public life was the severance from you and the manner of it.'

Lismore Castle, the Seat of the Dukes of Devonshire in County Waterford, Ireland

CHAPTER XXII

MR. GLADSTONE'S ADMINISTRATION, JANUARY TO JULY 1886

Mr. Gladstone formed his Cabinet upon a basis of inquiry, but inquiry developed at express speed into a legislative measure. The Irish Government Bill and the Land Bill were ready in about two months' time. Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Trevelyan disagreed with the definite proposals, and resigned on the 26th March. Lord Morley, who was present at the decisive Cabinet Council, intimates that the Prime Minister made no attempt to conciliate or to retain the two Ministers.[1] Provisions were, at a later date, inserted in the Bill which went some way towards meeting Mr. Chamberlain's objections, but if these would ever have availed to keep him, it was now too late.

Mr. Gladstone's art, Lord Granville's tact, had hardly kept in the same Cabinet from 1880 to 1885 those incompatibles, Lord Hartington and Mr. Chamberlain. Now, by a strange and unexpected turn of events, they had been driven into common opposition. The absence of both lieutenants was no doubt a relief to their aged and obstinate chief; at any rate he was now at the head of a Cabinet in which his authority was supreme. Mr. Chamberlain's defection, however, vastly increased the chances

[1] *Life of Gladstone*, vol. iii. p. 303. This means probably that his action was like that of Mr. Balfour at the Cabinet crisis of 14th September 1903 towards his dissentient Ministers, to the effect 'I see that you don't agree, and, therefore, we cannot continue together.'

of defeat in Parliament, and, still more, in the country. That Mr. Gladstone so nearly won this fight in the House of Commons—with the leader of the Whigs and the leader (till then) of the Radicals in revolt, with the whole tradition of English policy against him, opposed by almost all the wealthy, the experienced, and the wise—certainly shows his marvellous influence over generous instincts, weak wills, and impressionable minds. A hostile writer once said that Mr. Gladstone's influence reminded him of the influence of the Moon described in Butler's invocation to that deity in *Hudibras* :—

> 'Queen of the night, whose vast command
> Rules all the sea, and half the land,
> And over weak and watery brains
> At high spring tides, at midnight reigns.'

Better, perhaps, it might be said that his power was the Dæmon within him, in the nobler Greek, and not in the lower Christian, sense of that word. Goethe, in his *Dichtung und Wahrheit,* says :—

'The most fearful manifestation of the dæmonic is when it is seen predominating in some individual character. During my life I have observed several instances of this, either more closely or remotely. Such persons are not always the most eminent men, either morally or intellectually, . . . but a tremendous energy seems to be seated in them, and they exercise a wonderful power over all creatures. All the moral powers combined are of no avail against them ; in vain does the more enlightened portion of mankind attempt to throw suspicion upon them as deceived, if not deceivers—the mass is still drawn on by them. Seldom, if ever, do the great men of an age find their equals among their contemporaries, and they are to be overcome by nothing but the Universe itself ; and it is from observation of this fact that the strange, but most striking, proverb must have arisen, *Nemo contra Deum nisi Deus ipse.*'

An agent of Napoleon I. in Germany said that he felt so uneasily conscious of his distant master that he could realise the doctrine of the 'Real Presence.' Gladstone had this power of making his personality invade the imagination of men. It is a power which moves the world, and seems, at times, to make events deviate from their ordained course. So a great storm may make a river overflow, and, for a while, cause channels and landmarks to disappear. The strange thing was that, in 1886, Gladstone's full mental and physical strength no longer existed. It was the impression which he had made in the 'seventies' which still worked on the people.

The best defence of his action is that, by the test of political and economic results, the English rule of Ireland had, so far, been miserably unsuccessful, that the question of Irish Government was, after the recent elections, a very real one, that, as Bacon has said, 'Where a great question exists it will not fail to be agitated,' and that it could best be discussed upon the basis of a definite legislative proposal. The debates, in and out of Parliament, were educational and cleared the air. The question is not yet settled. It may be that the future historian who sees unravelled the whole story to its last page, may judge that, although Gladstone made an impossible proposal at an impossible time, there was in his crusade a certain consonance with main results achieved through and after the events of many years. Things anticipated are apt to come to pass, but in a form different from that dimly and erroneously seen by the earliest pioneers. The road of change is paved with the errors of its builders.

The real opposing force centres in this battle were not, however, so much Hartington and Gladstone, as Hartington and Charles Stewart Parnell. These two men, so opposed in policy, resembled each other in temperament

far more than either resembled Gladstone, and indeed more than either resembled some other leading men in the House of Commons. Both Hartington and Parnell were of the positive, or realist, character; neither the one nor the other was influenced by abstract ideas, or by books, or by phrases of any kind. Neither man was in the least degree a Radical, a Sentimentalist, or an 'Intellectual.' Neither was swayed in his course by philosophic theory or by definite religion. Each was cool, aloof, by nature indolent, inclined to silence and averse to rhetoric, country-bred, independent, unimpressionable, self-contained, indifferent in the main to the opinion of men at large, doggedly tenacious of his own view and purpose. Both had that which Harcourt (or was it Lowe?) used to call 'Hartington's you-be-damnedness,' the characteristic so striking in that mighty Anglo-Irishman, the first Duke of Wellington. This quality was brought to a lofty point by the Irish squire who led, and despised, the Nationalists. Hartington and Parnell were, in fact, both of them, extremely Anglo-Saxon by nature and temperament, as they mainly were by descent.[1] Hartington himself, through the Butlers and the Boyles, may have inherited some of the Anglo-Irish temperament, which is that acquired by men of a conquering race living among the conquered.

Lord Hartington was guided by his conception of the public interest, touched with some special feeling, no doubt, natural to the representative of a family having large territorial possessions in Ireland. How far Parnell was guided by public spirit, or how far by a cold and personal hatred of the English who, so he thought, had treated him—an Anglo-Irish aristocrat—with some condescension or con-

[1] Parnell in 1886 consulted the London physician, Sir Henry Thompson, who did not at first know who he was. Sir Henry said afterwards, 'I should have taken him, and did take him, for a quiet, modest, dignified, English country gentleman.'—*Life of Parnell*, vol. ii. p. 161.

tempt as a mere Irishman, will always be a matter for conjecture.[1] Probably there was a certain commixture of patriotism with personal vindictiveness, as in the case of Dean Swift. And his biographer supplies reason for thinking that, blended curiously with cool reason and common sense, he had a touch of that insanity which hangs about Ireland like an unwholesome mist. But Lord Hartington was sanity itself, and, having good reason to be satisfied with life, was singularly free from any domination by ambition, vanity, or jealousy.

Lord Hartington, true to the intention stated in his letter to Mr. Gladstone, said at an 'Eighty Club' dinner on the 5th March :—

'The people of this country must know what the scheme is. They must be able to bring their judgment to bear on the question whether it presents dangers and risks which they cannot bring themselves to face, or whether it presents so little hope that they are unwilling to face those risks. They must know whether the scheme is one which will, or can, be accepted by Mr. Parnell. They must know whether there is any scheme which can be proposed by any responsible English Government which it will be in the power of Mr. Parnell, in the name of the people of Ireland, to accept. When they know these things, when they have had the policy of the Government clearly and fully placed before them, and not before, they will be in a position to make up their minds and come to a final judgment upon this great issue; and when they are so informed, so instructed, and so prepared, I do not doubt their ability to form a sound judgment upon it. For these reasons, although I have not been able to be a party

[1] See in Barry O'Brien's vivid *Life of Parnell* the tale of what Parnell said to his brother after a visit to the Governor of an American state ; and see also O'Donnell's *History of the Irish Parliamentary Party*. This writer thinks that Parnell was 'a bit of a Cataline,' a discontented aristocrat, and speaks of his early 'vague sympathy with Ireland as a fellow-sufferer with the Parnells.'—Vol. i. p. 255.

to this policy of examination and inquiry, I have done nothing to put any obstacles in the way. I will not be a party to any attempts to prejudge the policy of the Government by agitation of a political or sectarian character. . . . I will do all I can to enable the Government to have a fair field for a policy of peace to Ireland, and no one would be more rejoiced than myself if it should succeed.'

On the afternoon of the 8th April 1886 Mr. Gladstone issued from his recaptured house in Downing Street and, as convinced as Don Quixote of the rightness of his cause, went gallantly down through a deeply interested crowd of friends and foes to introduce the Bill for giving autonomy to Ireland. The measure had undergone transformations in drafting, and did not represent Mr. Gladstone's original ideas. He had at first wished to place Ireland upon the basis of a self-governing dominion, with full power over all internal affairs, raising and spending all her own revenue. This was, of course, the position which Parnell and his friends would have desired. It was also a proposition more logical, intelligible, and consistent than was the hybrid measure which, to persuade his English and Scottish adherents, he was obliged to introduce. Apart from other and more serious objections, it was urged that, if Ireland were placed in the position of New Zealand or Cape Colony, her Government and Legislature could, and probably would, refuse to make any contribution towards Imperial expenditure, the Army and Navy, and so forth, and would almost certainly raise part of their revenue for fiscal and protective purposes by taxing English imports. It was also thought that an Irish Government could not be trusted with certain subjects of internal legislation, especially where religion was concerned, or with so dangerous a plaything as a local

military force, or even an armed constabulary. The measure, therefore, contained provisions reserving to the Imperial Parliament certain subjects of Irish legislation and administration, forbidding the Irish Government to maintain any local forces, or to impose customs duties or co-related excise duties, and arranging that Ireland should make a contribution towards 'Imperial' expenditure. The ingenious proposal was that the customs and excise duties, which formed three-fourths of the total revenue collected in Ireland, should be levied under the Imperial authority, paid into the Imperial treasury, and appropriated so far as necessary towards paying the fixed Irish contribution to Imperial expenditure, including that of the Irish police force, the balance to be paid over to the Irish Government. This arrangement certainly killed two birds with one stone, saved free trade and secured the contribution. But, since Irish members were not to sit at Westminster, the proposal involved 'taxation without representation.' Ireland would be placed in a worse position than that against which the American colonies revolted. Moreover, it would be difficult for the British Parliament either to raise or to lower in future the existing duties. If they raised the duties, they would impose further taxation upon the unrepresented Irish. If they lowered them, they would diminish the balance to be paid over to Irish revenue. But if, on the other hand, the Irish Legislature were allowed to levy their own customs and excise duties the plan would be open to the equally terrible charge, from the English point of view, of abandonment of free trade principles, leading probably to exclusion of many English goods, and 'dissolution of fiscal unity.' Such a surrender would, no doubt, arouse the keen hostility of the English and Scottish commercial and industrial classes. In this

dilemma, Mr. Gladstone preferred to accept the horn of 'taxation without representation.' He met the difficulty, characteristically, in his first speech, by saying that, as the Irish leaders had consented to the arrangement, Ireland might be taken to have consented to such taxation. He said, also, in this speech that it was 'perfectly clear that, if Ireland is to have a domestic legislature, Irish Peers and Irish representatives cannot come here and control English and Scottish affairs.' This argument was insuperable, but so also was the argument that, in this case, the Irish Legislature should, like a free colony, have full control over all the legislation and taxation affecting their own island.

Gladstone, in fact, would have liked to give the full colonial status to Ireland, but the concessions with which he had to buy English support reduced his measure to an illogical and impossible scheme. Between grant of full colonial status and maintenance of the legislative union there is, in the case of Great Britain and Ireland, one *via media*, and one only, and that would involve a great constitutional change. It was the solution suggested, but not worked out, in these debates by Mr. Chamberlain, viz., to divide the whole of the United Kingdom into provinces, corresponding or not with the separate kingdoms from which it was constructed—and, while maintaining the Imperial Parliament, to allocate to the provincial Legislatures and Governments such subjects of legislation and departments of administration as might be prudent and advisable; in a word, to adapt to our own circumstances the scheme of the Canadian Constitution of 1867, with its distribution of power between the Dominion and the Provincial authorities. This, also, was the kind of system which Mr. Isaac Butt, supported by many moderate men in Ireland, had advocated, before he was so rudely set aside by Parnell and the extremists.

The reasoning by which Mr. Gladstone supported his proposals on April 8th was to the following effect. Coercion in Ireland had become habitual instead of exceptional. The agrarian crime in Ireland and the necessity of constant resort to special measures for enforcing law showed that the law was discredited in Ireland. Why discredited? Because it came 'to the people of that country with a foreign aspect and in a foreign garb.' Continuous and resolute coercion might, he said, be successful, but this could not be maintained except under an autocratic government, and with the condition of secrecy in public transactions. It could not be carried on against Ireland by England and Scotland, the two nations on earth 'most fondly attached to the essential principles of liberty.' In this connection he attached great importance to the decision of Lord Salisbury's Government not to renew the Coercion Act in 1885. The solution of the problem was to strip law of its foreign garb, and to 'invest it with a domestic character.' England, he said, makes her own laws as freely as if she were not connected with the smaller countries. Scotland was allowed, virtually, to do the same, but not Ireland. 'It is a problem not unknown in the history of the world . . . how to reconcile Imperial unity with diversity of legislation.' He quoted Grattan's fine sentence, 'I demand the continued severance of the Parliaments, with a view to the continued and everlasting unity of the Empire.' The orator then referred to the union under one monarchy of Norway and Sweden with absolutely independent legislatures. 'The Norwegians and Swedes are every year more and more feeling themselves to be children of a common country united by a tie which never is to be broken.' Not, as later events have shown, a very happy illustration. He also referred to

the success of the confederation between Austria and Hungary. Our own Act of Union, he said, had replaced two independent legislatures by one supreme authority. That supremacy was not now to be impaired. Men spoke of a reform of the administrative system of Ireland, but the fault of the system was simply that its spring of action was English not Irish. Unless there were an Irish Parliament by what miracle could the administration be made Irish and not English? No scheme for creating a central elective body to control specific branches of administration could have finality, for the Irish did not want this. 'I cannot,' he said, 'conceal the conviction that the voice of Ireland, as a whole, is at this moment clearly and constitutionally spoken. I cannot say it is otherwise, when five-sixths of its lawfully chosen representatives are of one mind in this matter.'

Mr. Gladstone said in this speech that the Act of Union had established a 'supreme statutory authority' over the whole United Kingdom. 'That supreme statutory authority it is not asked, so far as I am aware, and certainly it is not intended in the slightest degree to impair.' This was to repeat that dictum contained in one of his speeches before the elections when he said to the electors of Midlothian, 'We are, every man, woman, and child among us, convinced that it is the will of Providence that these islands should be bound together in a *United Kingdom*, and, from one end of Great Britain to the other, I trust there will not be a single representative returned to Parliament who for one moment would listen to any proposition tending to impair, visibly and sensibly to impair, the *unity of the Empire*.' [1]

[1] By the more old-fashioned speakers of that time 'United Kingdom' and 'Empire' were often used as interchangeable terms in certain connections in a way they would not be now. If in the last line of this quotation Mr. Gladstone

What meant these phrases? Lord Hartington suspected that they meant nothing at all, and were mere words corresponding with no realities in heaven above, or in the earth beneath. He spoke on the following day, April 9th. He described the position in which the Liberal party had stood before the elections, opposing the Irish demands, and defending the administration of the law in Ireland as it had been carried on by Lord Spencer. Thereby they had drawn upon themselves the bitter hostility of the Irish party, who had assisted to defeat them in the House of Commons, and had opposed them with all its might at the elections. He quoted Mr. Gladstone's utterances before the elections to show that they had given no notice of the policy now proposed. These dark and vague sayings had not prevented the Irish party from strenuously opposing the Liberals, nor had they created alarm or excitement, or even much interest in Great Britain. Gladstone had said that 'Providence' had bound these islands together as a United Kingdom. But what, asked Hartington, with his damaging matter-of-factness, *is* the United Kingdom? It is, he replied, 'the creation of a particular Act, the Act of Union.'

The country, therefore, had, before the elections, no idea of the vast proposal which was to be set before it if the Liberals came into power. He said:—

'Although no principle of a "mandate" may exist, there are certain limits which Parliament is morally bound to observe, and beyond which Parliament has, morally, not the right to go in its relations with the constituents. The constituencies of Great Britain are the source of the power

really meant the Empire, Ireland might, of course, have been given the independence of New Zealand without impairing *that* degree of unity. But the sense is, or should be, governed by the preceding use of the 'United Kingdom.'

at all events of this branch of Parliament, and I maintain that, in the presence of an emergency which could not be foreseen, the House of Commons has no right to initiate legislation, especially immediately upon its first meeting, of which the constituencies were not informed, and of which the constituencies might have been informed, and of which if they had been so informed, there is, at all events, the very greatest doubt as to what their decision might be.'

This, he pointed out, was not 'mere theory,' it had a very practical bearing. In many cases Liberals had won seats by narrow majorities, and the total majority, including the Irish, was not large. If the scheme of a new Irish Parliament and Government had been announced before the elections, the result would probably have been reversed. He referred to Gladstone's pre-election declaration that the work of dealing with the Irish question by any Government depending upon the Irish party would be extremely difficult. This consideration had not prevented Mr. Gladstone from displacing the Conservative Government and placing himself in that very position. The Government, he said, had taken upon themselves a 'tremendous responsibility.' Whatever might be the fate of this measure, its introduction would add vastly to the future difficulties of Irish administration.

Grattan's Parliament, Lord Hartington reminded the House, was a Protestant and Landlord Parliament. Was it not probable, had it continued to exist, that it would have resisted all those reforms which the Imperial Parliament had effected in Ireland? On the other hand, could any Irish Parliament have averted the economic evils which have befallen Ireland since then?

'We are a great deal too apt to attribute omnipotence to Parliaments and to Governments. In the presence of physical and economic causes and changes, I believe that

it is much nearer the truth to say that Parliaments and Governments, whatever they may be, are almost powerless.'

But these very reforms effected by the Imperial Parliament materially affected the situation.

'It may be, and I believe it was, substantially just that these changes should have been made . . . but at the same time it is not less just that the minority which has been deprived by our action, and not by the action of the people of Ireland, of almost all the rights and privileges and power which they possessed at the time of the union, should not be handed over, without due and adequate protection, at the hands of that Power by whose influence these vast and far-reaching changes have been effected.'

The time might come, he said, when not merely County Boards or Municipal Councils, but—

'some larger provincial, and perhaps even national organisation and co-ordination of local authorities may be required in England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. When that time comes, let Ireland share in whatever is granted to England, Scotland, or to Wales, but, when it comes, it will, in my opinion, be the outgrowth of institutions which have not yet been created.[1] The superstructure will be raised on foundations which have not yet been laid, and it would be unwise and impolitic . . . to attempt to begin at the top.'

Mr. Gladstone, however, he said, had discovered that it was not local institutions at all that the Irish party wanted, but—

'a practical separation from this country, national independence, the power to make their own laws, and to shape their own institutions, without any reference what-

[1] It must be remembered that at this date there were no elective County Councils in any part of the United Kingdom.

ever to the opinion that may be held here in respect to the wisdom, the justice, the equity of those laws, or to the fitness or the wisdom of those institutions.'

Lord Hartington pointed out the distinctions between the case of the United Kingdom and that of the self-governing colonies. The colonies were, at the nearest, 3000 miles away. The connection between them and ourselves was voluntary and not one which, if a colony manifested unmistakably its desire to terminate it altogether, we should maintain by force. He showed, at length, the essential impossibilities of the actual scheme resulting from the fact that, on the one hand, the Imperial Parliament, without Irish representatives in it, would have the power of levying certain taxation, and other important powers in Ireland, and, on the other hand, that Ireland would contribute a large sum to Imperial expenditure while ceasing to have any voice or vote in the Imperial Parliament which controlled both that expenditure and the policy to which it was due. He replied also to the nebulous contention of Mr. Gladstone that supreme authority over the whole United Kingdom would remain, as before, vested in the Imperial Government and Parliament.

'We shall be under one Sovereign, but the question is—Shall we be under one sovereign power? The sovereign power is the power of the Imperial Parliament. Will the power of the Imperial Parliament remain sovereign in Ireland? Nominally it will remain; will it be real?'

How, he asked, was it to be enforced in Ireland? By military force? 'It is impossible to administer the affairs of a country by means of an army.'

The difficulty of maintaining order in Ireland had, he

thought, been exaggerated. In so far as administration had failed in Ireland it was due to the fact that—

'Irish questions and the government of Ireland have too long and too habitually been made the battle-ground of political parties. Questions of Irish order have been too often subordinated to what, I have no doubt, have been honestly thought at the time to be interests of a superior or more pressing character.[1] But, Sir, I do not admit that, because this has been so, it need always be so. If, indeed, this be a necessity, then I am afraid no alternative lies before us but either resort to civil war or abandonment of our duties, our privileges, and our responsibilities. But, Sir, I refuse to believe it. I believe, at all events, that now, if ever, now that the people of this country have been brought face to face with the alternative of the disruption of the Empire on the one hand, or all the evils and calamities which, I admit, will follow on the rejection of this unfortunate measure, I believe that now, at all events, the people of this country will require that their representatives shall, in relation to Irish affairs, agree to sink all minor differences, and to unite as one man for the maintenance of this great Empire, to hand it down to our successors compact as we have received it from our forefathers, and at the same time to maintain throughout its length and breadth the undisputed supremacy of the law.'

This was the peroration of a speech which, as Lord Randolph Churchill said, when he followed it, profoundly impressed the House of Commons. Mr. Chamberlain wrote to express his 'unfeigned admiration,' and said, 'It was the finest you have ever made and was sustained throughout on the highest level.' An old social and racing friend, himself a Tory orator of no mean level, Mr. Henry Chaplin, wrote to congratulate 'on the best speech I have

[1] He evidently had in mind the perpetual Radical attempt to give precedence to remedial legislation over measures intended to reinforce the law.

ever heard you make by ten to one, and the most statesmanlike I have ever heard made by any one in Parliament. It may be a drawback in your eyes that, if it has half the effect in the country that it has had here, it will make you Prime Minister for certain.'

Lord Salisbury wrote to say that the 'very powerful speech of last night . . . will make a great difference in the political situation.' A fine orator of the older and grander school, the Duke of Argyll, wrote saying that he agreed with every word, and that the speech was the *weightiest* that Hartington had ever made, or that had been made by any one in these debates.

Among the letters of congratulation on this occasion was one from Mr. Auberon Herbert. He did not agree with the view of Irish policy taken by Lord Hartington, but had 'gratefully watched your courageous stand on your own opinions and your refusal to go simply with party in the matter.' He added, with splendid truth :—

'I think we may go right or wrong about Ireland or almost any great matter, and, if wrong, recover from our mistake ; but the one thing from which I think there is no salvation is when men begin to have no confidence in themselves and their own opinion, and to become the mere instruments of party. I have long hoped to see you break with what I have believed to be a false position, and I think your having done so will give a new sense of duty and a new power of action to hundreds of men throughout the country. Every man who consents to action of which he is believed to disapprove helps to lower the sense of individual responsibility in all others whom he influences, and the moment he refuses to do so any longer he wakes others from a mental and moral sleep.'

Throughout these debates Lord Hartington took what, in the history of mediæval philosophy, is called the 'realist' view ; Mr. Gladstone took the 'nominalist.' Men

are born, or bred, with this diversity of brain. Gladstone, son of the Oxford school, believed in what he called the 'union of hearts,' the higher or more spiritual unity of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and thought that the concrete, or visible, unity of government, so far from being necessary, stood in the way.[1] Hartington by his whole temperament, descent, education, pursuits, and pleasures in life, was a realist; he could not have accepted words in place of things, the invisible without the visible, spirit without body. He did not understand how the 'supreme authority' of the Imperial Parliament could at once persist and disappear. Sir Louis Mallet sent to him about this time a quotation from Mountstuart Elphinstone: 'Most mistakes in policy arise from ignorance of the plain maxim that it is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be,' and applied it to the desire of people at once to have Home Rule and not to have it. No one was less capable of this error than Lord Hartington. To him a thing either was or it was not. It had slowly become clear to him, at last, that, as he said, he and Mr. Gladstone 'did not mean the same thing' by the 'supremacy' of Parliament. Because Lord Hartington looked at facts as they were, or at least tried to do so, and not as interest or love of the more facile course might make him wish them to be, he rendered good service to the country, and attained to the influence which he had.

II

The introduction of the Irish Bill was followed by a pause in the progress of the measure. The second reading was not taken until the 10th May. The interval

[1] The minutely self-described history of John Henry Newman was that of a realist spirit slowly working its way out of a nominalist cocoon into full realism. Mr. Gladstone's course in politics was somewhat the reverse.

was filled by an oratorical war throughout the country. There was a remarkable meeting on 14th April at Her Majesty's Theatre in the Haymarket. Both Lord Salisbury and Lord Hartington spoke from the stage, and other leading Liberals and Conservatives. It was the first manifestation of the coalition which was to hold the State firm on its course for the next twenty years. The audience was mainly composed of Tories, and was in a state of strong emotion. Lord Hartington was received with a storm of cheering. When he first had occasion to mention the name of the Prime Minister there were groans and hisses. The speaker paused, and then said, in a moved tone which silenced the demonstration, 'Gentlemen! I hope that I may appeal to you not to make my task more difficult than it is by any manifestation of want of respect to one whom I shall always admire and revere as the leader of a great party, who, in my opinion, has conferred great advantages on this country, and who, at this moment, in my judgment, although I am bound to differ from him, is actuated by feelings as noble and honest as any that have ever inspired the conduct of an English statesman.' Lord Randolph Churchill, speaking elsewhere in London, said that the Prime Minister had appealed to the cowardice of the people, their dread of what, in Ireland, might follow a refusal. Lord Hartington, at the Opera House, said that this assuredly was not the motive of the Prime Minister, but that it was the sole motive of many who had followed him, in opposition to their own reason and conscience. He spoke on this memorable occasion with great feeling, force, and concentration.

He also spoke in Lancashire, where he met with a mixed reception from his own constituents; then, at the end of April at Edinburgh, and in May in Yorkshire. A veteran and distinguished Whig, Mr. Pleydell Bouverie, of

Wiltshire, wrote to congratulate him on a speech at Bradford. He said:—

'Its substance and its form are equally admirable, and it is an unanswerable argument of the most complete and statesmanlike character against this fatal Bill. I really do not think it omits anything which ought to be said, or says anything which ought to be omitted, and the whole case against the scheme may be safely rested on what you have thus said in the best possible spirit and way. You may have forgotten that, when you were a parliamentary youngster, I endeavoured to stir your ambition by pointing to the position you might, with your abilities and advantages, fairly aspire to reach. My forecast has been more than confirmed now by the event, and, as I am old, on the shelf, and want nothing, you will forgive my intrusion.'

On the 14th April, Lord Randolph Churchill urged upon Lord Hartington, 'the enormous desirability of your giving notice to-morrow of your intention to move the rejection of the Bill.' Any delay in giving notice would, he thought, be open to misinterpretation. 'There are many waverers. The only way, to my mind, of leading such persons is by resolute, prompt, and decided action.' Lord Hartington was willing to take the lead in the second reading debate, but doubted whether it would be better to move, in the usual form, the rejection of the Bill, or to defeat it with what is known as a 'reasoned amendment.' He consulted Mr. Chamberlain upon this point. The reply shows how things stood at the moment. Mr. Chamberlain said that a 'reasoned amendment,' would be fatal. He had a list of Liberal members who had promised to vote against the Bill, more than sufficient in number to destroy it in its present form. But the pressure from the constituencies was great. 'If you alter the motion of

rejection and give any excuse to waverers you will lose fifty votes at least.' Mr. Chamberlain had heard on good authority that, to win the battle, Mr. Gladstone might allow the retention of the Irish members in the Imperial Parliament. 'If it is true, I must vote for the second reading, and I estimate that from fifty to fifty-five will go with me.' But, in that case, Mr. Chamberlain believed that the Bill would perish by certain large amendments, which would be pressed in Committee, amendments intended to give a purely provincial instead of a national character to the Irish institutions.

Mr. Gladstone moved the second reading on the 10th May in a speech which was certainly feebler than either his first or his final speech in these debates, especially than the last, which was a fine oratorical effort. His main argument was still the will of the Irish people manifested in the late elections. He said :—

'I live in a country of representative institutions; I have faith in representative institutions, and I will follow them out to their legitimate consequences; and I believe it to be dangerous to the Constitution of this country, and to the unity of the Empire, to show the smallest hesitation about the adoption of that principle.'

To the argument that Home Rule was incompatible with unity he opposed a singular and illuminating defence, which showed how his genius transmuted words into things. This question, he said, was settled in his mind on the first night of the session, when Parnell had declared that what he sought was 'autonomy' for Ireland. 'Autonomy,' said Mr. Gladstone, 'is a name well known to European law and practice as importing, under a historical signification sufficiently definite for every practical purpose, the management and control of the territory to which the

word is applied, and as being perfectly compatible with the full maintenance of imperial unity.' To the charge of 'taxation without representation' Mr. Gladstone replied that 'nothing but the consent of Ireland could have induced Her Majesty's Government to contemplate such a thing for a single moment,' as if the unwilling assent of Parnell, given for tactical purposes, could have bound the future Irish Parliament. As to Ireland ceasing to have any share in the control of imperial affairs, he replied (1) that oversea affairs did not affect Ireland so much as they did England and Scotland; (2) that there was now a provision in the Bill which would enable Ireland to vote a contribution in case of a great war. He hinted, however, that some modification of the principle of 'exclusion' might be introduced into the Bill in Committee. When, for instance, it was proposed to alter the Excise and Customs duties, Irish representatives might be allowed to attend the Imperial Parliament 'to take a share in the transaction of that business.' As to foreign affairs, treaties of commerce and so forth, there might be some system of a Joint Commission to consider those matters. These suggestions were aimed at the hearts of Liberal waverers, who might be induced to vote for a second reading. Lord Hartington then rose to move the rejection of the Bill, and made the most powerful *debating* speech, probably, of his life. As to Gladstone's singular argument about 'autonomy,' he said:—

'Is this great question, which has long been perplexing the mind of my right honourable friend, to be solved by a single sentence spoken in debate, for a manifest and obvious purpose, by the leader of the Irish National party, when that sentence is in direct contradiction to almost everything which he and his friends have hitherto said, and to the repeated assurances which

they have given us that they were working and would work for, and would be satisfied with nothing but, complete separation. Did the hon. member for Cork ever use the words "severance of the last link," or "complete independence," or did he ever say that no bounds were to be set to the independence of the Irish nation?'

Mr. Gladstone had said that Government were charged with experimenting on this question, and he had defined experimenting as 'treating grave questions without grave causes.'

'I do not deny,' said Lord Hartington, 'that there may be grave causes, and that this is a grave question, but I should rather be inclined to define experimenting in politics as treating grave questions for grave causes, but without grave and mature consideration. Whatever may be the consideration which my right hon. friend may have himself given to this policy and this measure, it is certain that the country and its representatives have had no sufficient opportunity of forming their judgment or giving their decision upon it. And it is, also, equally notorious that, with very few exceptions, the colleagues of the right honourable gentleman, up to the moment of their joining the present Government, had formed opinions, and expressed opinions upon the question of Ireland, I will not say diametrically opposed to, but certainly very little in harmony with, the policy of the Prime Minister.'

Mr. Gladstone's scheme was not only an experiment, but a 'novel experiment, for never, I believe, in the history of the world, has the attempt been made to carry on the government of a country upon any such system as that which is now proposed for Ireland.' Mr. Gladstone had said that previous Governments had carried on Irish administration by a 'judicious mixture' of measures of conciliation and measures of coercion. Lord Hartington replied that no Minister had ever admitted that these

measures were introduced upon any such principle. Each measure had been proposed because the Government thought it a measure of justice or a measure of necessity. He challenged Mr. Gladstone's review of history. Grattan's Parliament could not have endured. That experiment must have ended either in complete separation or in a legislative union sooner or later. Mr. Gladstone had said that Lord Hartington had taken a great responsibility on himself in his opposition to this measure. Lord Hartington replied that he and his friends were so acting because they knew that the Bill could not be defeated by the Conservatives alone. He added :—

'We believe this Bill is a mischievous measure. We believe it is not one which will heal the feud, the long-standing feud, between Great Britain and Ireland. We believe it does not satisfy any of the essential conditions which have been laid down by my right honourable friend himself. We believe it is not a final settlement of the question. We believe there is nothing in this measure which conclusively commends it, or ought to commend it, to those who profess Liberal principles ; and, holding these opinions, we who have the misfortune to differ from my right hon. friend and from the bulk of the party which he leads, have thought it necessary not to conceal our opinions, not to take a passive or a neutral part, but to take that part which alone could give effect to the opinions we entertain, and which alone, in our opinion, can result in the defeat of this measure, which we believe to be injurious to the best interests of the nation.'

Lord Hartington, then, in reply to Mr. Gladstone's question, said that he was not bound in opposing a measure to state an alternative policy, but that he saw no reason why there should not be an attempt to confer upon Ireland local institutions of a kind which were also applicable

to other parts of the United Kingdom. This he believed to be 'a more statesmanlike method of proceeding than to attempt to confer on Ireland a cut-and-dry constitution, separating and cutting off Ireland completely from all political connection with the United Kingdom of England and Scotland.'

He objected to Mr. Gladstone's treatment of the exclusion of Irish representatives from the Imperial Parliament, or their inclusion for some ill-defined purposes, as a detail which could be settled in Committee. This was, he said, on the contrary, of the essence of the matter. He pointed out what immense changes the Bill would effect. It did not merely grant local self-government to Ireland; it broke up the political unity of the kingdom; it placed restrictions upon the power and the policy of the Imperial Parliament. The Bill would destroy the very essence of political unity. Lord Hartington said:—

'We may have not only different laws in Ireland from those which prevail in England and Scotland, but laws founded on entirely different principles and administered in a totally different spirit. And I say that is no extravagant supposition. If the principles recently preached by the Irish Land League and the Irish National League be translated into legislation by the Irish Parliament, and if laws founded on these principles be administered by those who have had control over the National League, then we shall find in Ireland a state of law relating to property, liberty, and security of life which will be of an altogether different character to that prevailing in this country. Can it be said that the unity of the Empire is maintained when an Englishman going from England to Ireland, or an Irishman remaining in Ireland, finds himself subject to a code of laws administered in a totally different spirit from that which prevails in the rest of the Empire?'

He then discussed the position of the minority in Ireland under the proposed system. Certain provisions intended for their protection had indeed been inserted in the Bill, but would it be possible to tie down the Irish Government by these restrictions?

'I may be included,' said Lord Hartington, 'among those representatives of class whose evidence is discredited evidence, whose opinion upon this subject is not worth having; but I shall not be debarred, nevertheless, from expressing my opinion of the character, the political antecedents, and the political record of the men whom we are now told are the representatives of the vast majority of the people of Ireland, and to whose hands will be entrusted, if this Bill should pass, the future destinies of Ireland. I shall call as a witness no discredited representative of class, but I shall call my right honourable friend himself.'

He quoted the famous denunciation of Parnell made by Mr. Gladstone in that speech at Leeds in 1881, which formed the prelude to the arrest of the Irish leader, and said that the doctrines of violence and rapine then denounced had never yet been repudiated by the Irish leaders. Mr. Gladstone at Leeds had upheld the policy of strongly maintaining order. 'If,' said Lord Hartington, 'this war—this final conflict between law on the one side and sheer lawlessness on the other—is to continue, that is the policy which I venture to recommend still, but for recommending which I and my friends are called the representatives of class.' The circumstances of 1881 were not 'materially altered,' neither, therefore, should the policy be substantially altered.

'I see no reason, simply because the party professing those principles has acquired greater strength and possibly

a greater claim to represent a large number of the people of Ireland—I see no reason why we are to retire from that which has been called by my right hon. friend a conflict between law on the one side and sheer lawlessness on the other; and why we are to sacrifice, without any further struggle, the principles upon which, in the opinion of my right hon. friend at that time, the structure and basis of society reposed.'

The Government delayed rather than pressed the conclusion of the debate, and the division was not taken until the 8th June. The result was uncertain to the last. Mr. Gladstone had told his party on the 27th May that he would consider any plan for the retention of the Irish members, provided that it did not interfere with the liberty of the Irish legislature, or make the working of the Imperial Parliament impossible. The Bill, if read a second time, would be recast, and not taken in Committee until the autumn. Would these last concessions sap the opposition of the Radicals who went with Mr. Chamberlain, and were, with him, deeply committed to approval of some kind of Irish self-government? Would the continuous pressure from the constituencies have been too much for Liberal Unionist consciences to withstand?

Attempts were made to discover some formula which would enable, or, rather, compel, Mr. Chamberlain and his group to vote for the second reading. A memorandum by Lord Hartington written at this time shows that, in his opinion, there would be no reality in any form of words devised to cover irreconcilable divergencies of intention. Mr. Gladstone's concessions to meet English opinion had already put a strain upon the rope which bound him to the Irish Nationalists as great as it would bear. The Irish parliamentarians were themselves straining to the utmost their own connection with Irish extremists. It was not

possible, in this tug of war, to draw Mr. Gladstone over a certain line.

The division was taken amid intense excitement before sunrise on the 8th June. Government were defeated by thirty votes, 343 against 313. Ninety-three Liberals had voted against the Bill. Never since then has an English Government been defeated in a critical division in consequence of a great revolt in its own camp, and this was twenty-five years ago. Will it ever happen again, or are party chains now too strong?

On the following day, 9th June, the Prime Minister, after a Cabinet Council, advised the Queen that Parliament should be dissolved, and that the opinion of the country should be taken. He flung himself into the struggle with vigour amazing in a man now in his seventy-eighth year, appealing freely to the wisdom of the 'masses' against the 'classes,' who, he alleged, had been politically in the wrong, always and upon every question. An arrangement was rapidly made between the Conservatives and the Liberal Unionists to the effect that, where a Liberal Unionist already held a seat, the Conservatives should not oppose him, but support him against any Gladstonian candidate. But in the Liberal Unionist party itself there was a certain division of opinion as to Irish policy. Lord Hartington wrote in reply, on May 24th, to questions put to him by a follower important in matters of organisation in the north :—

'I do not think that the time has come when Liberal Unionists can with advantage commit themselves to any definite Irish policy; but I see no reason why they should limit themselves to opposition to Mr. Gladstone's Bills, or refuse to indicate their willingness to support safe and well-considered measures for the satisfaction of what is reasonable in the Irish demand. All Liberals have, I think, pledged themselves to support an extension of local self-

government in Ireland on lines similar to those which may be adopted for the rest of the United Kingdom. Others are quite willing to consider favourably a larger measure for Ireland than has yet been proposed for England and Scotland, provided that it is founded on principles which would be applicable in case of necessity to the remainder of the United Kingdom, and that the real unity of the Government of the United Kingdom, and the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament, and the protection of all classes from injustice or oppression are fully secured. I do not see any reason why a candidate holding opinions within these limits should not be supported by the moderate Liberal party. It is certainly undesirable that a policy of coercion alone should be attributed to us; though personally I should always be prepared to maintain that the law must be enforced, and that the measures necessary to secure its enforcement should be adopted, by whatever name they may be called.

'I do not think that it is necessary to take up a position of antagonism to Mr. Chamberlain and the section of the party which he leads. I believe that our objects are the same, the difference between us being simply that he sees less difficulty than I do in framing a measure which would give satisfaction to reasonable Irish aspirations and at the same time maintain the substantial authority of the Imperial Government and Parliament.'

The address which Lord Hartington issued to his constituents on 15th June was an extremely well-reasoned statement of policy, and, as the question is still with us, it is of living interest even now, twenty-five years later. The whole question, he said, was not one of justice, or right, but of expediency. To what extent could concession be safely made to the desire for self-government undoubtedly existing among a majority of the Irish population?

'The measure introduced by Government reserved to a Parliament of Great Britain, in which the Irish people would not have been represented at all, the control over

vital matters in which they are as much interested as Englishmen or Scotchmen—such as the conduct of foreign and colonial affairs, the regulation of trade, and the imposition of duties of Customs and Excise. At the same time it entrusted to an Irish Legislature, and to a Government responsible only to that Legislature, a control practically exclusive, not only over affairs of a local character, but also over legislation and administration of laws affecting the relations of property, the prevention and punishment of crime, and the civil and religious rights and liberties of the whole community.

'To say that these are exclusively Irish affairs, and may therefore be safely entrusted to the management of the Irish, is misleading. To recognise this fact is not to import into the controversy the elements of religious bigotry. Not only the Protestants of Ulster, and those who are scattered over the whole country, but many Roman Catholics also, regard this measure with real alarm, as fatal to their prosperity and their liberties. To ignore this fact is to trifle with the question, and is *an attempt to escape by specious phrases from the realities of the position.*'[1]

Lord Hartington pointed out that Mr. Gladstone continued to pass over these difficulties *sub silentio.* He was therefore compelled to conclude that 'within the lines of the plan of the Government it is impossible to devise any adequate protection for those who are admitted to need it. That plan surrenders powers which the Imperial Government and the Imperial Parliament must retain, if the first duties of government are to be discharged.'

'It is easy,' the address continued, 'to dismiss with contempt the alternative plans which have been suggested by those who decline to accept the Separatist scheme, but are yet willing to concede that which they deem reasonable in the Irish demand. The difficulties are great, and I

[1] Italics are not in the original, but so true and characteristic a sentence deserves them.

am certainly not prepared to commit myself to the details of any of the plans which have been proposed ; but, in my opinion, there are certain conditions which may be clearly stated, which are essential to any plan which can be accepted by the country.

'Parliament ought to continue to represent the whole, and not merely a part, of the United Kingdom. The powers which may be conferred on subordinate local bodies should be delegated, not surrendered, by Parliament. The subjects to be delegated should be clearly defined, and the right of Parliament to control and revise the action of subordinate legislative or administrative authorities should be equally clearly reserved. And, lastly, the administration of justice ought to remain in the hands of an authority which is responsible to Parliament.

'It is asserted that no measure thus limited will satisfy the demands of the Irish people. No doubt the representatives of the Nationalist party in Parliament will declare themselves dissatisfied with any concession which falls short of the demands that they have been encouraged to make. But, if the great majority of the people of the United Kingdom now distinctly and firmly declare that they can give no assent to measures which will loosen the bonds of union between the two countries, and that they are ready, at the same time, to give to Ireland as large a measure of self-government as is consistent with that union, it remains to be proved whether the Irish people will be persuaded to maintain a hopeless and unnecessary contest.'

It had been alleged, Lord Hartington added, that, in face of a determined opposition by ninety Irish members, supported by an English and Scotch minority, it would prove impossible to carry on a parliamentary government. He did not believe it, and intimated that, if this should prove to be necessary in defence of the existence of parliamentary institutions, it would be a duty to adopt a policy with regard to Irish representation which might be

considered to be analogous to defensive war. He concluded his address by saying:—

'In advocating the policy, which I have attempted to define, I deny that I have seceded from the principles or traditions of the Liberal party. I contend, on the contrary, that I am maintaining them, and, with them, the best security for freedom and justice in every part of the United Kingdom.'

The Irish people still maintain that which Lord Hartington called 'a hopeless and unnecessary contest,' but, on the other hand, it may perhaps be contended that they have not yet received 'as large a measure of self-government as is consistent with' the union of the two countries, so that the conditions of the test as posited by Lord Hartington have not yet been fulfilled. The more moderate Home Rule Bill of 1893 did not comply any more than that of 1886 with Lord Hartington's condition that subjects to be delegated to the local legislature should be specified and clearly defined, as they are in the Canadian Constitution. In the 1893 debates his nephew, Mr. Victor Cavendish, the present Duke of Devonshire, proposed such definition and specification as an amendment to the Bill, but Mr. Gladstone adhered to the method of leaving to the proposed Irish legislature all power in Irish affairs from which it was not expressly debarred. It makes all the difference in the world which of these methods is adopted, the Canadian precedent or that of the United States.

The electoral campaign was now opened, and there were the usual 'alarums and excursions.' Mr. Gladstone took the field with hardly any abatement of his old energy and valour. Lord Hartington fought the most strenuous campaign of his life. He spoke at Rossendale, Manchester, Glasgow, Paisley, Cardiff, Bristol, Plymouth, Chesterfield,

Rossendale again, and at Derby, the capital of the county where his family had played so large a part. The Gladstonian standing for Derby was Sir William Harcourt. Two rather touching letters show that he felt keenly his late colleague's acceptance of the invitation from Derby to speak there. Harcourt's political career was certainly open to criticism, but he was a good friend and a man of large and generous character.

Sir William Harcourt to Lord Hartington, 27th June 1886.

'What you said to me about the possibility of your coming to try to defeat me at Derby took me so by surprise that I was hardly able to realise the thing at the moment. On reflection I feel bound to say before it is too late what a bitter thing it would be to me to find myself placed in personal hostility to you after the long and close relation in which we have stood.

'I judge the case by the impossibility I should have felt myself in taking any action individually against yourself, but I do not, of course, consider that you are at all bound by the same considerations.

'If there is to be war between us it will be to me the saddest thing which has befallen me in public life, but I shall have the satisfaction of feeling it was not of my seeking, and that I have done all in my power to avoid it.'

Sir William Harcourt to Lord Hartington, 28th June 1886.

'Your kind letter of this morning was an immense relief to me. Anything which brought me into personal collision with you would be to me the most painful thing in the world, as the recollection of our intimate relations for so many years is to me a deeply cherished feeling which no political difference can change.

'I can quite understand the pressure to which you were subjected by those who agree with your views in Derbyshire. At the same time I hope you will not in the future

regret that you did not find yourself obliged to emphasise and widen the breach between the two sections of the Liberal party here as elsewhere which we must all desire to heal.

'I do not know whether it is by accident or instinct that we have hitherto been all of us able to avoid placing ourselves in individual conflict with our former colleagues of a recent date, and I am sure you would not willingly find yourself unnecessarily an exception to that happy rule.'

Lord Hartington was supported in Lancashire by his old 'fair trade' opponent, Mr. Farrer Ecroyd, but was bitterly opposed by the Gladstonians. 'They have begun the contest in earnest,' wrote (2nd July) to him Mr. Thomas Brooks of Crawshaw Hall, 'on the other side; in fact, they seem to have gone mad. Mr. Gladstone has not said those words in vain, "the masses against the classes."' Lord Hartington wrote to his father on 9th July:—

'A great many of my old supporters seem to be very angry, and are working as hard as they can against me. Both the Manchester Liberal papers are strong against me, and we are certainly on the unpopular side with the mob this time. I have only had one very noisy meeting, but the others were decidedly cold.'

Rossendale was, however, carried, with the Tory assistance, on 15th July. Some other leading Liberal Unionists were less successful, and Mr. Goschen and Mr. Trevelyan were defeated in Scotland. But the Gladstonians were beaten. The Tories came back 316 strong instead of 251; and the Liberal Unionists were slightly diminished, yet were 74 in number. Thus the Unionist alliance were 390 in the new Parliament, the allied sections led by Gladstone and Parnell amounted to 280, and there was a majority of 110 against the Home Rule policy. This result placed the Liberal Unionists in a commanding

position, although, if on any occasion they merely abstained from voting, the Tories could still defeat the Gladstone-Parnell combination. The electoral defeat of that combination had not been very decisive, especially if votes were counted instead of seats.[1] There can be no doubt that the failure of the Home Rule proposal was due to the action of Lord Hartington, Mr. Chamberlain, and Mr. Bright. Not so important was the defeat in Parliament as the defeat in the following elections, because, even if the Bill of 1886 had passed the House of Commons, it would certainly have been rejected by the House of Lords. If Gladstone had returned with a majority, it would not have been easy for the House of Lords to offer resistance. These results were prevented by the influence of Lord Hartington over moderate Liberals, of Mr. Chamberlain over a section of Radicals, and the weight carried by the name of John Bright. But all these forces, combined with the regular army of Conservatism, did but narrowly defeat the host of believers in Gladstone in England, Scotland, and Wales.

Mr. Gladstone resigned office at the end of July. Now began the long Unionist tenure of power which, with one interval of three years, lasted from July 1886 to December 1905. Lord Randolph Churchill said, at the opening of the new Parliament in August 1886:—

'The great sign-posts of our policy are equality, similarity, and simultaneity, as far as possible, in the development of a genuinely popular system of local government in the four countries which form the United Kingdom.'

This marked the Unionist policy of the future tending towards, firstly, county, and then, perhaps, provincial

[1] In Great Britain the votes cast were: Gladstonians, 1,344,000; Liberal-Unionists, 397,000; Conservatives, 1,041,000; so that the Unionist majority was only 76,000 excluding the vote in Ireland. Including actual and potential electors in Ireland the Unionists were probably in a minority.

institutions for the whole United Kingdom, and, although Lord Hartington would not have been inclined to move so fast as the Tory Democrat, this was, as his addresses and speeches show, at the foundation of his own ideas.

His speeches throughout this great campaign in Parliament and on the platform impressed his opponents as well as his allies. Mr. F. O'Donnell, an Irish Home Ruler, who long sat with him in the House of Commons, has written :—

'The Marquis of Hartington appeared to me to be the only statesman who, if he had dealt with the subject, could have reconciled Nationalism and Imperialism in Ireland. His subsequent objections to Mr. Gladstone's scheme of Home Rule were all unanswerable, and I, a thorough maintainer of Irish legislative independence, acknowledge that they were so. Except, perhaps, on financial subjects, there was more relevant matter and more broad thought in one of Lord Hartington's speeches than in a round dozen of the great Parliamentarian's utterances.' [1]

The contrast between Gladstone and Hartington was that between those eternal opponents, the sea and the rock. The imaginative and sentimental waves broke vainly against and around the opposing strength of character.

[1] And, elsewhere, the same candid writer says :—

'Lord Hartington always impressed me with the conviction that he was the English statesman above all others who could introduce the proposal which would solve the difficulty between England and Ireland, provided only he was convinced of the rectitude and expediency of the step.'—*History of the Irish Parliamentary Party* (Longmans, 1910).

CHAPTER XXIII

LORD SALISBURY'S SECOND ADMINISTRATION, 1886 TO 1892

LORD SALISBURY'S first idea was that the new Government should be formed by Lord Hartington. He had himself been Prime Minister for a short period; he was philosophical, magnanimous, and superior to personal ambitions, and he would have been contented to carry on that which chiefly interested him, the work of the Foreign Office. If, moreover, Lord Hartington were Prime Minister, he would also, of course, be leader in the House of Commons, and this would solve a domestic question then vexing the Tory party. Their Hector in recent warfare had been the still youthful Lord Randolph Churchill. He had won the heart of the Tory part of the democracy by his hard hitting, and by the cavalier insolence of his assaults upon Mr. Gladstone. He was an iconoclast, and dared to assail with impious ridicule that venerable image of the Prime Minister which had formed itself in the public mind. He had risen as much through revolt against the constituted authorities of his own party as through warfare against their opponents, and stood out in the popular imagination with infinitely more distinctness than any other Tory leader. He had the restless and ambitious spirit of the young Buonaparte, and could not rest until he was First Consul. When the Conservatives came into power in June 1885, he refused to accept office unless Sir Stafford Northcote were re-

moved from the leadership in the House of Commons; and he was successful. Sir Michael Hicks Beach occupied the vacant place during the short Administration. Sir Michael, a proud and self-respecting country gentleman, was unwilling, in July 1886, to retain the lead with a second in command more popular and powerful in the party at large than himself. Evidently the leadership in the House of Commons must pass to Lord Randolph, unless Lord Hartington would accept it. Hartington's social and political position was superior to that of the cadet of the House of Churchill, and he was regarded with more general and real esteem. Lord Randolph had always treated him with ceremonious respect. When, on one occasion, this failed, Lord Randolph wrote a kindly-received apology. He stood, it seemed, in some awe of a man who was not only a leading statesman but also a great figure in the social world, whose word and opinion carried weight in aristocratic circles and clubs. Early in 1887, Lord Randolph told a Liberal Unionist friend that he felt that Lord Hartington hated him politically and ignored him socially. He recognised later that this was not a well-founded suspicion; he was a guest at Chatsworth; and they were on friendly terms enough. But he had, perhaps, rather the feeling of the Duke in Disraeli's *Lothair:* 'St. Aldegonde was the only one of his sons-in-law whom the Duke really considered and a little feared. When St. Aldegonde was serious, his influence over men was powerful.'[1] Lord Randolph had indeed some reason, based on bygone encounters, for his views as to Lord Hartington's feelings. The acute observer who wrote 'Essence of Parliament' in *Punch*

[1] It was thought by some that Disraeli drew the character of St. Aldegonde from Lord Hartington. Whether this was so or not, it might stand very well as a clever sketch from this model.

for the benefit of future generations, describing one such encounter, in the year 1881, says:—

'Randolph could not have been very happy after Lord Hartington had finished with him. Hartington not often roused from his chronic condition of passionless indifference. Randolph, among other charming qualities, possesses the secret of moving the Marquis to astonishing exhibitions of sledge-hammer contempt.'

The view, at this conjuncture, of another important leader must be given.

Mr. Chamberlain to Lord Hartington.

'HIGHBURY, *July* 16, 1886.

'I am enjoying myself very much here, and am revelling in the delights of Capua, that is to say, I am playing lawn tennis and reading French novels—the while accompanied by unlimited tobacco. You will easily understand that I have no intention of giving up this blissful existence to come to London unless it is absolutely necessary.

'As to the situation: of course I could not join any Coalition; it would be absurd in me, and I need not argue it.

'With you it is somewhat different. You might join and be perfectly consistent.

'But if you do you must make up your mind to cease to be or call yourself a Liberal.

'The force of circumstances will be irresistible, and you will be absorbed in the great Constitutional party. The fate of the Peelites will be the fate of the Hartingtonians—they will be probably swallowed up and digested by the party to which they adhere.

'I do not suppose that you desire this, and I have therefore always assumed that you would refuse to head or to join a Coalition Government. In that case we must all give a loyal support to the Conservatives provided that

they do not play the fool either in foreign policy or in reactionary measures at home. They might count on some years of power—after which, if Mr. Gladstone is out of the way, the Liberal party will probably pick itself together again, and I hope may be strong enough to turn them out.

'I do not see how we can find them an Irish Secretary, but I think we might suggest a policy which would last a year or two, and that is as much as can be expected at this time.'

Lord Salisbury met Lord Hartington on the morning of the 24th July. The latter, in a letter on the following day to Mr. Chamberlain, said that—

'Salisbury told me that he wished to advise the Queen to send for me to form a Government. I told him that I thought it was impossible, and, after consulting H. James and others, I wrote to him to Osborne finally declining. I gather from him that he will not make any difficulty about undertaking it himself, and I do not think there will be any further offer of coalition, though he admits and deplores his weakness as to men in the House of Commons.'

The following is the letter which Lord Hartington wrote to Lord Salisbury on this evening of decision:—

Devonshire House, *24th July* 1886.

My dear Lord Salisbury,—I have considered as well as I have been able what you said to me this morning. I have also seen Sir Henry James, Lord Northbrook, and Lord Derby.

I have come to the conclusion that the difficulties in the way of my forming a Government are so insuperable that it would be useless for me to attempt it.

I have had some means of ascertaining the opinions of the unofficial, as well as of the ex-official members of the Liberal Unionist party, and I am convinced that I could not obtain the support of the whole or nearly the whole of them for a Government the main strength of which

must be Conservative. They have represented themselves to their constituencies as Liberals, and nothing will induce many of them to act with Conservatives in general opposition to Liberals.

It is scarcely worth while to discuss whether this attitude is reasonable and logical or not. The important fact is that the Liberal opposition to Home Rule would be broken up, and the fraction of the party which declined to follow me would inevitably gravitate towards the Home Rule portion of the party led by Mr. Gladstone.

I have to look at the question from two points of view, (1) that of the future of the Liberal party, and (2) that of the immediate future and the best means of maintaining the Union. The first has, perhaps, more interest for me than for you; but national as well as party interests are concerned in a step which, so far as it might succeed at all, would have the effect of withdrawing from the Liberal party all its most modern elements, and leaving it a purely Radical and Democratic party.

But I do not believe that compensation for this evil, as I should esteem it, would be obtained by securing any better stability for the Union. If Home Rule is to be resisted it must be, not by the Conservatives alone, but by the assistance of a party which not only is, but is acknowledged to be, Liberal. There is no name which could be invented which would prevent an Administration resting mainly on the support of 320 Conservatives being, in the public estimation, a Conservative Administration. The Liberal resistance to Home Rule would devolve on Mr. Chamberlain and his friends, whose position would shortly become untenable, and the Liberal party as a whole would soon become identified with Home Rule.

I believe, therefore, that, as I endeavoured to state to you this morning, the most useful part which I can now take is to afford to you an independent but friendly support. In this course I think that I can rely on the assistance of Mr. Chamberlain, though I have had but little conversation with him since the elections. At all events I am sure that it is in this position alone that his active co-operation with

me will be possible, and that it is of the greatest importance to secure it.—I remain, yours sincerely,

HARTINGTON.

On the same day Lord Hartington, in a letter to Mr. Goschen, said :—

'Lord Salisbury came to me this morning to tell me that he wished to tell the Queen that he thought I ought to form a Government. He admitted that he was not certain that his friends would agree to support such an Administration, but he would be willing to serve in it himself, and he thought that he could obtain their concurrence. I told him that though this solution had been suggested to me as a possibility, I had not thought so much of it as of the probability of his asking me to join him. I pointed out the objections which I saw to it, but told him that I should like before giving him an answer to consult those whom I could see to-day. In the course of conversation he excluded Chamberlain, and said he thought it would be too sharp a curve for both him and Chamberlain to sit in the same Cabinet. This, I think, was really conclusive. Although Chamberlain would not have joined, the fact of my not being able to ask him would remove any possibility of the Government's being in public estimation anything but a Conservative one. I have seen Northbrook, Derby, Stalbridge, and H. James, and have written to him that I consider the difficulties insuperable. I think he is quite ready to accept, though he would have preferred the other solution. It is possible that there may be a further offer to some of us to join him, but I do not much expect it. My answer is really a refusal to both proposals. He said that if I declined he hoped I would let him talk over policy with him. I mentioned your name, but I could not gather whether he was likely to ask you separately or not. He said there would be difficult personal questions involved. He has gone to Osborne, and remains there till Monday.' [1]

[1] This letter was published in the *Life of Lord Goschen*, by Mr. Arthur Elliott (Longmans, 1911).

Lord Hartington thus for the second time refused to be Prime Minister. Two or three days later Sir Henry James, writing to him the news of the town, said: 'It is true that Lord Randolph is to be Chancellor of the Exchequer and leader in the Commons. I gather that he would take nothing else. He would not have served under you.' In a letter on the following day Sir Henry James said:—

'I saw Randolph Churchill yesterday evening. He is anxious, I can see, to keep on very good terms with us, and I think he also fully approves of the course which you have taken. He is nervous about leading the House, and is naturally desirous of as much aid from you as possible.'

Certainly the antithesis of the Cavendish to the Churchill was complete. One refused to accept, the other tried to seize the 'Crown'; and, in the end, fell by the qualities through which he had risen. He was also, perhaps, already suffering from the approach of the malady which, in a few years, was to prove fatal to a brilliant existence.

The new Administration was formed, and Lord Hartington received from the Queen this letter:—

'OSBORNE, *August* 6, 1886.

'The Queen has hesitated till now to write to Lord Hartington. She would have liked, as he knows, that he and others should have joined in a Coalition Government, which she believes was the general wish of the country. But she saw Lord Hartington's reasons against this course in his letter to Lord Salisbury. She will not dispute his reasons, much as she regrets them; but, this *being the case*, she thinks it imperative on him and his followers to support Lord Salisbury's Government on all important questions, on which she feels sure Lord Salisbury will gladly consult with him; for if, as he has declared, Lord Hartington

cannot form a Government himself, he is, she considers, bound to support Lord Salisbury, so that the country may not be perpetually exposed to changes of Government, which upset everything and give a painful uncertainty at home and abroad.'

Lord Hartington replied thus:—

Lord Hartington to the Queen, August 6, 1886.

'Lord Hartington with his humble duty begs to thank your Majesty for the gracious letter which he received last night.

'Lord Hartington can well understand the desire, which is shared by many of your Majesty's subjects, that an open and recognised coalition should take place between men of different political parties, who are nevertheless at the present time in general agreement on the most important question of the day. But Lord Hartington is still of opinion that, whatever might be the case with a few leading statesmen and members of both Houses, there remains on the part of the large majority of the constituencies so strong an attachment to party organisations and associations that no real fusion of parties could at present take place; and that all that would really be accomplished would be a reconstruction which would no doubt considerably strengthen the Conservative party, but would at the same time deprive the Liberal party of all its most prominent and moderate elements. Lord Hartington humbly agrees with your Majesty that it will be the duty of the Liberal Unionist party to give to the present Government all the support in its power which may be necessary to retain it in office until the Liberal party can be reorganised on principles which they can approve, and he trusts that the policy of your Majesty's present advisers will be such as to make this no very difficult task. It will probably not be for the advantage of the Government itself that such support should be given ostentatiously or indiscriminately; but Lord Hartington will gladly avail himself of any oppor-

tunities which may present themselves of confidential consultation between himself and his friends and Lord Salisbury and his colleagues.

'Lord Hartington again ventures to tender to your Majesty his most sincere thanks for the expressions of approval of his conduct which your Majesty has been graciously pleased to convey to him.'

On August 5th a meeting of Liberal Unionists was held at Devonshire House, and Lord Hartington explained his reasons for not accepting office. He would, he said, have been nothing more than the Liberal leader of a Conservative Government. He still hoped, he said, for the reunion of the Liberal party. But this, he added, could only be if the Gladstonians again became Unionists; not a very hopeful prospect.

The question, of some real importance, arose as to where the Liberal Unionists should sit in the House of Commons, which does not in its physical construction make provision for a 'Centre' party. Should they sit on the Government side, or on that occupied by the Gladstonian Liberals and the Irish? If the latter, should members of the late Administration sit on the front bench or below the gangway? Some, Lord Salisbury, for instance, thought that they should sit on the Government side. Lord Hartington was at first inclined to think that, while the party should sit on the Opposit on side, the leaders should sit not on the ex-ministerial bench but below the gangway. Mr. Chamberlain and others held that, in order to assert the claim to be the true Church of Liberalism, the Liberal Unionists of ministerial rank should take their places upon the front bench, and that the rest of the party should sit as near to them as possible. Lord Hartington thought it well to consult Mr. Gladstone on this delicate subject, and the two following letters passed :—

Devonshire House,
August 3, 1886.

My dear Mr. Gladstone,—We shall have to decide before next Thursday on a point of detail, but which is still of some importance, viz., where we (the Privy Councillors who were not members of the late Government) are to sit in the House of Commons.

It might for some reasons be more convenient for us as well as for you that we should endeavour to find seats in some other part of the House than on the front Opposition Bench. But the arrangements of the House are so inconvenient, and there has on former occasions been so little disposition on the part of some members of the House to assist in mitigating this inconvenience, that it is difficult to decide in what other part of the House we can sit. I believe that, according to the practice of the House, we are entitled to our seats on the front Bench, but before deciding to take them, I should be glad to know whether you see any objection or could suggest any other arrangement.

There have been some foolish paragraphs in the news papers on one side and the other, for which neither I nor, I feel sure, any of my friends are responsible. Some political considerations may, of course, be involved in the decision; but I think that it may be settled, for the present at all events, without reference to them, and solely on grounds of convenience and necessity.—I remain, yours sincerely, Hartington.

Mr. Gladstone replied :—

'I fully appreciate the feeling which has prompted your letter, and I admit the reality of the difficulties you describe. It is also clear, I think, that, so far as title to places in the front Opposition Bench is concerned, your right to them is identical with ours. Nor can I for a moment regard some insignificant newspaper statements or suggestions as fit to be taken into the account by either of us in dealing with this far from easy matter.

'I am afraid, however, that I cannot materially contribute to relieve you from embarrassment. The choice of a seat is more or less the choice of a symbol; and I have no such acquaintance with your political views and intentions, as could alone enable me to judge what materials I have before me for making an answer to your inquiry.

'For my own part, I earnestly desire, subject to the paramount exigencies of the Irish question, to promote in every way the reunion of the Liberal party: a desire in which I earnestly trust that you participate. And I certainly could not directly or indirectly dissuade you from any step which you may be inclined to take, and which may appear to you to have a tendency in any measure to promote that end. Beyond this general but decided declaration my state of information does not at this moment enable me to go.'

The question was settled in the way advocated by Mr. Chamberlain, and for the next six years the Liberal Unionist and the Gladstonian leaders sat uncomfortably upon the same bench. This unpleasant arrangement came, of course, to an end when Mr. Gladstone formed his last administration in 1892. Parliament sat in August and September to dispose of some pressing business. The following letter shows Lord Hartington's attitude towards a Bill introduced by the Irish leader to deal with evictions for non-payment of rent.

DEVONSHIRE HOUSE,
10th September 1886.

MY DEAR LORD SALISBURY,—I see that Parnell's Bill is to be introduced to-day, and I understand that you have another Cabinet to-morrow, at which I suppose you will finally decide on the course to be taken on it.

I saw Sir Michael Hicks Beach yesterday, and gathered from him that he would be very glad if he could see his way to putting some check on evictions in the worst districts. I see much objection to any concession to Parnell

which he could use as a proof of his power of coercing Parliament.

On the other hand, it is clear that the Nationalist agitation is to be carried on during the winter by resistance to payment of rent, and that numerous evictions are probably desired by Parnell and his friends. The Bill will probably, in view of its rejection, be drawn in as moderate a form as possible. I do not believe that it will be in his power to draw the eviction-suspending clause in such a form as will not encourage and protect tenants in a fraudulent refusal to pay rents which they are able to pay. But if it should be such as, in the opinion of the Irish Government, ought with any modifications to be accepted, I hope that there is nothing which I have said which would indispose the Government to consider it fairly. If, as is probable, you decide to oppose the second reading, I shall certainly come up to vote against it. I have no reason to think that any Liberal Unionists will support it, but the number who will vote at all will be small.—I remain, yours sincerely,

HARTINGTON.

In the House of Commons debate Lord Hartington described the Parnell Bill as a measure for stopping for a time the collection of rents all over Ireland. He said:—

'Individuals of all classes, whether they be landlords or whether they be others, have their rights, and have a right to appeal to law, and it is not in the power of this Government, or any Government, to raise itself as a dispensing power superior to law.'

The Whigs of the Revolution had resisted the 'dispensing' power claimed in certain matters by the Crown, the power, in that case, of dispensing with the enforcement of provisions of statutory law. Their successor now protested against the proposal, too common in these days, to dispense by statute with the elementary principles of the Common Law.

Lord Hartington, upon whom the strain of political and administrative work had been incessant since he assumed the leadership of the Liberal Opposition at the beginning of 1875, thought of taking holiday by way of a visit to India, where Lord Dufferin was now Viceroy.[1] He was debarred from this relaxation by a letter from the Queen :—

'BALMORAL CASTLE, *October* 19*th*, 1886.

'When the Queen saw Lord Hartington here about four weeks ago, he spoke of the possibility of his going to India—at the same time saying he felt doubtful whether he ought to do so. She then strongly urged him against it, but she still sees mention of his journey thither in the papers. The Queen writes to ask him in the strongest terms not to do so. Lord Hartington's position at the present time is one of the greatest importance ; we do not know at the present time whether the state of affairs at home and abroad (which last are very serious) may not necessitate an earlier calling together of Parliament, and even without that, it is of the utmost importance for his party that he should be here.

'Lord Hartington has shown so much sense of duty and such true patriotism and loyalty during the first trying six months of this year that she feels persuaded that he will again listen to appeals for the same great object.

'Lord Salisbury feels very strongly on the subject.'

The Cabinet crisis which ended in the resignation of Lord Randolph Churchill occurred in the last days of the eventful year 1886, and Lord Hartington now, for the third time, received and refused the offer of the position of Prime Minister. At the time of the crisis he was at Rome. He wrote to his father on his return to Devonshire House on the 29th December :—

[1] He had been in office, or a leader in Opposition, since 1863, but the first six years of the whole period were 'easier going.'

'I got back this evening. I had a telegram from Lord Salisbury at Rome, asking me when I should be back, and at Monte Carlo I found a letter from him renewing his offer of last July that I should either form a Coalition Government, or join the Government as leader of the House of Commons. I have not sent him any answer except that I was coming back at once, and I suppose I shall see him to-morrow. I am also to see Goschen and Chamberlain and lots of other people; but, so far as I can see, my answer is likely to be the same as before. I should think from the little that I have heard that there would be a good deal of difference of opinion among the Conservatives as to following me, even if I was inclined to attempt it, and I should think that Lord Salisbury may have found this out by now.'

The desire of the Queen again coincided with that of Lord Salisbury. She wrote to Lord Hartington from Windsor on Christmas Day, 1886, to express her earnest desire that he should accept the proposal. Lord Hartington stated his reasons for declining in the following letter, dated 31st December 1886:—

'Lord Hartington presents his humble duty to your Majesty, and begs to thank your Majesty for the letter which he received on his way home from Italy.

'Lord Hartington has, since his return on Wednesday night, been in consultation with as many of his friends and others likely to be able to give him information as to the position of parties, as he has been able; and to-day, as your Majesty will have heard, he has seen Lord Salisbury. Lord Hartington has found among his friends a perfectly unanimous opinion, in which he completely acquiesces, that the accession of himself and a few of his friends to the Conservative Government, while it would not give any numerical strength to the Government on a division, would inevitably bring about the dissolution of the

Liberal Unionist party, the whole of which would not follow him, while the remainder would be compelled to gradually join the Home Rule section of the party. Lord Hartington is still of opinion that the best defence of the Union is to be found in the alliance of the Conservative party with a considerable portion of the Liberal party; and that it would only be in the last extremity, which in his judgment has not yet arrived, that the two ought to combine in a party united for all political purposes. The question whether Lord Hartington and his friends should have acceded to Lord Salisbury's most patriotic and disinterested suggestion that Lord Hartington should himself be called on to form a Government would have been a very difficult one, even if it had appeared that the whole of the Conservative party were prepared cordially to concur in Lord Salisbury's proposal. Many of the same objections as would have existed to the other course would have still remained; but undoubtedly as Prime Minister Lord Hartington would have been in a position to claim, and might have retained, some of the influence on the Liberal party as a whole which he would certainly have lost by entering as a subordinate member into a Conservative Cabinet. But it would at the same time have been a somewhat anomalous position that the leader of a small section in the House of Commons should receive the constant and steady support of the much larger Conservative majority whose opinions on all subjects he did not profess to share.

'This view has, it appears, very naturally presented itself to many members of the Conservative party, and it is admitted that strong remonstrances against the suggested arrangement have been received.

'Lord Hartington has no doubt that he would have received the loyal and hearty support of Lord Salisbury and of his colleagues, and that their influence would have suppressed any open indication of dissatisfaction. But in the very difficult circumstances in which Lord Hartington would have been placed, he feels that nothing but the

general and spontaneous conviction of the whole Conservative party that the arrangement was a right and necessary one could have given him the strength necessary to carry on your Majesty's Government.'

The Cabinet rearrangements involved the transfer of Mr. Smith from the War Office to the leadership, as First Lord of the Treasury, of the House of Commons, and that of Mr. Edward Stanhope from the Colonial Office to the War Office. Consequently two posts were vacant, that of Chancellor of the Exchequer and that of Colonial Secretary. Lord Salisbury wished to strengthen his Government by taking in two Liberal Unionists. Mr. Goschen's financial skill made him an obvious choice for the Exchequer, and, as he had not been a member of the 1880 to 1885 Administration, by reason of his views on the franchise, he was less bound to Liberalism than the rest. The two following letters from Lord Hartington to Lord Salisbury show the part which the former took in securing this valuable recruit for the Government. The first, written from Brooks' Club on the 31st December, runs:—

'I have had a long talk with Goschen, and have urged all the considerations I could think of. He is thinking it over, but I do not think that he will be able to give you an answer to-day. I suppose that you can give him till to-morrow morning.

'He feels that he will find himself isolated in a Conservative Cabinet, and also that there is no such strong desire on the part of the Conservative party generally for his assistance as would make it worth while for him to separate himself from me and his other Liberal Unionist friends. He also appears to dislike extremely having to retire from the struggle for the Union which he has fought side by side with me. He would distinctly prefer the Chancellorship of the Exchequer without the leadership, if he accepts at

all. I am afraid, however, that I cannot hold out to you any sanguine prospect that he will be induced to accept.'

The second letter to Lord Salisbury is dated 1st January 1887:—

'I have seen Goschen again to-day, who is, I think, disposed to accept your offer if he can, after personal communication with you, be satisfied on certain points. He would desire to be at liberty to state that in joining your Government, with or without one or two Liberal colleagues in the House of Lords, he had taken this step, not as having become a Conservative or ceasing to hold any of his Liberal opinions, but as a Unionist joining a Government which relies on the support of Unionists of all shades of political opinion. If you think that such an interpretation of his action given by him would be resented by your party he would prefer to remain outside.

'Next, he would wish to have a full consultation with you as to general policy, foreign, domestic, legislative, and financial, and satisfy himself that he would be able to act with you on all these questions, as he feels that any subsequent disagreement on them, leading to a possible separation, would materially aggravate the present difficulties.'

'I am not surprised,' Lord Hartington wrote to Mr. John Fell of Ulverston on 13th January—

'that some should see inconsistency in my advising Goschen to join the Government when I decline to join myself; but I think that a sufficient reason is that I can undoubtedly continue to exercise a good deal of influence over a large section of Liberals in the country so long as I remain in name as well as in reality a Liberal and abstain from actual official coalition with the Conservatives, but that Goschen's previous difference of opinion with his

party deprives him of much of the influence which he ought to have possessed, and that he would be more useful in strengthening the Government than in supporting it from outside.'

Another detached Liberal Unionist, Lord Lansdowne, then Governor-General of Canada, was invited to accept the Colonial Office. 'The temptation,' he wrote to Lord Hartington, 'was great,' but he did not wish to give up his work in Canada so soon, nor did he like the idea of sitting among the Conservative peers, so strong still was the old Whig family feeling. Lord Northbrook was also sounded, but he did not desire to re-enter any Cabinet. Eventually the Colonial Office was given to a Conservative, Sir Henry Holland, afterwards Lord Knutsford.

Lord Hartington's friends approved of the course which he had taken. Lord Northbrook wrote that 'You would have weakened the Unionist cause if you had either taken Salisbury's place or joined his Government under existing circumstances,' and Lord Derby was of the same opinion. His old adviser, Lord Granville, wrote on 1st January: 'I presume it is certain that you have declined to join the Government. You will not, under present circumstances, attach weight to my opinion, but I cannot resist telling you how glad I am for various reasons. Among these, however, is not that of your refusal strengthening our Home Rule policy. But the coalition would have weakened you and your position.'

What did Lord Hartington himself feel as to his decision? Doubt and some regret. He replied to Lord Granville:—

'I wish I could feel as convinced as you are that I have done right. There seems to me to be a good many reasons why the chance of forming a tolerably strong Government

by those who agree on most of the immediate and practical questions should not be sacrificed to the very doubtful prospect of my recovering any influence with the Liberal party as a whole. However, most of my friends seem to think otherwise.'[1]

Events proved that his friends were wrong, and nothing, perhaps, was gained by this final refusal. He was not again member of a Cabinet for more than eight years; he was then over sixty years of age, and his physical powers were declining. But has any other Englishman refused three times to be First Minister of the Crown, or is this a 'record'?

II

An apology may be due for the length at which three or four years have been treated in this Memoir, but a biographer's aim should be to make character stand out; character most appears in times of greatest stress, and the years 1884, 1885, and 1886 were the critical period of Lord Hartington's political career. He now passed into smoother waters, and, except for the year 1903, the remaining story of his life can be narrated in more summary fashion. It is necessary, however, to dwell in some detail upon the year 1887, which was occupied by the sequences of the Irish storm and the Unionist victory. During the first three months of this year took place an attempt to find a basis of Irish policy upon which it might be possible to re-unite the shattered Liberal party. Formal sittings of a 'Conference' were held, known as

[1] Lord Morley says in the *Life of Gladstone* (vol. iii. p. 364) with regard to this event: "Lord Hartington was too experienced in affairs not to know that to be head of a group that held the balance was . . . far the more substantial and commanding position of the two," *i.e.* than being Prime Minister under the circumstances. This seems to attribute to Lord Hartington a motive which certainly did not inspire him.

the 'Round Table Conference.' Those who took part in it were Sir William Harcourt, Mr. Chamberlain, Lord Herschell, Sir George Trevelyan, and Mr. John Morley. Lord Morley has given an account of what happened at the Conference in his *Life of Gladstone.*[1] Mr. Chamberlain wrote to Lord Hartington on the 4th January 1887 with reference to the proposed Conference:—

'Nothing,' he said, 'will induce me to consent to a Parliament in Dublin with an Executive dependent on it. On the other hand, Mr. Gladstone can hardly be expected to proclaim that he had entirely abandoned what he has declared to be a cardinal principle. The Conference would show,' he added, 'whether (1) we can agree on other branches of the Irish question, viz., the land and local government; (2) whether there is any *tertium quid*—any alternative to an Irish Parliament on which we can also agree as good in itself, without requiring from either side any formal repudiation of previously expressed opinions.'

If Lord Hartington decided to take no part in the Conference, would he at least announce that he was cognisant of and approved the negotiations and 'heartily desired reunion, provided that it could be brought about without danger to the principles that'—he had advocated as to Irish Government?

Lord Hartington took great pains in drafting a letter in accordance with this request, but the result was a document so distrustful, and so carefully guarded, that Mr. Chamberlain, when he had studied it, said that he would not be responsible for its publication. 'It may appear' (ran one passage), 'at least to some, that the most probable result of the Conference would be to bring about some partial reconciliation in the Liberal

[1] Vol. iii. p. 367.

party, while the great differences which have divided us still remain. All that I have said at, and since, the General Election, and the course which I have taken in the last few days, precludes me from promoting such a reunion of the Liberal party as would weaken or destroy the existing securities for the Union, until we can feel a greater confidence in the future policy of the party on what we hold to be essential points.'

Mr. Chamberlain followed in the Conference his idea that two Provincial Legislatures might be established in Ireland, with strictly limited powers, having to the Imperial Parliament the same relation as those of Quebec or Ontario have to the Dominion Parliament and Government in Canada. He made it clear that, in this scheme, the separate treatment of Ulster was absolutely essential to agreement. Lord Hartington's opinion appears in a letter of 6th March 1887.

Lord Hartington to Mr. Chamberlain.

'*March* 6, 1887.

'I understand that you think that the time has arrived when you are entitled to have some expression of my views on the negotiations between yourself and Trevelyan and some of Mr. Gladstone's late colleagues as to the progress of which you have informed me from time to time. I must point out in the first place that, up to the present time, proposals have not yet been made, much less accepted, on any of the points under discussion which would make it possible for me to say that they are or are not in my judgment admissible. All that has hitherto taken place, so far as I understand, has been an exchange of views on certain points of agreement and of difference, and all that I can do under the circumstances is to try to give you some indications of my

opinions on them as communicated to me by you.[1] . . . As to Local Government, I understand your position to be that while you have not undertaken, as on the Land question, to submit proposals, you have expressed your willingness to discuss proposals, provided that the measure of last year is definitely withdrawn; and subject to the conditions which you have stated in your speeches. Further, you have insisted, not as new conditions, but as consequences of those which you have previously contended for, that Ulster or a part of Ulster should be represented by a separate council, that Judges should be appointed by the Imperial Government, and that the Irish constabulary should be maintained and controlled by the same authority. I believe that these conditions do not differ in principle from those which I attempted to formulate last year in my address to my constituents. I do not consider that they were complete or exhaustive, but I have no desire to make them more stringent. All that I wish to add, with immediate reference to the present proceedings, is that it is necessary that any scheme which professes to comply with them should offer a reasonable probability of being a practicable one having regard to the circumstances of Ireland and the temper of the leaders of the Irish people. It would not be very difficult to devise several schemes for the extension of local self-government in Scotland which might be tried without much risk, because the demand in Scotland, such as it is, is on the part of the vast majority really limited to local self-government. But in Ireland the demand is, on the part of a large section at all events of the people and their leaders, a demand for national recognition; and it is certain that unless the provisions for the maintenance of the authority of the Imperial Parliament and Government are made strong, simple, and effective, the concession which may be made will be used for extorting complete separation and independence.

[1] Some observations on a Land Purchase scheme, which was discussed at the Conference, are omitted, not being of much existing interest.

'For this reason I doubt the applicability of the precedent of the constitution of the Dominion of Canada. I think that this constitution provides no sufficient guarantees for the maintenance of the power of the Dominion over the Provincial Governments except the desire of the Provinces for Union which prompted the Federation. I do not refer to the absence of a powerful Dominion force, or to the weakness of the Imperial forces, in which respect Great Britain would have some advantages in the case of Ireland which the Dominion Government lacks in the case of the Provinces. I refer to the possibilities under the Canadian constitution of legal constitutional Parliamentary resistance to the superior authority, which it seems to me to be fatal if made use of as they probably would in Ireland.

'For this reason it has occurred to me that it might possibly be safer to look for a solution in the direction not of subordinate Parliamentary institutions or subordinately responsible Governments such as have been adopted in the Colonies, but of such extended municipal institutions and powers as have been conferred on our large cities, and as are proposed to be conferred upon counties. No doubt the power conferred upon such councils would be rather administrative and executive than legislative; but certain legislative power would not necessarily be excluded; and it seems to me that the Irish demand, so far as it is a reasonable one, is rather for administrative and executive than for legislative control over local affairs. I am very far from saying that I have a clear idea of the extent to which this principle might be applied to solve the Irish question. Neither do I say that the difficulties of the subordinate responsible Government system are insuperable. But I feel strongly the necessity of looking at any scheme from the point of view of distrust as well as of confidence, and to bear in mind the danger of assuming that a system which might work admirably in the case of a people which desired union would be prudent in the opposite case of a people who had been brought to desire the largest possible measure of separation.'

A few days later this Conference came to an end, but the idea of settling the question upon the lines of the relations between the Canadian Dominion Government and Parliament and the Canadian Provincial Legislatures, was discussed among leading Liberal Unionists for some time longer. A letter of August 1887 to Mr. Goschen shows that Lord Hartington feared that, if the Liberal Unionists adopted a scheme of this kind, and if Mr. Gladstone wholly or partly accepted it, and the Conservatives rejected it, then the Liberal Unionists 'would be almost compelled to help to bring Mr. Gladstone back, and, with the large majority which he would have under such circumstances at an election, the influence which we could exercise over the future policy would be very small.'

Mr. Arthur Balfour now succeeded to Sir Michael Hicks Beach as Chief Secretary in Ireland, and the Government entered upon a policy of resolute repression of the forces of disorder. A new Crimes Bill was introduced differing from its predecessors in that it was not made to last for a short definite period. Thus the question of renewal which had caused so much trouble on previous occasions would in the future be avoided. One justification for this measure was the 'Plan of Campaign' which some of the Irish agrarian leaders had launched after the rejection of Mr. Parnell's Bill in the autumn of 1886. Parnell himself, two years later, said in a speech made in London that he was not the author of the 'Plan,' and was not prepared to vindicate it.[1] The 'Plan' was this. Rents on estates were assessed by the managers of the agitation at a figure lower, if they thought good, than the judicially fixed rents. If the payment was refused by the landowner, the money was handed

[1] Speech at the Eighty Club. His hearers were taken aback, because many of them had, like Mr. Gladstone, been engaged in semi-vindications of the Plan.

to a kind of trust to be used for the purposes of the struggle.

Mr. Gladstone, now more Parnellite than Parnell, admitted that the 'Plan' was 'one of those devices that cannot be reconciled with the principles of law and order in a civilised country,' but he more than balanced this admission by adding that 'such devices are the certain result of misgovernment.' Lord Hartington, speaking in Parliament on the 10th February 1887, justified the action of Government in striking at the 'Plan of Campaign.' But he doubted, he said, whether the relations between landlord and tenant in Ireland could be satisfactory 'so long as the dual ownership created by the Land Act exists.' By some process the occupiers in Ireland must be made proprietors of the soil. Industrial resources must be developed, and some scheme of emigration might be useful. 'If there are any other remedies I confess I do not know what they are.'

A resolution in the Home Rule sense had been moved by the Gladstonians. Lord Hartington said—

'I decline to vote for a resolution which holds out as the sole object to be borne in mind by the House of Commons that of satisfying the wants and securing the confidence of the Irish people, and fails at the same time by a single word to recognise that there are securities and conditions which are equally required, and equally justly required by the people of Great Britain, and which must be secured before they can assent to any such legislation as is contemplated by some of my right honourable friends near me.'

On the 18th April he spoke in support of the Crimes Bill.[1] The Gladstonians, he said, had—

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[1] This Bill was carried in June, against violent resistance, by application of the then novel 'guillotine' mode of closure.

'discovered that the true method to govern Ireland is not to arm the law, or to arm the Judges, with powers for contending against the intimidation practised by the National League, but to make such changes in the Government of Ireland as will place the Judges and the law practically in the hands and under the control of the National League. Having been converted to those doctrines it is perfectly reasonable that my honourable friends should now be opposed to anything in the shape of exceptional and repressive legislation. That is sufficient excuse for them, but it is not a sufficient reason for us, who have not been converted.'

Sir William Harcourt had mentioned in defence of the 'Plan of Campaign' some consecrated Whig precedents, such as the refusal of Hampden to pay ship-money; the illegal and rebellious proceedings in support of the invasion of England by William of Orange; the riotous throwing of tea cargoes by the American malcontents into Boston harbour. Lord Hartington coldly said:—

'It is extremely difficult to argue with opponents who avow there is a moral justification for defiance of the law. I believe we are here in this House to amend the law, if necessary; but to support the Government in the enforcement of the law. We are not here for the preaching or condoning resistance to the law, either passive or overt."

The land-law in Ireland had been settled by the Act of 1881.

'It was passed by the greatest statesman of this age; it was passed with his assurance that "walking in the light of justice we could not err." . . . The wicked Conservative Government, supported by the still more wicked Liberal Unionists, refuse to disturb or alter summarily this beneficent settlement of five years ago, and immediately, according to the case of my right honourable friend, a case has

arisen not only for the alteration of the law, but for rebellion, for armed resistance and defiance of the law.'

Lord Hartington had a disconcertingly plain way of stripping facts from sentimental trappings. Mr. Gladstone, who possessed the opposite power of veiling facts in clouds of sentiment, showed a sympathy both with disorderly resistance to business in the House of Commons and with disorderly resistance to the Executive Government in Ireland which widened the breach between him and Lord Hartington. In July 1887 he said, with virtuous sadness, to an American 'deputation':—

'We have been tampering with trial by jury; we have given the right of imprisonment to the Lord Lieutenant. These things are very mournful.'

Had 'the Grand Old Man' forgotten his own Coercion Acts, certainly not less drastic, of 1870, 1881, and 1882? Or would he have said that all reasons for enforcing law had been removed by his defeated Home Rule Bill of 1886? Mr. Balfour, regardless of these vain lamentations, used his power in Ireland with vigour and success. In August 1887 the National League was proclaimed. This step almost led to a schism in the Liberal Unionist party. Mr. Chamberlain, remembering the recent days when he had fought in the Cabinet against Coercion unaccompanied by Local Government, had been extremely uneasy with regard to the policy of his Tory allies, and disapproved of the attempt to suppress the National League. He was still anxious that the Liberal Unionists should not oppose a mere negative to Gladstonian Home Rule, but should adopt and advocate a scheme based upon the Canadian lines, upon the relation that is, not between Canada and England, but between the Dominion and Provincial Governments. The

following letters show how matters now stood between the Liberal Unionist leaders :—

DEVONSHIRE HOUSE, *August* 15, 1887.

MY DEAR CHAMBERLAIN,—I met R. Churchill in the country yesterday, and had a talk with him. I found that you had mentioned to him your opinion that the time had come for a new departure, and for the production of a modified scheme of Home Rule, and I had therefore no difficulty in discussing the question with him.

I gather that he thinks that the Conservative party would not entertain any plan going beyond a large extension of Local Government for the three kingdoms. The only form in which they could be brought to consider Home Rule would be that of a development from a measure of Local Government on the lines indicated in my speech in Belfast in 1885, when I advocated the building up from the foundation of Local Self-Government, instead of the attempt to create a new cut and dry constitution.

R. Churchill thinks, therefore, that our adoption of a modified Home Rule scheme founded on the Canadian constitution will probably break up the alliance between the Conservatives and the Liberal Unionists, and will be fatal to the prospects of a coalition or of a national party, to which he still looks forward, though he sees greater difficulties than he did in the way of any combination which would not include Lord Salisbury. I conceive that on Irish as well as on other political questions, R. Churchill is at least as advanced as any of the Conservatives; and I conclude, therefore, that the prospect of any national settlement on the lines of your plan must be a very remote one, even if Mr. Gladstone were to take a favourable view of it.

The probable result, then, of your now bringing forward your plans will be to break up the alliance with the Conservatives, and to make a reconstruction of the Government impossible. We shall either have to join Mr. Gladstone or to remain in a position where we shall have the

support of neither the Liberals nor the Conservatives, which of course means our disappearance.

I hope, therefore, that you will still very seriously consider the expediency of taking a step so exceptional in its character as the production of a policy by a party in our position. It is probable that we may continue to suffer some losses, and it may not be easy to carry on the campaign; but surely it is still possible for us to criticise and examine Mr. Gladstone's supposed concessions, to ask for explanations as to what they amount to, and to draw him into more explicit declarations before we commit ourselves further.

If you still decide on treating Mr. Gladstone's concessions as substantial and as providing a basis for an understanding, I fear that it may be, as you have suggested, the commencement of a separation in our lines of action. But I do not know that the risk of this is greater than it was at the time of the round table, and I doubt whether anything which I could honestly say at this time would certainly avert it. If I could promise a favourable consideration to some plan which should be intended to satisfy my conditions, it would not carry us much further, for I should do so with the knowledge that the plan when produced would not differ very much from the one which I have seen, to which I do not think that I could agree, and for which I could not take any responsibility; and we should before long find ourselves drifting apart.

If this should come to pass under any circumstances I shall deeply regret it, but the difference of our positions from the outset would make such a separation perfectly intelligible on both sides.—I remain, yours sincerely,

HARTINGTON.

HARDWICK HALL, *Sept.* 21, '87.

MY DEAR CHAMBERLAIN,—C. Sellar asked some of our people to let him have their opinion in writing on what ought to be the policy of the Unionist party, and especially on the question of our proposing a scheme of Home

Rule or extensive Local Government. He has sent me some idea of what he has already received, which I think you may like to see, although one of them at least was evidently not written for your inspection.

He expects further memoranda from ——.[1] The opinions which he has got are all against any form of Irish Parliament, or very large scheme of Local Government.

I feel more and more convinced that the production of any alternative plan will break up the Liberal Unionist party, or what remains of it, immediately. There are, no doubt, a certain number whose objections were to the details of the Gladstonian scheme. Mr. Gladstone has probably indicated sufficient openness of mind to conciliate them, and they would prefer such a modification of his plan as he would himself propose, to anything which we could offer as an alternative. But the principle of the large majority of Liberal Unionists is, I think, opposition to an Irish Parliament in any shape, and them we shall lose by any approach to Mr. Gladstone.

I think you may like to see other opinions before you speak either in Ireland or England. I saw an Irish Catholic Liberal Unionist the other day, who speaks in the same sense, and asserts that this is the opinion of Irish Unionists, Catholic and Protestant. Yours very truly,

HARTINGTON.

HIGHBURY, MOOR GREEN,
BIRMINGHAM, *Sept. 22nd*, '87.

MY DEAR HARTINGTON,—Thanks for your letter and its enclosures. I cannot say that I think much of the authority of the various writers consulted by Craig-Sellar. With the exception of —— and —— they are all bad advisers for a popular party, and even the two Ulstermen regard the question from an Irish standpoint and without references to the English electorate.

Besides, I feel that in an inquiry of this kind every-

[1] The names of six leading Liberal Unionists are here mentioned.

thing depends on how the question is put and who puts it. If we had a meeting of Unionist Liberals and a discussion of the whole situation, it is possible that some at least of Craig-Sellar's correspondents would have taken a different view.

However, I do not want to press this now. I decided after my last conversation with you not to put any alternative scheme forward at the present time in opposition to your wish, and I certainly shall not say anything in my coming speeches more definite than the general allusions I have previously made.

At the same time it is right that I should privately record my dissent from the policy which you have finally adopted. It is a negative policy, and, while it may do very well for the Conservatives, it will not retain any considerable number of Liberal or Radical Unionists in the country. Unless something unexpected turns up we are certain to be extinguished at the next election, and it is impossible to say how soon that election may come. If you are ready to support the Government through thick and thin, and whether they accept your advice or not, they may retain office for a few years, but the smash will be all the worse when it does come. Believe me, yours very truly,
J. CHAMBERLAIN.

On the other side, Lord Derby wrote, a few days later :—

'I hold, and have held all along, that there is no middle course possible. If Ireland and England are not to be one, Ireland must be treated like Canada or Australia. All between is delusion or fraud.'

At the end of August Mr. Gladstone moved a resolution condemning the proclamation of the National League, of which the leaders were now his allies. Mr. Balfour replied in a powerful speech, showing, by many an instance, how the branches of this League had usurped the power of trying and punishing men who were acting, in taking or holding

land, within their legal rights. Lord Hartington spoke on the 26th August. The Government had been charged with violating fundamental British principles by suppressing a political association. He replied to this :—

'So far as the objects and action of any association are political, and only political, their action ought not to be interfered with. But if the action of any association, whether political or otherwise, becomes destructive of the liberty and freedom of the people of any country, if it becomes subversive of the principles of order and good government, then it seems to me that it does not matter whether the professed objects of that association are political or private, or are of whatever character you choose, so that the operations or actions of that association are hostile to the peace and good order of the country.'

He argued that the Crimes Act was now part of the law, that the Executive Government were proceeding under their powers, and that the question was now, simply, whether Parliament was to place a veto upon the action of the Executive Government.

He said that he had pointed out to members of the Government some political and parliamentary difficulties, and had indicated a preference for procedure under other sections of the Act if, in the judgment of Government, such proceeding would be adequate. He had always, however, considered that the Government alone were responsible, and were bound to act on their own judgment, and that it would be 'in the highest degree inexpedient and unwise' of the House to damage in advance the authority of Government, and to deprive them of the executive discretion which had been given to them by Parliament.

He believed the objects of the National League to be 'spoliation and injustice,' and their methods to be 'intimidation, defiance of the law, and the oppression of every

one who disagrees with them.' He had doubts as to the procedure adopted by the Government, but heartily and entirely sympathised with the end which they had in view.

'There is not room in Ireland for these two governments. If we think that the government of the National League is a better or more just, and a more expedient government for Ireland than the government by law established, let us put this government in power, and confer upon it the responsibility that ought to go with power.'

But the majority had not arrived at that conclusion. They must therefore support the legal Government.

'Let us not permit any body or association, however organised, however designated, whatever its objects may be, to usurp any of the functions which ought only to belong to the Government that is established by law.'

Mr. Gladstone's Resolution was defeated by 272 votes to 195, but Mr. Chamberlain and some of his friends voted in the minority.

The reaction from 1886 had already set in, and bye-elections showed that a tide of feeling had begun to flow against Government. Mr. W. H. Smith, the excellent and virtuous Conservative leader in the House, wrote on 27th August to Lord Hartington:—

'Don't suppose that I think we must be beaten on the Irish question. We must sooner or later go out of office, but as nothing but the unexpected happens in politics, it is quite possible that the issue on which the next election may be fought may not be the Irish one, but Protection in some shape, or a peace or a war policy in a great European struggle. For the present, and among my friends, I should hold the most confident language, whatever may be the result of bye-elections.'

Notwithstanding the 'Radical' reaction in remoter and less civilised provinces, the great centres of life and intelligence remained firm. In December 1887 Lord Hartington received the honour of its Freedom from the City of London, now and henceforth the great citadel of imperial and patriotic thought and feeling, as it once had been of Liberal ideas when these were in accordance with the best interests of the English nation. The resolution of the City Council spoke of the 'wise and patriotic spirit evinced by Lord Hartington during his parliamentary career, and more especially in connection with the events of recent times affecting the welfare of the United Kingdom.' In the summer of 1887 he had received addresses signed by the Liberal Unionist residents both at Oxford and Cambridge, a body comprising most of the distinguished men at both Universities. The Cambridge address said, among other things, 'We consider that you, and the other eminent Liberals who have acted with you, have rendered an inestimable public service both by opposing Mr. Gladstone's Bills and by the manner, at once firm and moderate, in which your opposition has been conducted.'

With rare exceptions all the best thought in England was opposed to the disuniting policy of Mr. Gladstone and his political followers or allies. It was a pity that Mr. Gladstone did not fulfil his long-delayed intention to retire, now that he was seventy-seven, after the elections of 1886, for the following years added nothing to his reputation. John Bright, now within a few months from his death, wrote sadly to Lord Hartington in the autumn of 1887: 'Times are changed, and our old friend Mr. Gladstone has done much to make them incurably worse.'

But the antique leader of Opposition was not so wholly swallowed up by the Irish question as utterly to forget the

financial ardours of his glorious prime. In April 1887 he wrote to Lord Hartington to ask him whether he could not bring 'friendly pressure' to bear upon the Government 'with a view of suppressing the deplorable proposal for invasion of the Fund dedicated to the redemption of Debt. I feel that you are the man who *can* make an appeal, and *can* make it effectively.' He himself would do anything, either by speech or by silence, as might be best, to support him. Lord Hartington replied that, 'I have, as you know, given very little attention to the subject of finance. You will remember that in the Cabinet I used to place my financial conscience in your keeping, and I always supposed it was almost equally safe in Goschen's hands.' He feared, therefore, that his intervention would not carry much weight, or be justified.

III

During the remainder of Lord Salisbury's second administration Lord Hartington steadily supported the Government, but seldom spoke in the House of Commons. The chief event of 1888, or at least that which most excited the political world, was the embroilment caused by the attack made by the *Times* newspaper upon the actions and character of the Irish leaders. In order to assist the passing of the Crimes Bill in 1887, and for general reasons, this newspaper had published a series of articles intended to connect these leaders with criminal associations. The most sensational point of these articles was the print of a facsimile letter purporting to be dictated and signed by Mr. Parnell. The letter was supposed to be written after the Phœnix Park murders. It faintly regretted that of Lord Frederick Cavendish, and approved that of Mr. Burke. Mr. Parnell denied that he had written the

letter. Lord Hartington in the House of Commons alluded to these charges, and, in his plainest language, said that in his opinion men so accused ought to vindicate their character by proceedings taken in the Courts of Law. His speech met with fierce Irish clamour and interruption at every sentence. In the summer of the following year, 1888, the men impugned having taken no action, the Government introduced a Bill instituting a special Judicial Commission to inquire into charges so much affecting the reputation of members of Parliament. It was a kind of State trial. Sir William Harcourt said in the debate on this step of the Government that Lord Hartington had more than any one else 'vouched for the *Times*,' adding, 'vouched is perhaps too strong a word to use, but he has said that these were charges that men were bound to meet.' Lord Hartington resented this language. He said that, although he had referred a year ago to the charges which had been brought against the Irish members, and had suggested that they ought to vindicate their innocence, he had 'never referred for a single moment to the letter which has been mentioned, and I have never referred to it since.' 'Why?' interrupted an Irish member. Lord Hartington paused, and then, in a tone and with a gesture impressive to those remembering who it was that spoke, and what was the subject of the letter, said :—

'Why? I do not know that it is necessary on this occasion that I should go into my reasons for not referring to it. I want to know for what reason, for what purpose, and with what justification my right honourable friend thinks it necessary to drag my name into this discussion in respect of letters to which I never so far in these discussions referred.'

When the Commission sat the authenticity of the letter in question was disproved, and it was held that the *Times*

had been deceived by a forgery. The findings on the rest of the questions referred to were unfavourable to the Parnellite leaders from the point of view of ordinary morality. Acquitted of some of the graver accusations, the Irish leaders were merely found guilty of inviting the assistance of the Physical Force party in America, and of abstaining, in order to obtain that assistance, from repudiating and condemning the action of that party—of accepting subscriptions from Patrick Ford, a 'known advocate of crime and the use of dynamite'—of making payments to persons injured in the commission of crime—of not denouncing the system of intimidation which led to crime and outrage, but persisting in it with knowledge of its effect—of disseminating the *Irish World* and other newspapers which tended to incite to sedition and the commission of crime, of intending (some of them) to 'bring about the absolute independence of Ireland as a separate nation,' and of certain other specified offences.

On these charges, especially the last, men would certainly have imperilled their heads two centuries earlier; in our mild times—mild, perhaps, in consequence of the immense strength of the modern State relatively to that of any group of rebels—the result was deemed rather a triumph for the accused Nationalists, all public attention having been concentrated on the single sensational incident of the forged letter. Parnell was hailed as an injured hero by sentimental English Radicals, whom he thoroughly despised. All this pointed to a certain degradation in political tone, and there was some justification for Lord Salisbury's pessimistic view when he wrote:—

'We are in a state of bloodless civil war. No common principles, no respect for common institutions or traditions unite the various groups of politicians who are struggling

for power. To loot somebody or something is the common object under a thick varnish of pious phrases.' [1]

Lord Hartington wrote to Lord Wolmer [2] from Cairo, where he was preparing for an expedition up the Nile with Lord and Lady Gosford, on 22nd February 1890:—

'I am very well satisfied with the Commission's report, which I find most interesting as far as I have read it in the *Times*. Of course it does not confirm all the *Times*' charges, which I have always thought (apart from the letter) to be pitched too high and exaggerated, but it more than confirms everything that I have ever said about the Parnellites and the character of the movement with which the Gladstonians have associated themselves.'

Lord Hartington strongly supported the real cure, or basis for the cure, of Irish troubles, viz. the policy of assisting the transfer upon fair terms of the freehold of rural holdings from landlord to tenant, and the termination thereby of the 'dual ownership' created by the Act of 1881. A sum of £5,000,000 had been devoted to this purpose by Lord Salisbury's Government in 1885. In the autumn of 1888 a further Bill was introduced authorising the application of a second five millions. Lord Hartington supported it. 'Has this policy,' he asked, 'proved a failure? On the contrary, it is the only successful experiment which has been tried in the direction of a peasant proprietary in Ireland.' Parliament, he said, 'could be guilty of no more wanton or mischievous act than to abandon, in pursuit of some other aim, a policy which, so far as it has gone, has been attended by unlimited success.' In the year 1890 Mr. Balfour, pursuing his policy of promoting the economic recovery of Ireland while sternly

[1] Letter to Mr. W. H. Smith of 5th February 1889, quoted in Sir H. Maxwell's *Life of W. H. Smith*, vol. ii. p. 241.

[2] The present Lord Selborne.

maintaining order, introduced a still larger measure. The great sum of thirty-three millions was added to the ten millions already advanced under the Acts of 1885 and 1888. This measure was opposed by the Gladstonians and the Nationalists, and was supported by Lord Hartington. He said that the difficulty in instituting any 'reasonable' local self-government in Ireland had lain in the unsatisfactory relations between landlord and tenant. He had always regarded the creation of a large number of occupying holders as a necessary preliminary to any large measure of local government. He was not surprised that this policy was opposed by the Irish National party.

'They have in view, they do not disguise it, the establishment of Irish National independence; and one of the strongest weapons on which they rely for the attainment of that object is the unsettled state of the relation between landlord and tenant, and the discontent, unrest, and disturbance caused by those unsettled relations.'

As their opposition, he said, was dictated by these superior motives and was not based solely upon the merits of the measure, it was not possible to be guided by their views, as Parliament would, no doubt, have been guided in the case of a like measure for Scotland, by the views of Scottish representatives.

On the 29th March 1889, Lord Hartington added his tribute to those which the leaders of parties dedicated to the memory of John Bright. Some words of this speech are worthy of remembrance.

He said that the cause of the esteem in which Mr. Bright was held was to be found in—

'the transparent simplicity of his character, and the high standard of political conduct which he set before his fellows. Mr. Bright did not profess to be—perhaps he was not—a

THE SEVENTH DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE IN THE YEAR 1891

(*From a picture by the* LADY ABERCROMBY)

statesman versed in all the arts of government, a statesman capable of conducting all the complicated affairs of a great nation; but upon certain subjects he had thought deeply and felt strongly, and had formed convictions which, to his mind, carried all the weight of absolute and indisputable truth. It was this absolute conviction which gave to the eloquence of Mr. Bright extraordinary and unrivalled power and force.

' . . . In forming his political opinions, in shaping his political conduct, he consistently and resolutely determined, as perhaps few men have ever been equally able to determine, that the standard which should guide his political conduct should be precisely the same rule as that which the strictest principles of morality imposed upon the private life and character of a man.

'These are the things which have combined to make Mr. Bright, if not one of the foremost statesmen, one of the noblest figures, we have ever known in Parliament.'

Since Lord Hartington always endeavoured to make his words correspond exactly with his thought, his testimony is of high value.

IV

The last words which Lord Hartington spoke in the House of Commons were on June 1, 1891, in answer to some dull question asked as to the procedure of the Labour Commission. Thus tamely do long stories of lives of men in arenas of labour often end. He was now to leave the assembly in which he had sat, with only one three months' break, since 1857. He entered it in his twenty-fifth year, and left it in his fifty-ninth. His father, the seventh duke, arrived at the conclusion of his long, quiet, and dignified life on December 21, 1891, and Lord Hartington succeeded to the title and estates as eighth Duke of Devonshire. He soon became to his fellow-

countrymen *the* duke, in a sense in which no duke had been since the death of the first Duke of Wellington.

The last few months of the life of the seventh duke had, unhappily, been saddened by the death, in May 1891, of his youngest son, Lord Edward Cavendish, a most truly amiable and beloved member of the family. Lord Edward began life in the army, sat for some years in the House of Commons, and spent much of his life in public, local, and family business in the North. Lord and Lady Edward Cavendish had always, when in London, lived at Devonshire House, and had thus incidentally given to Lord Hartington a domestic circle. Lady Edward came of the Lascelles family. Their eldest son is the present Duke of Devonshire; and their second son is Lord Richard Cavendish, to whom Holker Hall in Lancashire now belongs. A third son is Lord John Cavendish, now of the 1st Life Guards.

Mr. Gladstone wrote to the new Duke of Devonshire a letter of condolence upon the death of his father. The Duke replied:—

CHATSWORTH, *December* 28, 1891.

MY DEAR MR. GLADSTONE,—Your kind letter has given me great pleasure. I am sure that you know that, although my father's opinions on certain matters were very strong, no political differences could affect the great admiration and esteem which he had for you; and I hope that you will believe that this is also true of myself.

Nothing could have been more peaceful than the closing days of his life, and there was no sign either of bodily pain or mental disquiet.

I am happy to say that my sister seems to have quite recovered from the effects of her long and anxious watching.—I remain, yours very truly, DEVONSHIRE.

Mr. Gladstone did not for a moment allow private friendship to interfere with political warfare. It is the

modern English way, and the non-politician is tempted to think that either the warfare or the friendship must be unreal. Mr. Gladstone never lost an opportunity of denouncing by speech or letter Mr. Balfour's firm administration of the law in Ireland. Lord Hartington at Edinburgh, on October 31, 1890, had pointed out that the coercive system in Ireland now denounced by Mr. Gladstone was substantially the same as that which a few years before had been established and administered under Mr. Gladstone's Government; that Mr. Gladstone had now 'gone very near the length of exciting, and the whole length of excusing, breaches of the law'; and that such vehement denunciation was not the duty of a statesman unless he first took the trouble to acquaint himself with the case of his opponents, the state of the country, and the circumstances which had made exceptional legislation necessary. He said that he did not apologise for the Crimes Act, on the contrary was proud of it, for it had 'done more to restore freedom and the most elementary rights of liberty in Ireland than if twenty new political franchises had been given to the Irish people, or if the widest system of self-government ever devised had been bestowed on them.' Lord Hartington evidently held to the old Whig view that *liberty* consisted in the safeguarding of personal rights, and was not, as the French Jacobins held, a kind of goddess. Mr. Gladstone must have thirsted to have his revenge for this dreadfully heretical doctrine, delivered within the hearing of his own constituents. The new Duke of Devonshire, a year later, increased the offence by his farewell address to the electors of Rossendale, when he said, with the most wounding veracity, that the 'anticipation of danger and difficulty which exercised for a time so large an influence on the minds of the timid and irresolute had not been realised, and the Government of every part of the

United Kingdom by a single Parliament had been found practicable and effective.'

The vacant seat, Rossendale, was contested between a Liberal Unionist and a Gladstonian. Mr. Gladstone came to the support of his follower by a letter in which he alleged that, in 1886, Lord Hartington had—

'promised a large introduction into the Irish Government of the representative principle, and a fundamental reform in the system of administration known and hated in Ireland under the name of Dublin Castle. Nearly six years have elapsed, but not a single step has been taken towards the redemption of either of these pledges, but instead of such fulfilment, Ireland has for the first time been placed under a law of perpetual coercion, and the credit of the Exchequer has been pledged . . . for the purchase of Irish estates. This is the system which is now, it seems, to recommend your opponent to the suffrages of Rossendale—that is to say, a constituency, historically Liberal, is invited to the systematic support of a Tory Government, which founds its chief claim to favour on its having done more than any Tory Government to alienate the Irish from the British people, and to dishonour the names of law and order by making them a pretext for trampling on liberty, for promoting the interest of the landed class, and for undermining the Union while professing to maintain it.'

This astoundingly reckless assault upon those who maintained social order in a still restless Ireland, while they promoted the true remedy for agrarian discontent, elicited a reply from the Duke, in which he did not attempt to conceal his resentment:—

'Mr. Gladstone says that I owed my majority in 1886 to my promises of a large introduction into Irish local government of the representative principle, and a fundamental reform in the system of administration "known and

hated in Ireland under the name of Dublin Castle." My promises and pledges, to which he now attaches so much importance, were contained in my address to my constituents, and were at the time abundantly commented on, disparaged, and sneered at by Mr. Gladstone himself. I was not in 1886, and have never since been, in a position to promise fundamental reforms on any subject, and I made no such promises. All I did was to admit the existence in Ireland of a desire, recognised by the Liberal party as reasonable within certain limits, for a larger share of control by the Irish people over their own affairs; and while I expressly declined to commit myself to any of the plans which had been proposed, I endeavoured to state in more intelligible terms than Mr. Gladstone had used some of the conditions which, in my opinion, were essential in any measure which could be adopted by Parliament. There was not a word in my address, nor, so far as I can recollect, in my speeches, about the representative principle, or about Dublin Castle.

'There were, therefore, no pledges of mine to be redeemed; but a considerable step will be taken, or attempted, in the next session, if Mr. Gladstone and his followers do not prevent it, in the direction of satisfying the reasonable desires of the Irish in the matter of local self-government, to which I referred, and it is more than probable that these steps would have been taken long ago, but for the determined and mischievous agitation which was kept up in Ireland by his allies, as long as they were able, and was tolerated and encouraged by Mr. Gladstone himself, for the purpose of proving that the government of Ireland under the Union was impossible.' [1]

Mr. Gladstone had the delightful satisfaction of seeing the capture of the seat which his great adversary had held. The Liberal Unionist was defeated by 1225 votes,

[1] Lord Salisbury's Government introduced a Bill for Irish County Councils in 1892, but its progress was arrested by the Dissolution. The English and Scottish County Councils had been established in 1888. The Irish County Councils were established by Lord Salisbury's third Government in 1896.

a slightly smaller majority than Lord Hartington had obtained in 1886.

Since the schism of 1886, Lord Derby had led the Liberal Unionist section of the House of Lords. He now very willingly resigned this function to the Duke of Devonshire as the recognised chief of the whole Liberal Unionist party. Mr. Chamberlain succeeded, almost as a matter of course, to the command of the Liberal Unionists in the House of Commons. The only possible alternative would have been the choice of Sir Henry James, and he entirely agreed with the course taken. The Duke continued to be chairman of the Liberal Unionist Association. Other honours, or duties, followed. Lord Salisbury wrote that he was 'afraid' that he must ask the Duke's leave to submit his name to the Queen for appointment as Lord-Lieutenant of Derbyshire. The Duke replied that he 'could not even go through the form of objecting to the submission.' . . . 'My father told me that he believed the office had been held by one of our family for over 200 years, and I know that he hoped that I might succeed him.'

In July 1892 the Prime Minister wrote that he had submitted the Duke's name to the Queen for the 'Garter' vacant by the death of the Duke of Cleveland, and that the 'submission was received with very hearty approval.' 'It is a liability,' Lord Salisbury added, 'which you inherit, like the Lord-Lieutenancy. At all events it may serve as a very slight expression of the debt which the existing but moribund Government owes to you.' The Prince of Wales wrote on this occasion:—

COWES, *July 27th*, 1892.

MY DEAR HARTINGTON,—As your name appears in to-day's newspaper as a Knight of the Garter, I must write these few lines to offer you my sincere congratu-

lations on the honour the Queen has conferred upon you. I am sure no one deserves it more for your devotion to your country—my only regret is that you have not received it long ago. Let me also congratulate you on winning the 'Stewards' Cup' for the second time. . . . Ever yours very sincerely, ALBERT EDWARD.

Throughout life this kind and genial Prince counted Lord Hartington, or, as he became, the Duke of Devonshire, among his most intimate friends, and they met very frequently in the more easy and less formal society which, both as Prince of Wales and as King, he had the rather rare gift of enjoying and making enjoyable for others, without any sacrifice of his own dignity, or of the respect due to his position. He had a high opinion of the Duke's sound judgment and good sense, and, when occasion arose, consulted him both in matters of a more public character and in private affairs relating to the social world.[1] One little scene, from a cheerful dinner table at the Baths of Homburg, is rescued from oblivion by Mr. George Smalley, in his book entitled *Anglo-American Memories*:—

'The late Duke of Devonshire, at that time the Marquis of Hartington, was sitting nearly opposite the Prince, but at some little distance, and this colloquy took place: "Hartington, you ought not to be drinking all that champagne." "No, sir, I know I oughtn't." "Then, why do you do it?" "Well, sir, I have made up my mind that I'd rather be ill now and again than always taking care of myself." "Oh, you think that now, but when the gout comes what do you think then?" "Sir, if you will ask me then I will tell you. I do not anticipate." The Prince laughed and everybody laughed, and Lord

[1] The writer has submitted these observations to the best authority, Lord Knollys, who confirms them. The Duke was often called upon to arbitrate in private social matters. He once said, 'I don't know why it is, but whenever a man is caught cheating at cards the case is referred to me.'

Hartington, for all his gout, lived to be seventy-four—one of the truest Englishmen of his time, or of any time.'

Another hereditary succession (by way of election this time) was that to the office of Chancellor of Cambridge University, vacant through the death of the late Duke. It was fitting. The Duke was not, like his father, a man of academic distinction. But in other respects his position was a great one, and there was much in his cool and unbiassed way of regarding things akin to the genius of the University of Cambridge. Lady Louisa Egerton, speaking to Professor Liveing, of Cambridge, soon after the death of the seventh Duke, and the accession of his son to the office of Chancellor, said, 'You will find that my brother has the same strong sense of duty which characterised my father.' 'This,' says the Professor, 'I found to be quite correct.' The Duke did his best to raise a sum for the much-needed better endowment of the University, and himself gave £10,000 towards this object. The donations exceeded £100,000, but the Duke was disappointed by the results, since half a million was required to meet urgent needs. Professor Liveing says that the Duke—

'found that there was a widespread belief among men who had amassed large fortunes that the education given at Cambridge was not the best preparation for the practical business of life, and especially that time was wasted in the study of classical languages, without, in most cases, any adequate result, and he did not fail to press this on the attention of the leading members of the University. When the Liberal party came into power in 1905, he sympathised with the proposal, which arose within the University, to endeavour to get an Act of Parliament to modify its constitution so as to give those actually doing the work of the University fuller control of the courses of study,

and was disappointed that it went forward so slowly. He took a particular interest in the development at Cambridge of a school of scientific agriculture. Before he became Chancellor he was a member of a University syndicate to consider the promotion of education in that subject, and later, it was through his influence that the Drapers' Company provided a liberal endowment for the professorship of agriculture. When the school had taken root, he again came to the front, in the endeavour to obtain subscriptions for suitable buildings and further equipment for it. He was again disappointed in the result. The amount subscribed, though a substantial help to the University, was inadequate, and he remarked, "We must hope that the fruit of our labour will come in legacies."'[1]

The Duke, quite at the end of his life, was also elected to be Chancellor of the modern Victorian University at Manchester. He was also for some time President of the National Association for the Promotion of Technical and Secondary Education. Another non-political office which he held for fifty years was that of the Provincial Grand Master of the Freemasons of Derbyshire.

In the summer of 1892 the Duke was married in the most private way possible, at the church in Down Street off Piccadilly, to his most intimate friend of nearly thirty years, Louise, daughter of Count von Alten of Hanover. Her first husband, the seventh Duke of Manchester, had recently died. Her daughters by that marriage were the Duchess of Hamilton, the Countess of Gosford, and Lady Alice Stanley, now Countess of Derby, and her sons were the eighth Duke of Manchester and Lord Charles Montagu. There had been no reigning Duchess of Devonshire since 1811. The Duke informed Queen Victoria of his intended marriage, and received a kind

[1] This quotation is made from an obituary notice of the Duke by Professor G. D. Liveing, published in the *Proceedings of the Royal Society*.

letter of approval and congratulation. In it the Queen said in her noble style:—

'The Queen cannot conclude this letter without expressing to the Duke her high sense of the great services he has rendered to the country and herself during the last few years—and how much she relies on him to assist in maintaining the safety and honour of her vast Empire. All must join in this great and necessary work.'

The new Duchess was of a vigorous character and an extremely social and hospitable disposition. Devonshire House, Chatsworth, and other abodes were henceforth centres of active life, the resort of beautiful and shining women, and of men distinguished in the social and political world. The society was not, like that of some great Tory or Whig houses of former days, of a distinctively political and party character. The Duchess was the centre of a world whose interests were rather social than political, and although, among politicians, guests of Unionist opinion were naturally the more numerous, those from the opposite camp were also to be found. At a great evening party at Devonshire House the leading statesmen of both sides were to be seen, a Harcourt as well as a Balfour, and that house and Chatsworth did something to soften the edge of political conflict. This was one effect of the transfer to alliance with the Conservatives of a great Whig family not oblivious of the past, and faithful in friendship. The Duke troubled himself not at all about the social part of his establishment. People came and went, and he himself, not usually knowing who was coming or going, and not always who all his guests were, was, as a kinswoman observed, like the most popular and permanent guest in his own house.[1] It was the work of the Duchess

[1] The writer remembers the Duke saying to him when a house party were assembled before dinner in the library at Chatsworth: 'This is all very well, but I should like to know who all my guests are. Do you know the name of that red-faced man over there?'

to maintain his social relations, and this she did most effectively. No doubt also there is ground for the common belief that, in earlier times, it was due, in some measure, to her energy and decision, as a friend, that he did not abandon a political life which was so often extremely distasteful to him. Those who knew them best can and do testify to the tender and faithful affection which united the Duke and the Duchess of Devonshire.[1]

Meanwhile the days of Lord Salisbury's Administration came to an end. It was six years since the last General Election, and it was necessary to take new powers from the nation. Parliament was dissolved and the electoral battle was fought in July 1892. The result was the return of 274 Gladstonian Liberals and 81 Irish Nationalists on the one side, and 269 Conservatives and 46 Liberal Unionists on the other. Thus the former alliance had a majority of 40.[2] The bye-elections, especially between 1887 and 1890, had run so strongly against the Government that this victory was, to the Gladstonians, a disappointingly small one. In all probability it would have been far greater, but for the charms and unruly affections of one woman. The action for divorce from his wife, on the ground of her long-standing and fairly well-known liaison with Charles Parnell, brought by the political intriguer O'Shea, in 1890, had unchained a pack of angry forces against the Irish chief. The bishops and priests had never gladly followed one who was a Protestant or a Freethinker; many of his parliamentary followers cherished old resentments against his system of despotism, his assertion of social superiority, and his personal neglect;

[1] The Duchess died at the end of July 1911.

[2] The Unionist majority, reduced by bye-elections, had stood at 66 before the elections.

he had bitterly offended some of them by insisting upon the election of O'Shea for Galway in 1886; and now he was found guilty of the sin which to the conscience of England and Scotland is, if made public, almost the darkest. The *coup de grâce* was given by Mr. Gladstone, who was a strong moralist and was, no doubt, pressed by countless invocations, and well informed of the Nonconformist feeling. He publicly declared that 'notwithstanding the splendid services rendered by Mr. Parnell to his country, his continuation, at the present moment, in the leadership would be productive of consequences disastrous in the highest degree to the cause of Ireland.' The meaning of this oracle was, he gave it to be understood, that, unless Parnell retired, he himself could no longer assist the Irish cause. The majority of the Irish M.P.s who, after the divorce verdict but before Gladstone's declaration, had publicly committed themselves to the continued support of Parnell, then forsook him. The ruined leader sustained a hopeless fight in England and Ireland against all these foes with darkly splendid heroism resembling that of Satan in Milton's epic. He was defeated and killed in this battle. He was driven from political life, and, virtually, from life itself, for an offence not altogether unpardonable, by those who understand, in strong men who attract, and are attracted by, beautiful and ambitious women; an offence, moreover, which has been condoned by the English in some of their most illustrious kings, statesmen, soldiers, and sailors. Parnell disclosed, with scornful comment, conversations which he had had with Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Morley, and explained to his fellow-Irishmen the attempts made, he averred, by these leaders to water down the Home Rule claim to a drink more acceptable to the English Liberal

palate.[1] This he did, he told his countrymen, in order to 'enable you to understand the loss with which you are threatened, unless you consent to throw me to the English wolves now howling for my destruction.' A leading Tory Minister wrote to Lord Hartington: 'Our business is to sit still while Parnell is being devoured by the wolves.' He was soon devoured, and the Irish party, torn in two, lost all vigour and power. John Redmond said, with truth, in the debates in Committee Room No. 15, that—

'in selling our leader to preserve the Liberal alliance we are selling the independence of the Irish party. This party has been powerful only because it has been independent; every Irish party that ever existed in this House fell in the same way; if we sacrifice Parnell to preserve this alliance the days in our generation of the independence of the Irish party are at an end. Mr. Gladstone would be absolutely unfettered, and he would have the Irish party in the hollow of his hand, and it would be a discredited and powerless tool of the Liberal party.'

The younger Redmond brother wrote fiercely in *United Ireland*, after Parnell's death:—

'The greatest friend of Irish liberty, the greatest enemy of British tyranny, the one man hated and feared before all other men by the oppressors of Ireland, is hunted to death, that the virtue of Ireland might be vindicated to the satisfaction of the Pharisees and hypocrites of holy England. The Nonconformist conscience is now at ease, &c."

This affair just made the difference in the elections of 1892. It headed back many Nonconformists and others

[1] The Irish members opposing Parnell sought in vain to obtain a specific re-assurance as to his intentions from Mr. Gladstone, though he is said to have remarked after a deputation from Committee Room No. 15: 'My heart bleeds for the poor fellows.'

who had been driven into the Unionist camp in 1886 by fear of the Church of Rome, and had, since then, been reverting towards the main Liberal body, carried by inveterate bias and ancient jealousy of the Church of England.[1] The policy of handing over Irish government to Irish political leaders seemed, to men of the world, more questionable than ever now that the one strong man, Parnell, was dead. The Irish party was divided into a Parnellite group and an anti-Parnellite majority. They were shattered like the aggregation of Highland clans after the fall of the 'glorious Dundee.' The larger group lost spirit and fighting power, and were led by individuals of the forcible-feeble order, who, delivered from the stern control of Parnell, could not stand alone, and fell miserably under the magic spell of Mr. Gladstone.[2] The leader of the smaller group of those faithful to Parnell, although his following was still further reduced at the next elections, was in the end more successful, and, ten years later, reunited the party under his able chieftainship. Mr. Redmond well deserved this success because he was loyal and consistent.

V

Lord Hartington had undertaken twice during Lord Salisbury's second Government to discharge the duty, important, though tedious and without glory, of chairman of a Royal Commission. The first was that appointed in the summer of 1888 to inquire into a matter of much practical importance, 'the civil and professional administration of

[1] Mr. Chamberlain, writing to Lord Hartington in October 1889, said: 'The bye-elections are most discouraging. I am afraid the Liberal cry is too strong for us, and that it is true, as Harcourt says, that the Liberal Unionists of 1886 have largely become Gladstonian since then.'

[2] Parnell was aware of this peril to his party, and on one occasion, after the breach, compared Mr. Gladstone to a 'spider.'

the naval and military departments and their relations to each other and to the Treasury.' The Commission reported in 1890. Their chief conclusions were that the office of Commander-in-Chief (still held by the Duke of Cambridge) should be abolished, and that a naval and military Council should be created. This Council was to comprise the principal professional advisers of the Secretary of State for War and the First Lord of the Admiralty. The reason for creating such a Council was to remedy the want of co-operation between the Departments. The mischief was not so much that the Departments quarrelled, as that by avoiding discussion with each other they also avoided the solution of problems, though the absence of such solution might lead to disaster. The reasons for abolishing the office of Commander-in-Chief, given fully in the Report, are well summed up in a speech made by Lord Hartington on July 4, 1890. He said:—

'We have felt that, under our Constitution, it is impossible to place any direct control over the army, over army organisation, in the hands of any man except one who shall be directly responsible to the House of Commons. That being so, the question is narrowed to this: whether it is desirable to place between the parliamentary Chief and the heads of the various Departments into which the office must be divided, one great military officer, to whom all other departmental officers shall be subordinate, and in whom all the lines of administration shall centre. In my opinion that is not a desirable link in the chain of War Office administration. I think that the existence of such an officer tends to weaken the sense of responsibility of each of the officers at the heads of the Departments. It also tends to diminish the efficiency of the War Office Council. I do not think it possible, if you have an officer of the weight and influence of the Commander-in-Chief, however

much you may modify his functions, that you will have that freedom of discussion in the War Office Council which will alone enable a civilian Minister adequately to decide, rightly and justly, the question of War Office administration.'

The Government did not take the main steps advised by this Report. The Duke of Cambridge continued to be Commander-in-Chief until the autumn of 1895, and was then succeeded by Lord Wolseley. The post was not abolished until after the conclusion of the South African War, and the Report of Lord Elgin's Commission. It was, however, intended that the Commander-in-Chief should hereafter discharge duties akin to those of Chief of the Staff, and direct access to the Secretary of State was given to the heads of the other great Departments. Nor was the joint naval and military Council created. Instead, the Government adopted a different plan, that of a Cabinet Committee for naval and military defence which professional advisers in both services could be invited to attend. This was the Committee over which the Duke of Devonshire presided under Lord Salisbury's third Administration, and it was a step in the process of evolution which led to the existing Imperial Defence Committee, an institution very much the creation of Mr. Balfour, which should have still larger destinies.

The other Royal Commission, due to an outbreak of labour troubles and wars, was that appointed in 1891 to inquire into 'questions affecting the relations between employer and employed, the combinations of employers and employed, and the conditions of labour, which have been raised during the recent trade disputes in the United Kingdom.' This inquiry covered a vast field. Nearly 600 witnesses were examined, and masses of written information were collected and arranged by the energetic Secretary to

the Commission, Mr. Geoffrey Drage. The inquiry was useful in the way of ventilating grievances, and making employers and employed appreciate more truly each other's points of view, but the subject proved to be incapable of definite recommendations except upon matters of detail. The Report was not presented till June 1894. The Duke of Devonshire (as he had now become), in a supplementary report signed by himself and several other Commissioners, suggested that a fuller legal personality should be given to trade unions, so that they could enter into legally recognised contracts with employers.

CHAPTER XXIV

SOME CHARACTERISTICS

The writer of the present Memoir worked, in connection with the Labour Commission, upon the personal secretarial staff of the Duke of Devonshire, from January 1892 to June 1894, and saw him constantly. He was an excellent chief to serve. He was sensitive to the feelings of those who worked under him, and, when he had chosen them, he trusted them, and did not commit the error, fatal to good administration, of worrying himself over details.[1] To do this is to diminish the responsibility of subordinates, and to lessen their zeal. He was absolutely unassuming, but every one in his presence was aware of a largeness and dignity of nature which filled much 'moral space.' In business he spoke little, hardly using a superfluous word, listened to others, when possible with the aid of a cigarette, without much appearance of interest or attention, and at the right moment indicated, with an instinctive sagacity, the best and most practical line to follow. A decision, once taken, was adhered to; he did not look back or retrace his steps. His work was done with a weary, or bored, thoroughness, the resultant apparently of a conflict

[1] Mr. Robert Hobart, now Sir Robert Hobart, K.C.V.O., C.B., was the official private secretary to Lord Hartington 1863-66, 1868-74, and 1880-85. Mr. Reginald Brett, now Viscount Esher, was private secretary 1875-80, and non-officially till 1882. After 1885, at various times, Colonel Henry Lascelles and Mr. John Dunville and Mr. Charles Hamilton acted on his personal staff, and after 1895 Mr. (now Sir) Almeric Fitzroy and then Mr. Riversdale Walrond were successively official private secretaries.

between a strong sense of duty on the one side, and, on the other, hatred of writing and speaking, and inborn indolence. Once he said to one who was speaking of the indolence of another man, 'I know some one more indolent,' meaning himself. Throughout life he had to spend most of his hours in uncongenial tasks, because, when his political functions had declined in severity, his accession to the dukedom and the control of great landed estates exposed him to new obligations of duty, and to fresh assaults by that 'Fiend, Occupation,' as Charles Lamb calls it. His semi-public and private business was capably managed by those who served under him, but inevitably the time of a large landowner of high rank is devoured by estate business, local functions, and so forth, affairs even more tedious than those connected with the public work of the State. Mr. Charles Hamilton, who worked on the Duke's staff from 1894 onwards, has been so good as to contribute the following remarks :—

'The Duke had large estates in Derbyshire, Yorkshire, Lancashire, Cumberland, Lincolnshire, Somerset, Sussex, Middlesex, and Ireland. He was absolute owner of all these estates. He was also the patron of a number of livings, and was largely interested in several commercial enterprises such as the Furness Railway, the Barrow Hematite Steel Company, the Eastbourne Waterworks Company, the Naval Construction Company, and the Waterford, Dungarvan, and Lismore Railway. The two last concerns were sold during the Duke's life, the former to Vickers, Maxim & Co., the latter to the Great Southern of Ireland Railway.

'The Duke took a keen interest in all that concerned his estates. His agents referred or reported all matters to him directly. He required full information before coming to a decision, and important questions were personally discussed by him with his agents. The estate accounts

were all kept in a very elaborate manner, and at the end of each year an exhaustive report was made on them, pointing out and explaining in what respect the figures varied from those of the preceding year, and these reports he carefully studied. Requests for pecuniary assistance for persons or objects connected with his estates were very numerous, and the Duke always met generously any demand which had a reasonable claim on him. He realised fully that his great possessions entailed great obligations on him, and his own personal interests were the last things he considered in his dealings with his tenants on his estates.

'His duties as chairman of companies in which he was by far the largest shareholder were rather irksome to him. He distrusted his knowledge of business matters, consequently he did not, as a rule, attempt to force his views, as chairman, on his colleagues, and, besides, he felt unwilling to urge strongly his particular view lest his colleagues should, having regard to his preponderating interest in the concern, feel bound to give way to his wishes. I have known instances where, had the Duke insisted on his own view, it would have been far better for the particular Company. His business mind worked slowly, but once he got a grip of a subject he kept it, and then no one was better able to confute a false argument or to see what the real point was. He grudged no time in trying to master a difficult question. I have heard him say, "It may be all right and clear, but I don't understand it the least"; and the whole matter would then again be thrashed out.

'As patron of a number of livings, he had frequently to appoint clergymen to vacant livings. This was a duty he particularly disliked. He would carefully consider the names of all candidates who had applied personally or been recommended, but he did not approve of personal application. If any candidate seemed suitable he caused further inquiries to be made and generally had a personal interview. If not satisfied he would consult some one who might be able to recommend a good man, sometimes the bishop of the diocese, frequently his sister, Lady Louisa

Egerton, in whose judgment he had the greatest confidence. As a rule he did not appoint clergymen holding extreme views.

'He was a most loyal member of Cambridge University. When he became the Chancellor he never grudged time, trouble, or financial assistance on their behalf. The Senate could at all times rely on the Duke to do his utmost to forward their interests.

'Perhaps the pursuit in which the Duke took the keenest interest was his breeding and racing stud. He never seemed happier than when he was looking at his mares and yearlings at his Polegate Stud Farm. While he was the owner of some good horses, he never was successful in any of the classic races for colts. He said to me once, "Sometimes I dream that I am leading in the winner of the Derby, but I am afraid it will never be anything but a dream." I often thought that he would almost as soon have won the Derby with a good horse as have been Prime Minister.

'As I was associated with him for more than twelve years, I should like to say that no secretary ever had a more considerate chief or one more delightful to work with. When he gave his trust, he gave it absolutely. His custom was to open and read all letters himself, and then to give instructions how they were to be dealt with. Though by nature he was indolent (he said once to me, "I think my motto should be, 'Never do to-day what you can put off till to-morrow,' and then very often it need not be done"), he was always most accessible and willing to deal with estate or business questions, and the fact was, that he was really a very hard-worked man, who against his inclination forced himself to consider and deal with the numerous questions, political and private, that cropped up every day.

'No one could realise the great simplicity of the man and the charm of his nature who had not seen him living quietly at one of his country homes. It used to be said at the Turf Club that, if all the members had to be

re-elected, the only one certain of re-election was the Duke of Devonshire.'

Any one who worked with the Duke of Devonshire must have felt how impossible it was to express in his presence any false sentiment or exaggerated view. Distaste for all superfluous or hyperbolic expression was one of his most marked characteristics. Some orator in the House of Lords said on one occasion, 'This is the proudest moment in my life.' The Duke murmured to his neighbour, 'The proudest moment in *my* life was when my pig won the first prize at Skipton Fair.' [1]

In his conversation there was much of the humorous, nothing of the brilliant. Devonshire House, in his day, was a social and political centre, but not a mart and exchange of ideas on all subjects, like some of the older Whig houses—Bowood or Holland House. Unlike his father, who had throughout life been a great reader of books on science and history, the eighth duke was no reader. In his earlier days he would sometimes be seen absorbed in a book, probably a political memoir, during a purely domestic evening at Chatsworth or Devonshire House. Later, like most men of action as they advance in life, he read little save newspapers, or novels which did not involve any strain on the mind (he consumed many of these), and in leisure hours preferred cards to any book-reading. It was said at one time, 'Gladstone reads every new book that comes out, Hartington none of them.' Probably he quoted poets or other authors less than any political leader of his time, except Parnell.[2] His natural inclination was, like that of Parnell, rather towards applied science, and

[1] This glorious incident probably took place when he was a boy at Holker Hall.

[2] Parnell is said only to have quoted poetry once in a speech, viz., Moore's line about Ireland, 'First flower of the earth and first gem of the sea,' and then excruciatingly wrong, saying 'jewel' instead of 'gem.' He once asked a poetic Irish patriot, 'What is the good of poetry?'

he always showed interest in the mechanism of a great factory or a workshop. A Chatsworth story relates that Lord Salisbury, being on a visit there, and alone in the great library, discovered, by some chance, the non-apparent way up to the gallery which runs round it, but could not re-discover the door, veiled by sham books, leading to the spiral staircase when he wished to descend. Lord Hartington, returning from shooting, strolled through the room. Lord Salisbury, from above, asked for guidance, and his host, equally ignorant, had to summon expert assistance. But, like many Englishmen of his class, the Duke of Devonshire had more real, and happily unsophisticated, appreciation of literature and art than he cared to express or, perhaps, admit even to himself. Men cannot be brought up and live in houses full of the best things in these kinds without being, perhaps unconsciously, affected by them. What unconscious influence may not the chivalrous portraits of Van Dyck, hanging in many a great, boy-breeding, country house, have had upon the actual political history of England! Mrs. Strong, who was for a time, after her husband's death, librarian and custodian of works of art to the Duke, gives an interesting aspect of his character in this connection. She writes:—

'In all that concerned the management of his library and art collections the Duke showed in the highest degree the same wise liberality which I always understood he brought to the administration of his vast estates. I have studied for over twenty years in private collections both in England and abroad, but I have never met with another owner who understood so fully as the Duke the privileges and responsibilities of possession. He was too liberal and generous—too conscious also in a simple way of a certain mal-adjustment of this world's goods—not to wish others

to come in for their share of enjoyment of his splendid treasures. Chatsworth and Hardwick, with all they contained, he seemed to consider himself as holding in trust for the benefit primarily of the county and then of the larger public from wheresoever they might come. Year in and year out thousands tramped through the magnificent State Rooms at Chatsworth and the Picture and Sculpture Galleries.[1] The privilege was certainly immemorial, dating back to the eighteenth century; but with the increased facilities of travelling and the institution of cheap railway excursions it threatened to become a serious nuisance. When it was pointed out to the Duke that this continuous stream of "trippers" involved tremendous wear and tear to the works of art and was bad for the actual structure of the house, he would answer, "I daresay they will bring down the floors some day, but I don't see how we can keep them out." He would sometimes waylay these parties with the evident intention of watching their deportment. Probably none of his contemporaries had been more often portrayed and caricatured or was a more familiar figure. But he would stand there amusingly unconscious of recognition, wondering why the housemaid who acted as guide and the whole party had suddenly stood still and were staring at him.

'But there was another and more important side to his liberality as owner of a great collection, and that was the constant and unfailing welcome which was extended at Chatsworth to scholars and to students of every degree. No praise bestowed upon his memory on this score could be excessive, as savants, scientists, art critics, curators of museums, learned men of every sort or description all over the world can testify. If abroad Chatsworth has become a name to conjure with, if it stands for the very type of a princely collection conducted on princely lines, this is due in great measure to the reception that the Duke not only allowed, but wished, his representatives to accord to

[1] It was stated in a newspaper that in the year 1910 no less than 80,000 people visited Chatsworth.

savants. Many have carried back to France, to Germany, to Italy, to distant universities in Poland, in Russia, in Greece, and in America, grateful recollections of long, undisturbed days of study in the stately library and of the quiet, refreshing walk home in the evening light across the great park to the little inn outside the gates ; unforgettable days "au pays des grands arbres," as a Frenchman once wrote to one of the Duke's librarians. In a sense the Duke reaped his reward—not only by the prestige that came to attach to Chatsworth as a great house where learning and research were encouraged—but also because well-nigh all these scholars left some trace of their passage through Chatsworth in contributions of some kind.

'In acting thus the Duke was, of course, continuing the enlightened tradition of his family—showing himself the worthy descendant of those seventeenth-century Earls of Devonshire who had been by turn the pupils, the friends, and the patrons of Hobbes. Moreover the Duke, following again in this in the footsteps of his ancestors, understood the necessity of placing the library and collections in the charge of scholars of experience and reputation. His father, the "Scholar Duke," without appointing a resident librarian, had received friendly assistance in the care of the library and the making of the catalogue from the late Sir James Lacaita. In 1893 the late Duke appointed as librarian, Arthur Strong, a young Cambridge man of thirty, a favourite pupil of Renan, who had been librarian to Max Müller and had already made his mark both in England and on the Continent as an Orientalist and art critic. Strong, who died only ten years later after a rapid and brilliant career during which he held simultaneously the appointments of librarian to the Dukes of Devonshire and of Portland, of librarian to the House of Lords, and of Professor of Arabic in the University of London, brought to his work at Chatsworth a devotion and enthusiasm combined with a wealth of learning which will probably leave their mark on the great collection as long as it exists.

'The art treasures of Chatsworth were freely drawn upon by outsiders, few applications to study or to photograph or to publish being refused, provided the Duke could be satisfied that they came from an honest and competent source, and that no one's claims to priority were interfered with. One of the undertakings planned by Strong was the publication for the Roxburghe Club of the famous Benedictional of St. Æthelwold—one of Chatsworth's greatest treasures. The Duke showed his usual munificent spirit when the scheme was submitted to him, and wished the publication to be worthy of the splendid manuscript—a masterpiece of Anglo-Saxon miniaturists. But he also was to die before its completion, and the work was brought out only a few months ago under the auspices of the present Duke, who adds the touching inscription to his uncle's memory.

'Moreover, the Duke, contrary to what is generally supposed, was a liberal purchaser. There are several cases full of books at Chatsworth, bought for the Duke by Strong, which form an interesting record of what was done for the library under his reign. Unlike so many other great libraries, which seem to have been frozen or petrified at a certain date with the cessation of new acquisitions, the Chatsworth Library was kept alive by this continuity of purchase, and in touch with modern thought and requirements.

'Alongside this work for the library, the Duke encouraged Strong's desire to see the works of art put into good order. The systematic cleaning of the pictures—most of which were darkened by the varnish dear to mid-Victorian connoisseurs—was taken in hand, and the more valuable drawings were mounted and cleaned, all of which led to many important results—to the detection of artists' signatures, the discovery of unique prints, or the identification of forgotten drawings. A notable achievement was the restoration of the now famous Hardwick "hunting Tapestries"—once in Elizabethan days a glory of Chatsworth, then relegated to a Chatsworth lumber-

room—finally cut up into strips to cover the walls of the Hardwick Gallery, where the single figures and scenes had long been known and admired, but without any understanding of the conformation as a whole. It was Strong who made out, with the assistance of the late Sir P. Clarke, the sequence of the scenes. The Duke had the whole repaired. The four panels, reconstituted, almost in their first freshness, are now on loan at the Victoria and Albert Museum, where they afford a practically unique example of a fourteenth-century tapestry sequence on this scale.

'These tapestries, however, remind me that if the Duke was mostly silent on art matters, he would on occasion give his opinion in a most direct and unmistakable manner. When the two first panels had been completed they were brought to Chatsworth, where they proved something of white elephants. No wall could be found large enough to hang them upon save those of the Sculpture Gallery, which, as is well known, is full of works of the period of Canova and Thorwaldsen. When, however, the Duke came to see the effect, he sharply and rightly disapproved. "I can only say," he remarked, "that to hang Gothic tapestries behind statues in the classic style is simply ridiculous, and nothing will induce me to think otherwise" —and upon that he walked out.

'In the latter years of the Duke's life, under Mr. Strong's successor, the rearrangement, or rather the reinstatement of certain sections of the library and collections was undertaken. For instance, the curious and interesting collection of mathematical and scientific tracts, left with his fortune and his collections to Chatsworth by Henry Cavendish the physicist, were restored to the great library, whence they had been displaced, at some date unknown, in favour of full-dress "library editions of a thousand authors" dear to mid-Victorian taste. Again, the famous Kemble-Devonshire collection of English plays, purchased from John Philip Kemble by the sixth duke and greatly enlarged by him, had failed to find suitable house-room after its removal from Devonshire House to Chatsworth, but had

been lodged in a gallery. In 1905, however, it was first adequately displayed in a room near to the Duke's own study. He took perhaps more interest in this portion of his library than in any other.

'The fears which I at first not unnaturally felt when summoned to the Duke's room for library business soon turned to pleasurable anticipation, owing to his genuine kindliness and also because of the touches of humour which would relieve these interviews. He hated adulation and flattery of any kind—to him mere "humbug." One day when reading a long-winded begging letter he came to the sentence, "I had the honour of presenting a copy to your Gracious Consort." "I don't know who he means," said the Duke rather irritably; and as I suggested that the reference might be to the Duchess, "Then why can't the man say so?" growled the Duke. Or he would meet me in the passage and, holding out a letter, say, "Here's a man writes to inform me I am a passionate admirer of the pictures of Claude Lorraine. You had better come to my room after breakfast and tell me what he wants." However tedious it might be he took infinite pains over correspondence of this kind. The applications for loans of pictures or other objects were interminable, but too often, as those who had the care of his collections thought, they had to be answered in the affirmative. He was one of the most liberal of lenders; since exhibitions came into being, there were few, if any, of importance held in England which did not contain one or more examples from the Duke's collections. He even lent liberally to the Continent. The Chatsworth Memlinc went to Bruges; the finest Van Dycks to Antwerp; the famous Sir Joshua, of the Duchess and the child, to Berlin. It might all be a bore and a nuisance, but it was rather to the Duke like the question of admitting trippers to view Chatsworth—a duty to be put up with—incumbent upon him as a great owner.

'It would, of course, be absurd to claim for the Duke that he had any serious knowledge or understanding of

art, but he had decided tastes, and a certain natural instinct which often led him to what was best in his collections. When the first batches of drawings came back from being mounted at the British Museum, the Duke took a singular pleasure in looking over the drawings by older German masters such as Matthaïcus Grünewald, Altdorfer, or Dürer. He liked their strong, rugged lines. At last one day the Duchess asked me to put out on an easel in the library a splendid battle-scene by Altdorfer because, she said, "the Duke enjoys looking at it so very much."

'Nor could it be said that he knew the collections in detail, but he knew certain things about them well. He rarely took any of his guests over Chatsworth, but I remember, among other instances, his showing the house to the late Lord Goschen, and hearing him myself describe pictures and other objects which we were apt to suppose he had never so much as looked at. His reputation for apathy in these matters arose in great measure from his fear of boredom and of having to exert himself in the way of small talk. The unwary guest who thought to please the Duke by ecstasies over the beauties of Chatsworth and its art treasures was often disconcerted by some answer such as that which he was reputed to have given to an enthusiastic American lady, "It's a rummy old place." People would go away under the impression that the Duke was indifferent to his artistic treasures. But this was false; for as he had an evident deep pride of race, so he had in equal measure a legitimate pride of possession, mitigated by his strong sense of responsibility.

'My last recollection of the Duke at Chatsworth is of him in the library on the occasion of what was to be his last visit to his great Derbyshire estate. He came in while I was arranging one of the cases that contained the rarer books, and asked me to show him some of the more precious among these. I took out the first edition of *Paradise Lost*, which he seemed not to know. The Duke sat down with the book and, to my astonishment, began to read the poem aloud from the first line. He read on

for quite a time, stopping once to say, "How fine this is! I had forgotten how fine it was;" when the Duchess came in and, poking her parasol into the Duke, whimsically remarked, "If he begins to read poetry he will never come out for his walk." That afternoon they returned to London, and I only saw the Duke once again in the following autumn on his return from Eastbourne, during the period of apparent convalescence that followed the first attack of illness.'

In matters of dress (to descend to a lower plane) the Duke was famously careless and conservative and averse to new apparel. He wore a certain round hat so disgracefully long at race-meetings and elsewhere that four-and-twenty ladies, it is said, conspired each to send him a new hat of that species on the same day. Once, at luncheon at Devonshire House in 1893, after attending a levee, he asked, 'How many years is it since 1866, when this uniform was new?' This showed that his figure had not materially altered in the critical years of the life of man. The highly correct Conservative leader, Mr. W. H. Smith, once noticed with surprise the attire of his Liberal Unionist ally. He writes from Aix-les-Bains in August 1888: 'Yesterday Lord Hartington came to see me, dressed as a seedy, shady sailor, *but* he sat down and talked politics for half-an-hour, and he said it was pleasant in a place like this to have some work to do.' Note that unconscious 'but.'

Like St. Aldegonde, in Disraeli's *Lothair*, he had a preference for plain and substantial viands. The following anecdote supplied by the well-known author, Mr. Wilfred Ward, illustrates his tastes both in diet and conversation:—

'I only met the late Duke of Devonshire twice. But the two meetings left a vivid impression on my mind, and had in them enough character to be perhaps worth re-

cording. The first occasion was in 1885 at a small dinner party in London. Mr. Gladstone, I remember, was there, and the late Lady Londonderry; also Bishop (afterwards Cardinal) Vaughan and Mr. R. H. Hutton of the *Spectator*. The Duke, then Lord Hartington, arrived after a long day of committees, both tired and hungry. And he was obviously dissatisfied with the unusually unsubstantial character of the excellently cooked French dishes which formed the first courses at dinner. His remarks were for a time few and brief. I was sitting nearly opposite to him, and a little later my attention was aroused by hearing him suddenly exclaim in deep tones, "Hurrah! something to eat at last"—as some solid roast beef made its appearance. He spoke freely after this, but as I was talking to others I did not get the benefit of his conversation until after the ladies had left the dining-room. Then an extremely interesting political discussion ensued. I remember that while Mr. Gladstone talked very much and with great animation, Lord Hartington spoke briefly and seemed not much inclined to make the necessary effort. But I thought that in every case when the two men differed Lord Hartington put his finger on the weak point in the logic which Mr. Gladstone's rhetoric had tended to obscure, and that he had much the best of the argument, though he did not seem to care to press his advantage. When, a little later, Mr. Gladstone led the conversation to theological topics, Lord Hartington appeared as little inclined to talk as he had been at the beginning of dinner. Another member of the company also held aloof rather ostentatiously from Mr. Gladstone's theological discussion. This was Dr. Vaughan, who evidently did not care to discuss theology with a "heretic." Matters ended by the future Duke and the future Cardinal removing themselves to the other end of the table and carrying on a rival conversation on country pursuits and sport. They became friends then and there (they had never met before, I think), and I believe that the Cardinal used occasionally to go to Devonshire House in later years.

'The evening long dwelt in my mind as an exceptionally interesting one, in which I had had an opportunity of getting a very distinct impression of two great statesmen—for Mr. Gladstone showed quite as much character as Lord Hartington.

'Some eighteen years later I was dining at the British Embassy in Rome with Sir Frank Bertie, and the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire were staying in the house as his guests. After dinner I was presented to the Duke, who talked politics very pleasantly for some minutes. I then ventured to remind him that we had once met before, and he looked somewhat blankly at me until I mentioned the place of our meeting. Then he exclaimed with strong feeling, "Of course I remember. *We had nothing to eat.*" The inadequate French dishes had dwelt in his mind for nearly twenty years.'

The Duke played cards habitually, and in earlier times had the reputation of a specially good whist-player, but was not so brilliant in the later days when bridge superseded whist. He enjoyed easy and casual society, and the coming and going of acquaintance, if it were unaccompanied by trouble to himself, and throughout life he was glad to be provided with the company of beautiful and lively women. He liked children. Lady Granville's daughters can remember him stretched on the floor, and unsuccessfully endeavouring to defeat them in the ancient game of 'knuckle bones,' which for a year or two, in the later seventies, while he led the Liberal Opposition, had a passing revival.

In his earlier days his passion had been hunting; he was a bold rider, and his figure was especially well known at the meets in the country near Kimbolton Castle. He liked shooting well enough, and was deemed rather a dangerous shot by (and to) his friends and relatives. Shooting in the Highlands stimulated his nerves, and

Photo: Sports and General

THE DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE AT A RACE-MEETING

Taken at the Derby Races, 1906

he is said to have suffered at critical moments of the sport from the excitement known as 'stag fever.' But his chief pastime and delight was horse-breeding and racing. As the horses in a good race neared the stand he would show almost tremulous excitement. He built himself a house at Newmarket, where his horses were in training, and was never more happy than on that airy heath. Once he said, after he was Duke, 'I have six houses, and the only one I really enjoy is the house at Newmarket.' He was a Steward of the Jockey Club. His success on the turf was by no means in proportion to the money spent. He never won the Derby, though one year, 1898, a horse of his, Dieudonné, was a good deal fancied for that triumph. The most 'classic' of his victories was at a much earlier date, when he won the One Thousand Guineas, and £4750 therewith, in the year 1877, after a thrilling race, by a neck, with his fair and rare Belphœbe, a filly whom Vaga bore to a noble sire, Toxophilite. In the Oaks the same bay lady all but defeated the brilliant Placida, and for a triumphant season or two she won, or nearly won, many other races. 'Shall I call my daughter Belphœbe?' wrote to Lord Hartington a friend new-blessed with an infant. Indeed 'tis a charming name, and fit for the proudest beauty.

The Stewards' Cup three times fell to his colours; Monaco was his horse, and Marvel, both of some repute in their day. In 1902 one of his horses won the Eclipse Stakes at Sandown, very unexpectedly. Some think that the best horse he ever owned was Morion, son of Barcaldine, who captured the Gold Cup at Ascot in 1891. This was a popular victory, and, as a racing correspondent wrote, 'Morion was much cheered as he passed the post, the cheering being meant quite as much for his noble owner as for himself.' One can imagine all the pleasant

friendly scene on the loveliest of English race-courses. His horses were, during most of his racing life, trained at Newmarket by Mr. Marsh, and then by Mr. Goodwin, but in his last years the Duke sent them to be trained by Mr. Sam Darling in Wiltshire. Mr. Darling has kindly supplied the following reminiscences:—

'It is with much pleasure that I send you a few remarks about the late Duke of Devonshire during the time I trained his Grace's horses.

'The first race I won for him was the Queen's prize of £1000 at Kempton in 1906, and I never saw him more pleased in my life. It was so long since he had won a race. The *Sporting and Dramatic* portraits him patting the horse and smiling at the weighing-room door after the victory. The following week he was in a £1000 race at Newmarket, and, during the transit from Kempton to Newmarket (Burgundy was the horse's name) hurt himself in the box, and was so lame the following morning I found he could not run. So, after breakfast, I went to Beaufort House, which was the Duke's Newmarket residence, and told him what had taken place, with much regret and disappointment from me, as he would have won. His Grace turned quietly round and said, "Well, Mr. Darling, we had a good time at Kempton." That is what I call a true and noble sportsman, for his Grace had not won many races for some time before this.[1]

'I won the Newmarket Stakes, High Weight Plate, and other races with Acclaim, and several more with Cheshire Cat, when his Grace said, "Well, you are winning me a lot of races!" Fugleman won at Ascot and Doncaster and would have won the Cesarewitch, had I been able to train him on; his leg was a little sore, and though I thought of winning Ascot Cup with him the last year I did not risk it. His Grace's Black Spot was also a winner from here.

'I cannot speak too highly of the late Duke of Devon-

[1] Quite, on a small scale, like Louis XIV. and Marshal Tallard after Blenheim.

shire. He, as all knew, raced on the very highest lines, and I'm sure no man ever took defeat better than his Grace, or enjoyed victory more; and I've always been proud and felt honoured to have had the Duke as one of my patrons, and I am also proud of the present Duke as a patron. I paid my last respects to his Grace by attending his funeral at Chatsworth.'

The Turf Club was, perhaps, the Duke's favourite resort in London, though he also frequented 'Brooks'' and the 'Travellers'.'

Racing, unless carried on with decided success, is, like war, an expensive amusement, and at one time Lord Hartington accumulated a certain though not very serious load of debt, which was paid off in 1880. An old estate steward once said to the fifth Duke of Devonshire with regard to a former Marquis of Hartington: 'My Lord Duke, I am very sorry to have to inform your Grace that Lord Hartington appears disposed to spend a great deal of money.' The Duke replied: 'So much the better, Mr. Heaton—so much the better; Lord Hartington will have a great deal of money to spend.' Objects and ways of expenditure may certainly be open to the censure of the moralist and the criticism of the economist, but something can be said for the view that he to whom much is given ought much to spend, and not to accumulate.

Lord Hartington was sensitive to the feelings of others in matters of larger import, but he successfully established early in life the principle that little was to be expected from him in details of polite etiquette. Like in this to the poet Wordsworth, according to De Quincey, he would never have volunteered to carry a handbag for a lady. He was not at all conventional. Those who take these things very seriously thought him 'rude' or 'spoiled' as a young man. He was sadly

deficient in social punctuality; he might arrive very late to dinner, or possibly not at all. A hostess of those days said that when she had asked Lord Hartington to dinner she always asked one man to spare, upon the principle of the twelfth man in a cricket team. Life is certainly rather spoiling in these minor respects to a young man of great position who is aware that he will be sought after whatever almost he may do, and is sought after so much that it bores him. He has in this line nothing to achieve, and this is the secret of ennui.

He was not of an impressionable nature. It is said that upon one occasion King Edward told him that he proposed to dine quietly at Devonshire House on a certain day. The Duke forgot this arrangement, and when the King unexpectedly arrived, had to be hurriedly retrieved from the Turf Club. This recalls a certainly true tale of Queen Victoria. The Queen had told the Duke of Devonshire of her idea—at that time a new and striking one—of revisiting Ireland after the lapse of many troubled years. She asked him to mention it to Lord Salisbury, then Prime Minister, so that she might talk to him also about it when he had had time to think it over. When the Queen next saw Lord Salisbury she said, 'And what do you think of my Irish plan?' but found the Prime Minister blankly ignorant of her meaning. 'The fact was I clean forgot about it,' said the Duke. Perhaps no other man in England would have been capable of these wonders of forgetfulness, certainly no politician.

Both defects and merits of the original character tell more decidedly towards the end of a man's career, like the bias in a bowl, as the dynamic force decreases. In his later years, although on occasions, such as that of an important speech, the Duke's mental strength was as good as ever, his innate slowness, or lethargic habit, of mind

made it increasingly difficult for him to keep in touch with the movements of other minds. His own mind worked slowly, and for that reason the more surely, because, when he arrived at last, his view was sound, and really his own in all its parts. Expression could not, in him, outrun thought. But it was no doubt a difficulty for him in Cabinet Council that a decision was usually arrived at by swifter intellects before he had been able to formulate, even to himself, his own position. It was impossible for him to keep in pace with minds so swift as those of Mr. Gladstone or Mr. Balfour, or to arrive at one practical conclusion in the time during which Mr. Chamberlain could have reached ten. Throughout his political career his attitude was that of a man refusing to be hurried.

CHAPTER XXV

THE GOVERNMENTS OF MR. GLADSTONE AND OF LORD ROSEBERY, 1892-1895

LORD SALISBURY'S Government did not resign at once, after the defeat of the Unionists at the elections of July 1892, but met the new House of Commons in August. A motion of 'No confidence' was moved by Mr. Asquith on behalf of the Opposition. Mr. Gladstone in this debate said that his own principles of Home Rule were well known. They were 'limited, on the one hand, by the full and effectual maintenance of the imperial supremacy which *pervades the whole of the Empire*, and, on the other, by the equally full and effectual transference to Ireland of the management of her local concerns.' Ireland, in other words, should in his view have self-government limited only by the recognition of the imperial supremacy in the same way as the self-government of (say) New Zealand was so limited. This was his own principle, and if he consented, as he did, to make modifications, it was only in order to assuage the terrors of the men who formed the main body of his host, the English and Welsh Nonconformists, Scottish Presbyterians, and Freethinkers, who shivered at the idea of assisting to set up a Roman Catholic Government in Ireland with full power to deal with all Irish affairs.

Lord Salisbury, defeated on the motion of 'No confidence,' resigned office, and Mr. Gladstone, in his eighty-

fourth year, heroically formed a Liberal Government for his fourth and last time. The Queen's Speech at the beginning of the session of 1893 promised, with true English avoidance of the *expression* of realities, a measure 'to amend the provision for the government of Ireland.' The Duke, in the debate on the Address, summed up the facts with which Parliament would have to deal. He compared declarations made by leading Gladstonians as to the narrow limits which they proposed to set to Irish autonomy, with the wholly incompatible declarations made by Irish Nationalists. He said :—

'There is a fear that the English people, trusting to the validity of such declarations as I have quoted, and finding in this proposed measure some recognition of the principle of the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament, may be lulled into a sense of security, while the Irish members, with better reason, trust to the assurance, or to the conviction, that this nominal supremacy, although it may exist, will never be enforced, and can never be enforced.'

Mr. Gladstone introduced his new Home Rule Bill into the House of Commons, and the second reading was carried on the 21st April 1893, by a majority of 43 votes. The Bill of 1886 had provided for the exclusion of all Irish representation from the Parliament at Westminster, notwithstanding that Ireland was to make considerable contribution to the imperial expenditure. The measure of 1893, on the contrary, proposed that, while Ireland was to have a legislature for Irish affairs, Irish representatives, eighty of them, were to continue to sit in the Parliament at Westminster. As the Bill stood until after the second reading, these members were not to have the power of voting upon any legislation or taxation which was limited to England or Scotland, and not expressly

extended to Ireland. By way of diminishing the Protestant objection it was provided that the Irish were not to legislate in their own Parliament on matters touching religion or education. The power of legislation on Irish matters, over-riding local Irish legislation, was reserved to the Imperial Parliament; the Irish Parliament was prohibited from repealing or amending any laws so made, and its own Bills were to be subject to a veto by the Lord-Lieutenant exercised upon the instructions of the Imperial Government. It was pointed out that this 'in and out' method, by which Irish members at Westminster were to vote on some subjects but not on others, was incompatible with the system of party government. A Government which, like Mr. Gladstone's at that moment, depended for its majority on the Irish vote, would be defeated on purely English or Scottish measures, while the Opposition side could not hold office because they, in turn, might be defeated on matters of imperial concern. It was said that thus there would be two centres of political gravity in the same Parliament. Sir Michael Hicks Beach truly said, 'This Bill is not a Union, it is not a Federation, it is not a Colonial Self-Government. It is a bastard combination of all three.'

These objections prevailed, and Mr. Gladstone, who had carefully left open the door for the alternative of '*omnes omnia*,' adopted it in Committee. He defended the change on the ground that the debate had shown (1) that the Liberal party preferred it; (2) that it 'passed the wit of man to draw an exact line of severance between subjects which concerned Ireland and those which did not.' The Bill, as it left the Commons, allowed Irish members to vote in the House of Commons on all measures, whether of imperial concern or limited to England or Scotland. But now it encountered the no less fatal

objection that Irish members would take part in legislating for purely English or Scottish affairs, while English or Scottish members would have no power of legislation in Irish matters, except by way of legislation ignoring or over-riding that of the Dublin Parliament, a power which Irish national spirit would probably make difficult or impossible in practice.

Mr. Gladstone himself would always have preferred his original plan of placing Ireland upon a footing as nearly as possible corresponding to that of a fully self-governing colony. He had said at Manchester on 25th June 1886 : 'I will not be a party to a legislative body to manage Irish concerns, and at the same time to having Irish members in London acting and voting on English and Scottish questions.' In 1893 he had to do that which he said in 1886 he would not do. The fact is that, between the giving to Ireland of full colonial status and the existing legislative union, there is, as John Redmond said in Parliament on 13th July 1893, 'only one logical way of solving the problem, and that is by establishing a system of Federalism which would enable various local Parliaments for the different parts of the United Kingdom to legislate locally for those parts, leaving to the Imperial Parliament the function of managing imperial affairs.'[1] In other words, *if* we depart from full legislative union for all purposes, and *if* we are not willing to place Ireland in the position of New Zealand or Newfoundland, the only possible course is, as Mr. Chamberlain held in 1886, some adaptation of the Canadian Dominion and Province system to the circumstances of the *whole* United Kingdom.

Most of the attack led by Mr. Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain was founded on the contention that the securities

[1] Mr. Redmond added, it is true, that the process by which this complete result must be arrived at must be carried out step by step, beginning with Irish Home Rule.

which the Bill contained for the supremacy of the Imperial Government and Parliament, well as they might look on paper, would prove worthless in practice. This 'supremacy' question has been the issue all through. What is supremacy? A real thing? Or is it nothing but the hardly even nominal supremacy of the Imperial Parliament over self-governing Dominions? On the base of the monument now (1911) being erected to Parnell near the Rotunda at Dublin are engraved his words, 'No man has the right to set a boundary to the march of a nation,' followed by an assertion of eternal adherence to this dogma on the part of those who erect the monument. It is this everlasting claim of the Irish to the full recognition of a national status which has made the English unwilling to give them even a mild form of local self-government. It is feared that, if any form be given, the national spirit will enter into that body, and soon transform it into something very different. 'Nothing,' said Mr. Redmond in these debates, 'so long as the Union remains unrepealed, can deprive you of the right to control the Irish Parliament as you can control the Australian and Canadian Parliaments, and to check the growth of oppression and injustice.' It was pointed out again and again, in reply to this argument, and by none more frequently and lucidly than by the Duke of Devonshire, that this control is not real and cannot be exercised. Even if a fully free Dominion wished to leave the Empire, and its inhabitants were fairly unanimous in the desire, we should probably, he said, not try to prevent this except by argument. The advocates of Home Rule, trying to satisfy at the same time advanced Irish Nationalists and English and Scotch Protestants, hovered uncertainly both in 1886 and in 1893, as they still hover in 1911, between the proposition that the relation of Ireland to Great Britain was

to be that of Canada to England, and that it was to be that of Quebec Province to Canada, two wholly different things. It is one thing if a provincial government is created which has no general power of taxation, and perhaps no power to raise loans without sanction of the Imperial Parliament, which has a right of legislation strictly limited to special and defined subjects, which cannot raise any military or semi-military force, or appoint high judicial officers. It is another thing to say, as Mr. Redmond and others have said, following the Gladstonian principle, that the Imperial Parliament will retain 'an over-ruling supreme authority over the new Irish Legislature *such as* it possesses to-day over the various Legislatures in Canada, Australia, South Africa, and other self-governing Dominions.'[1] Such 'supreme authority,' in the case of these Dominions, does not exist. It is a purely theoretic idea, or, at best, the ghost of ancient authority which lived long ago, when the self-governing Dominions were still Crown Colonies. No real power is exercised over these Governments either by the Imperial Parliament or by the Imperial Executive. In practice the relation of the United Kingdom to Canada, Australia, New Zealand, or South Africa is the relation between States allied for all purposes. The Governors are our Ambassadors, and the Colonial Office does, on this side of its activity, the same kind of work as that done by the Foreign Office with regard to other external Governments. There is all the difference in the world between these cases and those in which, by hold over finance or in other ways, the Imperial Parliament and Executive does exercise real control, as, for instance, over the London County Council, or, in of course a very different way, over India, hitherto, or any Crown

[1] The words are quoted from a speech by Mr. Redmond in 1910. Quotations to the same effect might be made from Mr. Asquith, Mr. Churchill, &c.

Colony. But part of the lower art of politics consists in confounding things which ought to be distinguished.

A few years ago, it may be remarked, a slight interference by the Imperial Government with an executive detail, involving, however, the life of several persons and allegations of injustice and oppression in a self-governing Colony, was immediately followed by the resignation, as a protest, of the Ministry in that Colony. If the Secretary of State for the Colonies had persisted, no other Colonial Ministry could have been formed, and the only possible method would have been the abolition or modification of the Colonial Constitution by Act of the Imperial Parliament. Of course the Colonial Office gave way at once. A little later the Government of another self-governing Dominion threatened to adopt the same course upon a far smaller interference, and was met by a prompt apology and withdrawal. This shows how little the Imperial Supremacy amounts to, in practice, as a check on Colonial action. Mr. Gladstone, in the debate of 1893, spoke of this Supremacy as a 'hallowed thing.' Mr. Balfour, in reply, said, very truly, that Mr. Gladstone adored a 'hallowed Nothing.' This 'supremacy' is one of those magical phrases which have the terrible power, when used by the clever, to 'call fools into a circle.' It is worth while to dwell upon this point a little because the confusion of thought, against which Lord Hartington so often protested, is to this very day sedulously maintained, and is apt to cheat the ignorant.

Side by side with this talk about Canada and Australia, and South Africa, and Imperial Supremacy, were, and still are, placed definite proposals as to an Irish Constitution wholly different from, and inferior in nature to, the Constitution of these Dominions. This was done in 1886 and in 1893, and is done to this day. It is a kind of intellectual

jugglery, a sleight-of-hand. Perhaps it was, and is, thought that the Irish are more easily held with words than are the English, and that by phrases, which make it seem that Ireland is to be placed upon the footing of a self-governing Colony, the Nationalists will 'save face' and be brought to accept a merely provincial Constitution. Honestly, one can concede to Ireland either the position of a self-governing Dominion or that of a Canadian Province. It is not honest to pretend that one is doing the first while one is really doing the second of these things.

II

More than enough excitement alleviated the tedious progress of this measure through the House of Commons. There were speeches in the country and demonstrations in Ulster. The Duke of Devonshire, on April 15th, addressed a meeting of the Prime Minister's Scottish constituents in that same Corn Market at Dalkeith which has been the scene of several famous orations. He set forth lucidly the main objections to the Home Rule Bill, and his words on the deepest objection of all may here be quoted :—

'The people of Ulster tell you that they will not willingly submit to the form of government which it is proposed to impose upon them. I have never attempted to say whether you are to believe that the people of Ulster say what they mean or not, but I will say that it is a very ill-advised action, at all events, on the part of the supporters of the Bill, to treat the manifestations of Ulster as mere bluster.'

He referred to the resistance in arms made to James II. by those ancestors whose memory 'we are accustomed to venerate.' Then he said : 'The people of Ulster are a

strong and masterful race. They have been for a long time accustomed to rule. . . . We expect that the inhabitants of Ulster will obey the law, but no subject is bound to obey a law which does not give him at least equal protection with that which is offered to every other class of his fellow-subjects. . . .

'But,' he added—

'the people of Ulster believe, rightly or wrongly, that under a Government responsible to an Imperial Parliament they possess at present the fullest security which they can possess of their personal freedom, their liberties, and their right to transact their own business in their own way. You have no right to offer them any inferior security to that; and if, after weighing the character of the Government which it is sought to impose on them, they resolve that they are no longer bound to obey a law which does not give them equal and just protection with their fellow-subjects, who can say—how, at all events, can the descendants of those who resisted King James II. say—that they have not a right, if they think fit, to resist, if they think they have the power, the imposition of a Government put upon them by force?'

Mr. John Morley, the Irish Chief Secretary, quoting these words a few days later in the House of Commons, said that they showed 'the high-water mark of the frenzy to which Unionist fanaticism and superstition can bring men of intelligence.' Mr. Morley himself admitted the danger of an armed Protestant rising in Ulster, and the 'frenzied fanaticism and superstition' of the Duke of Devonshire consisted apparently in his statement that, if such a rising took place, no Whig, on his own historic principles, could condemn it. But was not this true? The Revolution of 1688 was, essentially, an armed rising, with foreign aid, of English Protestants who desired, for reasons

of a general kind, not to allow executive power to be in the hands of a virtually Roman Catholic Government.[1]

There was bitterness enough, yet the whole affair of 1893 was but a pale repetition of that of 1886. It was felt to be not an attempted and menacing Revolution, but an ordinary piece of party campaigning. In 1886 there was real danger. Early in that year, in view of the new and untried electorate, it could not be predicted with certainty how, on appeal to the people, the final verdict would go. But in 1893 the judgment of the larger island was obviously against Home Rule. Mr. Gladstone, if the representatives returned by England and Scotland were alone counted, was in a decided minority; he was only maintained in office by the combined support, for a limited purpose, of the two Nationalist factions, then bitterly hostile to each other, sent to Parliament by the over-represented Irish electorate. No one felt the smallest doubt that the Bill, if it reached the House of Lords, would there be slain with the approbation of England. Had it not been for this certainty the Bill would not, it was thought, have got through the House of Commons. The Unionist party, however, fought the measure line by line; it was forced through at last by free use of the closure, and arrived in the House of Lords at the end of August with the greater number of its clauses undiscussed.

The Duke of Devonshire, on the 5th September, moved the rejection of this Bill in the House of Lords, as he had moved the rejection of the Bill of 1886 in the House of Commons. His speech touched upon some political principles of general importance. He wished, he said, to call

[1] The not very convincing *specific* grievances of 1688 were, mainly, the appointment of a few Catholics to places of trust or profit; the refusal of the Executive to enforce laws against Catholics or other dissenters, and the punishment of a dynastic rebellion with the same kind of severity as that used in 1746 in the Highlands after Culloden.

the attention of the House to the decision which they had to give :—

'It is an important one, but it does not appear to me to be a decision which involves your Lordships in any heavy responsibility. Such cases have occurred before, and will doubtless occur again. The question has had to be solved whether your Lordships should make use of the Constitutional powers which you possess to reject measures which did not commend themselves to your judgment, but which you had reason to believe were approved by the majority of the House of Commons and of the country. . . . I think that your Lordships know well the limits of your power. You know that, not being a representative Assembly, and not backed by the strength that a representative character gives to a legislative body, and not sharing altogether the democratic principles which are making progress in this as in other countries, it would be unwise, impolitic, and unpatriotic to insist upon your personal convictions in opposition to the decided view of the country.'

Such, he said, was the aspect of matters in the case of the Reform Bill of 1832, the repeal of the Corn Laws, and the Irish Church Act.

'Such cases may recur, and it is not for me to say what it may be the duty of this House to do when a similar case recurs again. It may be that a measure may be, in your Lordship's opinion, so impolitic, so unjust, and so mischievous that it may be your duty to resist it to the last at any risk, even at that of the loss of your own political privileges.'

The present, he maintained, was not a case in which the will of the country was known and declared.

'On a question of such magnitude, so closely touching the fundamental institutions of our State, if there is any

object in the existence of a second Chamber, it is, at all events, to prevent changes of that character being made without the absolute certainty that they are in accordance with the will of the majority of the people. Now of that certainty we have no knowledge, and we can have none.'

To prove this point he traced the history of the measure. It had not been, like the Reform Bill of 1832, or the repeal of the Corn Laws, preceded by a long popular agitation, nor had it been, like the Irish Church Act, the sole measure submitted to the country at a General Election.

'In 1885 not only was no political party committed to this policy, but I venture to say that not one elector in ten thousand was favourable to the policy of Home Rule. This is a policy which emanates from the brain and will of a single man. It is not a policy which has proceeded from a political party; it is not a policy advocated by a political party and then adopted by its leaders. It is a policy which has been imposed upon his followers by the single will of one man.'

The policy had been rejected by the House of Commons in 1886, the rejection had been, immediately afterwards, confirmed by the voice of the country, attempts to revive interest in the subject had been unsuccessful, and—

'in the electoral campaign carried on from 1886 to 1892 the Home Rule policy was more and more withdrawn from the notice of the constituencies, and other measures which, it was found, commanded a larger measure of popular sympathy and support were put forward in its place. That policy was so successful that no human being can tell on what question the majority which put the present Government in office was returned.'

Supposing, for argument's sake, that the present Bill were passed. It was quite possible that there might be, at the next elections, a strong Unionist and anti-Irish

majority. The new Irish Government and Parliament might find themselves confronted by a hostile English Government and Parliament.

'Consider what, in that case, would be the responsibility of your Lordships' House. You would be told that you had had the power to prevent these evils, that you had had the power to impose an interval during which the true will and desire of the people might be ascertained, but that you had failed to use this opportunity. In vain you would plead that you had acted as we are told we ought to act; in vain you would plead that you had acted on the assumption that the vote of the House of Commons was conclusive. Those who now denounce you for attempting to withstand the judgment of the popular Assembly would then be the first to denounce, with more justice, this Assembly as an utterly useless and inefficient body, incapable of averting even the consequences of a mistaken estimate of the opinion of the country.'

In a case so serious, he contended not only the principle but the form of the measure should be before the country. In this matter the form was 'only less essential than the principle itself.'

'I shall be told that the House of Commons approved of this Bill, and that the General Election gave to the House of Commons the necessary mandate and authority to work out the organic details of the measure. I traverse that argument at every step. For reasons which I have stated I deny that the House of Commons received any mandate upon Home Rule at all at the last election; and I say further that, if there were a mandate, it was a conditional mandate, and that the conditions were not within the knowledge of the country. Before this measure is passed into law, we have a right to demand that the judgment of the country shall be given, not upon a cry, not upon an aspiration, not upon an impatient impulse, but upon a completed work; and that this measure, the result of the

collective wisdom of the Government and Parliament, shall be submitted to the country for its approval, aye or no.'

He denied that the measure even represented the real views of the existing majority in the House of Commons. Every one had known that the measure could not be passed into law. 'Members have debated and voted on this question knowing well that it was not a question of practical policy.' Knowing that their action could lead to no practical consequences, they had voted with their party. Three-fourths of the Bill had been put to the vote without debate in the House of Commons.

Turning to the merits of the Bill itself, he pointed out that its authors appeared to recognise no distinction between the Government of the British Empire and the Government of the United Kingdom. He compared the real supremacy of the Parliament at Westminster in the United Kingdom—'the direct government of these islands by Parliament through a Committee'—with its merely nominal supremacy in the British Empire. 'As regards the affairs of our self-governing Colonies, the supremacy of Parliament, and the direct control of Parliament, has become nothing but a name.' Which of these two systems, he asked, was intended by the proposed measure? 'When the Government speak of this measure sometimes as one preserving the unity of the United Kingdom, and sometimes the unity of the British Empire, are we to read those terms in the sense in which they are now applied to the United Kingdom, or only as they are now applied to the British Empire?'

This was Lord Hartington's old point of 1886. It was the point which Gladstone, the great Nominalist, to whom words were as things, could never see, or would never meet. This part of the Duke's argument is too long to be

summarised here, but it is worth the most careful attention of those who wish to make up their minds on this question of organic policy. The Duke repeated also his old objections to the establishment of an Irish Government and Parliament, that there would be no guarantee to the minority of protection against oppression and injustice, and his view that the true path of advance was the extension of local, as opposed to national, elective government:—

'All our institutions have been gradual in their growth, and never has there been wholly absent from them, even in Ireland, the germ of local self-government. In very recent times we have seen an enormous development of the principles of local self-government. In our County Councils we have seen great and powerful bodies created, possessing now very considerable executive and administrative powers. No one can say how far this principle may yet be capable of extension; but to whatever extent it may grow, in the course of its growth it destroys nothing, it takes no power away from our central Government, or from our Imperial Parliament. It grows side by side with our parliamentary institutions. . . .

'It is like the action of a father who, as his sons grow up, and show more and more capacity for business, entrusts a larger and larger share of the management of his affairs to them, or like the case of an employer who, as his business increases, and he feels less inclined to devote himself to details, delegates to managers and subordinates a larger amount of power and responsibility. But the course you prefer resembles that of a father who is compelled by his son to sign during his lifetime a bond assigning a considerable proportion of his income and an appreciable amount of control in the management of his affairs, or like the conduct of subordinate managers of a firm who insist on their employer converting his business into a limited liability company, and appointing all of them co-directors with equal power and authority to himself.

'The reason for this course of conduct on the part of Government is not far to seek. No proposal to extend local self-government in Ireland would have purchased votes. In an evil and unhappy day the Irish party accepted at the hands of Mr. Parnell the principle of Irish nationality; and, in a still more evil day, without consulting his followers, the leader of the Liberal party committed the great bulk of his own party to the same principle.'

The speech ended in a solidly eloquent peroration:—

'We have been accused of indulging in prophecy. I do not know which of us has claimed that gift, but no doubt statesmanship does consist in the gift of foreseeing, so far as our imperfect faculties will admit, the consequences of certain acts and certain policies. Principles may be important, details may be essential; but what the statesman has to look at are the probable results. We have, as the Prime Minister thinks, a distorted vision of the measure. You also have your visions. We think we see not only the evils and horrors which will result from this Bill, but we have a vision of a happier Ireland under other conditions. Our vision, I admit, is not clothed in any radiant colours, but we see the prospect of a continuous growth in the material prosperity of Ireland which has marked the history of the country in recent years. We believe that contentment and order will in the end follow in the steps of material prosperity. If we have the distorted vision of the facts of your policy which the Prime Minister describes, we are entitled to think that your Utopia is still more wild and improbable than ours. . . . We believe that the picture we draw is drawn on truer lines, and in more faithful colours, than their picture, which is so much the work of the imagination. They must acknowledge, at all events, that their remedy is a critical and a capital one. If it does not succeed one of the patients surely dies, while the other must be left sorely afflicted almost unto death. Believing that it is better to

endure the ills we have than to fly to others that we know not of, we elect, and we hope that the people will support us in electing — to abide by the Union of the United Kingdom, which we believe was decreed by Nature, and to which laws and treaties have only given a written sanction.'

Oliver Cromwell once said that when he forcibly dissolved the Long Parliament 'not a dog barked.' So it was when the House of Lords threw out the Home Rule Bill of 1893. The only sign of popular feeling was a small crowd singing 'Rule Britannia' and cheering the Lords as they came down into Palace Yard near midnight. Not a meeting of protest was held. The Government did not dare, or care, to go to the country, as in 1886, and their Irish allies, although they had the power, had no longer spirit or independence enough to compel them.

The House of Lords, in 1893, thus stopped with ease the last attempt made by an old political hero—inspired as he believed by high motives—to impose upon the English nation, by means of a small, hybrid, and almost weightless majority, his own inveterate and impatient will. If, in some future dream of delusion or lassitude, we succumb to the empire of new magicians, or, what is worse and far more probable, to the cold mechanic sway of intellectual schemers, then some even of those who did the deed may have bitter cause to repent of the revolution completed on the night of 10th August 1911, which violently broke and almost destroyed the liberty-guarding power of that free and famous Council.

In the following February (1894) Mr. Gladstone, tired out at last, resigned, and was succeeded by Lord Rosebery, a faithful personal friend of the Duke, as Prime Minister. It was the end of Gladstone's long and strange romance, and to him this political story may now bid farewell.

He lived thenceforth in retirement, and died in a religiously noble manner in May 1898, almost ninety years after he was born. The Duke of Devonshire, in the House of Lords, then spoke in these words of the man whose character and actions had so much affected his own life :—

'But for the events of 1886 it would have been unnecessary on my part to add anything to that which has been said as to the great qualities of Mr. Gladstone or any of the incidents of his great career. As to those events I only desire to say this—to be placed in acute opposition to one with whom as a trusted leader we had been in relations of intimate confidence and warm personal friendship must necessarily have been, and was, to us, a most painful position. But, although it was not in the character of Mr. Gladstone to shrink from letting his opponents feel the full weight of his blame or censure, when he considered that blame or censure was deserved, I can truly say that I can recall no word of his which added unnecessary bitterness to that position. My Lords, deeply as we regret the difference of opinion which caused the separation between Mr. Gladstone and so many of those who had been his most devoted adherents, we never doubted, and we do not doubt now, that in that, as in every other matter with which, during his long public life he had to deal, his action was guided by no other consideration than that of a sense of public duty, and by his conception of that which was in the highest and truest interests of his country.'

Lord Salisbury on the same occasion said that Mr. Gladstone had been 'a great Christian man.' It was then felt, even by the strongest of his old opponents, that his errors had been the fruit of honest convictions and high aims and standards, and had been expiated by his defeats, his virtues, his sufferings, and by the burden of his years.

Popular homage was his guerdon to the last. Beaconsfield was quietly buried near Hughenden Manor, Salisbury at Hatfield, and Devonshire at Edensor, when their labours were ended, but the mortal part of Gladstone lay in state in Westminster Hall, visited by thousands, and was interred in the most frequented part of Westminster Abbey, where unnumbered feet pass above his grave.

Lord Rosebery's Government lost some of their narrow majority at bye-elections, were defeated in a division in the House of Commons on the 21st June 1895, and resigned. Lord Salisbury accepted office, formed his third Administration, and advised the Queen to dissolve Parliament. The elections took place in July, and proved to be the worst disaster that had ever befallen the modern Liberal party. The action of the House of Lords was completely approved by the country. Conservatives were returned 340 in number, and 71 Liberal Unionists. A transfer of 221,059 votes in Great Britain had changed Mr. Gladstone's last majority of 40 into a Unionist majority of 152.

Now from the most sanguine breast had wholly vanished that hope of a complete reunion of the Liberal party which had inspired most of the Liberal Unionists in 1886 and 1887, and had prevented Lord Hartington from inscribing his name upon the roll of English Prime Ministers. He accepted office as Lord President of the Council, Mr. Chamberlain as Colonial Secretary. Sir Henry James was also a member of the new Cabinet, and some of the minor posts were held by Liberal Unionists. The seven following years were the calmest in the Duke's political life, and they can be dealt with very shortly.

CHAPTER XXVI

LORD SALISBURY'S GOVERNMENT, 1895–1902

Lord Salisbury's third Administration, the last in Queen Victoria's reign, enduring from June 1895 until July 1902, was by far the best and strongest and most successful English Government of modern times.[1] The conduct of affairs was immensely strengthened by the conversion of the alliance with the Liberal Unionist leaders into the closer relation which exists between men actively working in, as well as for, the same Ministry. In that Cabinet were combined the wise and far-seeing mind of Lord Salisbury, incapable of illusion or self-deception, with the weight of character and common sense of the Duke of Devonshire, the business capacity of Lord Goschen, the coolness and lucidity of Lord Lansdowne, the strength and courage of Sir Michael Hicks Beach, the swift intellect of Mr. Balfour leading the House of Commons, and the temperament of Mr. Chamberlain, open to ideas, in natural touch with the average Englishman, a dynamic force, and a power in the country.

Mr. Chamberlain wrote to the Duke on the 23rd July 1895:—

'We have a chance now of doing something which will make this Government memorable. Do not be alarmed! I do not mean sensational legislation, but we can settle some questions in a way which cannot be touched when

[1] Technically, this period covered two Salisbury Administrations by reason of the accession of a new Sovereign at the beginning of 1901.

the inevitable reaction takes place. National Defence, for instance, besides some pending English and Irish questions.'

The expectation was largely justified. In the field of domestic legislation Lord Salisbury's Government passed useful though not sensational measures, such as the Friendly Societies Act, 1896, the Workmen's Compensation Act, 1897, the Act of 1898 establishing County Councils in Ireland, and the Act of 1899 establishing the Irish Department and representative Council for Agriculture and Technical Instruction, the Act of 1899 establishing the London Borough Councils, and the Factory and Workshop Act of 1901.

Through the sea of foreign and imperial affairs Lord Salisbury's Government held the ship on a steady and forward course. In these years great things were done. Strong soldiers and civilians abroad were supported by strong statesmen in Whitehall. The boundaries of Empire were driven outward in Western and Northern and Southern Africa, advancing as, in the days of Chatham, they advanced in America and Asia. Sir George Goldie's brilliant victory in 1897 at Bida, the Plassey of Western Africa, and the subsequent transfer of Northern Nigeria from the Company to the Crown, converted nominal influence into actual sway over a vast territory with a boundless future.[1] Lord Kitchener, by his Nile campaigns, and his crushing defeat and slaughter of the Dervish host at Omdurman, and Lord Cromer by his civil skill and patience, repaired the disasters of 1884 and 1885, and, fulfilling the idea of Gordon, gave to the desolated Soudan a happier future under British

[1] This somewhat unknown but most eventful victory was won by about 30 British officers leading 600 native troops, with a few machine guns, against a host reckoned at over 20,000 men, a large proportion of whom were cavalry of the dominant Arab (Fulani) race.

control. Khartoum began to arise from ruin like Jerusalem after the return from exile. In South Africa, Lord Salisbury's Government bore the burden of a long series of errors committed by previous Governments, both Conservative and Liberal. Mr. Chamberlain and Sir Alfred Milner, Cecil Rhodes and the Dutch Presidents Kruger and Steyn, brought, between them, the old question to its final issue. A wearisome and costly war, fought with heroic obstinacy by the Boers, and carried through with resolution and superior force by the English, ended, before Lord Salisbury resigned, in a peace which laid the foundation of a free and united new Dominion beneath the Imperial Crown. This war, and the Colonial military co-operation, swelled the tide of feeling which set towards greater imperial unity. Strong impulses were also given by the celebration of the Queen's Jubilee of 1897, the Colonial Conferences of 1897 and 1902, the death of Queen Victoria, the accession and coronation of King Edward VII. The sense of family unity throughout the Empire was quickened by these events.

The year 1897, combining, as it did, the Jubilee celebration of the sixtieth year of the longest reign in our history with the first formal Conference between the Governments allied beneath the British Crown,[1] seemed to some, more especially on that perfect day of June, when they watched the noble procession move through the radiant and exulting streets of London, to be a culminating point in the wonderful story of England. In that glorious and happy summer serious and world-embracing business, pregnant with future consequences, was combined with feasting and revelry. Devonshire House has always played a leading part both in the sphere of politics and in that of social magnificence. By far the most splendid private entertainment of the 'Dia-

[1] The preceding Conference of 1887, under Sir Henry Holland's presidency, was a very informal proceeding, though the seed of much to come.

mond Jubilee' was the Devonshire House Ball on the 2nd July, where the elect of the British aristocracy appeared in the Court costumes of all times and countries. They were received at the head of the fair and curving marble staircase by the Duchess, gloriously apparelled as Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra, and by the Duke as the Emperor Charles V., adorned with the collar and the badge of the Golden Fleece.[1] Two English kings, to be, were present. The Prince of Wales appeared as Grand Master of the Knights of Malta, the Duke of York as Clifford, Earl of Cumberland in Elizabethan days. The Duchess of York came as the renowned Marguerite de Valois. Princess Henry of Pless shone as a beautiful Queen of Sheba, her train borne by four negro boys. Sir William Harcourt assumed the weighty shape of his ancestor, Lord Chancellor Harcourt;[2] Lord Rosebery donned the lighter mien of Horace Walpole. Mr. Chamberlain appeared in the costume worn by courtiers at Versailles shortly before the French Revolution, and by the younger Pitt at Windsor; Mr. Balfour was habited like a distinguished gentleman of Holland at the period of the English Restoration, but Mr. Asquith, faithful to life-long convictions, was attired in the riding dress of a Puritan or Roundhead. Modestly, he did not in terms assert himself to be the reincarnation of Oliver Cromwell.

As Lord President of the Council the Duke of Devonshire had a leading part to enact in the annual openings of Parliament from 1896 to 1903, at the accession and at

[1] The *Times* correspondent remarked that this was suitable since the Cavendishes and the Hapsburgs are 'curiously alike in feature.' The Golden Fleece was lent to the Duke by the Prince of Wales for the occasion.

[2] The Harcourt *temp.* Anne and George I., to whom Swift addressed his beautiful allocution:—

> 'Come, trimming Harcourt, quit your place,
> And to another yield your mace!'

Photo: R. Keene, Derby

CHATSWORTH—SOUTH FRONT

the coronation of King Edward VII., and in other great ceremonials. His stately figure, with something recalling the idea of an old Teutonic prince, well became these high rituals of the Crown of England. The English Court shone with renewed splendour during the too brief reign of Edward VII., and on more than one occasion the Duke and Duchess received the King and the Queen with feudal magnificence at their palatial house of Chatsworth. All this, however, is somewhat in anticipation of the course of this political story.

During this great period the Duke was the President of the British Empire League, comprising distinguished men of both parties, and founded to promote the consideration and evolution of Imperial ideas. The Duke, on the 6th July 1897, addressed a meeting of the British Empire League, at which the Colonial Premiers then in England were present. He spoke of the growth of the self-governing Colonies, and of the common sentiment which united ourselves and them, and said that—

> 'we should fall short of our opportunities and our capabilities if these nations should in future grow up as separate or independent nations, and not rather as integral parts of a still greater nation—the British Empire—which shall be connected by ties which may be more or less close, more or less definite, but still shall be substantial ties connecting us together in everything which connects our government, our general policy, our commercial relations, and our general defence.'

In a speech to this same League on the 24th July 1900, he spoke of the approaching establishment of the Australian Commonwealth, and said that these great measures of Colonial Federation strengthened, in his opinion, 'that cause of Imperial Federation which shall spread over the whole world.' Lord Morley says that 'in

their views of Colonial policy Mr. Gladstone was in substantial accord with Radicals of the school of Cobden, Hume, and Molesworth';[1] and it is not necessary to quote well-known passages to show that those men thought and taught that all political connection between the Colonies and the United Kingdom would and should come to an end. It is to be hoped and believed that modern Liberals have abandoned these false and depressing doctrines, and hold, like their rivals, a nobler faith, taught by experience and by wisdom.

II

Strong as the Conservative and Liberal Unionist coalition was from the point of view of Imperial policy, it was not free from internal weaknesses and seeds of disintegration. The very fact of the administrative fusion involved a tendency towards a redivision of parties upon the old Conservative and Liberal lines. Mr. Gladstone's final withdrawal from the political arena had removed the purely personal and Gladstonian aspect of his party; the second crushing defeat of Home Rule had removed the menaced danger to Irish Protestantism which had made so many Nonconformists, like Bright and Spurgeon, become Liberal Unionists. The fusion of Liberal Unionists in Government and Parliament with a Tory party hereditarily sympathising with the wishes and interests of the Church of England was likely to drive these Nonconformist Unionists back towards the main Liberal body. It was difficult also to arrange the distribution of seats between Conservatives and Liberal Unionists. The general basis of division had been that of *beati possidentes*. Conservative was to succeed to Conservative and Liberal Unionist

[1] *Life of Gladstone*, pp. 361, 362.

to Liberal Unionist, as candidates. But what if Conservative electors, as happened in 1895 at a bye-election at Warwick, wished a Conservative to succeed to a Liberal Unionist, and declined to obey the commands of headquarters? Before the change of Government, in the spring of 1885, some of the Tory papers were assailing Mr. Chamberlain. Sir Henry James wrote to the Duke of Devonshire: 'This policy among the Tories is founded partly on the Leamington row, and partly on the vote on the Welsh Church.[1] Chamberlain is so furious that he talks of ceasing any political action and going to Australia until after the General Election is over.' In the eyes of many Tories who were behind their time and rooted in their ideas, Mr. Chamberlain remained for years the typical Radical and Dissenter of an earlier period. The following letter shows the position:—

Mr. Chamberlain to the Duke of Devonshire.

April 19, 1895.

'I am much obliged to you for your very kind letter, and I hasten to assure you that although I have been led very seriously to consider my position during the last few weeks, I have never thought of taking any irrevocable step without consulting you and asking your advice.

'The difficulty has arisen unexpectedly—almost from a clear sky.

'It does not consist in any single incident, but in a sort of cumulative demonstrations from different quarters directed against the principles of the Unionist alliance, and chiefly against myself as their personal representative.

'As far as I am concerned the question is a simple one. I have nothing to gain by remaining in public life—I would not give a brass button to fill any office that is likely to be within my reach—and therefore, unless I

[1] Mr. Chamberlain had voted for the second reading of the Liberal Government's Bill dealing with the Church in Wales.

can see a clear public duty or a great public object—I am ready and even desirous to be relieved of further responsibility.

'As to the longer consideration, and the possibility of further usefulness, I feel that this can only exist under certain conditions which the recent demonstration tends to make impossible.

'My rôle in the Home Rule controversy has been to keep a number of strong Liberals and Radicals staunch to the Union. To do this, I have had to give evidence that I remain a Liberal at heart although I am loyally working with the Tories. I can sacrifice a great deal in the way of opinions, but I cannot sacrifice everything without losing all the influence I now possess.

'If any considerable number of Conservatives believe that they are strong enough to stand alone and can do without the Liberal Unionist "crutch," as poor Randolph phrased it, I am ready to be thrown aside and to let them try the experiment.

'On the other hand, if they still want our assistance, they must pay the price they have hitherto willingly paid. There is no room for further concession, and they will find it bad economy to haggle over the terms of the bargain.

'I believe that Lord Salisbury, Balfour, and the great bulk of the party are loyally anxious to carry out the agreement; but they will have to find some way of preventing their more undisciplined troops from firing into the backs of their allies.

'If we are to help the Unionist party in the future we must have a certain latitude of interpretation, and in carrying out our combined strategic movement we are entitled to the same confidence as is accorded to the Conservative members. The recent controversy has had for its main object to establish a difference between us, and while the Conservative leaders are to be trusted, *we* are to be used.

'Once grant this, and our influence will be destroyed with both sections of the party.

'I hope that good may come out of evil and that the air may be cleared after the recent thunderstorm, but if we are to avoid the most serious complications in the near future it seems to me that we must take up a firm stand now.'

In the autumn of the same year, 29th November 1895, Mr. Chamberlain, in a letter to the Duke, expressed his opinion that some authoritative statement must be made as to the necessity for maintaining the Liberal Unionist organisations throughout the country. If nothing were done, he believed that in many places the organisation would be broken up and the Liberal Unionists divided, half joining the Conservatives and the remainder returning to the Radicals.

III

The Duke of Devonshire, as Lord President of the Council, took charge from 1895 to 1902 of the Education Department. Sir John Gorst, rather a malcontent Tory, was Vice-President, and answered for education to the House of Commons. Now education was precisely the weakest link in the relations between Conservatives and Liberal Unionists. Fortune compelled Lord Salisbury's Government to begin, and Mr. Balfour's to continue, educational legislation upon a large scale, although, for political reasons, they would rather have avoided this horrid question. These events touch, both directly and indirectly, the life of the Duke of Devonshire.

Like most things English, national education had grown in its own way without forethought taken or general design. Rate-supported School Boards, created at first to supplement the numerous gaps left by the voluntary, religion-prompted system, had become, by

dint of growing, powerful and jealous rivals of the older elementary schools. Secondary or higher education was carried on partly by endowed schools, partly by municipal authorities, exercising powers to promote technical education, partly, in large towns, by School Boards illegally, as it afterwards appeared, instituting 'continuation' classes.

There was, in 1895, no real Minister or Board of Education. The Committee of Council on Education had been created in 1839. The Lord President of the Council had many other functions, and the Vice-President was not a Cabinet Minister. One department dealt with elementary education, and another, that of 'Science and Art,' distinct and independent, dealt with technical instruction. The Charity Commissioners exercised a limited and ineffective control over endowed schools. A Royal Commission had recommended, in 1895, the establishment of a real central authority, and of local authorities, for secondary education.

The denominational elementary schools, then supported partly by Treasury grants and partly by voluntary subscriptions, were in distress. The requirements of the Education Department led to ever-increasing expenditure, while subscriptions showed no power of expansion. Especially was this the case in rural districts where squire, parson, farmer, and tradesman had been hard hit by the decline of rents, tithes, profits, and local business. The ratepayers also, where School Boards existed, limited to narrow and poor areas, were oppressed by the increasing load of taxation.

An attempt was first made to smooth out the administrative entanglement, central and local. Bills with this end in view were introduced, but for various reasons not proceeded with in 1896 and 1898. Bills were, however, passed in 1897 of a financial *modus vivendi* kind—measures intended,

as the Duke said, 'to relieve the voluntary schools from intolerable strain of poverty, and to relieve the oppressive burdens of rates in some of the poorer districts.' Even these transient expedients—so far as assistance to voluntary schools was concerned—revealed the rift which menaced the integrity of the Unionist party. The Duke wrote on 24th March 1897 to Lord Salisbury, who went abroad for his health :—

'I look forward with a good deal of anxiety to what may occur here. I think it has required all your influence in the Cabinet to keep us together, and I do not feel sure that those who have joined us unwillingly in the present policy will be equally amenable if further developments should arise. On the other hand, you have made considerable concessions to opinions expressed in the Cabinet, and I do not very well see how this process is going to be continued.'

The House of Cecil were, and are, firm defenders of all the rights, or claims, of the Church of England. Lord Salisbury wrote to the Duke on the 21st January 1900 :—

'I am afraid I shall have trouble with you about this denominational question. I cannot accept any measure which aids undenominational religion out of the public funds and refuses the same aid to denominational religion. If you choose to give aid to specified *secular* teaching without touching the religious question, of course I have no objection.'

The Duke himself, like nine Englishmen out of ten, would have been perfectly content, and indeed better pleased, with the simplest and most undenominational teaching. He had a correspondence at the same date with Lord Cranborne, the eldest son of Lord Salisbury, who

quite unsuccessfully endeavoured to explain to him the Church view. The Duke said in one of these letters :—

'I am afraid that there is some defect in my intelligence which renders me incapable even of understanding the apprehensions of the advocates of denominational education. If I could only understand them, I might try to do something to remove their objections.'

His position in these years was not an easy one so far as concerned education. Tory Churchmen on one side and Unionist Nonconformists on the other were alike malcontent, while the state of the case forbade the policy of leaving things as they were. In 1899 a Bill was passed enabling the constitution of a Board of Education, which should unite the two existing departments under a President and a Parliamentary Secretary, on the lines of the Board of Trade. In 1900, and again in 1901, Bills were introduced, but not passed, with the object of making each County or County Borough Council the local authority for all secondary education.[1] Early in 1901 came a bolt from the calm Olympus where sit the highest Judges of Appeal, the famous decision *re Cockerton*, which accelerated the pace and enlarged the intent of legislation. The supreme tribunal held it to be illegal on the part of School Boards to use rates for any purpose beyond that of elementary education strictly so-called. This decision threatened immediate destruction to the weapons by which the greater School Boards, in rivalry with, and overlapping the action of, municipal authorities, had been invading the sphere of secondary education, not

[1] I have heard on good authority that when the Cabinet decided not to proceed with one of these Bills the Duke undertook to break the news to the Vice-President, who had produced it and was attached to it, and that he went to Sir John's room, and after standing some time with his back to the fire, said, 'Well, Gorst, your damned Bill's dead.'

without the approval of the Education Department. Flourishing evening continuation schools were in danger of losing their means of subsistence. A financial *modus vivendi* was hastily arranged, but Government were now forced to deal with the question as a whole. The confusion between the powers of School Boards and of County Councils, the Cockerton judgment, the cry of the distressed ratepayer in the poor districts, the failure of ruined voluntary schools to meet the rise in ideals of the Education Department and of sanitary experts—all these things clamoured for that which newspapers call a 'bold and comprehensive reform.'

Sir Almeric FitzRoy, who was official private secretary to the Duke from 1895 to 1898, and afterwards Clerk of the Privy Council, has supplied the following note as to his chief during this period:—

'When we first met he told me it was intended to associate Sir John Gorst with him as Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education in the belief that his ingenuity might assist the Government to square the educational circle, but the uses of political ingenuity were not perhaps fully realised. As a matter of fact the Duke stood to a large extent between Sir John and the resentments he incurred, defending him on one occasion in the House of Lords with great vigour and success: he was indeed tolerant of the liberties of expression which Sir John allowed himself, and inclined to attribute his idiosyncrasies to friskiness rather than disloyalty.

'The relations in those days between a Lord President who was expected to exercise some real control of educational policy and a self-willed Vice-President with ideas of his own and a contempt for mandarins, were likely to prove uncomfortable, but from the first the Duke conquered both the esteem and respect of his critical subordinate. His own view was that the questions

agitating controversialists were given a prominence out of all proportion to the interests involved, and he was therefore impatient of the violent and uncompromising passions which retarded a lasting settlement.

'It must be admitted that the details of educational administration, however interesting to the enthusiast, were frankly distasteful to the Duke's temperament, and on one occasion when he found them particularly tedious, he threw himself back in his chair, put his hands through his hair and groaned, "I can't understand how it is I ever got the reputation of an educational expert." It was of course in connection with higher and especially technical education that any such reputation was gained. As President of the National Association for the Promotion of Technical Instruction he was not merely a figurehead; but further, he more than once vindicated his title to the possession of large views on national education as a whole, and never more effectively than in the speech of August 1, 1898, when presenting two Bills on the subject to the House of Lords: a speech which, at the suggestion of no less an expert than Mr. Lyulph Stanley, now Lord Sheffield, was printed and circulated to the members of both branches of the legislature.

'In this connection there should not be overlooked his contribution to the settlement of the University problem in the North of England, when as President of the Committee of the Privy Council (Lords Rosebery, Balfour of Burleigh, and James of Hereford, and Sir Edward Fry being the other members), which dealt with the petitions of Manchester and Liverpool for separate incorporation, he guided its deliberations to the conclusion which has borne fruit in the creation of four vigorous Universities of a new and progressive type in Lancashire and Yorkshire.'

'His peculiar bent of mind fitted him to deal with controversies over which other and smaller men got angry. He was never angry, though often bored. He did much of his work at Devonshire House, but he was

frequently at the Office, and showed himself capable of any effort, if moved thereto by the obligation of duty. No man arrived at the substance of papers submitted to him more thoroughly—indeed, his capacity to extract the essence of a Blue Book was phenomenal. He had, moreover, a most effective manner of dealing with a deputation: to the onlooker it might seem as if he was prejudiced against the view they sought to present, so resolute was he in raising objections which he thought it their business to remove, before he could be persuaded to give an encouraging reply. He never put a question which was not pregnant with meaning, nor made a comment which was not instinct with sense. He was not so conspicuously successful in conducting Bills through the House of Lords; he was neither very ready in handling small points nor supple enough always to accommodate himself to the parliamentary view of the situation, and it was distasteful to his candour to make formal concessions merely to buy off the pertinacity of a troublesome or presumptuous opponent. Thus his charge of the London Government Bill in 1899 incurred some criticism. In subsequent years, while the new local authorities were being brought into being by a Statutory Commission, responsible to a Committee of the Privy Council for the arrangement of their boundaries and the settlement of their liabilities, he took an important part in the labours of the Committee, and once or twice sat judicially on appeals against the decisions of the Commission, when the power of his mind to disentangle leading ideas from subsidiary issues received striking illustration.

'In his last weeks as a Minister, amid the agitations of fiscal controversy, he took considerable interest in the appointment of the Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration; on the very day his office was transferred to another, he declared to me his conviction that the matter was of far more importance than Tariff Reform. He did not fail to follow the course of the inquiry with

attention, and subsequent to the issue of the Committee's Report raised a valuable discussion in the House of Lords upon certain of its aspects.'

IV

In addition to his supervision of the education departments, the Duke of Devonshire had been asked by Lord Salisbury to preside over the 'Defence Committee of the Cabinet.' It has sometimes been said that this Committee was to blame because it did not foresee, and take steps to meet, all the contingencies of the South African War. But the scope of this Committee was ill-defined and uncertain. The War Office and Admiralty, and other Departments, were inclined to refer questions to it as little as possible. It did not, like its successor, the Imperial Defence Committee, profess as its main business the devising of strategical schemes for the defence of the Empire. It did not often meet, had no permanent secretariat, and kept no records. Its functions chiefly consisted in settling, now and then, controversies between the War Office, the Admiralty, and the Treasury, which would formerly have led to interminable correspondence, or would have been brought before the Cabinet as a whole.[1] Even if the Defence Committee had devised the most beautiful defensive-offensive scheme of operations in South Africa the theory would probably have been upset by unexpected events, as much as were the plans and ideas of the most competent soldiers.

The Duke approved of the final despatch [2] to the Transvaal Republic which was in draft, at the close of a long diplomatic correspondence, at the beginning of October

[1] See *Report of Royal Commission on the War in South Africa*, 1903, p. 135.

[2] This was the final despatch predicted in the last preceding despatch of 22nd September 1899, sent after the Transvaal had declined the terms offered in our despatch of 8th September (see C. 9251 of 1899 and C. 9530).

1899, and would have been launched had not the Republican Government sent on the 9th October their own terse, summary, and decisive ultimatum, or rather, declaration of war. Three days later the mounted Boer riflemen rode across the historic Pass of Laing's Nek, and made their fateful descent from the high plateau of the Transvaal into the valleys of Natal. The Cavendish kinship, like so many in all ranks, contributed to the sad and glorious roll of men who died for their country. On a day of dire disaster, when two battalions were lost and Sir George White's force was driven back into Ladysmith, the Duke's nephew Frederick, the son of Admiral and Lady Louisa Egerton, a most promising naval officer, who had assisted Hedworth Lambton in bringing the big ship guns from Durban to Ladysmith just in time to cover the retreat, was fatally wounded by a Boer shell.

In a speech made in September 1900, the Duke said that the war was 'undertaken in the defence of imperial interests in South Africa,' and that the British demands on the Transvaal Republican Government which had let to it were 'not only just, but imperatively necessary in imperial interests, not only in South Africa, but in the interests of our authority in every part of the world.'[1] The vast expenditure upon this war, the assistance given by the Colonies, and the stimulus to imperial feelings, were the main causes of the next great development in English politics.

The Queen dissolved Parliament, upon Lord Salisbury's advice, in September 1900, immediately after the formal annexation of the Transvaal had taken place, and the elections were fought in October. Liberal orators complained that the Government were making use of a moment of national victory to snatch a party triumph. The Duke, in

[1] Speech at Bradford, 24th September 1900.

a speech in Yorkshire, said that the act of annexation was one worthy to be referred to the electors for approval. He also said, with his usual frankness, using a simile which must have appealed to a Yorkshire audience—

'We all know very well that the captain of a cricketing eleven, when he wins the toss, puts his own side in, or his adversaries, as he thinks most favourable to his prospects of winning; and if there is not supposed to be anything unfair about that, then I think the English people would think it very odd indeed if the Prime Minister and leader of a great political party were not to put an electoral question to the country at a moment which he thinks will be not unfavourable to his own side.'

The moment was, in fact, very good, because the main part of the war was over, and the wearisome guerilla resistance of the tenacious Boers had only just begun. The tide of patriotic feeling still ran in favour of the Government, the Liberal party were weak and divided, the usual reaction, which had begun before the war, was stayed, and the result of the elections corresponded very nearly to that of the elections in 1895. A few changes in the *personnel* of the Administration were carried out with the usual difficulty. 'It is extraordinary,' wrote the Duke to Lord Salisbury, 'what an attraction office seems to have for some people.' Mr. Balfour wrote to the Duke, 'I wonder, if I live till seventy-two, whether I shall still wish to be a Cabinet Minister. I like it so very little at fifty-two that I can hardly believe it.' The Duke offered to place his own office at the disposal of the Prime Minister, but he was desired to remain as Lord President of the Council, and until the summer of 1902 the educational control continued to be part of his functions. His old anti-Radical ally, Lord Goschen, at this time retired from office.

These elections were the last in Victoria's glorious reign.

That great Queen died at Osborne on the 22nd January 1901, and on the following day the Duke presided over the meeting of the Privy Council at which King Edward VII. entered upon the royal duties. Lord Salisbury's vital force was now rapidly failing. He had lightened his task in 1900 by the transfer of the Foreign Office to Lord Lansdowne, but his physical strength was now insufficient to allow him to be Prime Minister. The following letters are of interest :—

DOWNING STREET, *July* 10, 1902.

MY DEAR DEVONSHIRE,—After some communications with the King, I have arranged to wait upon him to-morrow and give him my seals.

As my strength has considerably diminished of late I had contemplated this step for some time, but as long as the war lasted I was apprehensive that it might be misconstrued to indicate some division in the Cabinet, and therefore might have a prejudicial effect.

In taking my official leave of you, I desire to thank you most warmly for your kindness and forbearance which during the last seven years have enabled us to carry through a difficult experiment with very fair success.—Ever yours truly, SALISBURY.

DEVONSHIRE HOUSE, *July* 11, 1902.

MY DEAR SALISBURY,—I am very sorry to hear of the resolution which you have come to, and especially of the cause which has induced you to take it.

I am very grateful to you for the terms in which you write of our official relations during the last seven years, and feel that it is rather for us, who entered your Government under conditions which might have made our position difficult, to thank you for the forbearance and consideration which you have always shown to us.—Yours very sincerely,

DEVONSHIRE.

Mr. Balfour was First Lord of the Treasury, and had been since the year 1891 the brilliant Tory leader in the House of Commons. He had a first claim to the succession to his uncle as Prime Minister, and the King acted upon his own judgment in the matter. It would, however, possibly have been better if Lord Salisbury had, *pro formâ*, consulted the Duke of Devonshire before he resigned. The Devonshire papers show that there was for the moment a slight feeling of this kind in the inner circle of the Liberal Unionists.

Mr. Balfour's accession to the office of Prime Minister was accompanied by certain ministerial changes. Sir Michael Hicks Beach resigned, and was succeeded as Chancellor of the Exchequer by Mr. Ritchie, a change which soon had important and unforeseen results. Lord James of Hereford also retired. Lord Cadogan resigned the Viceroyalty of Ireland. 'Of course,' he wrote to the Duke, 'it is with a sad heart that I thus terminate my political and public life, but I am only following the splendid example which you have given us of self-denying devotion to duty, and that is always a consolation.'

The Duke himself surrendered with much pleasure his functions in respect of education to Lord Londonderry, who became first distinct President of the Board of Education, but he continued to be Lord President of the Council until the catastrophe of 1903. At the request of Mr. Balfour he also undertook the leadership of the whole Unionist party in the House of Lords, rendered vacant by the retreat of Lord Salisbury from all political life.

CHAPTER XXVII

MR. BALFOUR'S GOVERNMENT

THE first important measure passed by Mr. Balfour's Government was the Education Act of 1902. The main features of this reform were (1) the transfer of the powers and functions of School Boards to the Town and County Councils with the object (*a*) of terminating the over-lapping and conflict of jurisdiction between the School Boards and these bodies in the matter of advanced education, and (*b*) of spreading the education rate over wider areas; and (2) the placing of the voluntary or denominational schools upon the rates, this step being accompanied by an increased control by the public over the secular education.

The fight raged bitterly over the proposal to give to denominational schools a share in the rates without at the same time transferring their complete control to elected Authorities. That schools teaching Anglican or Roman Catholic doctrines should be supported by local as well as by national taxation was a thing intolerable to Nonconformists, who had hoped to see the extension to all schools of teaching religious indeed, but colourless.

The Duke of Devonshire, although no longer in control of the Education Department, undertook the chief share in carrying this measure through the House of Lords, partly because Lord Londonderry was new to the work, partly because it was thought that any suspicion of lack of sympathy would thus be avoided. He moved the second reading at the end of an Autumn Session in December

1902. He was aware, he said, when he reached the controversial line, that—

'to many conscientious and religious men a denominational school, especially if it is supported out of public funds, whether those funds be derived from the taxes or the rates, is an abomination. Certainly this is not the opinion of His Majesty's Government, and we do not believe that it is the opinion of the majority of the country. We have, therefore, deliberately adopted the principle that, subject to conditions which we believe to be adequate to secure their efficiency, and to all necessary public control of these schools, they shall remain a part of the educational provision of the country, and shall not be compelled to sacrifice their definite religious character.'

He admitted the right of the Opposition to criticise the adequacy of the provisions for securing public control, and said:—

'I think we have a right to know from what point of view these provisions are criticised, whether they are critics who accept, perhaps unwillingly but in good faith, the denominational schools as part of our educational system, or whether they are critics who are openly opposed to their retention in any form or shape. That is the main issue. All the rest of the discussion is, in my opinion, mere detail.

'This Bill does not strengthen "clerical" control in the slightest degree; on the contrary it diminishes it: this Bill does not weaken public control over any school; on the contrary it strengthens it. It brings it to bear in schools where it had not previously existed at all. This Bill contains nothing that aggravates a Nonconformist grievance; the real grievance is that it does not extinguish Church Schools. They hoped, many of them, either to have those destroyed by legislation or starved out of existence. My Lords, that is a grievance which we cannot undertake to remedy.'

The Duke then discussed the alternative courses which the Government might have adopted. They might simply have legalised the action of School Boards invalidated by the Cockerton judgment. In that case they would have perpetuated the evil of the over-lapping jurisdiction of different Authorities. There were, he said, two insuperable objections :—

'The first was our educational conscience, which told us that any such course would be fundamentally unsound, and would, in the long run, tend rather to aggravate than to remove or diminish the existing evils; and the second was the conviction that we entertained of the fixed resolution of a very large number of our own supporters that no final settlement, or even temporary settlement, of the education question would be acceptable to them which did not do something to increase the efficiency and secure the permanent existence of that class of elementary schools in which they were deeply interested. In these circumstances we resolved on what is admitted to be a bold and comprehensive measure.'

This Act relieved Churchmen, but had disastrous effects for the Liberal Unionist party. Numbers of their adherents reverted to the host now led by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman ; the line dividing parties became more nearly than it had been since 1886 the old line demarcating Conservatives from Liberals; and these events had their share in bringing about the Unionist disruption. Sir Henry James wrote to the Duke on the 6th August enclosing 'a wail from Jesse Collings.' He added :—

'I am afraid that he is quite right as to the smashing blow inflicted on the Liberal Unionist party by the Education Bill. Our reports to Great George Street are black as night, and Powell Williams is more despondent than Jesse. What can be done now to make Arthur Balfour understand

the position? If he makes no concession to the anti-clericalists, I am quite sure that, apart from the difficulty of carrying the Bill, there will be an opposition to the Act being worked which will produce chaos.'

Mr. Chamberlain had taken no part in the debates in the House of Commons. On the 22nd September he wrote to the Duke:—

'The political future seems to me—an optimist by profession—most gloomy. I told you that your Education Bill would destroy your own party. It has done so. Our best friends are leaving us by scores and hundreds, and they will not come back. I do not think that the Tories like the situation, but I suppose they will follow the Flag. The Liberal Unionists will not.

'We are so deep in the mire that I do not see how we can get out. If we give way now, those who have sacrificed much to be loyal will be furious, while our enemies will not be appeased.

'If we go on, we shall only carry the Bill with great difficulty, and, when it is carried, we shall have sown the seeds of an agitation which will undoubtedly be successful in the long run.

'After all we have done some good work in the last seven years, and ought to be satisfied. I wonder how much mischief the Opposition will be able to do when they at last seize the opportunity which we have so generously presented to them.'

Mr. Chamberlain departed to South Africa in November and did not return until the early spring of the fatal year 1903. It was clear that the fighting force, so closely attached to him personally, and centred at Birmingham, was deeply offended. Only by avoiding certain questions, and by finding common interests, could Tory Churchmen and Radical Nonconformists work together. But these questions had insisted upon a solution; the very success

of the Unionist party had weakened the original common interest; the African War, which had been a new binding influence, was over. Before the autumn of 1902 the tide of reaction was already running against the Government, and at every bye-election they were losing votes or seats.

II

There may have been in the mind of Mr. Chamberlain some subconscious desire to find a new motive of political action. But, what is more important, his work at the Colonial Office during an important period had detached his mind from that preoccupation with parliamentary tactics which is apt to disturb the sense of relative values in statesmen; and his special duties there had brought some questions before him far more vividly than they could present themselves to colleagues, each absorbed by the work of his department. In the minds of some of those who opposed his policy during the following years there certainly was an antagonism not dating from the initiation of the fiscal question. Successors of the Gladstonians regarded Mr. Chamberlain as an apostate; they had more or less openly fought against his South African policy, and were ready to disagree rashly, violently, and without reflection, with anything which he proposed, not merely on its merits, but because he proposed it. Nor was he beloved by the High Church Tories, who had not forgotten his vote for Welsh Disestablishment and his attitude on the Education question. When, in 1904, a leader of this group in the House of Commons called Mr. Chamberlain an 'undesirable alien in the ranks of the Tory Party,' it was not a figure of speech, nor could the bitter word refer merely to the new fiscal policy. For this fiscal policy, in reality, was the revival, with modern

improvements, of an article of the old national creed, never altogether disowned by Lord Beaconsfield, nor by Lord Salisbury, nor by Mr. Balfour.

The doctrines of national, as distinguished from abstract or universal, economy had smouldered like a low fire covered with grey ashes during the predominance of Liberal ideas in philosophy and Liberal power in politics. One might compare the thing to the smouldering of High Church ideas during the long Low Church period. The 'national' doctrine had been expounded scientifically by German writers, and practised by the greatest of German statesmen. Lord Hartington had come across these inclinations in his Lancashire campaign of 1885, and had found them to be stronger than he had imagined. Since then, resolutions in the sense of Fair Trade had been passed almost annually at the Synod of the Conservative Associations, and frequently also, since 1887, resolutions in favour of renewed preferential relations with the Colonies.[1] Englishmen were aware of their own prosperity, but were impressed by the rapid increase in the wealth, power, population and industry of Germany and the United States under increasingly protective systems. There was natural irritation among men in many trades when they beheld goods freely entering our ports from countries which hindered or prevented the import of similar goods from England. Nor was there doubt that Free Trade, when the development of transport removed the natural protection long afforded by distance, had ruined the old agricultural system both in Great Britain and in Ireland. There was, therefore, in 1903, material for a new political conflagration. It must be remembered also that the tide of Imperial feeling had been flowing strongly since 1886, and had reached its height about the

[1] Previously to the repeal of the Corn Laws a tariff preference had been given in the United Kingdom to Colonial corn, &c.

middle of the South African War. In 1902 it had, perhaps, just begun to ebb, but the part taken by the Colonies in the war had begotten a strong feeling in favour of something being done to promote more real Imperial union. Some, like Brutus in the play, replying to Cassius, who wished to defer the decisive battle, felt that—

> 'Our legions are brim-full, our cause is ripe :
> The enemy increases every day ;
> We, at the height, are ready to decline.
> There is a tide in the affairs of men
> Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune ;
> Omitted, all the voyage of their life
> Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
> On such a full sea are we now afloat,
> And we must take the current when it serves,
> Or lose our ventures.'

The decision of Brutus, it is true, led the Roman constitutionalists swiftly to Philippi, but the hesitation of Cassius would have led them less gloriously to the same end.

When Mr. Chamberlain made his famous declaration of 1903 he was accused of a sudden change of policy. This was no less unjust than the like accusation brought against Mr. Gladstone as to Home Rule at the end of 1885. Both statesmen, years earlier, had indicated clearly enough the tendencies existing in their own minds, but the public, in each case, had not understood their meaning, or had forgotten what they said.

The march of world-wide events had called the attention of men occupied in foreign and Imperial affairs to the need of Imperial consolidation. During the last decade of the century Russian aggression in Asia was still feared, and more than once we had been near a collision with the French Republic. Other events, the message of the German Emperor to President Kruger at the time of the 'Jameson Raid,' and the despatch of President Cleveland

in the affair of Venezuela, had indicated new dangers. On Lady-day 1896, Mr. Chamberlain, Colonial Secretary of State, made a striking speech at a Canada Club dinner. He referred to these events, and he said :—

'We may endeavour to establish common interests and common obligations. When we have done that, it will be natural that some sort of representative authority should grow up to deal with the interests and obligations which we have created. What is the greatest of our common obligations? It is Imperial defence. What is the greatest of our common interests? It is Imperial trade. Imperial defence is largely a matter of ways and means, and dependent upon fiscal and other arrangements which you may make, and therefore the conclusion at which I arrive is this, that if the people of this country and the people of the Colonies mean what they have been saying, and if they tend to approach the question of Imperial unity in a practical spirit, they must approach it on its commercial side.'

He then referred to the history of the Zollverein, or Customs Union, one of the foundation stones of the strong and successful German Empire, and, next, to the resolution passed at the Colonial Conference held at Ottawa in 1894, viz. :—

'That this Conference records its belief in the advisability of a Customs arrangement between Great Britain and her Colonies, by which trade within the Empire may be placed upon a more favourable footing than that which is carried on with foreign countries.'

Mr. Chamberlain said :—

'At any rate a proposition of this kind is entitled to respectful consideration, and if we object to it we ought to propose an alternative, or else to say at once that all that we have said, all that we have done, all that we have

thought about Imperial unity has been thrown away, and that that idea must be abandoned as an empty dream.'

Very fully, fairly, and clearly he stated the great objection that Imperial preference would, in this country, involve taxes on foreign food and, perhaps, raw material, which might increase the cost of living and the cost of production. This difficulty could only be faced if the advantages offered by the Colonies in return were of a real kind. He discussed the suggestion, first made at the Colonial Conference of 1887, by the South African statesman, Hofmeyr, that each state in the Empire should impose a common revenue duty upon goods when imported from non-Imperial countries, in addition to any existing duties, and that the revenue thus obtained should be devoted to purposes of common defence. This suggestion, stating the difficulties, he left for consideration. He spoke much to the same effect to the Conference of Chambers of Commerce of the Empire held in London in June 1896, and said that it might become desirable to impose duties on foreign corn, meat, and wool, while admitting these products from the Empire duty free.

In the following year, 1897, there was a Colonial Conference in London on the occasion of the 'Diamond Jubilee.' The Colonial Governments again, as in 1887, and as at the Ottawa Conference in 1894, made clear their desire for special and preferential relations with the United Kingdom. Canada in this same year gave a large preference, afterwards increased, to certain produce of the United Kingdom, and, to facilitate her action, Lord Salisbury, meeting the desire expressed by the Conference, denounced treaties with Germany and Belgium which stood in the way. This led to a tariff war between Germany and Canada. On the 3rd November 1897 the Colonial Secre-

tary, in an address on 'Patriotism' which he delivered as Lord Rector of Glasgow University, significantly quoted a passage from Bolingbroke's 'Patriot King,' where it is said :—

'To give ease and encouragement to manufactory at home, to assist and protect trade abroad, to improve and keep in heart the national colonies, will be the principal and constant parts of the attention of a patriot prince.'

Mr. Chamberlain added, in his own trenchant style :—

'I have faith in our race and our nation. I believe that with all the force and enthusiasm of which democracy alone is capable, they will complete and maintain that splendid edifice which, commenced under aristocratic auspices, has received in these later times its greatest extension, and that the fixity of purpose and strength of will which are necessary to this end will be supplied by that national patriotism which sustains the most strenuous efforts, and makes possible the greatest sacrifices.'

III

The South African War and consequent financial necessities brought this question to an issue. The shilling duty on imported grain and flour endured long into the period of Free Trade finance. It survived, as a useful branch of revenue, many a year of Mr. Gladstone's administration of national finance, and was not removed until 1869. It was re-imposed in 1902 when Lord Salisbury was still Prime Minister, and Sir Michael Hicks Beach was Chancellor of the Exchequer. In proposing the tax Sir Michael said :—

"Looking to the ever-increasing demands made upon the Exchequer flowing from our modern civilisation we must expect some increase in our expenditure in years to come. I am, therefore, endeavouring now, as I endeavoured

last year, when I asked the Committee to raise additional taxation in order to meet the charges of the war, so to frame that taxation that, when peace returns, and it is possible also to return to ordinary expenditure, we may have no difficulty in settling our financial system on a basis which would be equitable to all payers of taxation in the country. Therefore, in seeking for new indirect taxation, what I desire to find, as I desired to find last year, is an article of practically universal consumption, from which, therefore, a large revenue can be produced to the Exchequer without any injurious or oppressive burden on any individual or on any class. My primary duty is to look for revenue, and my ideal of a tax is that which will yield the most revenue with the least injury and inconvenience to the community.'

The Liberals at once assumed an attitude of strong opposition to this tax, and their suspicions were increased by the events which next happened.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier, the Canadian Prime Minister, speaking early in May at Ottawa to the Canadian House of Commons, welcomed the English corn duty as a mild measure of 'protection' in which he rejoiced, for now, said he, 'the field is clear for arranging a system of larger trade between all parts of the British Empire.' The duty, he said, 'placed Canada in a position to make offers which she could not make in 1897. A step has been taken which would make it possible to obtain preference for Canadian goods.' In the second reading debate on the Finance Bill, which began on the 12th May, the English Liberals made the most of this cabled Canadian declaration, and Mr. Balfour said, on the following day in meeting their attack, 'Sir Wilfred Laurier's mission to this country[1] has absolutely nothing, direct or indirect, to do

[1] *I.e.*, Sir Wilfrid's visit for the Coronation and Conference. This was to have been in June, but because of the King's sudden illness it had to be deferred until August.

with this tax. This tax was put on for fiscal reasons.' Three days later, on the 16th May, Mr. Chamberlain addressed the Liberal Unionist Association of Birmingham and the Midlands, in a powerful and stirring speech, in which he reviewed the whole political battlefield. Towards the close he denounced the attacks made by the Liberals upon Sir Wilfrid Laurier's utterance, and pointed out the dangers menacing English trade from hostile tariffs of foreign States, and from offensive warfare waged by enormous Trusts. He added, amid the loud cheers of his faithful and delighted Midlanders :—

'It is quite impossible that these new methods of competition can be met by adherence to old and antiquated methods. At the present moment the Empire is being attacked on all sides, and in our isolation we must look to ourselves. We must draw closer our internal relations, the ties of sentiment, the ties of sympathy, yes, and the ties of interest. If by adher nce to economic pedantry, to old shibboleths, we are to lose opportunities of closer union which are now offered to us by our Colonies ; if we are to put aside occasions now within our grasp ; if we do not take every chance in our power to keep British trade in British hands, I am certain that we shall deserve the disasters which will infallibly come upon us.'

All the policy which the Colonial Secretary declared more at large in May 1903 was contained in this speech of May 1902 ; he had set up his standard, and his colleagues and the world had received fair warning.

The Liberal Opposition were now more hostile than ever ; they maintained that, along the road of the revenue corn duty, the Government were moving towards an end disastrous to mid-Victorian ideals, and on the 9th June 1902 they moved in Committee an amendment to limit the operation of the Corn Duty Bill to the space

of one year. The amendment was avowedly based upon the supposed leanings of the Government towards a preferential system. Sir Michael Hicks Beach, in reply, again said that the tax was imposed simply for the purpose of raising revenue, and of more equitably adjusting the burden of taxation. But he added, 'If we could have Free Trade with our Colonies, I do not see why that should necessarily involve increased duties on our part against foreign nations, but, if we could have Free Trade with our Colonies, even some sacrifice in that direction might be made.' He said also that, although he had proposed this duty as a revenue duty, he had proposed it 'absolutely without prejudice to any discussions which may take place between us and the Colonial representatives (at the approaching Conference) on the question of commercial relations.' There was fierce debating. The Colonial Secretary was prudently or scornfully absent, but his son, Austen Chamberlain, then Financial Secretary to the Treasury, defended the Birmingham speech. His father, he said, had not argued in favour of preferential relations, but had refused 'to be deterred from proposing a tax, which he believed to be good on its merits, merely because it might be used, if the people of this country so willed, to draw closer the ties between the Mother Country and the Colonies.'

It was the summer of the Coronation of King Edward VII., and the Prime Ministers of the self-governing Colonies came to London to assist at it, and also to take part in a Conference which was of a character more formal than those of 1887 and 1897, although, since the Australian Commonwealth Government was not established until 1903, and South Africa was still in the making, the constitution of the Conference was not yet quite satisfactory. The eventful resolutions relating to trade unanimously adopted

at the Conference of 1902, on 11th August, were as follows :—

'1. That this Conference recognises that the principle of preferential trade between the United Kingdom and his Majesty's Dominions beyond the Seas would stimulate and facilitate mutual commercial intercourse, and would, by promoting the development of the resources and industries of the several parts, strengthen the Empire.

'2. That this Conference recognises that, in the present circumstances of the Colonies, it is not practicable to adopt a general system of Free Trade as between the Mother Country and the British Dominions beyond the Seas.

'3. That with a view, however, to promoting the increase of trade within the Empire, it is desirable that those Colonies which have not already adopted such a policy should, so far as their circumstances permit, give substantial preference treatment to the products and manufactures of the United Kingdom.

'4. That the Prime Ministers of the Colonies respectfully urge on his Majesty's Government the expediency of granting in the United Kingdom preferential treatment to the products and manufactures of the Colonies, either by exemption from or reduction of duties now or hereafter imposed.

'That the Prime Ministers present at the Conference undertake to submit to their respective Governments at the earliest opportunity the principle of the Resolution, and to request them to take such measures as may be necessary to give effect to it.'

Mr. Chamberlain said at the Conference that the change desired by Canada, *i.e.* an abatement of the new corn duty in favour of corn grown within the Empire, would involve a departure from the established fiscal policy of the United Kingdom, and that, assuming that the proposals could be entertained at all, it would be necessary for Canada to

offer some material tariff preference beyond that which she had already given. The Canadian Ministers, in reply, stated that 'if they could be assured that the Imperial Government would accept the principle of preferential trade generally, and particularly, grant to the food products of Canada in the United Kingdom exemption from duties now levied, or hereafter imposed, they, the Canadian Ministers, would be prepared to go further into the subject, and endeavour to give to the British manufacturer some increased advantage over his foreign competitors in the markets of Canada.'[1] The importance of this Conference was obscured by the fact that the chiefs of the allied Imperial states had crossed the seas partly in order to assist at the Coronation, and sufficient attention was not given in this country to these supremely important proposals.

Between the Conference of 1902 and that of 1907 the Dominions south of the Equator gave some tariff preference to the produce of the United Kingdom in accordance with the third Resolution, and, at the Conference of 1907, the request that a reciprocal preference should be given by the Government of the United Kingdom was once more strongly and unanimously pressed by his Majesty's other Governments, reaffirming in unchanged terms the Resolutions of 1902. It was as deliberately refused; and the present Ministerial party in this kingdom still hold to the refusal. Mr. Asquith, in a speech made on 9th February 1911, said that 'what used to be called Imperial Preference' was 'one of the greatest and most disastrous political impostures of modern times.' These are not words, certainly, which the Duke of Devonshire would ever have used, although he could not

[1] Memorandum by Canadian Ministers. Miscellaneous. No. 144. Colonial Office, October 1902.

bring himself to think that the balance of considerations was in favour of the policy.[1]

In the debates of June 1903, Sir Michael Hicks Beach, now no longer a Member of the Cabinet, gave the following account of what had happened in 1902:—

'What is the history of this small duty on grain and on flour? When I proposed it as Chancellor of the Exchequer to my colleagues in the Cabinet of last year the South African War was still at a stage of which no one could foresee the end. I proposed it as it was necessary, in my opinion, to raise more money for the purposes of that war by indirect taxation, and because I believed that in this revival of this duty I had a source of revenue which would yield largely to the Exchequer, while doing the minimum of injury possible to the trade, commerce, and industry of this country. When I brought it before my colleagues in the Cabinet it was my duty to state to them that I foresaw the objections with which it would be assailed. I knew that it would be challenged as a violation in theory, though I believe not in practice, of the principles of Free Trade. I was well aware of the use which would be made of it in reviving the cry of the big loaf and the little loaf in Parliamentary elections. But, after careful consideration of the objections to the proposal, my colleagues in the Cabinet cordially accepted what I suggested. And when the war ended in South Africa, as we had to reconsider the finance of the year, of course, as it was my duty, I placed the matter before them, not merely as a tax necessary for the war, but as *a permanent addition* to our sources of revenue. They unanimously accepted the proposal which I made to them to persist in the tax. I proposed it, and my colleagues accepted it, as a purely fiscal measure which, in the enormous annual growth of the ordinary expenditure of the country, I be-

[1] The agreement of Mr. Asquith's Government at the Imperial Conference of 1911 to the constitution of a joint commission to inquire into all the facts, shows, perhaps, that the door is not quite closed after all.

lieved, and they believed, to be a necessary addition to our sources of taxation.'

Sir Michael Hicks Beach, therefore, stating with force the reasons in favour of this tax, had made it clear to the Cabinet and the House of Commons that it was proposed as a *permanent addition* to the sources of revenue. No objection was made by any member of the Unionist party, and such men as Mr. Arthur Elliot, Lord Hugh Cecil, and Mr. Winston Churchill, strong Unionist Free Traders, voted and spoke in its favour.[1] Why, then, did the Cabinet decide a year later to remove this duty? It was certain, and it had been foreseen, that the Opposition would make the most of this tax. Sir William Harcourt called it 'infamous.' But, as Sir Michael Hicks Beach said, 9th June 1903, 'No Government which is afraid to face temporary unpopularity in the interests of sound finance deserves to sit on that Bench.' Had he continued to be Chancellor of the Exchequer this tax would probably have been retained on its own merits. To retain it did not of necessity involve its use for any other purpose than that of raising revenue. But he retired, with Lord Salisbury, in July 1902, and his successor, Mr. Ritchie, was a Minister of a different disposition. He was alarmed by Mr. Chamberlain's proposal, now made definitely to the Cabinet, to give a tariff preference to corn grown within the Empire over foreign corn. He may have been influenced also by certain abstract doctrines, or hard and fast rules, then dominant among high Treasury officials. His desire to repeal the duty was strengthened by defeats at some by-elections, and by the representations of scared party officials, who never look more than a mile ahead, or Members of Parliament. It was, above all, this terror which enabled him to carry his view in a Cabinet

[1] Mr. Churchill even showed some leaning towards a preferential system in the debate of 1902.

which was certainly not then awake to the full importance of the issue.

The subject was discussed at a Cabinet held in November 1902, a few days before Mr. Chamberlain departed to South Africa. Mr. Chamberlain contended that the duty should be retained in order to meet the fourth resolution passed at the recent Colonial Conference and to give a preference to Colonial corn. Mr. Ritchie protested against the continuance of the tax with this non-revenue object, and put in a written Memorandum. He did not, in this paper, ask his colleagues to come to an immediate decision, but he stated very strongly the objections both on political and general grounds to the adoption of the policy. Mr. Chamberlain left for Africa under the impression that the Cabinet, or at any rate the great majority of the Cabinet, agreed with his view; but the Duke, writing to him in July 1903, said—

'I have myself no clear recollection of what took place upon it, but I do not think it possible that Ritchie's protest against a pledge for the retention of the tax with a view to giving a preference to Canada was in any way overruled. Certainly no communication was made to Canada, and I was under the impression that the whole question must have been postponed till the Budget, when we should all be free as to the retention of the tax, or as to any new departure in the way of preferential treatment of the Colonies.'

There are some disadvantages, now that Cabinet Councils are so large, in the practice of having no Secretary and no minutes of proceedings. Mr. Balfour, in a letter to the Duke in August 1903, said that Mr. Chamberlain on his return found 'that his scheme for employing the shilling duty on corn as a means of obtaining preferential treatment for Canada was rendered im-

possible by the Chancellor of the Exchequer's unexpected refusal to embody it in his Budget, and this after he had just reason to suppose that in November the Cabinet as a whole were in its favour.'

The Duke and some others would not have admitted that the words 'unexpected' or 'just' were correctly used. In any case no final decision was made until the eve of the declaration of the Budget of 1903. Mr. Chamberlain had, by then, returned to England and was present at a Cabinet held before the Budget speech, and again contended that the tax on imported corn should be continued in order to carry out the preferential policy. On the other hand, Mr. Ritchie quoted a Memorandum from the Chief Whip urging, on behalf of many Members of Parliament, the repeal of a tax which was unpopular. His Budget speech, on 23rd April 1903, announced the repeal of the corn duty. He was reducing the income tax, and it was a question how corresponding relief to indirect taxation should be given. He gave reasons for leaving as they were the export duty on coal and the import duty on sugar. Should, then, the duty be taken off corn, or should that on tea be reduced? He said, following the most commonplace style of Chancellors :—

'Tea has many attractions, it is the easiest and least contentious subject of taxation, but it cannot be said to be dear. Nor do I think that a duty of sixpence on tea is very excessive or hard to bear. Corn is a necessary of life in a greater degree than any other article. It is a raw material, it is the food of our people, the food of our horses and of our cattle; and, moreover, the duty has a certain disadvantage inasmuch as it is inelastic, and, what is much worse, it lends itself very readily to misrepresentation. I do not think it can remain permanently an integral portion of our fiscal system, unless there is

some radical change in our economic circumstances, or it is connected with some boon much desired by the working classes. . . . In my opinion, being, as it is, a tax on a prime necessity of life, it has the first claim to be associated with the large remission of income tax of which I have spoken.'

It may be asked why, when Mr. Chamberlain upon his return from South Africa found that, so far from using the corn tax to give a preference within the Empire, the Cabinet proposed to repeal it, did he not then resign as a protest? His answer is—

'Why should I have resigned? The majority of my colleagues agreed with me. The difficulty of carrying out my policy arose only from the fact that the Chancellor of the Exchequer was opposed to it, and that there was no time to fight the question out then and there before the Budget had to be introduced. Accordingly the Cabinet, while allowing Mr. Ritchie to have his way with the Budget, decided to use the summer in further investigations of the questions which had been raised. No decision adverse to them was taken, and there was no occasion for me to resign.'

When he did resign, in September, the position had altered, he says, because the 'Liberal party had used every endeavour to excite prejudice and influence passion on the subject of food taxes.'

The two preceding quotations are from a letter from Mr. Chamberlain to the writer in reply to a question. Mr. Chamberlain said in the House of Commons, on 18th May 1904, that when he spoke at Birmingham, 15th May 1903, he had 'no idea that so great a storm would be raised, because my view was that I was raising an important question which deserved the fullest consideration, and which could not at the moment be decided. When I

raised it I said that I asked for no immediate decision, and that it might be an issue at the General Election.' If this be so, it illustrates Cromwell's saying that 'no man goes so far as a man who does not know how far he is going.'

Thus, for reasons not at the time clearly understood, was repealed in April 1903 the corn duty to which, as a permanent revenue tax, the whole Unionist party, in the Cabinet and in the House of Commons, including all the subsequent 'Free-Trade Unionists,' stood strongly committed by their vote in May 1902. A Chancellor of the Exchequer who would probably have resigned sooner than assent to a continuance of a tax on the 'food of the people,' carried, of course, great weight in a Cabinet which had no very firm or definite views on the question, and had already begun to feel the effects of the reaction following upon war.

IV

The announcement that the corn duty was to be repealed was swiftly followed by Mr. Chamberlain's famous speech at Birmingham on the 15th May 1903. He reminded his hearers that Canada had given first a 25 per cent. preference, then a 33 per cent., to British goods, and had intimated that she would go further if some preference were given in return to her corn.

'I must say,' he continued, 'that, if I could treat matters of this kind solely in regard to my position as Secretary of State for the Colonies, I should have said, "That is a fair offer, that is a generous offer from your point of view, and it is an offer which I might ask our people to accept; but, speaking for the Government as a whole, not in the interests of the Colonies, I am obliged to say that it is contrary to the established fiscal policy of this country."'

Then he went on to say:—

'The people of this Empire have two alternatives before them. They may maintain if they like in all its severity the interpretation—in my mind an entirely artificial and wrong interpretation which has been placed on the doctrines of Free Trade by a small remnant of little Englanders of the Manchester school. . . . They may maintain that doctrine in all its severity, though it is repudiated by every other nation and by all your Colonies. In that case they will be absolutely precluded either from giving any kind of preference or favour to any of their Colonies abroad. . . . That is the first alternative. The second alternative is that we should insist that we will not be bound by any purely technical definition of Free Trade; that, whilst we seek as one chief object free interchange of trade between ourselves and all nations of the world, we will, nevertheless, recover our freedom, and resume that power of negotiation, and, if necessary, retaliation, whenever our own interests or our own relations between our Colonies and ourselves are threatened by other people.' [1]

The speaker left no doubt which alternative he himself would take. 'For my own part,' he said, 'I believe in a British Empire, an Empire which, though it should be its first duty to cultivate friendship with all the nations of the world, should yet, even if alone, be self-sustaining and self-sufficient, able to maintain itself against the competition of all its rivals.'

On the same day the Prime Minister was replying to a deputation which came to protest against the repeal of the corn duty. He said, among other things, that, in certain

[1] The reference was to the quarrel between the German and Canadian Governments. The Germans had taken steps to retaliate on Canada for the preference given by Canada to English over German manufactures. We could not assist Canada by retaliating against Germany by reason of our fiscal principles of Free Trade.

events, there might be a small corn duty in connection with a general preferential system. But such a movement must proceed from the conscience and intellect of the great mass of the people. Until such a general agreement were reached it was useless to maintain a tax which would be the shuttlecock of opposing parties.

Mr. Chamberlain maintained and defined his view in a speech made in the House of Commons on the 28th May. His policy, he said, had he the choice, would be first to obtain a 'mandate' from the nation at the next General Election ; next, to summon a special Colonial Conference in order to negotiate the terms of preference with the Colonial Governments. Any effective preference on our side could only, he said, be given upon raw materials, upon food, or upon both. It would be inexpedient that it should fall upon raw materials, therefore it must fall upon food. He was ready to argue with any British workman that the result would be to his benefit. Any revenue collected by means of new taxes imposed upon food for the sake of preference should, he said, go directly for the benefit of the poorer classes, as, for instance, in old age pensions. The duty upon foreign corn might give some encouragement to British farmers ; but this, so far from being a national calamity, would, he actually dared to say, be a good thing. He also defended protective measures, such as a duty upon foreign manufactured goods, as they might be applied both in order to obtain reduction of foreign tariffs and as a defence against the offensive operations of such powerful organisations as the American Steel and Iron Corporation. Mr. Chamberlain was clear and definite, and, when he spoke outside the House of Commons, he appealed to sentiment as well as to reason. He held that if we established neither closer political nor closer commercial relationship with the Colonies, the tide

would set in the opposite direction, and the maintenance of a united Empire would become difficult or impossible.

The seed fell upon rich soil and increased a hundredfold. Advocated by some able writers in the Press, the new doctrine grew and developed with amazing speed in all its branches—imperial preference, protection to home industry, retaliation against the alien. On the other side the Liberals saw their chance, and appealed to the old deep-lying feeling against the taxation of wheat. For mild Conservatives who had long professed an academic scepticism as to the blessings of Free Trade it was an embarrassing situation. They were in the position of English Jacobites when the Pretender crossed the border, or of men who had talked vaguely in favour of Home Rule when Mr. Gladstone, who also could take a great decision, proposed the real thing. The Midland leader was of those who rapidly translate ideas into action. His was that quality which now and then enables a hero successfully or not to march upon some city consecrated by time, veneration, ancient authority, and general acceptance. Did Cæsar do well, morally, to cross the Rubicon, or no? The world has never been able to decide. But he crossed the stream because he was Cæsar, and so could do no otherwise.[1]

The Duke was informed at the end of May that the Birmingham speech had been issued by Mr. Powell Williams, from the London Office, on behalf of the Liberal Unionist Association to all the local Associations, and would thus receive the appearance of an officially recommended policy. He wrote on 29th May to Mr. Chamber-

[1] Plutarch affirms, perhaps poetically, that Cæsar hesitated for some time on the north bank of the Rubicon. 'At last, under some sudden impulse, bidding adieu to his reasonings, and plunging into the abyss of futurity, in the words of those who embark in doubtful and arduous enterprises, he exclaimed, "The die is cast," and immediately crossed the river.' Garibaldi marched upon Rome, without the same immediate success, some 1900 years later.

lain to say that this step had called forth inquiries whether the speech was to be considered as embodying the views of the Government and 'of myself as President of the Association.' He did not think that 'anything which has taken place in the Cabinet has committed any one of us to a definite approval of the policy, and I am myself extremely doubtful whether I can be a party to it when it takes a more definite shape. At all events I feel that the Liberal Unionist Association cannot be employed in the active support of the policy without serious risk, if not the certainty of breaking it up.' He suggested that the Association should take up a perfectly neutral position, although 'the Birmingham Association has always been so directly under your control that I think its position is a different one, and no one could object to your using it in the active support of your policy.' Mr. Chamberlain replied :—

40 PRINCE'S GARDENS, S.W., *29th May*, '03.

MY DEAR DEVONSHIRE,—Powell Williams told me on Wednesday that some objection had been taken to the distribution of my speech by the London Liberal Unionist Office, and I at once said that this ought not to be done without your full approval, and that, if you objected, I should deprecate proceeding any further in the matter. I have therefore anticipated your letter, and I am quite of your opinion that, in view of some division in the party, the London Office had better confine itself to the work on which we are all agreed. The Birmingham Association is in a different position, and I shall have to consider whether it may not be necessary to extend its operations, which hitherto, as you are aware, have been confined exclusively to the Midland District; but this is a matter which I can leave for future settlement.

Meanwhile, it is hardly necessary for me to assure you that, although I had no idea that the Cabinet as

a whole, or indeed any individual members of it, was pledged to a definite line of policy, I did assume that, with the possible exception of Ritchie, they were all in favour of raising the question as a matter of discussion.

My own desire would be that it should be treated as an open question, and that no effort should at present be made to commit any member, either of the Government or of the party in the House of Commons, to a final decision. Discussion must go on, and I shall do my best to direct it; but as a general election may very well be postponed for two years, or even more, there is no necessity to attempt a purely party agitation.

If we had all felt exactly the same on the subject, our united influence would no doubt have secured a practical unanimity in the party. As it is, each member of the party must go his own way, and the constituencies in the long run must decide. It is not like the Home Rule business, where we ran our own candidates to support our views. In this case each member must take his own line, which I suppose he will do in most cases according to his judgment of the feeling in his own constituency. As a matter of prudence, I should advise my friends who are hesitating not to commit themselves finally. I think the working-classes may be ripe for change; but whether this be so or not, I am myself so convinced of the importance of the matter and the necessity of dealing with it, if any progress is to be made in regard to Imperial union, that I am ready to stake my fortunes upon it. If I succeed I shall consider the result worth all the pains I have taken to secure it.—Believe me, yours very truly,

J. CHAMBERLAIN.

The question of the action of the Liberal Unionist organisation was thus, for the time, adjourned, but the schism which was to break up that party within a few months was made manifest. The position of the Prime

Minister, after Mr. Chamberlain's pronouncement, is defined in the following letter :—

LITTLESTONE-ON-SEA, *June 4th*, 1903.

MY DEAR DEVONSHIRE,—It must be admitted that Chamberlain's speech of last Thursday has not made either the Parliamentary or the Cabinet situation easier than it was left by the utterances he delivered on the two Fridays which preceded it. I have not therefore been greatly surprised at receiving letters from yourself, Ritchie, G. Wyndham, Balfour of Burleigh, and George Hamilton, all, in various degrees, expressing disquiet and anxiety.

Yet surely nothing has occurred which ought to make it difficult for us all—whatever shade of opinion we may entertain on the subject of Colonial Preference—to act cordially together during the natural term (not of course necessarily or probably the legal term) of the present Parliament. Chamberlain's views, both in their general outline and their particular details, commit no one but himself. They certainly do not commit me; although I am probably more in sympathy with him than either you or Ritchie. Ritchie, I gather, dislikes Colonial Preference *simpliciter*. If a good fairy offered it to him to-morrow as a *fait accompli*, he would reject it. I do not, as at present advised, share this view. If I could have it on my own terms I am disposed to think I should take it—though even then I should like to have more time for analysing its economic consequences before expressing a final decision. My hesitation, however, chiefly arises from doubts as to its practicability rather than its expediency. I question whether the people of *this* country will be sufficiently tolerant of the protective side of the scheme, or the people *of the Colonies* sufficiently tolerant of its Free Trade side, to permit them to accept the compromise in which it essentially consists.

But whatever be the merits of the question, whether looked at from the strictly economic or the political side, why should the fact that some of us differ and many of us

hesitate about it, break up or tend to break up the present Cabinet? Of course I admit that, if Chamberlain is to be at liberty to express his views on one side of the question, a like liberty must necessarily be extended to his colleagues to express their views on the other. I also admit that, if we are to be perpetually debating it in public, this constant collision of opposing opinions will give the impression of general disunion, and may even produce it. I further admit that such a state of things might make it useless for us to remain longer in office. But I do not think we should anticipate such a misfortune—and certainly not act as if it had already befallen us.

I call it a misfortune, because our resignation must produce an immediate dissolution, and this is not a felicitous moment for putting the party fortunes to the hazard. It is of course true that our greatest offence—that of having been too long in office—is one that time cannot diminish. But the Education Bill fever will be allayed in twelve months, and Ritchie will, I hope, next year get another penny off the income tax. There is yet another reason against causing or precipitating a ministerial crisis, and that is that it would destroy the chances of the Land Bill.[1] Chamberlain, I am aware, does not like that measure, and I am not sure that it moves *your* enthusiasm. Yet it seems to me to give us a unique *chance*—I do not put it higher—of really settling the Irish Land controversy; and I should regard it as the greatest of national misfortunes if that chance was thrown away over differences which do not, as yet, relate to any question of practical politics.

I think in this connection we ought to bear in mind that through many Parliaments Catholic Emancipation was an open question in the Tory party; and (a generation later) the same thing was true of Free Trade. I suppose that Disestablishment occupies at the present moment a similar position among the Radicals. I cannot conceive why we are not to allow to ourselves a liberty of

[1] First Land Purchase Bill.

difference which we allow to our opponents; and which is in strict conformity with constitutional tradition. I am the more moved to take this view when I reflect that if we dissolved *now*, I, and I suspect many other of our colleagues, would be in the embarrassing and indeed somewhat ludicrous position of having to say that on the point which divided us we had not made up our *own* minds, and could not therefore pretend to give a decided lead to any one else.

My hope, therefore, is that for the present it shall be agreed among us—

(*a*) That the question is an open one; and that no one stands committed by any statement but their own.

(*b*) That we should be allowed officially to collect information upon the effects of the proposed policy.

(*c*) That, at all events for the session, we should discourage further explicit statements of individual opinion.

(*d*) That if it be necessary for Ritchie on the Budget or you in the House of Lords to say anything, you should not go beyond the statement that the question was one of extreme difficulty—that you had not come to a final decision upon it, although as at present advised you were disposed to doubt the practicability of *any* scheme of preferential tariffs. Whether this particular formula satisfies you and Ritchie or not, I hope at least that no more definite or vigorous expressions of opinion will be used by any of us than are absolutely required to prevent us being committed *either way* to opinions from which we dissent. This, however, is only a counsel of expediency: and I admit the right of each member of the Cabinet to express on this subject his own opinions in his own way.

If Ritchie is with you will you show him this letter? If he is not, would you mind telegraphing to me and I will send him a copy.—Yours,

Arthur James Balfour.

The difficulty of the situation at this moment was shown by a letter addressed by one of the younger Unionists in

the House of Commons, Mr. Winston Churchill, to the Duke (8th June). He said—

'It is quite impossible that the question of Mr. Chamberlain's proposals can remain open and academic. Those of us who are Free Traders will not accept them under any circumstances, popular or unpopular howsoever. If, therefore, he proposes to carry on an active propaganda in favour of Protection and Preferential Tariffs, we shall be bound in self-preservation to band ourselves together under such leaders as we can find, and organise and agitate in our turn. You will easily see that this must end in an utter split, and that the Tory dissentients will be driven to make the same sort of arrangements as the Liberal Unionists in 1886. You will be able to judge much better than I whether this is worth considering.

'But if you should be able to persuade Mr. Balfour to refuse the new proposals, then I am quite sure the Government would find a loyal and faithful support in quarters where lately perhaps there has been enough criticism. I do not think Mr. Balfour realises quite how determined people are against a reversion to Protection.'

The Duke wrote, on 9th June 1903, to Sir Edward Hamilton of the Treasury :—

'I believe that my position is almost exactly the same as what I understand Goschen's to be. I am not so confident as Ritchie that the principles of Free Trade, or rather of Free Imports, are unassailable, and I do not object to a fresh inquiry into their effects. On the other hand, I entirely disagree with Chamberlain in thinking that it is already proved that they are unsuited to our existing conditions, Imperial or industrial. And I believe that I differ from Arthur Balfour in attaching more importance than he does to the economical side of the question. I gather that, if Chamberlain can persuade the Chambers of Commerce and the constituencies to try the experi-

ment, he would let him negotiate with the Colonies in this direction. I say, on the other hand, and I understand Goschen to say, that he would be no party to the experiment at all, unless he were satisfied as to its probable result on the condition of the people and the prosperity of industry and commerce generally. Do you think that any inquiry on these lines could be indicated?'

V

For the time being the difficulty within the Cabinet was held at bay by the expedient of instituting an inquiry into the subject. But no Royal Commission was created for this object, as it might advisably have been, and the inquiry was ill-defined. It consisted in the hurried accumulation and printing of a vast store of statistics by the Board of Trade, which could not, as any one who knows anything of the work of Cabinets and Cabinet Ministers will understand, be studied by men each overwhelmed by the work of his own department. The Minister best informed was, no doubt, Mr. Gerald Balfour, who, after his excellent work as Irish Chief Secretary, was now President of the Board of Trade. It was also agreed that, except under necessity of parliamentary exigencies, no member of the Cabinet should deal publicly with the subject during the rest of the session.

A group of Conservatives opposed the removal of the corn duty, and the question was debated in the House of Commons on the 9th and 10th June 1903. Sir Michael Hicks Beach said in this debate that he had much regretted the action of his successor in proposing to repeal the duty, but, now that the question appeared to lie between removing the duty and retaining it with a view to Preference, he preferred the former course as the least of two evils.

Mr. Ritchie said :—

'I avow myself a convinced Free Trader, and I do not share the views of those who think that any practical means can be devised for overcoming the difficulties which present themselves to me in connection with their proposals, and, as at present advised, I cannot be a party to a policy which, in my opinion, would be detrimental both to the country and to the Colonies.'

Mr. Balfour stated his own position with candour and lucidity. He quoted Mr. Gladstone's canon that a Prime Minister was responsible for the common *action* of his Cabinet, but not for the expression of individual opinion. He advocated a policy of wise hesitation and inquiry. What, he asked, were a Prime Minister, or Ministry, to do when circumstances indicated that some existing policy must be reviewed and some change contemplated? One course was that of open discussion. Another was to 'mature in silence and in private his, or their opinions, and to act in public as if the old system were absolutely impeccable in all its parts. That system . . . was tried by Sir Robert Peel in 1845. It was tried by Mr. Gladstone in 1886. . . . In each case the result was disruption.'

After referring to all the difficulties and complexities of the question, the Prime Minister said that he would be ill-performing his duty to the House and to the country if he were to 'profess a settled conviction where no settled conviction exists.'

'It would,' he added, 'be folly and rashness to interfere with a great system which has been in operation all these years, without a most careful examination of every side of the problem, and with all due regard to the history and traditions of the past; or to ignore new problems which the ever-changing phases of industrial life present

for the decision and action of statesmen." In the House of Lords the Free Trade attack fell upon the Duke of Devonshire as leader for the Government. With regard to the proposed inquiry he said, 15th June 1903 :—

'I cannot see how any man, any convinced and rational Free Trader, can take exception either to inquiry or discussion on this subject. In the first place there is no Free Trader who can feel, or profess to feel, satisfied with the present position of the question. What the Free Trader advocates is free interchange of all commodities between all nations. What we have got is something very different from that. We have got free imports on one side and exports burdened by every barrier fiscal ingenuity can devise. And I cannot see how any convinced Free Trader can object to an inquiry after the lapse of a period of fifty years into the reasons which have prevented the realisation of the hopes which were entertained by the founders of this policy, and an inquiry whether it may not be possible that anything should be done to secure the more ample and full realisation of that policy which was undoubtedly in the minds of the founders of Free Trade policy—Sir Robert Peel, Mr. Cobden, and Mr. Bright.

'The name of Free Traders cannot with strict accuracy be applied to the supporters of our present fiscal system. We are not Free Traders, because we have not got Free Trade. It is more accurate to say that we are free importers. I acknowledge that I have been a free importer during the whole of my political life, and I am now. I was in favour of that policy for the first twenty-five years of my career in the House of Commons, for the simple reason that, so far as I knew, no one was anything else. Then came a period of commercial depression, and the agitation in those days went by the name of Fair Trade.

'It happened that my opponent in a division of Lancashire was the President of the Fair Trade League. I think it is also perfectly accurate to state that with the help of my friends, including, I think, the valuable assistance of

the present Colonial Secretary, I absolutely annihilated and demolished my opponent and his doctrines.'

He had opposed that movement, he added, partly because it was not 'supported by any strong or sound economic opinion,' and partly because he was convinced that on the facts brought forward the fair traders had failed to establish their case. But much had happened since then. So far from other countries having lowered their barriers against our imports they had raised and strengthened them. Also during this same period our manufacturing supremacy in iron and steel, textiles, and other manufactures had been seriously challenged. He said :—

'Undoubtedly it was the opinion and contention of the founders of our present fiscal system that our industrial supremacy would be secured by the adoption of those principles in the face of the refusal of other nations to adopt them. Certainly any anticipations of that description which they may have held have fallen very far short of the reality.'

He referred also to the great industrial Trusts which had arisen in other countries, and to the growth in importance of the Colonies.

'With that growth in importance, prosperity, and strength, these Colonies have manifested a desire to enter into closer political relations with each other and with the Mother Country. One manifestation of that desire has been in the direction of increased fiscal unity with the United Kingdom.'

All these things, he said, could 'not be put aside as if they were not; there is no sense or reason in ignoring these facts and in refusing to enter into some inquiry as to their effect. And all those who profess principles of real Free Trade, the men who believe that those principles are

founded not only on the dictates of absolute reason, but are proved by the teaching of experience, those are the very last who ought to refuse to enter into the fullest and most searching inquiry and discussion as to the effect not only of those principles, but of the effectual results which have been achieved under the present system.'

The Duke then indicated the lines upon which in his opinion the inquiry ought to proceed, such as the condition of the home trade as well as the foreign, and the effect of any raising of the price of food upon the purchasing power of the people. He pointed out that the system of free imports of cheap food had brought into existence additional millions of people between whom and famine the margin was slender, and added :—

'I can conceive that under a different system, though we might not have been so rich or so prosperous, a condition of things might have existed in which the problems with which we are now confronted might have been less great, less momentous than they are now. We have to deal not, perhaps, with the best possible organisation of society in our country; we have to deal with it under conditions which have been brought about by our present fiscal system, and we must be very careful indeed before we alter those conditions in a manner which may possibly reduce the margin which now exists between those people and absolute want. Under these circumstances I should hesitate very long before I could bring myself to assent to changes the effect of which, so far as I know, or have the means of knowing, might be to improve the conditions of certain of the higher classes of labour, but might also have the effect, so far as I know or have the means at present of knowing, of breaking down that barrier which still exists between those millions and absolute starvation. These are questions, I think, which every one who professes to be a statesman will admit cannot be solved simply by counting votes at a general election.'

If he knew that every working-man with a vote was in favour of trying the experiment, and that every Colony would meet us as fully as we could desire, yet, he said, he would not be a party to its trial, 'unless I were convinced in my heart and conscience that that experiment was justified on sound economic grounds, and that there was reason to believe that it would tend to the benefit of the great masses of the people, as well as to that of some of the more favoured sections of the working classes.' There were, he said, undoubtedly political advantages in the proposed change—in connection with the Colonies—but if these could 'only be purchased at the expense of privation, hardship, and discontent on the part of our own people, then I can conceive of no policy which would more certainly or more swiftly tend to the dissolution and disintegration of our Empire.' He drew a distinction in point of importance between the 'preferential policy and the policy known as 'retaliation,' and said:—

'The policy of preferential treatment of our Colonies, founded on the taxation of food, would be a policy which would be either irrevocable, or, if reversed, the reversal must be attended with the most serious and grave consequences. On the other hand, I can conceive that an experiment in the way of retaliation might be tried, and, if found not to succeed, that it might be reversed without any serious injury to any great national interests.'

The Duke then discussed the question whether men could have open and declared convictions of an opposite kind on a serious question, and yet remain in the same Cabinet. He quoted a passage from a speech of Lord Macaulay to show that both Tory and Whig Governments, especially that of the second Pitt, had allowed questions not pressing for immediate decision to remain open in this way. He admitted that the present position

of the Government was difficult, but it was not impossible. Ought, he asked, the Prime Minister to have resigned because Mr. Chamberlain had set forth a policy as to which the Prime Minister had not yet formed fixed opinions. 'The position of the Prime Minister, if he had resigned as soon as that speech was made, and on further reflection found that he agreed with it, would have been a most absurd one.' Then, again, why should Mr. Chamberlain resign 'when he found that his colleagues, though they frankly avowed their present frame of mind, were willing to give an opportunity for opening a discussion on the question he raised.' And why should members of the Cabinet who entertained grave doubts as to this policy resign? 'They were asked to take no immediate action except to vote for a Budget which was entirely consonant with the most pronounced Free Trade principles.' Noble Lords opposite, he concluded, thought that both the principles and results of the present system were so obviously satisfactory that no inquiry was needed, or even permissible.

'I believe that they will find that the people of this country are not so deeply impressed with the absolute perfection of our present fiscal and commercial policy that they will view with much favour the action of those who refuse even to inquire whether it has been, as they believe, a success, or whether, as is held in other quarters, it has been but an incomplete success, and is tending towards failure. I believe the best friends of Free Trade will be found to be those who are willing to enter into a full and fair inquiry, not as to its principles, which, perhaps, we may take for granted, but as to its consequences and results. And I believe for myself that the result of any such inquiry will be to establish more firmly the essential principles which underlie our policy, although it may be found, possibly, that some modifica-

tion and alteration of our arrangements may tend to strengthen and consolidate, and make more unassailable and permanent, a system founded essentially upon the principle of Free Trade.'

The question was raised again in the House of Lords on the 29th June and the 2nd July. The Duke remained intrenched within the lines of the Inquiry. Why was this position not tenable beyond September? Mr. Balfour and the Duke had quoted instances earlier than the Reform Bill of 1832 of important questions on which members of the same Cabinet had long professed different opinions. Some questions, much more recently, have long remained "open," such as women's suffrage. But, in the earlier days, the political machine had been little developed. Statesmen were not expected to make numerous speeches throughout the country; there were no local associations clamouring for a lead, no central federations expecting, or pressing, a policy. Mr. Chamberlain was not only an individual Minister, he was at the head of eager legions which he had himself organised for other purposes. On a question of this kind he could hardly, perhaps, even had he wished it, have prevented them from going into action, after his first speeches, any more than the Transvaal Republic could have prevented war after their burghers had been encamped for some weeks on the border of Natal. As a matter of fact, the propagation of the new faith and policy, from the Midland centre, was continued with the utmost energy during the period of truce and inquiry by every means possible other than speeches of Mr. Chamberlain. The doctrine met the wishes of hundreds of thousands of Englishmen, and in that respect differed materially from the Home Rule movement of 1886, which the Liberal party accepted for no other reason than allegiance to a much-adored old chieftain.

The Free-Trade Unionists in Parliament, whose position was being undermined in the constituencies while they were precluded from defending their views in the House of Commons, resented the one-sided truce from the first. A letter written a little later by Mr. Winston Churchill, then Conservative member for Oldham, to the Duke shows how impossible the neutral attitude had become.

DUNROBIN, *Sept.* 1, 1903.

MY DEAR DUKE,—An agreement has been come to in my constituency between the Free Trade majority on the Executive Committee and the small but very aggressive Fair Trade minority, that, during what is called the 'truce,' no literature is to be circulated by the Association on the Fiscal Question. We have made this concession to the minority in the hopes of delaying as long as possible what I fear is the inevitable split. We could at any moment by a large majority carry a resolution authorising the Hon. Sec. to distribute Free Trade literature and no other literature, but, till Mr. Balfour has definitely pronounced, I think it better to defer a step which will cause a secession of the Protectionists and Fair Traders, and probably lead us into negotiations with the Liberal party in the borough. But I now receive complaints from my chairman and other Free Traders on the Committee that the Birmingham Tariff Committee has been in communication not only with the central party organisation in Oldham, and the recognised leaders and officials of the Association, but with the separate ward committees and the officials of the various clubs underneath the central organisation, that literature has been pressed upon them, and that they have been invited to distribute it. In some cases they have been induced to do this, largely because they believe that it is, in fact if not in name, the orthodox literature of the Unionist party sent out by the Unionist party leaders. If it were not for Mr. Chamberlain's ministerial position, his close association

with the Birmingham Tariff Committee would not matter, and the operations of that Committee would not embarrass me. But the fact that the circulation of this literature is regarded as an act of party loyalty by some of my constituents does undoubtedly make the position difficult, and I think we have some reason to complain that a Minister should countenance the tampering with subordinate members of a party organisation which gives him general support, and should encourage them to circulate propagandist leaflets, against the wishes of the members and of the majority of the Association, upon a question of policy not agreed upon by the Cabinet and not accepted by the party.

I don't set much store myself by leaflets either way, and I do not myself propose to do anything until the middle of October ; but I write to you to point out that by then we must know where we stand. We must know who are our friends and enemies, and make arrangements accordingly. It is perfectly impossible for the ordinary routine of party work to be carried out in the borough while these highly irregular methods are being employed. I have no doubt that my case is the case of other constituencies, and I submit to you that no compromise on which the Cabinet may decide will be of the slightest use in keeping local organisations together, unless it includes an absolute, honest, and immediate cessation of these tactics on the part of a Minister. I have written all this formally, because I think you ought to be in possession of the facts. If it were not for you, I do not think it would be worth while for Free Traders to worry on in the party. On my last visit to Oldham two working men at different clubs informed me that they would wait to see what you decided, and I believe your influence is much greater than perhaps you think. We are on the eve of a gigantic political landslide. I don't think Balfour and those about him realise at all how far the degeneration of the forces of Unionism has proceeded, and how tremendous the countercurrent is going to be.

Don't bother to answer this. I know you must have a good deal on your hands.—Yours very sincerely,

WINSTON S. CHURCHILL.

During July letters passed between the Duke of Devonshire and Mr. Chamberlain upon the more abstract merits of the question; but as, in this field, the views and reasoning of eminent statesmen are not of more value than those of other thinkers, this correspondence need not be given. Mr. Chamberlain closed it by saying (July 25, 1903):—

'All economic arguments are speculative, and, in my opinion, as apparently in yours, they are inconclusive. I prefer a little common sense and business experience. Both tell me that there is ample room for the investment of untold millions in this country, and, if we gave manufacturers here some security, there would be an enormous development both by British and foreign capital. There will also be a sufficiency of labour, though its cost per man may increase. There are always millions of unemployed in this country, or with only partial employment, and besides this there is a large continuous emigration.

'Ireland might have had nine millions of people but for the Corn Law repeal; whether that would be a blessing or not, I leave to others to decide.

'In any case we have four facts to go upon, viz.:—

'1. British exports have been stagnant for ten years.

'2. They would have shown an immense decrease but for the increase of Colonial trade, and the larger export of coal.

'3. British industries will be in the most serious danger when Germany and America have a large over-production.

'4. Tariffs and Preference, which might remedy the above evils, are consistent with a growth and progress in protected nations enormously greater than our own.'

By the end of the summer the controversy in the country had grown to such a height that, with a view to

autumnal speeches, and especially the address by the Prime Minister to the meeting at Sheffield on October 1st of Conservative Associations, who were thirsting for a bold and strong lead, the Cabinet had to try to arrive at some common line of statement. The question was discussed at a Cabinet held on the 13th August 1903. In anticipation of this meeting the Prime Minister circulated to his colleagues his paper, afterwards published, on 'Insular Free Trade,' together with a paper suggesting certain propositions for adoption. He proposed that the Cabinet should take up the position that, while no fiscal change should be rejected *merely* because, like the corn tax of 1902, some flavour of protection could be imputed to it, they intended to propose 'no tax *simply* for protective purposes,' and that 'any readjustment of taxation, required either for the purpose of furthering Free Trade with the Colonies, or for the purpose of preventing 'dumping,' should be framed so as to avoid any material increase in the budget of the working-men, whether artisans or agricultural labourers.' This attitude assumed that, subject to satisfaction of certain conditions, the road was open to a reform of the fiscal system with a view to preferential relations with the Colonies and to defence against foreign economic aggression. No decision was reached at this Cabinet, and the discussion was adjourned to a meeting to be held on the 14th September. Mr. Chamberlain wrote on the 25th August 1903 to the Duke that—

'If, as I originally hoped, the proposal that I made for discussion had been accepted on both sides, and had not been made a party question, we might have stood to what was undoubtedly my original idea, and have treated the small taxation that will be necessary to give a preference to the Colonies as a revenue tax, and have used the profits for the promotion of those social reforms which are certain

to come in the future, and which ought in my opinion to be provided for by indirect, and not by an increase in direct taxation.[1] But the Opposition thought the chance too good to be lost. They have raised the Free Food cry, and we must meet them on their own grounds. I am therefore prepared to accept the responsibility of treating the change, so far as preferential rates are concerned, as a redistribution of taxation and not as an imposition of increased burdens. Accordingly any tax on one kind of food must be met by a reduction of an equal amount on other articles of food which are now being taxed.'

After discussing this matter at length he concluded—

'In face of such facts as these, it seems to me that one may fairly put aside the dogmatic assertions of the fanatical Free Traders as to the consequences of a change in our system. All prophecies are made on insufficient foundation, while the facts show a greater proportionate increase in prosperity in every country in which a scientific fiscal system has been adopted, in place of the haphazard free import policy to which we alone have hitherto adhered."

In the interval between the Cabinets of 13th August and 14th September the Duke also received the following letter :—

Mr. Ritchie to the Duke of Devonshire

WELDERS, GERRARD'S CROSS, R.S.O., BUCKS,
20th August 1903.

MY DEAR DUKE,—Those of us who appreciate the serious character of the results which are likely to follow from the success of Chamberlain's policy should do our utmost to prevent his obtaining that success. It would be infinitely more agreeable for me to resign, as the position

[1] In his speeches Mr. Chamberlain had connected in this way a tax to give Colonial Preference with the proposal of Old Age Pensions. There can be little doubt that, from a political point of view, nothing has injured the Unionists so much as leaving Old Age Pensions to be given by the Liberals.

is gradually becoming almost intolerable, but it is clear that those of us in the Cabinet who oppose this policy should act together if we are to produce any effect. I am therefore quite prepared to continue in office, if you consider it advisable to do so, but it seems to me that, if this course is adopted, we must have some clear understanding that Balfour in his speech *is not to commit the Cabinet as a whole to any portion of Chamberlain's policy*, and that Chamberlain is not to be at liberty to carry the fiery cross into all the constituencies during the autumn.[1] I do not mean that he should be dissuaded from making speeches, but that they should, if made, be confined to a moderate exposition of his own views, which we, on our part, should be at liberty, also in a moderate way, to challenge. In this connection I think it most essential that you should take part in the public discussion. It is, I know, a great bore, but I think it will be necessary. No one's views are likely to carry nearly as much weight.

An essential condition of this arrangement is, of course, that we are not asked at our next meeting to come to a definite decision on Balfour's paper. This is what will be insisted on by Chamberlain, but I hope you will strongly oppose it. We cannot assent to the principles embodied in his paper until we have an opportunity of considering his plan in detail. In connection with this I enclose you the first portion of a paper I am writing for the Cabinet. I have written it very hurriedly, and it will require correction, and is not of course completed.

I quite agree to your proposal about resolutions, if we can agree upon them, which, however, I very much doubt.

I am going yachting on the West Coast to-morrow, joining the *Irene* on Saturday at Oban, and will not be back here for ten days or more. A letter to me at Oban will reach me.—Yours very truly, C. RITCHIE.

The Duke also received a letter from Lord Balfour of

[1] The italics are as in original letter.

Burleigh stating his reasons for disliking the new policy, the method in which it had been launched, and the arguments used by its supporters, and his distaste, also, for the prospect that the Government would go to the country with no specific scheme of policy by which it was prepared to stand or fall. On the 23rd August the Duke of Devonshire wrote to the Prime Minister from Bolton Abbey :—

The Duke of Devonshire to Mr. Balfour.

'I am afraid that there is no immediate prospect of your being able to leave London or Hatfield, and therefore make no excuses for writing to you about my position and that of some other members of the Cabinet in regard to the fiscal question.

'Without going so far as Mr. Ritchie in asking that a complete scheme should be submitted to us, I think that it is most desirable that, before our next meeting, we should have something more definite before us than anything which we have at present got. We know that Mr. Chamberlain, who has advocated something which it is not easy to distinguish from Protection, finds the Prime Minister's paper and memorandum sufficient authority to enter upon his autumn campaign, while I and others might find in the reservations contained in it securities and safeguards which might satisfy me. Would it not be possible for you, before we meet again, to draw up some propositions, affirmative and negative, which would enable us to see how far it is possible to agree, or within what limits we can, as a Cabinet, agree to differ?

'I am willing to admit that it may be right to make some attempt to establish closer trade relations with the Colonies, but do not admit that we ought to make sacrifices for this object, because I do not believe that the country will or ought to consent to make what can properly be called sacrifices, which would probably rather impair than strengthen its relations with the Colonies, and I doubt very much whether it is possible to establish very

close trade relations between a country whose fiscal policy is mainly Free Trade, and other countries whose policy is mainly Protective. But I do not absolutely reject the attempt.

'Again, I could admit that the restriction of exports to foreign countries, which is due not to natural but to artificial causes, may be, and probably is, an evil, and I do not refuse to consider measures intended to cure it. But I have the most profound doubt whether it is possible to secure either of these objects without resorting to measures which would do more harm to ourselves than good to our colonial relations or our improved treatment by foreign rivals, and therefore I should like to see the new departure tried, if at all, in the most restricted and guarded manner.

'But this is not what, under existing conditions, is in the least likely to be the issue placed before the country. From the manner in which the new policy has been initiated, and also opposed, it seems to be inevitable that, unless some very stringent limitations are imposed on and accepted by its advocates, the issue will become still more what it really already is, viz., a controversy between Free Trade and Protection. If a General Election were to take place now this would be the issue, and I cannot conceive a more unsatisfactory position than that in which Chamberlain and his supporters would be able to go as far as they liked in bidding for Protectionist support, while we, who are convinced, but not bigoted, Free Traders, would be reduced to attempt to restrain the application of Protectionist principles.

'For these reasons I should like, if possible, to have something in the nature of definite propositions placed before the Cabinet before the autumn agitation begins, and to see whether it is possible for us, even for a time, to continue as a united Cabinet.

'But there is a further suggestion which I should like to make. I do not know whether it has yet been considered how the present Parliament is to be treated in relation to this question. Probably, if Chamberlain thinks that he

has obtained a sufficient success in the autumn, he will want a dissolution before another session. I should think it a great misfortune that a dissolution should take place either on the issue of Protection *v.* Free Trade, or on the perfectly vague and indefinite issues which are now being discussed all over the country. While I admit that the present Parliament cannot sanction any important new departure in present policy, I think that the existing Parliament is the proper place in which such a new departure ought in the first instance to be discussed. I suggest, therefore, that we should decide and announce that, when the inquiry which we have undertaken to make is completed, we shall submit its results to Parliament in the form of Resolutions. There are probably no exact precedents for such a procedure, but I think that the Resolutions on which the Government of India Bill was founded, and Mr. Gladstone's Resolutions on the Irish Church, are something in the nature of precedents, and there may be others and better ones.

'But, precedent or no precedent, I think there would be some serious advantages in that procedure. If we are to meet Parliament again, it is impossible to exclude the House of Commons any longer from taking part in the discussion which is going on everywhere else, and it seems to me that definite Resolutions would be a better basis for discussion than an amendment on the Address, or a Vote of Censure, or repeated motions for the adjournment. In the next place a full and formal discussion in the House of Commons might really be of some use in helping the country to make up its mind on a question on which it is almost hopelessly perplexed.

'It would, I think, have a very wholesome effect on the autumn oratory if it were known that the platform speeches and disquisitions had to be reduced to the form of concrete resolutions. And, finally, it would have the more doubtful advantage of enabling us, if we can arrive at some provisional agreement, such as I have suggested, at our next meeting to postpone the moment at which, if our differ-

ences should prove to be irreconcilable, the Cabinet must break up, till near the time of the meeting of Parliament.'

Mr. Balfour wrote a long and lucid letter on the 27th August to the Duke, in which he gave his view of the whole history, general and personal, of the fiscal question. In the latter part of it he stated his own existing position, and this statement must be given, as it is essential to the matter in hand.

Mr. Balfour to the Duke of Devonshire.

'All this you will say is mere history; so it is. But it is history which must be kept in mind if we are to be just to the various actors in this rather complicated drama.

'I will, however, now come to the immediate issue.

'I should much have preferred that the controversy which, as I have said, I believe in any case to have been inevitable, should have been allowed to develop itself in a more peaceful and regular manner. Through no fault of mine this proved impossible, and my efforts have been devoted to lessening, so far as I can, evils which I fear cannot be wholly avoided. But inasmuch as the question, for good or for evil, has been raised in a form which makes it necessary for every man in practical politics to make some declaration of opinion, I cannot, as an honest man, do otherwise than range myself among those who *are* of opinion that our present fiscal system is not wholly suited to our present needs.

'I have troubled you already at great length with the economic reasons which have brought me to this view; and I have also made some practical suggestions for the consideration of the Cabinet.

'I do not propose to repeat here anything that I have said in either of the two Papers which you have before you. But I hope you will allow me to remove one misconception to which the blue Cabinet paper appears to have given rise. I had not the smallest intention of using

in that Paper anything in the nature of an *argumentum ad hominem*. I sincerely thought that the Cabinet, like myself, had long abandoned the narrow limits of what some persons regard as financial orthodoxy, and, in reminding them of the facts on which this view was based, I meant to do no more than point out that it was hardly open to us to declare that this or that proposal was outside discussion, merely because it did not square with the formulas of the Cobden Club. I never meant to suggest to any one that, because he was prepared to advise the use of our fiscal system (*e.g.*, under the Sugar Convention) for purposes other than mere revenue, he was therefore bound to go the "whole Protectionist hog," or, indeed, to go an inch further away from Cobdenite Free Trade than, on its merits, he thought proper.

'My own view, perhaps, can be put most clearly by drawing a comparison between my theories upon fiscal questions and my theories upon social questions. The old Free Traders were consistent advocates of the *laissez faire* principle in both departments of policy. Their advocacy of Free Trade and their objection to factory legislation largely sprang from the same root principle—the principle of *laissez faire* and individualism. The movement of thought and the pressure of events have compelled us (in my opinion rightly compelled us) to abandon these principles in their extreme form. But this does not mean that either you or I are Socialists. It *does* mean that we now feel bound to consider many proposals on their merits which the Manchester School of sixty years since would summarily have dismissed on (what they called) "principle."

'My attitude upon fiscal questions is precisely the same. I do not believe—indeed, I never have believed—that the old dogmas are theoretically sound. I do believe that they have served a very useful practical purpose at a certain stage of our political development. But they are in many respects unsuited to our present industrial and national position. I think we must be prepared to modify

them. Just as I am not a Socialist, so I am not a Protectionist; and as in the case of social reform, so in the case of fiscal reform, I think that the mere fact of our increasing largely the number of "open" questions, makes it more than ever necessary to approach their consideration in a spirit of cautious moderation.

'Now, if this is so, it would surely be a matter of profound regret if the conduct of this question were to be left wholly, or principally, to those who, by temperament or by opinion, were disposed to extreme courses. I noticed at the last Cabinet before we separated that many of those who were, so far as I could judge, in complete agreement with myself were, nevertheless, disturbed by the reflection that they might be dragged along the new path much further than they desired to go. Chamberlain's extraordinary vigour and controversial skill thoroughly alarmed them. They feared that if they give an inch, an ell will be taken, and though they had no belief in the old dogmas, they liked them because they were definite and precise, and because they knew not whither the current of events would sweep them if they once abandoned the familiar anchorage.

'For my own part, I do not the least desire to ignore the danger which they feared. The danger is real; and it exists with regard to fiscal just as it does with regard to social reform. If any political prophet were to assure me that we were either going to slip into some extreme form of Protection, or into some dangerous experiments in Socialism, I could not conscientiously say that I regard such a fate as impossible. What I could conscientiously say is that the path of safety is not to be found in the adherence to discredited dogmas, but in the cultivation of a sober public opinion, and in the steadfast co-operation of men who are neither blind to new necessities, nor too easily carried away by new enthusiasms.

'If, as now seems likely, these fiscal questions are going to remain in the forefront of practical politics, I should despise myself if I pressed any man to remain in the

Government who was, on principle, opposed to the views I have expressed in this letter, or elsewhere. But, on the other hand, I should boldly appeal, on grounds of public duty, to ask those who do *not* dissent on principle to continue their co-operation. And I make this appeal for two reasons—a narrower one and a broader one. The narrower reason is the one which I have just explained. The proper course for those who are afraid that a sound policy may be pressed too far, is to insist on having a share in determining the method of its application. The broader reason is that a great many all-important interests, besides those immediately affected by our fiscal policy, are entrusted to the Unionist party; and if that party be broken up, or seriously weakened, by internal divisions, these interests must assuredly suffer. That the party is threatened with serious disruption upon the fiscal question may be due to Chamberlain's fault, or it may be due to deeper causes; and Chamberlain's action may have only hastened, and, it may be, somewhat aggravated, difficulties which were inevitable. It matters little which. Our business is to prevent our divisions reaching a point which may convert them into a national disaster, and may deprive the greatest interests of the country of the guardianship by which since 1886 they have been protected.

'Much as you dislike office, and justly as you may feel that you are entitled to some rest from public labours, these are considerations to which you are so certain to attach their full value that I will not dwell upon them.

'This letter has, indeed, already reached an inordinate length, and if I did not feel it absolutely necessary that before the decisive Cabinet of the 14th, you should have before you the whole case as it presents itself to my mind, I would not have troubled you with it. The subject on which I have dwelt least is the Imperial, as distinguished from the economic, side of preferential treatment. I do not feel that on this I have any new or valuable observations to offer. But if, as seems certain, Canada and other Colonies are prepared to employ their tariffs in order to

further an Imperial ideal, and if, as seems probable, the rejection of their overtures will lead to their withdrawal, and we become worse off as an Empire than if those overtures had never been made, I should be sorry to think that I belonged to a Government or a party which hastily rejected them. Let that responsibility, if it has to be incurred, be incurred by others.'

In another letter two days later, 29th August, Mr. Balfour said that there would be no difficulty in preparing the definite propositions suggested by the Duke in his letter of 29th August. He said also that he had been a little disturbed by the Duke's description of himself 'as under some special obligation to consult the views of Ritchie, G. Hamilton, and Balfour of Burleigh. I quite understand that each and all of us are under obligations of this kind to the Cabinet *as a whole*, but surely not to any fraction of it. This is having a Cabinet within a Cabinet with a vengeance.'[1] Mr. Balfour wrote again to the Duke on the 6th September. He said—

'I quite understand your anxiety not to take any step which may ultimately involve you in a policy which you dislike, and your consequent hesitation in becoming responsible for a change which, while it *may* be confined within limits of which you approve, may also not be so confined. I cannot help thinking, however, that these dangers can be avoided. It may, of course, happen that the injury done at some future time to enormous home industries by foreign competition will so arouse public

[1] In his speech of 7th March 1904, Mr. Balfour said: 'It appears . . . that there had been formed within the Cabinet a sort of second Cabinet pledged to each other by bonds of mutual confidence in connection with this subject of fiscal reform,' and he referred to rumours of the time as to his own resignation and new ministerial combinations. It is quite possible, or probable, that some of those politically connected with the Duke may have talked of these things in the clubs, but nothing, one need not say, could have been more remote from the Duke's own mind.

feeling that another President of the Council and another First Lord of the Treasury may be compelled to adopt Protection. I do not venture to prophesy, but I am confident that the best way of avoiding such a contingency is to do what we can *now* to mitigate *illegitimate* competition. If, like the Cobden Club, we preach a doctrine of Free Trade which takes account of nothing but the *immediate* interests of the consumer, and which welcomes every form of competition which appears to minister to these; if, in other words, legitimate and illegitimate foreign competition receive from us an equal benediction, depend upon it Free Trade, thus made unnecessarily repulsive, will be repudiated by the nation, in the first great commercial stress which occurs.

'It is unfortunate, but certainly true, that it is not possible for any of us, at the present juncture, to adopt a quiescent or waiting policy. An answer, and a definite answer, must be given to the questions which the public are asking. There is the answer which Chamberlain, if he had no one but himself to consider, would probably like to give; an answer which goes perilously near to general protection. There is the answer *I* want to give—which is embodied in the documents you already possess, and is summarised in the accompanying formulas drawn up by Gerald. It is based on Free Trade and offers, I believe, the best hope of maintaining or extending Free Trade. There is, lastly, the answer which, I gather, Balfour of Burleigh is resolved to give; which is a mere *non possumus*. This which, in point of form, seems the most negative of the three, is really the one which will most quickly produce the most serious consequences. For it will not merely break up the Unionist party; it will shatter each separate wing of the Unionist party, dividing Tory from Tory, and Liberal from Liberal. This is dynamite with a vengeance! I still hope better things.'

The formulas, prepared by Mr. Gerald Balfour, which accompanied the letter were as follows:—

Draft Resolutions for Submission to the Cabinet (and possibly later on to the House of Commons).

'1. That an increasing tendency is manifest on the part of communities outside the United Kingdom towards a highly protective policy.

'2. That such policy is calculated to injure the trade and commerce of this country by diminishing the demand for British and Irish produce, and also in certain cases by directly or indirectly favouring the export of foreign produce at artificially low prices, and thus giving it an unfair advantage in competition with British manufactures in our home and in neutral markets.

'3. That it is expedient alike on commercial and on political grounds to establish trade relations between the United Kingdom and other parts of the Empire, so far as may be found practicable, on a basis of mutual preference.

'4. That for the purpose of securing freer trade within the Empire, and freer and fairer trade with foreign countries, the time has come when the Executive should be placed in a stronger position or more adequately equipped with powers for the conduct of commercial negotiations with other Governments, and for the defence of our commercial interests when threatened by the fiscal policy of foreign countries.

'5. That the importance of securing the above objects justifies such departure from the general rule that taxes should only be imposed for revenue purposes as the circumstances in each case may appear to demand.

'Provided that this resolution shall not extend to approval of any tax on raw material which is not food, or of any tax on food or food-stuffs exceeding[1] per cent. *ad valorem*, or of any tax the sole primary object of which is to protect British and Irish industry against the competition of foreign producers unaided by State agency.

[1] Left blank in the original document.

'Provided *further* that any readjustment of taxation required for the purposes contemplated in this resolution shall be framed so as to avoid any (material) increase in the general cost of living of working men, whether artisans or agricultural labourers.'

The Duke wrote on the 10th September to Lord James of Hereford:—

'I do not think that I can agree to any *modus vivendi* that can be proposed, and resignation appears to be the only alternative. But I am very low about it. You say that assent to a *modus vivendi* will be destruction to us as a party. What do you think is to become of the party if we break up? I cannot see how the Liberal Unionist Association is to be maintained.

'I suppose the critical decision will have to be taken on Monday, and the Prime Minister's compromise seems to me the most impossible course of all. I am completely puzzled and distracted by all the arguments *pro* and *con* Free Trade and Protection; but, whichever of them is right, I cannot think that something which is neither, but a little of both, can be right.'

On the 9th September Mr. Chamberlain wrote to the Prime Minister the letter, afterwards published, in which he said, that by reason of the 'unscrupulous use' which had been made of 'the old cry of the dear loaf,' and the prejudice thus created, he felt that 'as an immediate and practical policy, the question of preference to the Colonies cannot be pressed with any success at the present time, although there is a very strong feeling in favour of the other branch of fiscal reform, which would give a fuller discretion to the Government in negotiating with foreign countries for freer exchange of commodities, and would enable our representatives to retaliate if no concession were made to our just claims for greater reciprocity. If,

as I believe, you share these views, it seems to me that you will be absolutely justified in adopting them as the policy of your Government, although it will necessarily involve some changes in its constitution.'[1] As Colonial Secretary, he said, he stood in a position different from any of his colleagues, and would justly be blamed if he remained in office and 'thus formally accepted the exclusion from my political programme of so important a part of it.' He thought that he could best promote the cause from outside. He suggested, therefore, that 'You should limit the present policy of the Government to the assertion of our freedom in the case of all commercial relations with foreign countries, and that you should agree to my tendering my resignation of my present office to his Majesty, and devoting myself to the work of explaining and popularising those principles of Imperial union which my experience has convinced me are essential to our future welfare and prosperity.'

This letter, of the 9th, was not mentioned at the Cabinet meeting of the 14th, although Mr. Chamberlain did then say that, if Preference were dropped, he thought that he would have to resign, and carry on the movement in an independent capacity. On the 16th September Mr. Balfour replied to the Colonial Secretary. He began by saying that he did not answer the letter of the 9th, 'which I received shortly before my departure from Scotland for the Cabinet meeting, as I knew that we should within a few hours have an opportunity of talking over the important issues with which it deals. The reply, therefore, which I am now writing rather embodies the results of our conversations than adds to them anything which is new.' Mr. Balfour then expressed his general sympathy with

[1] 'Some changes' seems to refer to the retirement of the decided Free Trade Ministers, as well as his own.

Mr. Chamberlain's views as to Colonial Preference, and his agreement with the view that, if taxation on food-stuffs were necessary for that purpose, public opinion was 'not yet ripe for such an arrangement' by reason of 'past political battles and present political misrepresentations.' He acquiesced, in terms of reluctance, in Mr. Chamberlain's proposal, and said:—

'If you think that you can best serve the interests of Imperial unity for which you have done so much by pressing your views on Colonial Preference with the freedom which is possible in an independent position, how can I criticise your determination. The loss to the Government is great indeed; but the gain to the cause you have at heart may be greater still. If so what can I do but acquiesce?'

On 8th September Mr. Gerald Balfour sent to the Duke a scheme for giving to the Colonies a preference by placing a duty on meat, fruit, and dairy produce, but excepting the sacred corn, reducing at the same time, as a set off, the taxes on tea, coffee, cocoa, and sugar. In this letter he referred to the draft resolutions sent two days earlier by the Prime Minister to the Duke as 'expressing the policy he and I approve.' It appears, therefore, that on the 8th September the Prime Minister was in favour of the adoption by the Cabinet in *principle*, and as the objective of future action, of that policy which in his letter of the 9th Mr. Chamberlain described as 'a preferential agreement with our Colonies involving any new duty, however small, on articles of food hitherto untaxed,' which was, he said, 'even if accompanied by a reduction of taxation on other articles of food of equally universal consumption, unacceptable to the majority in the constituencies,' at present.

The letters which passed between the Prime Minister and Mr. Chamberlain, of the 9th and 16th September,

showed that they were, for the time at least, in what may perhaps be called an incomplete agreement. Both Ministers believed, although with different degrees of fervour in faith, that the preferential policy was an ideal to be aimed at; both of them held, although with different degrees of decision, that the time was not yet ripe for the proposal of taxation of food products. The policy was not to be abandoned, but to be adjourned for such time as might be necessary to affect a change in public opinion. Both Mr. Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain thought that public opinion was ripe, or nearly so, for the policy of arming our diplomacy with some means of enforcing our claim to fair treatment by other nations in matters of trade. It would surely have been better if the Prime Minister had informed his colleagues at the Cabinet of 14th September of Mr. Chamberlain's letter and his own reply, or intended reply, but the disclosure could not have made any difference to men like Mr. Ritchie, who were opposed *not only* to any immediate steps in pursuance of the policy, *but also* to the adoption of the principle as part of the Unionist creed.[1]

At the end of his letter to Mr. Chamberlain of 16th September Mr. Balfour referred to the readiness of Mr. Austen Chamberlain to remain in the Cabinet and said, 'There could be no more conclusive evidence that, in your judgment, as in mine, the exclusion of taxation on food from the party programme is, in existing circumstances, the course best fitted practically to further the cause of fiscal reform.' This, and the whole tenor of the letter, made it clear that no one could honestly remain a member of Mr. Balfour's Government unless he were, in general terms, a fiscal reformer, in favour, that is, of a free hand to treat other nations as they treated us, and in favour also, ultimately, when the people of this country could be converted,

[1] Mr. Ritchie himself admitted this in a later letter to the Duke.

of the imposition of such duties as were necessary to enable us to treat the Colonies on a different basis from our treatment of countries outside the Empire. Now Mr. Ritchie and, probably, Lord Balfour of Burleigh, sympathised, if not on the first, yet certainly on the second, of these points with the view taken from the first moment by the Liberal Opposition. The Duke of Devonshire still remained in the position of an inquirer without much hope of conviction. Mr. Balfour had, however, some reason to think that, regard being had to his speech in the House of Lords and to his letter of 23rd August, the Duke might accept the 'opportunist' position of the Chamberlain correspondence. The question raised was new to busy men of the day, and full of difficulty. Few of Mr. Balfour's colleagues were ready or willing to go beyond the most general declarations in favour of fiscal reform, none, perhaps, except Mr. Chamberlain and his son. Two of them, namely, Mr. Ritchie and Lord Balfour of Burleigh, were strong and decided adherents of the doctrine of free imports, without preference, at any rate in the case of all food products, although admitting the legitimacy of a small duty for purely revenue purposes. With these colleagues the Duke of Devonshire and Lord George Hamilton (who as Indian Secretary had committed himself to a defence upon Free Trade principles of the fiscal policy imposed, to satisfy Lancashire, upon a reluctant India in the matter of cotton duties) were, although less antagonistic to all change, in decided sympathy.

When papers containing definite proposals are circulated to the members of a Cabinet before a meeting by the Prime Minister, or another, it is the practice that any other Ministers who desire to do so can also circulate printed remarks on the subject. The only Ministers who sent in memorandums with regard to Mr. Balfour's

papers on this occasion were Mr. Ritchie and Lord Balfour of Burleigh, both of them stating strongly and fairly their reasoned objections to the *via media* proposed by the Prime Minister and their inability to accept his conclusions as to policy. When the Cabinet met, it was at once made clear to the two Ministers that, with the opinions which they held, they could not remain. In a letter at the time the Duke, who always put things into plain language, wrote: 'I never heard anything more summary and decisive than the dismissal of the two Ministers.' It was a 'dismissal' in the same sense, apparently, as Mr. Gladstone's dealing with Mr. Chamberlain and Sir G. Trevelyan in 1886, a prompt assertion, that is, 'If such is your view, you cannot continue to be members of this Government.' This opening appears to have been followed by a general and not very clear discussion. Mr. Chamberlain said that, if preferential proposals were dropped, he would have to resign. He also asked whether, if they were dropped, the Cabinet would hold to the retaliatory part of the programme. The Prime Minister tried to fix attention on the main issue of principle, 'Are we a Cabinet of Fiscal Reform, or no?' There was to be a second Cabinet on the following morning, Tuesday 15th, to deal exclusively with foreign affairs. Lord George Hamilton, in a speech which he made to his constituents on 22nd October, gave the following account of what happened up to the evening of the 14th September:—

'On the last day of the Session (13th August) the Cabinet met, and we had before us two documents, a pamphlet entitled *Insular Free Trade* and another document containing the proposals which the Prime Minister wished officially to put forward in the name of the Government. Preferential tariffs and taxation of food were in-

cluded in that programme. We agreed to the publication of the first document; we differed as to the acceptance of the proposals in the second. The discussion was adjourned, and on the 14th September was resumed. Both Mr. Ritchie and I understood that these proposals were still before us, though we were perplexed and mystified by the turn the discussion sometimes took. Again we were unable to agree. When the Cabinet was over, the Duke of Devonshire, Lord Balfour of Burleigh, Mr. Ritchie and I met in my room. We fully discussed the position, as we understood it, and we were unanimously of opinion that we had no option but to resign, and the Duke undertook personally to inform Mr. Balfour of the determination we had arrived at. One and all of us were then ignorant of Mr. Chamberlain's resignation, and we knew that as long as he was one of the Cabinet preferential tariffs could not be altogether dropped.'

There were, as must always happen, some differences in recollection as to what passed in conversation. In a letter of 24th October to Lord George Hamilton, the Duke said:—

'I certainly had not made up my mind to resign when we met in your room, as I had promised, and stated that I had promised, to see Balfour again. Neither did I undertake the commission on the part of us all to communicate the resignations to the Prime Minister. What I distinctly recollect that I undertook to do was to ask the Prime Minister whether those Ministers who, as it were, had notice to quit, were expected to attend the Cabinet next day.'

Lord George Hamilton continued his narration thus:—

'There was another Cabinet the next day dealing with other matters. We four met again after the Cabinet and, as I was informed there was no change in the situation, I formally sent in my resignation, which was written in words

making it clear that I understood that Mr. Chamberlain was remaining a member of the Government, and that, in one shape or another, preferential tariffs were to be advocated. I received the following day (16th) a friendly acknowledgment of my letter from the Prime Minister.'

The Duke, according to a memorandum preserved among the Devonshire papers, saw Mr. Balfour after the Cabinet of Monday the 14th. 'He hinted that Chamberlain might resign.' On September 15th, it is noted, the Duke met the other three Ministers, and it was understood that they would all send in their resignations in the course of the afternoon, with a proviso, in the Duke's case, that he was to have an interview with Mr. Balfour in the evening, and that it was 'possible but not probable' that he (Mr. Balfour) might cause him to reconsider his position. The Duke wrote his letter of resignation but suspended sending it until after the interview. Earlier on the same day (Tuesday 15th) the Duke had written to the Prime Minister :—

'Before sending you my final decision I should like to know, if possible, what it is you propose to say about preferential treatment of the Colonies involving taxation of food. Though I understand you to doubt its practicability at the present time, I do not understand that you will say anything that will prevent Chamberlain from continuing his advocacy of it. We are all, I believe, agreed that the time has come when the Cabinet must cease to speak with two voices, and therefore I do not think that any reservations on your part short of rejection of this part of the policy would make much difference on the situation, though I have reason to believe that a distinct repudiation of it would affect the views of other members of the Government, perhaps more than my own.'

When the Duke saw the Prime Minister at 7 P.M. that Tuesday evening the strong probability of Mr. Chamber-

lain's ceasing to remain in the Cabinet was mentioned, but not, as the Duke stated in his later explanation in the House of Lords, in such a manner as to lead him to believe "that a definite tender of resignation had been made, still less that it was likely to be accepted." Mr. Balfour, according to the Duke's memorandum, asked him not to mention this probability to any one. He also told him that Lord Balfour of Burleigh and Mr. Ritchie were not compelled to resign "on account of the Memoranda which they had circulated, but on account of the attitude which they had assumed towards the fiscal question throughout all its stages." The Duke, on his return to Devonshire House, decided to send the letter of resignation, which was already written, to the Prime Minister, with the following covering letter :—

'In thinking over the very difficult position in which I find myself, the only course which suggests itself to me is to send you the letter which I had written before I saw you this afternoon. It was only the accident of my having asked for a supplementary explanation on a certain point that caused its delivery to be delayed. It represents accurately the opinion which I had formed on the discussion in the Cabinet, and in my subsequent conversation with you,[1] and if you consider that it is based in any degree on a misapprehension of the circumstances it must be for you to take such action upon it as you think fit. I need, perhaps, only add that if I am acting under any misapprehension it was shared by others, who after consultation with me have taken more prompt action than I did, and that I could not honourably reconsider my position in any way without further communication with them.'

The letter of resignation of 15th September sent with the covering note was as follows :—

[1] *i.e.*, at Downing Street, immediately after the Cabinet on the 14th September.

The Duke of Devonshire to Mr. Balfour.

15*th September* 1903.

MY DEAR BALFOUR,—I need not tell you that I have given the most anxious thought to the discussion in yesterday's Cabinet, and to the conversation which I had with you afterwards. Nor is it necessary for me to say with what deep regret I find that I cannot come to any other conclusion than that which I have indicated in two or three recent letters to you as the probable one.

My conviction that I cannot with satisfaction to myself, or with any advantage to the Government, remain a member of it, after the declaration of policy which you intend to make at Sheffield, is strengthened by what took place at the Cabinet yesterday. Two members of the Cabinet only had written and circulated Minutes on the question under discussion. I have referred again to these Minutes, and I find that they consist mainly of criticisms on the procedure that has been adopted, of the expression of doubt as to the necessity of any new departure at all in our fiscal policy, and of objections to any plan of fiscal reform which, in the absence of any definite plan proposed by the reformers, it seemed possible to construct from the speeches of Mr. Chamberlain. I do not find in these Minutes a single criticism from which I dissent, or any argument with which, in the absence of reply or refutation, I disagree. But without any attempt to reply to these criticisms or objections, without any statement whatever on the part of the principal authors of the new departure, it was assumed that the writers had shown themselves to be irreconcilable, and that their resignation had become inevitable. I do not question the opinion expressed on all sides yesterday that this policy can only be successful if supported by men who thoroughly believe in it, and I ask myself, how is it possible that I, who so largely share the views of these Ministers who are deemed to be irreconcilable, can under any conceivable circumstances be of any use to, or add to the strength of, the Government?

But I only refer to this point as having strengthened the convictions which I think I must in any case have formed, and I do not wish you to suppose that any different procedure at, or previous to, yesterday's Cabinet would have materially altered my decision.

Without going into the merits of the questions which are being discussed, and those which will be discussed after your declaration, I hold that the raising of the issue at all was unnecessary and premature, and that it has been raised in the wrong way. Neither you nor I are responsible for this, and you know that a crisis similar to this one was imminent in the summer, and was only averted by the invention of the formula of the Enquiry. I have done my best to persuade myself, and to persuade others, that a real enquiry was being carried on, that Free Trade was on its trial, and that by the results of the enquiry it would be judged. But I cannot admit that the collection of a mass of statistics without any attempt to enlighten ourselves or the country as to what they prove, or an abstract essay such as you intend to publish, constitute the kind of enquiry which I, at least, have been promising. I object, therefore, to the declaration which you propose to make at Sheffield that the time has arrived when it is necessary that a change, which I understand you will indicate as a considerable change, must be made in the fiscal policy of the country.

How far you intend, or will be able to indicate the nature and the extent of that change, I confess that I am still quite unable to grasp, but I apprehend that your declaration must involve some attack on the principle of free imports, which will give great hope and encouragement to every Protectionist, and will, in the first instance at least, alienate from you every Free Trader until you have been able to persuade them—if you can persuade them—that you are working in the interests of real Free Trade.

As a consequence of what has already taken place, the issue of Free Trade *v.* Protection has been raised, and I

cannot distinguish the policy which Chamberlain has initiated, and which is being advocated by an organisation directly under his control, from a policy of Protection. Chamberlain has said nothing to lead me to believe that he is going to abandon or modify his course of action, and thus, in the coming months, a great deal must be said, if not by you, by the next most important members of the Cabinet, with which I shall be wholly unable to agree. I shall either have to be silent, or to dissent. The first course would be intolerable for me, and the second would be a prolongation of a state of things which we are all agreed cannot go on any longer with credit to the Government or with advantage to the country.

It has long been a matter of doubt how far such a question as this could properly be regarded as an open one. With the departure, recognised as necessary and inevitable, of the Free Trade members of the Government it ceases to be an open one, and those who, like myself, hold that no sufficient case has been made out for disturbing the foundations on which the fiscal and commercial policy of the country rest, must definitely declare themselves on one side or the other.

It might be possible for one who is more conversant with the abstract doctrines of political economy than I am, or who possesses more dialectical skill than I can pretend to, to support the position which you are going to take up, while dissociating myself from the more advanced policy which is going to be advocated by Chamberlain, but when I look forward to the controversies which will be raised by your declaration followed by Chamberlain's speeches, and to the part which I should be called upon to take in them in the country and in the House of Lords, I feel the most profound conviction that I should find my own position an impossible one, and one which could only bring discredit on your Government.

I believe that there is no other important subject on which we differ, and it has been a pleasure to me to give you what little help I could as a member of your Govern-

ment. I am not insensible to the effect which this severance may produce on the maintenance of the Unionist party, but I am certain that my continuance in office under the conditions which I have endeavoured to describe would deprive us of any power to be of real service to that party or the country. I have therefore, with feelings of the deepest regret, no alternative but to ask you to place my resignation in the hands of his Majesty.—I remain, yours sincerely, DEVONSHIRE.

On the afternoon of the following day, Wednesday the 16th, Mr. Balfour called upon the Duke and read to him Mr. Chamberlain's letter of the 9th and his reply of the 16th September. The Duke said that he thought that the same information should be given, and an opportunity of reconsidering their resignations should be allowed to the other three Ministers concerned, but Mr. Balfour did not agree to this, giving as his reason that they were irreconcilable, and that, if they remained, the Cabinet would break up. At the end of this conversation the Duke consented to continue in the Government. He wrote that same evening the following letter to Mr. Ritchie:—

September 16, 1903.

MY DEAR RITCHIE,—I received your message through E. Hamilton asking me whether the situation is altered since my interview with Balfour last night. I was unable at the time to answer the question, but I have since seen Balfour, and am able now to tell you of what I think you will agree with me is a fundamental alteration. He assured me in the first place that the promptitude with which he had acquiesced in the necessity for your and Balfour of Burleigh's resignation was not due, or mainly due, as I had assumed, to anything contained in your Minutes recently circulated, but to your general attitude towards the question throughout its stages which he considered had been very different from my own. But this is

not the material point. To my astonishment he informed me last night of the probability, and has to-day assured me of the certainty of Chamberlain's resignation. I told him at once that, though this would have materially altered my own view of the situation, I was still in a very embarrassing position. You, Balfour of Burleigh, and G. Hamilton had consulted me, and it was, if not on my advice, with my acquiescence, that you had sent in your resignations, and that I had led you to expect that I should take the same course. I also told him that I thought that the knowledge of Chamberlain's resignation might, though I did not know whether it would, have altered your decisions, and that, if I was asked to reconsider my position on this ground, the natural course would be that you should also have the opportunity of reconsidering yours. This he considers impossible on the ground I have already indicated, and indeed he is of opinion that he would not keep the remainder of the Cabinet together under such conditions.

I need not enter into the reasons why, for myself, this wholly unexpected result of these discussions has led me to reconsider the decision which I had formed. What I have, however, to consider is whether, after what has passed between us, I shall be guilty of any breach of faith towards you and the other seceders if I consent to remain in the Cabinet. On the best consideration which I can give to the question, I have come to the conclusion that I shall not. After the Prime Minister's opening statements on Monday, I do not think that you and Balfour of Burleigh could have taken any other course than that which you have taken, or that any different advice which I could have given you would have led to any different result. Although therefore you may blame me for inconsistency I cannot feel that any responsibility towards you or Balfour of Burleigh rests upon me which precludes the necessity of forming my own judgment as to my own conduct in the new situation.

While I was writing this your note has arrived, and though I can assure you that the turn which events have

taken has given me very great anxiety, and even pain, I shall be very glad to see you to-morrow morning, and to give you any further explanation you may desire.—Yours,

DEVONSHIRE.

The Duke, on the 17th September, sent copies of this letter to Lord George Hamilton, and to Lord Balfour of Burleigh. His covering letter to Lord George was as follows :—

'I enclose a copy of a letter which I wrote to Ritchie last night, which I hope may explain to you my position in this wholly unexpected turn of events.

'I have felt this position to be a very difficult and even painful one, but what has given me most anxiety has been the apprehension that, in having led some of my colleagues to expect that I should, under entirely different circumstances, take a different course from that which I am now taking, I may be open to some imputation of want of loyalty or good faith towards them. I have seen Ritchie this morning, who, though he considers that he has been badly treated in this matter, I hope entirely acquits me of any such charge of a personal character, and I trust that you may take the same view.

'I feel, perhaps, a greater responsibility towards you than any other of the Ministers concerned, for while Ritchie and Balfour of Burleigh received, at the opening of the Cabinet discussion, distinct notice to quit, you were not so singled out, and possibly, but for my advice, and if you had known of Chamberlain's impending resignation, you might not have thought it necessary to join the others in resigning.

'I think that what I said to the Prime Minister would justify you in re-opening the question with him, if you thought fit; but I should tell you that, for some reason which I do not know, he appears to class you among those who have been irreconcilable throughout.'

Lord George Hamilton said, in replying, on the 18th:—

'I do not see what else you could have done. If you had refused to stay on the Unionist party would have been scattered to the four winds. It is quite true that, if you had not agreed to my sending in my resignation, and if I had not thought that you were sure to do the same, I should have hesitated in taking the step I did. No one could foresee the extraordinary change that has occurred, and as the whole condition of things had changed you could but adapt your position to the facts put before you. Therefore dismiss me from your mind; you have treated me, as you do everybody else, with absolute good faith.'

The Duke also sent a copy of his letter to Mr. Ritchie to Lord Balfour of Burleigh, who answered laconically, 'You will never hear any complaint from me about your action.'

Lord George Hamilton, in the speech of 22nd October, portions of which have already been quoted, pointed out that when on the 17th September the newspapers published the correspondence between Mr. Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain, and the resignations of the Free Trade Ministers were at the same time gazetted, their letters of resignation were not also sent for publication. He said:—

'I am quite sure that this was a pure oversight, but the result was that the public believed that the whole Cabinet were aware of the change in the situation, and that with that knowledge before us the Duke of Devonshire and we differed. I make no complaint whatever on being out of office. In my own judgment I had been long enough in office, and I had felt that, for some time past, as I was tired and jaded, a change at the India Office might be desirable. There were plenty of able young men coming on, and it was only fair that they should have their chance before they were too old, and I was ready at any time, upon a hint from the Prime Minister, to resign my office. A

Prime Minister has, moreover, an undoubted right to request any of his colleagues, whose presence in his Cabinet is, in his opinion or judgment, prejudicial to the efficiency or policy of the Government, to resign his office. On the other hand, a Cabinet Minister has an unquestioned right to expect that, if he is summoned to decide upon a momentous issue, and one which may affect his whole future official and political life, he should be fully informed of the latest phase of the situation. Mr. Balfour, holding the opinions he does, was perfectly right in wishing to reconstitute his Cabinet, but I think it was a pity that more care was not taken so to conduct the procedure of resignation as to prevent all cause for subsequent misunderstanding.'

VI

The Duke's decision not to resign left him in a tormenting state of mind. He felt that the Ministers who had resigned must think that he had not stood by them. His explanations did not satisfy his own keen sense of honour and loyalty. His uneasiness was increased when he had carefully studied the letters of the 9th and 16th September exchanged between the Prime Minister and Mr. Chamberlain and now published in the newspapers, and saw, or thought that he saw, meanings in them not apparent when he had heard them read to him on the 16th. On the 17th September he wrote to Lord James of Hereford, who was a very strong Free Trade Liberal Unionist:—

'I suppose you will d—n me and say that I have accepted an impossible *modus vivendi*. I had fully intended to resign until I heard that Chamberlain's resignation was definitely decided, which was not till Tuesday evening. This removed my chief difficulty, which was freedom to Chamberlain, as a member of the Government, to carry on his Protectionist agitation.

'And the position seemed to me to be absurd that both

Chamberlain and I, who had been opposing him, should both leave Balfour. I believe that Finlay, who was, I think, the only man to foresee a possible solution of this kind, and whom I saw on Sunday, will think that I have done right, and will have no difficulty in remaining. Ritchie and Balfour of Burleigh did not really resign, but were told that they must go.

'I shall be curious to have your opinion, however condemnatory."

Lord James replied, with most effective gloom—

'Pray let me assure you that under no circumstances could I ever ejaculate the words you suggest in relation to any course you may pursue, and never in public will you find me uttering one word in condemnation of your political action. But to you I must say that your agreement to become a supporter of Balfour's Protectionist views has caused me as much sadness as surprise. In your last letter to me your condemnation and repudiation of his arguments were complete. Chamberlain's resignation does not alter the soundness of a policy.'[1]

Mr. Balfour, on the 22nd September, sent the following Memorandum to the Duke and to his other colleagues :—

'There appears to be some misapprehension among some of my colleagues as to what occurred in and out of Cabinet in the early part of last week in connection with fiscal reform.

'It has been implied, for instance, in some statements that I have seen, that I came to Monday's Cabinet knowing that Mr. Chamberlain was determined to resign, but resolved to keep the circumstance from the knowledge of my colleagues. The true facts are as follows :—

'I received Mr. Chamberlain's letter of the 9th by the last post on Thursday the 10th. I made no reply to it, hoping to have an interview with him on Sunday.

'He did not, however, leave Birmingham till Monday

[1] 19th September 1903.

morning; and I did not see him till an hour before Cabinet on that day (the 14th).

'We talked over his letter, he reiterated his view, afterwards expressed to the Cabinet, that, if preferential duties were dropped, there were reasons, personal to himself, which made it impossible for him to stay; and I said to him, what I said to the Cabinet within the last hour, that I was becoming more and more convinced that public opinion was not ripe for a tax on food, and that any attempt at the present time to impose one would endanger that portion of fiscal reform against which there was no such widespread prejudice.

'Whether, however, a duty on food-stuffs should be attempted or not seemed to be then—and seems to be still—a subsidiary point, important indeed, but in no way fundamental.

'I was not, therefore, of opinion that either Mr. Chamberlain's attitude or mine towards a food tax was relevant to the question of principle; nor could I suppose that any discussion of it would affect the opinion of those members of the Cabinet who were not prepared heartily to accept a change of fiscal policy at all.

'Over and over again, in the early part of Monday's Cabinet, I therefore called the debate back from all minor issues to this, which I conceive to be the main point; and I never doubted then, and I do not gather that there is any reason for doubting now, that, on this point, Mr. Ritchie, Lord George Hamilton, and Lord Balfour of Burleigh took, and take, a different view from myself and the majority of the Cabinet.

'The fiscal discussion has now been going on in an acute form since the middle of May. *Never once*, so far as I am aware, did any hesitating member of the Cabinet suggest to me that his objection to tariff reform would be completely met if no attempt were made to put a tax on food.'

The following correspondence took place between the Duke and Mr. Chamberlain :—

The Duke of Devonshire to Mr. Chamberlain.

19*th September* 1903.

'I am sure you must be overwhelmed with correspondence, and I will not add more than I can help to its volume. But I should like to assure you that, though I was as far from anticipating it as any one else, I am now convinced that from your point of view the course which you have taken was right, and I only wish that my own had been as clear to me as yours has seemed to you.

'After Monday's Cabinet I had quite resolved to send in my resignation with those of Ritchie and the others, and I know that you will not misunderstand me when I say that though I had, and still have, difficulty in accepting the policy which Balfour will announce at Sheffield, my main reason was that I did not see how you, holding what I understood to be frankly Protectionist views, and myself, could remain in the Cabinet together. I might, no doubt, have known that, if you had remained in the Government, you would have loyally accepted any limitations which the Prime Minister might have imposed, but I think you will agree with me that his statements are not as clear as they might have been, and that he expressed so much sympathy with your opinions that these limitations were not very accurately defined.

'I could, therefore, only look forward, so far as I was concerned, to a continuance of the unsatisfactory division of opinion in the Cabinet which has already lasted too long.

'This part of my difficulty is removed by the decision on your part which I perhaps ought to have anticipated, and, now that you have taken it, see to be the right and perhaps even inevitable one. I need not trouble you with the reasons which make me regret that our positions were reversed, but I do not imagine that it will be very long before we all find ourselves in the cold shade.'

HIGHBURY, MOOR GREEN, BIRMINGHAM,
21st September 1903.

MY DEAR DEVONSHIRE,—I am very much obliged to you for your letter and glad to receive it. I confess that I have been puzzled by your recent attitude, and even now I do not altogether understand it. You seem to have accepted Balfour's whole paper—which leads to retaliation and therefore, incidentally, to the Protection of which you are so much afraid. But you refused to look at my proposals for Preference, which are put forward solely with the object of ensuring Imperial Unity, and which, under no possible circumstances, would lead to any substantial, or indeed perceptible, protection of a Home industry. It is ridiculous to suppose that two shillings a quarter on corn would restore prosperity to agriculture, although the farmers might possibly support it as drowning men will catch at a straw.

For my own part I care only for the great question of Imperial Unity. Everything else is secondary or consequential. But for this—to quote a celebrated phrase—I would not have taken my coat off.

I should not be frank with you if I did not say that, after eighteen years of loyal co-operation, I have been bitterly hurt by the fact that you have thought well to confer as to your course of action with Ritchie and Balfour of Burleigh, who are not members of your party.

Meanwhile, I have never been called to your counsels, and have had to seek even such slight opportunity as you have given me to explain my views. If you had thought me worthy of your confidence, you would have known from the first that I was perfectly ready to put aside any personal claims and to resign office rather than be a cause of discord.

If the Cabinet and the Party had been united we might have faced the General Election with confidence that even if we were defeated—as I believe we should have been on Education and War Office Reforms—we should have had

a policy for the future which time and discussion would have made victorious.

Education and our War Office policy—on both of which I warned the Cabinet and yourself especially that you were destroying your party—gave us Greenwich and Rye and Kent—all before the fiscal question was mentioned. Where have you had such a turnover of votes since?

I, who for the sake of the party swallowed these camels, now find that you and others strain at my gnat!

What did I ask of you before I went to South Africa? That you should retain the shilling corn duty and give a drawback to Canada. I thought you had all, except Ritchie, accepted this policy. While I was slaving my life out you threw it over as of no importance, and it is to this indifference to a great policy, which you had yourselves accepted, that you owe the present situation.

I have written more of my mind than I had intended. I do not think that I should have served you as you have served me, but in spite of all I am glad that you have remained in the Government—I hope that your presence will add strength to it—and I sincerely intend to give to you and Balfour all the support, in Parliament and elsewhere, which it is in my power to afford. *Liberavi animum meum.*—Yours very truly, J. CHAMBERLAIN.

The Duke replied :—

DEVONSHIRE HOUSE, 27*th September* 1903.

MY DEAR CHAMBERLAIN,—I have been moving about and have had no time to reply to your letter of the 21st inst. until my return here to-day. I do not know that there would be much use in my attempting to explain my position in this question, but when I have been able to refer to some correspondence and other papers I may endeavour to do so. But I wish to assure you without further delay that I deeply regret that my conduct in regard to it should have caused you any pain or annoyance.

I think that you are mistaken when you say that I

have conferred with Ritchie and Balfour of Burleigh as to my course of action in preference to yourself. After your Birmingham and other speeches I wrote (I think in the Whitsuntide holidays) to the Prime Minister, Lansdowne, and Ritchie asking what view they took of them, but so far as I remember these letters they contained little beyond this inquiry, and suggested no course of action. I saw Ritchie in the morning before he made his speech in the House of Commons, but I was certainly not responsible for his declaration or the form of it. I had no consultation with Ritchie, Balfour of Burleigh, or any member of the Government before the speeches which I had to make in the House of Lords in which I endeavoured to the best of my ability to defend the course of the Prime Minister and yourself, although I could not profess to be entirely in sympathy with it. I had no consultation on the subject with the Free-Trade members of the Government until after the circulation of the Prime Minister's papers. They may have probably discussed these with me in conversation, but no consultation as to the course which any of us should take was ever held. Since the Cabinet of August 13th I have, no doubt, had some letters from them to which I have replied, but I have never asked their advice as to my own course, and the Prime Minister knows that about that time, in my anxiety to avoid disruption, I made some suggestions to him entirely on my own account, which, however, on further reflection, I did not consider practical, and withdrew. As to any failure on my part to discuss the question with you, I think that we must go back to the Cabinets immediately before and after your visit to South Africa, the proceedings at which are still extremely obscure to me. As you know, I am rather deaf, and I am afraid sometimes inattentive. I certainly altogether failed to understand that at the first of these a decision was even provisionally taken of such importance as that to which you refer, and it must have been taken after very little discussion. Nothing so far as I know was decided about the Budget before you came

back, and though I recollect that you were annoyed by Ritchie's proposals, and made some protests against them, you did not oppose them in such a manner as to lead me to suppose that you took so strong a view of their effect as it now appears was the case. In fact, whether through my own fault or not, your Birmingham speech, and still more the subsequent speeches in the House of Commons, took me completely by surprise. You appeared to have, without any personal communication whatever with me, adopted an entirely new departure in policy, and though I did not, and do not now complain of this, I confess that it did not occur to me that there would be any special advantage in discussing with you a question on which you apparently had made up your mind, and on which I thought it very unlikely that I should change mine.

In such conversations as we had, I thought that your object was rather to convert me to your opinions than, as now appears, to discuss the course which, with our conflicting views, we should each take in the best interests of the party. There has in fact been some misunderstanding between us, for which I do not think I can hold myself entirely responsible, but whatever mistakes you may think I have made in judgment, I sincerely trust that you will not attribute them to any want of respect to yourself or to any doubt as to the loyalty of your action towards the Unionist party or myself.—Yours truly,

DEVONSHIRE.

HIGHBURY, MOOR GREEN, BIRMINGHAM,
28th September 1903.

MY DEAR DEVONSHIRE,—I am very much obliged to you for your letter, and so far as any personal question is concerned, I am quite satisfied, and shall forget altogether the feeling which I undoubtedly entertained at one time that you had withdrawn all confidence in me.

During the long period of our political co-operation I have contracted so strong a feeling of personal respect

and regard that it hurt me to think that it was not reciprocated.

That is all over, and I do not wish to trouble you any more about the past, except to apprise you once more that I thought you were with me in principle when I raised this question, and had I known that you were so little prepared for it, I should certainly have delayed, and perhaps even abandoned, its advocacy.

I do not know what the future has in store, but every day convinces me more and more that before long the country will insist on some protection against what they consider unfair foreign competition. All the indications point to a period of bad trade before long, and when numbers of respectable work-people are thrown out of employment, the feeling in favour of a change will be irresistible.

This may not be strong enough to carry even a small tax on food, but I confess I do not see what answer can be made to the agricultural interest if you take special pains to exclude them from any retaliatory arrangements.

Do not trouble to give me any further reply.

I wish you and the Government well through all your difficulties, of which I still think the War Office and Education the greatest. If—in concert with the Archbishop and others—you could devise any compromise which would satisfy even a portion of the Nonconformists, you might win the next election even now. If this is impossible you must be defeated.—Believe me, yours very truly,

J. CHAMBERLAIN.

During the next fortnight Mr. Balfour filled up the vacancies in the Cabinet. He recruited mainly from the Liberal Unionist wing of the party. Lord Milner having declined to accept the Colonial Office because he wished to carry further his work in South Africa, the post was accepted by Mr. Alfred Lyttelton. Mr. Arnold Forster received the War Office, after Lord Esher had declined it. Mr.

Austen Chamberlain replaced Mr. Ritchie as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and some other consequential appointments were made. As Lord Lansdowne remained at the Foreign Office and Lord Selborne at the Admiralty, the Liberal Unionists were now more numerously than before represented in the Cabinet.

The reconstruction of the Ministry reflected Mr. Balfour's idea that the Government should adopt the general principle of "fiscal reform," without committing itself, as yet, to any definite proposals or practical steps. The Prime Minister believed that, above all things, it was to be desired that the Unionist party should not be broken in two. Sir Robert Peel in 1845, and Mr. Gladstone in 1886, by sudden and definite proposals, reversing a previous settled policy, had each shattered a mighty party, and had given years of power to their opponents. It was evident that by far the largest part of the Unionists were, more or less, in favour of fiscal reform, and Mr. Balfour was himself in favour of a moderate change in that direction, but the more rapid the pace of the movement, the greater was the danger of schism upon a considerable scale. The strongest tariff reformer and his most uncompromising adversaries having left the Government, Mr. Balfour was now able, although with great difficulty, to hold his course on the *via media* until November 1905, when he resigned in despair, and the Liberals came into power, and those General Elections followed which both reduced the Unionists to a small minority in the House of Commons, and almost eliminated from their benches the Free Traders pure and simple.

VII

The immediate cause of the schism of September had been the question what the Prime Minister should say to

the meeting of Conservative Associations to be held at Sheffield on the 1st October. The Duke did not yet know what would be said. In his uncertainty of mind he arrived at the decision that his continuance in office should depend upon Mr. Balfour's statement upon this occasion. He had decided not to resign on what he called the 'personal grounds,' that is, on account of his relation to the ex-Ministers, but there is no doubt that these personal grounds affected his mind strongly, and that he was vastly relieved that the strength of some expressions used by the Prime Minister in his Sheffield speech, and indicated in the next following letter, enabled or compelled him to resign on the 'public' grounds. The Sheffield speech gave rise to the following correspondence:—

The Duke of Devonshire to Mr. Balfour.

2nd October 1903.

My dear Balfour,—I have, since we last met, felt an increasing doubt whether I had been well advised in consenting to separate myself from those of our colleagues whose resignations were tendered and accepted last month. But until some new developments of the situation should have taken place, I have not thought it necessary to trouble you with these doubts. The speech, however, which you delivered last night makes it necessary for me finally and definitely to decide whether I am so far in agreement with yourself on the question of Fiscal Policy as to make it possible for me, with satisfaction to myself or advantage to the country, to remain a member of your Government. I must, especially as the representative of the Government in one of the Houses of Parliament, in forming this decision, have regard not only to the definite statements of policy contained in your speech, but also to its general tone and tendency. As to the former it was possible to arrive at a clear understanding by previous discussion, but

as to the latter, no judgment could be formed until the declaration had been actually made.

I was prepared by our discussions for your statement that you desired to obtain the sanction of the constituencies for a reversal of the doctrine that taxation should never be imposed except for purposes of revenue, and this is no doubt the principal and most definite statement in your speech. But you may remember that I told you that I thought it would be very difficult to make this statement the foundation of a great announcement of policy, inasmuch as I was not aware of any law or constitutional principle in which this doctrine was embodied. I admit that you have succeeded in making this declaration the basis of a great political announcement, but in my opinion that announcement has been extended very far beyond the necessities of the case. It was unnecessary, in my opinion, for the purpose of the statement to which I had assented, to assert that the controversy of 1846, which you describe as the great lawsuit between Free Trade and Protection, is of no interest whatever to us except from an historical point of view. Nor can I think that it was necessary to assert that you desired to 'reverse the fiscal tradition, to alter fundamentally the fiscal tradition, which has prevailed during the last two generations.'

I had hoped to have found in your speech a definite statement of adherence to the principles of Free Trade as the ordinary basis of our fiscal and commercial system, and an equally definite repudiation of the principle of Protection in the interest of our national industries, but, in their absence, I cannot help thinking that such declarations as those which I have quoted cannot fail to have the effect of materially encouraging the advocates of direct Protection in the controversy which has been raised throughout the country, and of discouraging those who, like me and, I had hoped, yourself, believe that our present system of free imports, and especially of food imports is, on the whole, the most advantageous to the country, although we do not contend that the principle on which

it rests forms any such authority or sanctity as to forbid any departure from it, for sufficient cause.

I have only ventured to make these criticisms as illustrations of the different points of view from which we regard the whole question, and I am very far from wishing to enter into any personal controversy with you. You have, in your second speech, said that this subject could no longer be left an open question among members of the Government, and I think I have said enough to prove to you that there is no such agreement between us on the general question, as to make it possible for me to be a satisfactory exponent of your views, or those of the Government, in the debates which must inevitably take place in the next Session of Parliament.

I cannot adequately express the deep regret which I feel in separating myself from a Government with which I believe myself to be in sympathy on all other matters of public policy, or the anxiety with which I anticipate the wide division which I fear must result from the unexpected scope and strength of your declarations of yesterday, in the ranks of the Unionist party, but holding the opinions which I have endeavoured to express, no other course is open to me but to ask you to place my resignation in the hands of his Majesty.—I remain, yours sincerely,

DEVONSHIRE.

Mr. Balfour to the Duke of Devonshire.

WHITTINGHAME, PRESTONKIRK,
3rd October 1903.

MY DEAR DUKE,—I received this afternoon two telegrams, forwarded in quick succession by my private secretary in London, the first from you, asking how soon your resignation might be announced, the second giving a full summary of the reasons which moved you to resign. I am not sure which of these unexpected communications surprised me most. On the whole, perhaps the second.

The first, however, was sufficiently strange. Remember

the circumstances. It was on Wednesday, the 16th September, that you informed me of your resolve to remain in the Government. This decision was preceded by much confidential correspondence, much intimate conversation. There was no phase of policy which I was not prepared to discuss, which I did not in fact discuss, with perfect frankness; men and measures were alike surveyed from every point of view which had a bearing on the present course or future fortunes of the party. A decision arrived at after these preliminaries I had a right to consider final; and final I certainly considered it. Accordingly I consulted you, as far as circumstances of time and place permitted, on the best mode of filling up the vacancies in the Government of which you were the most distinguished member; you were good enough to express some weighty judgments on the delicate matters submitted to you; you even initiated proposals of your own, which I gladly accepted. Our last communication on these subjects was in a letter I dictated during my journey to Sheffield on Thursday afternoon. In less than forty-eight hours I received in Edinburgh the telegrams which first announced both your intention to resign, and your desire to see the process of resignation consummated without delay or discussion.

The principal occasion of this singular transformation was (you tell me) my Sheffield speech. This is strange indeed. In intention (at least) there was no doctrine contained in that speech which was not equally contained in my *Notes on Insular Free Trade*, and my published letter to Chamberlain.

The first of these documents you had in your possession (before the generality of the Cabinet) at the end of July. The second you saw in manuscript before it appeared in the newspapers. With both, therefore, you were intimately acquainted during the whole fortnight in which you lent your countenance to the Government after the recent resignations. I must suppose therefore that it is some unintentional discrepancy between the written and the spoken word that now drives you to desert the Administra-

tion you have so long adorned. Such unintentional discrepancies are no doubt hard to avoid. Not every one, certainly not I, can always be sure of finding, on the spur of the moment, before an eager audience of five thousand people, the precise phrase which shall so dexterously express the exact opinion of the speaker on a difficult and abstract subject, as to foil the opponents who would wrest it either to the right hand or the left. But till one o'clock this afternoon I had, I confess, counted you not as an opponent, but as a colleague—a colleague in spirit as well as in name. To such an one it would have seemed natural (so, at least, I should have thought) to take, in cases of apparent discrepancy, the written rather than the spoken word as expressing the true meaning of the author: or (if this be asking too much) at least to make inquiries before arriving at a final and a hostile conclusion.

But, after all, what, and where, is this discrepancy which has forced you in so unexpected a fashion to reverse a considered policy? I do not believe it exists: and if any other man in the world but yourself had expended so much inquisitorial subtlety in detecting imaginary heresies, I should have surmised that he was more anxious to pick a quarrel than particular as to the sufficiency of its occasion.

To you fortunately no such suspicion can attach. Yet am I unreasonable in thinking that your resignation gives *me* some just occasion of complaint, and perhaps some occasion of special regret to yourself?

Am I, for example, not right in complaining of your procedure in reference to the Sheffield speech? You fear that it will aggravate party division. If there is anything certain, it is that the declaration of policy then made produced, and is destined still to produce, a greater harmony of opinion than has prevailed in the party since the Fiscal Question came to the front six months ago. Had you resigned on the 15th, or had you not resigned at all, this healing effect would have suffered no interruption. To resign now, and to resign on the speech, is to take the

course most calculated to make yet harder the hard task of the peacemaker.

Again, do you not feel some special regret at having at this particular juncture to sever your connection with a Unionist Administration? Doubtless there is no imaginable occasion on which you could have left one without inflicting on it serious loss. At the moment of its most buoyant prosperity, your absence from its councils would have been sensibly felt. But you have, in fact, left it when (in the opinion at least of our opponents) its fortunes are at their lowest, and its perplexities at their greatest.

It may be, however, that you are spared this aggravation of the inevitable pains of separation by holding, as I hold, that our opponents are in this mistaken. I firmly believe they are. I see no difficulty in successfully carrying out the policy which—for a fortnight—you were ready to accept, by the help of the Administration which—for a fortnight—you aided me to construct. On this point I feel no disquiet. I cannot pretend to feel with a like equanimity the loss of a colleague whose services to the Unionist party no changes and chances of political fortune can tempt any Unionist to forget.—Yours sincerely,

ARTHUR JAMES BALFOUR.

These two letters were sent to the newspapers. The following letter replies to an explanation from the Duke which it is not necessary to give.

10 DOWNING STREET, WHITEHALL, S.W.,
9th October 1903.

MY DEAR DUKE,—Pray do not think that any apology or explanation is needed in respect of the form in which the announcement of your resignation reached me. The announcement itself could not but give me pain—it would be but a poor compliment to you to pretend that it did not—but its mode, as distinguished from its substance, neither is, nor was, of the smallest importance.

I hope you will not mind my adding that if there was anything in the letter which I sent in reply which was too plainly expressed, I regret it.

In any case nothing has or can interfere with my strong feeling of personal regard.—Pray believe me, yours very sincerely,

ARTHUR JAMES BALFOUR.

The Duke's resignation was a joy to the foe, and a blow to the Government. The Cabinet now seemed to have lost all fire and zeal with Mr. Chamberlain and, with the Duke and Lord Balfour of Burleigh, all solid weight remaining since the retirement of Lord Salisbury and Sir Michael Hicks Beach, and to be existing grace only to the skilled rapier play of its chief. If Mr. Balfour's published reply to the Duke was too hastily expressed, this was due to the disappointment and irritation of the moment. He may possibly have thought that had the Duke persisted in his first resignation he himself would have resigned, or obtained a dissolution, and not have continued upon the weary and difficult course of office to which, by the reformation of the shattered Administration, he was now committed for, at any rate, a decent space of time. In a speech made in the House of Commons on 7th March 1904, Mr. Balfour said that he had nothing of which to complain in the Duke's conduct in this affair.

'Even the manner of his resignation and the time of it I have long forgotten. The character of the Duke of Devonshire is one of the assets of public life in this country. It is beyond attack and beyond criticism ; and, if we have unfortunately differed on this question, if the amount and the extent of our differences came to me with a suddenness of surprise, betraying me into unduly heated language, I should never forget the service he has rendered to English public life, or how he came forward in a great crisis of our

national history to play a part which will have a permanent effect on the fortunes of this country.'

On October 6th the Duke wrote to Lord James of Hereford :—

'I have made a mess of this business and have come out with severe damage, but I suppose you are glad that I have got out at any price.

'The fact is that the strain of the continuous discussions and interviews of Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday completely tired and wore me out, and when I had my final interview with Balfour on the Wednesday afternoon my mind was more occupied with the great change in the situation caused by Chamberlain's resignation and with personal relations towards Ritchie, Balfour of Burleigh, and George Hamilton than with anything else. When, therefore, Balfour read me his correspondence with Chamberlain or part of it, I altogether failed to grasp its full effect.

'When I had read and considered it more carefully I became extremely uneasy, but I had made up my mind to stick to the ship, and should have done so, but for the, to me, quite unexpected declarations in the Sheffield speech.

'It is, however, a great relief to me that the final declarations in the speech were so clear and decided (in my opinion) on the side of Protection that I had no alternative.

'I suppose that now I shall be readmitted into the fold of Free Traders.'

Thus ended the Duke of Devonshire's 'official' career. He was now seventy years old. He had spent forty-six years in Parliament, in one House or the other. During about twenty-three of these years he had held public office.

The Duke, at a later date, with a view to his own explanation in the House of Lords, asked Mr. Balfour

whether he had any objection to his referring 'to the conversations which took place between yourself and me on the Monday and Tuesday evenings after the Cabinets, and on the following day, and especially to the requests which you made to me that I should say nothing about Chamberlain's intended resignation.' Mr. Balfour replied on this point (30th January 1904):—

'As regards my request that you should say nothing about Chamberlain's intention to resign if Preference were omitted from the Government programme, you must bear in mind that rightly or wrongly (as it turns out, I am afraid, wrongly) I always in my own mind drew a sharp distinction between your position on the one side and Ritchie and Hamilton's position on the other. I was convinced that they were "root and branch" opponents of fiscal reform, and that they were resolved to leave the Government unless the fiscal reformers surrendered at discretion. I thought, on the other hand, that your attitude was one of not unfavourable suspense.

'In my view, therefore, the first thing to be decided was whether we were, or were not, a Cabinet of fiscal reformers; and to this question, whenever the discussion strayed from it, I always endeavoured to bring it back. Whether a fiscal reform Cabinet should make Preference part of its programme appeared to me a question which, however important, was quite secondary to the primary issue, and could only be profitably discussed in a Cabinet already at one on the broad principle of reform. If they had said, "We are prepared to go in heartily for fiscal reform, but we cannot accept any tax on food," the situation would, of course, have been different. But they neither said this, nor thought it, and it was not for their benefit, therefore, that, in the Cabinet of the 14th, I gave it as my opinion that a tax on food in the then state of public sentiment was impracticable; a statement immediately followed by one from Chamberlain to the effect that if Preference was *not* included in the programme, he

proposed to leave the Government and urge his view in an independent position.

'In our long conversation after the Cabinet, I was still influenced by the idea (which, indeed, I retained up to your final resignation) that your position was essentially different to that of Ritchie and George Hamilton. I regarded, and rightly regarded, *them* as having practically severed their connection with the Fiscal Reform Cabinet. I regarded *you* as still potentially a member of it, and I was quite prepared to discuss with you what I should certainly have never discussed with them, namely, the extent to which fiscal reform as a practical policy was ripe for inclusion in an official programme, and the effect which any limitation of the plan originally contained in the "blue paper" would have upon the reforming portion of the Cabinet, and especially upon Chamberlain. Hence my request for discretion.'

Mr. Balfour had lost in a fortnight five of his previous Cabinet colleagues, and Mr. Arthur Elliot, Financial Secretary to the Treasury, a strong Free Trader, had also resigned. His object apparently had been to impress upon his Government the general character of a Government of Fiscal Reform, but not, by taking immediate steps in practice, to break up the Unionist party. But on the one side Mr. Chamberlain was committed to immediate action; on the other, certain members of the Government were committed to resistance on the very principle of Fiscal Reform. In order to obtain the equipoise desired by the Prime Minister it was necessary that not one only of these extreme opposites should be withdrawn from the Government. If Mr. Chamberlain alone withdrew the Government would wear a dominantly anti-reform complexion. Mr. Balfour strongly desired to keep the Duke, whose attitude was, he honestly believed, that of the equipoise.

The Duke, on his side, had acted, as ever, with honour,

and in good faith. He made a mistake, on September 16th, in not asking for a few hours for consideration, and for leave to read (as well as hear read) the Balfour-Chamberlain letters. Had he done so, he would probably have maintained his first resignation, and would not have had to endure two of the most painful weeks in a much-troubled political existence. This schism was in some ways more trying for him than was that of 1886. *Then* he was separating himself, not without a sense of emancipation, from a Prime Minister from whom he had long been alienated, upon an issue as to which he felt the most profound conviction. *Now*, he was breaking with a Prime Minister, with whom he had no other difference, upon an issue which he felt to be one of great importance, but not one as to which he had arrived at absolutely firm and settled conclusions of his own. He could not, however, have acted otherwise. Public declarations, such as those contained in the Prime Minister's published letter to Mr. Chamberlain and in his Sheffield speech, must be the ruling consideration in matters of this kind. After these declarations Mr. Balfour could not rightly be regarded otherwise than as a prudent and cautious ally of the new Reformers, as in fact he was, and those who acted with him would be in the same position. The Duke, on the contrary, was not prepared to depart from the fiscal principles in which he had been educated, which he had publicly defended in 1885, and had, like most men of his time, taken for granted. He desired to have a real and full inquiry made into the question, but did not expect the result to shake Free Trade. Without such inquiry he certainly would not move at all.

CHAPTER XXVIII

LATEST YEARS

The Duke of Devonshire was now seventy years of age, and tired of most things. Long it was since young Lord Cavendish had entered Parliament in the cheerful and buoyant days of the consulship of Palmerston. His life deserved a more leisurely old age. But he became the target of advice from all sides. He received, and had to answer, in a handwriting which had, since 1886, lost its old plain firmness, and was becoming more and more tremulous and indistinct, endless letters from men of variously shaded views. The free-trade Unionists were in a state of utter disunion. The ambiguity in the policy of the Prime Minister served to keep them disunited. Some were complete free-traders, others made an exception in favour of 'retaliation.' Some were for, and some against, the formation of a distinct party co-operating, more or less, with the Liberals. Some Liberal Unionists had yearnings for reunion, as allies, with those whose name they partly bore, and with some of whose opinions they agreed, but Conservatives would not consent to this who had fought for years under the glorious banners of Beaconsfield and Salisbury against Radicals, Nationalists, and Gladstonians. Lord George Hamilton thought that free-trade Unionists might be advised not to support, and sometimes even to vote against, the followers of Mr. Chamberlain. 'But,' he wrote, 'I am not prepared to go further and politically associate myself with the Radicals

Photo: A. H. Poole & Co., Waterford

THE DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE FISHING, NEAR LISMORE CASTLE

even for temporary purposes. . . . I have fought too long and consistently against Radical doctrine to be able now to alter my attitude towards my old opponents.' Another leading Tory, the chief of an old west country family, wrote that he believed in Free Trade, but that if, for its sweet sake, he gave general support to Radicals it would be enough to 'make his father turn in his grave.' 'As to the future,' a Tory ex-Minister wrote to the Duke—

'I fear that it is very possible that you may be right, and that the General Election may see the Unionist party committed to Preference and Protection. . . . I am utterly disgusted with the prospect, and shall simply stand aside for a while in such a case. I should disagree with my party on the great issue of Protection. I remain in agreement with them on other questions, and could not bring myself to join the Opposition, a position which, to me who have stuck to my party for forty years, would be simply intolerable.'

Of the younger men, Lord Hugh Cecil, a frequent correspondent at this time, was in the same position. His family traditions, his intense antagonism to the highest Nonconformist ideals, would not permit him even to dream of crossing the floor of the House of Commons. Nor did he think possible even co-operation of free-trade Unionists with the Radical party. He wrote on the 29th June to the Duke:—

'A large number of Unionist free-traders could not in honesty and patriotism permanently co-operate with the Liberal party as now constituted. If, indeed, the dominant force in that party were Lord Rosebery and the Liberal Imperialists, the case might be different. But . . . the main stream of Liberalism does not run in that direction. That stream is Gladstonian in foreign, colonial, and Irish questions, it is Nonconformist in ecclesiastical and educa-

tional questions, it is Radical in questions affecting property, it is Trade Unionist in questions affecting labour and capital. For those of the Free Food League who are Imperialists and Unionists and Churchmen and Conservatives, a permanent co-operation with such a party could not be otherwise than immoral.'

He thought it possible, however, to make a temporary and strictly *ad hoc* electoral and parliamentary arrangement on the part of the free-trade Unionists limited to opposition to Mr. Chamberlain's movement, and solely for that purpose. The Duke doubted the feasibility of this course. He wrote to Lord Hugh on December 4, 1903:—

'Is it at all likely that the Opposition would be willing to give any such assurances as those you wish to obtain? It seems to me that they are much more likely to use the question as the means of breaking up the Unionist party, and will hope to secure for themselves a large number of the seats held by Unionist free-traders.'

In fact, the Conservative-Liberal Unionist Coalition of 1886 and onwards had only succeeded because the mass of moderate Liberals agreed more with the Conservatives than with the Gladstonians upon other questions as well as that of the Legislative Union. It is very difficult for two groups of men to combine for any length of time upon one question, and one only, and to differ on all the rest. Lord Randolph's son was naturally more hostile than the son of Lord Salisbury to the present Tory leader, and was more detached from the Tory creed. Mr. Winston Churchill wrote to the Duke on the 6th October 1903:—

"Let me offer you my most sincere congratulations and thanks for the course you have taken. There can only be two sides in these great struggles, and I believe that your decision will secure the victory of Free Trade. As long as you remained with Mr. Balfour the issue was

obscured, and yet it was certain that we were drifting, and that it was his intention that we should drift into a regular Protectionist system. On even larger grounds the reconstitution of the Liberal party in its old power and integrity was greatly to be desired. I implore you not to leave that work uncompleted; and I venture with great respect to offer such faithful service as is in my power.'

Mr. Churchill had some hopes that the free-trade Unionist section might be organised as a group, and might enter into an arrangement with the Liberal party, corresponding to the old alliance for certain purposes between the Liberal Unionists and the Conservatives. 'It is idle,' he wrote on 6th January 1904, 'for free-traders to expect to be returned by Protectionist organisations, and if we negotiate singly we shall be swallowed whole by the Liberal party.' But only a few of the free-trade Unionists in Parliament were willing to co-operate in any general way with the Liberals. Nor were the Liberals anxious to assist the free-trade Unionists. Their own success at by-elections was continuous from 1902 to 1905; their spirits had risen from the depths of 1900, and they were by no means inclined to waive their own claims in order to support Unionists, however orthodox in fiscal creed. Attempts at co-operative arrangements soon vanished in a mist of words, and Mr. Churchill crossed the floor of the House and entered upon a new and brilliant career. After this step he wrote to the Duke (25th August 1904):—

'. . . In 1886 the Liberal Unionists, or a good many of them, wanted to fight *with* the Conservatives. Nearly all your people—Free Trade apart—would like to see the Liberals get a good beating. *There* is the difficulty of an arrangement. I only wish I had a little more influence, so as to be able to help. If the whole position to-day is better, we owe it mainly to you, and though I have moved, as I

always intended, into the Liberal ranks, I hope I am not ungrateful for all you have done.'

Mr. Churchill was, perhaps, Radical by nature and Tory by accident. At any rate he was wise in his generation. Other frequent correspondents of the Duke, men like Mr. Arthur Elliot and Lord Hugh Cecil, who tried to combine Unionism with Free Trade and yet to retain seats in Parliament, found their political careers ruined or damaged. From the beginning of this schism the free-trade Unionists were divided in opinion and policy. Some held that Mr. Balfour must be regarded and treated as a Protectionist who was luring others into the net by a specious appearance of moderation and of adhesion to the general principles of Free Trade. Other men, few in number certainly, thought that Mr. Balfour should be regarded and treated as a real Free Trader, obliged to bend a little to the Protectionist storm. Both groups pressed their views in numerous letters upon the Duke, whose own feelings in the autumn of 1903 are best shown in the following letter to his old ally, Lord Goschen, on October 10th :—

'I find myself, as usual, in a very difficult position. In the first place, I am very unwilling to put myself at the head of a new political movement at all. I am getting old, and I am rather tired of, and disgusted with, politics. The question itself is difficult and complicated, and I have never given any special study to it. I never read a speech or an article upon it on either side to which I see clearly the answer, and I shrink from going through all the labour of getting up what is to me almost a new subject. In the next place, I am not sure whether you and the other Free Fooders do not wish to take up a more hostile attitude towards the Government than I, who have only left it after much doubt and hesitation, wish to do, or

could decently do. I told Beach yesterday that nothing would induce me to take up such an attitude, and that all I could do would be to use any influence I might have in preventing them from being led or forced by their followers to go beyond the limits of their definite declarations. . . .'

In this letter, also, the Duke referred to the difficulty concerning the Liberal Unionist Association. If, he said, he were to take the lead in opposing Mr. Chamberlain he would inevitably break up the Association. He added—

'I do not know that its continued existence is of much value to anybody under existing conditions, but I shall no doubt be open to a good deal of criticism for having joined Chamberlain in destroying one of the defences against Home Rule, which it has been the chief political work of my life to create.'

Lord Goschen, in reply, urged, as he had already urged, that the Duke should give a strong lead, and said, 'The fate of the free-trade Unionists, the degree to which they may hope to have any influence on the public mind, depends on your decision.'

This wearisome business of the Liberal Unionist Association gave birth to a copious correspondence until the matter was settled by Mr. Chamberlain's conquest and annexation of all that was left of it. The organisation had been constructed in 1886, and the Duke had, since then, been nominally in chief command of it, as 'president.' It consisted of the Liberal Unionist Association and the Liberal Unionist Council. It was supported partly by subscriptions, mainly provided by a few of the wealthier members before each General Election; partly from an invested fund which had been raised by the Duke, who was thereof trustee and sole disposer. The 'Association' was a nominal body. It never met, and its existence was

represented only by a little office controlled by the Liberal Unionist Whips, and by a small nominated committee. The Liberal Unionist Council was a consultative body of leading men of the party, and did meet from time to time, but the life of the system lay in the local Liberal Unionist Associations, and in the Whips and their committee. After the check given to the first pro-Tariff Reform outburst on the part of the London Office, a rather absurd compromise had been arranged on the lines of the general 'inquiry'—namely, that the Association should publish leaflets and literature on both sides of the fiscal question. In the autumn of 1903 Mr. Chamberlain began his missionary tour of the great cities, and this *modus vivendi* ceased to be possible. Lord Barnard, a leading nobleman of County Durham, presided in October over the North of England Liberal Unionist Conference, held at Newcastle in connection with Mr. Chamberlain's visit. The Conference resolved: 'That the time has now come when the fiscal policy of the country should be reconsidered with a view to promoting a closer union of the Empire, and of securing a modification in the hostile tariffs of other countries.' This resolution was followed by the withdrawal of Arthur Elliot and some other north country free-trade Unionists from the Conference. The Duke of Devonshire, on the 23rd of October, wrote to Mr. Chamberlain a letter in which, referring to this event, he said that 'It is almost impossible with any advantage to maintain, under present circumstances, the existence of the Liberal Unionist Association.' He pointed out that it was not possible to withdraw grants in aid from local Associations which took a line on the fiscal question, that without such grants from the central invested fund the local expenditure would exceed revenue, and that he himself was personally responsible for the application of this fund.

Mr. Chamberlain's long reply was couched in a fighting tone. He said: 'I should not myself be willing to break up the Association. . . . It is my conviction that a vast majority of the rank and file of the Liberal Unionists are with me, and, therefore, against you, on the question I have raised.' He suggested that this opinion should be tested by the holding of a meeting in the spring of delegates from the Liberal Unionist local Associations. Later in the autumn the Duke allowed a letter to be published, in which he advised Liberal Unionist electors at by-elections to refuse to support any candidate, although a Unionist, who held the Protectionist view. Mr. Chamberlain made a strong fighting point of this action, and insisted that it could only be regularised by a vote approving it, passed either by the Council, or by a meeting of delegates. He said, in a subsequent letter, that, if the Duke took no action, he should himself summon a meeting of delegates. The Duke, in the course of his reply, wrote:—

'You state truly that the main object for which the Association was formed was to prevent the return of a Home Rule Government, but I cannot agree with you that in that respect matters are unchanged.

'Your agitation has made it certain that the issue before the country at the next election will not be Home Rule, but Protection against Free Trade, and many of us are not prepared to surrender the principle of Free Trade because at some future time the Home Rule policy, to which we are as strongly opposed as ever, may be revived. The differences between us are certainly not less vital or urgent, as questions of practical policy, than those which separated us from Mr. Gladstone in 1886.

'The natural consequence of this situation would appear to me to be that the Liberal Unionist Association, which has done its work in averting Home Rule, and has helped

to maintain a Unionist Government in power for the greater part of seventeen years, should recognise that, under present conditions, its existence is no longer necessary, and should be dissolved with as little recrimination and bitterness as may be possible. It can no longer be, as it has been in the past, and as its name implies, an Association which includes all Liberals attached to the Union, and a majority, on whichever side of the fiscal question it may be, no more than a minority, would have a right to retain that name.

'While, therefore, I shall be willing to enter upon a fair and friendly discussion of the arrangements necessary for the dissolution of the Association, I cannot be a party to a proceeding which can have no other effect than that of dividing it into sections, neither of which will have a right to assume to represent Liberal Unionist opinion; and if this course be insisted on by any section of the party, I shall have no other alternative than to resign the office of President, and leave to others the responsibility attaching to such a course.'

Mr. Winston Churchill wrote, with regard to this correspondence, which was published:—

'No doubt Chamberlain had an advantage in your correspondence in being able to appeal to a majority; but, notwithstanding this, your last letter equalised matters. I am glad the correspondence has taken place, and hundreds of Liberal Unionists all over the country will silently revert to Liberalism. I hope Arthur Balfour's doubts will not put you out of your stride at Liverpool. I feel sure that, if you drive straight ahead, you will find other people conforming to you, whereas attempts at accommodating all the conflicting views and interests will only end in futility.'

A meeting of the Liberal Unionist Council was held on 18th May 1904. The proceedings were of a dignified and rather touching character. The Duke, as President, took

the chair. He began by reciting at length the history of the Liberal Unionist organisation, and the circumstances which had led to the present situation. He then referred to the proposals placed before the Conference by Mr. Chamberlain and his friends. These were—(1) that 'the existence and activity of the Central Liberal Unionist Association should be maintained'; (2) that assistance should be given to the local candidates and associations who were prepared to support the Unionist Government 'without regard to their opinions upon the question of fiscal reform'; (3) that the organisation should be reorganised. The reorganisation was to be carried out by dissolving both the Council and the Association, and forming a single body compounded out of the two. When Mr. Chamberlain spoke he said that the original intention was that the Association should have an active life, like the National Liberal Federation, on a democratic basis, that it had remained dormant, the management of affairs falling into the hands of a few co-opted men, and that the popular basis ought to be revived.

The Duke said that he could not take objection to the proposed dissolution and reconstruction, but, he added—

> 'At the same time, I do see difficulties, great difficulties, and I regret to say, in my opinion, insuperable difficulties, in the conduct of the affairs of a political Association which is united upon only one cardinal question of policy, and is fundamentally divided upon what seems to me an equally important political question. I cannot therefore undertake any responsible position in an Association which it is proposed to found upon this basis.'

Nor could he remain a member, or advise his friends to remain members, of the reconstructed Association, if it were held that this debarred them from expressing their

opinions or giving advice as to the choice or support of candidates for Parliament :—

'We, who hold the opinions which I hold upon the fiscal question, must be free to judge for ourselves the cases in which that advice should be given or should be withheld. And, speaking for myself alone, I must make it distinctly clear that I cannot permit my freedom to give such advice as I may consider necessary under such circumstances to be impaired by association with any political organisation, even although the professed and main objects of that Association are objects with which I am in entire sympathy.'

After a speech by Mr. Chamberlain his resolutions were carried by a large majority. The Duke closed the proceedings by a few words—his farewell to the Liberal Unionist party. He thanked them for their constant support, said that if ever the Home Rule question again became a burning one, his services, 'such as they are,' would be entirely at their disposal, and, in conclusion, said :—

'I trust that that occasion will not arise ; but, however that may be, I can only say that, if this Association is to be terminated, or if it should assume a different form, we are able to look back upon its previous history and work with feelings of no regret or compunction. We have been successful in what we undertook to do. We have defeated every proposal that has hitherto been made for Home Rule ; we have been able to maintain a Unionist Government in power for a long series of years ; and we have nothing, in looking back upon our past history, to regret or to be ashamed of.'

It was a funeral oration. The Duke no doubt left the room with a feeling of some sadness mingled with abundant relief. For years his position as Chief of the Liberal Unionist Association had involved him in detail work of

the most tedious and unsatisfactory kind. One burden, at least, was taken from his wearied shoulders. This meeting was the end of an episode in political history enduring for eighteen years. It sealed the dissolution of that remarkable alliance between two men of permanently antagonistic temperament, Hartington and Chamberlain, which Gladstone's action, or the ways of Fate, had so strangely brought to pass. The Duke might have quoted to himself that May morning the strong and noble words which Shakespeare made Octavius Cæsar use in consolation of his unhappy sister :—

> "Cheer your heart;
> Be you not troubled with the time, which drives
> O'er your content these strong necessities;
> But let determined things to destiny
> Hold unbewailed their way."

II

After his secession from the Ministerial party the Duke made but few speeches either in the House of Lords or in the country. Oratory, since he was not a rhetorician and was anxious to state things exactly as they were, had always been a great labour for him. Now also his physical strength was rapidly declining, and every effort was a severe one. He was compelled by the desires of his followers, rather than by his own will and judgment, to accept the presidency of a 'Unionist Free Food League,' a wretched failure from first to last, which perished in a year or two for want of funds and support. He delivered an address to a meeting convened by this League in London on 4th November 1903, and took the opportunity to reply to the Prime Minister's published letter to him after the rupture of October. One passage is truly Hartingtonian. He referred to Mr. Balfour's

statement at Sheffield that he desired to reverse the fundamental fiscal tradition of the last two generations :—

'What is the tradition of the last two generations? It is the tradition of Free Trade. He has imputed to me a controversial subtlety in detecting imaginary heresies, which he would rather have expected from an opponent than a friend. This is the first time that argumentative subtlety, whether controversial or otherwise, has ever been imputed to me; but I fail, even now, to know what is the imputation of heresy which I made against him, and which he resents. If Protection is a heresy, then I say that a reversal of the tradition to which he refers is Protection, and the heresy, if Protection is a heresy, stands confessed. I can assure the Prime Minister that, if I thought it necessary to tender my resignation upon these statements, it was because I felt that I was so utterly destitute of the argumentative subtlety to which he referred, that it would have been absolutely impossible for me, as representing the Government in the House of Lords, to have stood up, and, in the face of those declarations, contended against my opponents that the Government to which I belonged, and the only Government to which as a free-trader I could belong, still remained a free-trade Government.'

The Duke said also that, had he been present at Sheffield, he should have been tempted when Mr. Balfour said that, in his judgment, opinion was not ripe for the taxation of food, to interject, 'And I hope to Heaven that it never will be! Would the Prime Minister have said "Amen" to that declaration? And would the audience whom he was addressing have considered it a proper interruption, or would they have thought that it was somewhat wanting in tact?' He ended his speech by saying :—

'Mr. Chamberlain says that I am content that my name should go down to posterity as the "drag on the wheel."

If he will allow me a slight modification of the phrase I am content to accept it. A brake is an important and sometimes necessary part of the mechanism of a locomotive. More than ever it is necessary now, when the engine-driver has got down and allowed another to take his place, and when that other is running the locomotive at full speed down the line and against all the signals. More important than how my name will go down to posterity is the question what the leaders of the Unionist party are going to do with this policy. To me it seems that they are rapidly allowing the guidance of the party to fall from their hands. I trust it will not be long before they tell us whether they intend to join their late colleague in his retrograde career, or how long they intend to sit still as silent spectators or listeners while their colleague assumes all the duties, privileges, and responsibilities of leadership.'

The Duke gave his personal explanation in the House of Lords on the 19th February 1904, and dealt at some length with the fiscal question at large.[1] His next speech on this matter was elicited by the subsequent course of events.

Mr. Balfour's Government was in continual difficulties during the sessions of 1904 and 1905. The Unionist party, once so strong and united, was now divided into three sections, commonly known as 'Balfourians, Chamberlainites, and Free Fooders.' The last-mentioned group were, in varying shades, forty or fifty strong in the House of Commons. If they voted against the Government it would have been overthrown; if they abstained, it would have had a precarious majority. The Liberal Opposition—insolent, exulting, and confident, and victorious in every by-election—moved motion after motion, artfully designed to separate the free-trader section from the rest of the majority, and these tactics had to be met by various unsatisfactory devices.

[1] The personal explanation is printed as an Appendix to this volume.

Mr. Chamberlain was no abstract politician, and never contented himself with preaching general principles to the country. He put forward a perfectly definite tariff scheme. It was a policy, not original or eccentric, but of the kind which had been adopted by all important foreign States and British Dominions by the end of the nineteenth century. There was to be a normal duty of 10 per cent., *e.g.*, upon most manufactured produce, a lower preferential duty to goods produced within the Empire, a higher or penal duty on goods of nations who would not give reasonable terms to us, a low duty on food products, with a preference to imperial produce. He made in his speeches such cutting observations as, 'We cannot afford to be obscure.' He always represented speedy action as essential to the welfare of this country and to the unity of the Empire. He spoke with contempt of the moderate and prudent. 'Pioneers we are, but they are politicians.' He was lucid and decided, and went as straight to his mark as Octavius or Bolingbroke in Shakespeare's plays. Most of the strongest and ablest writers on the Unionist side followed in the same line.

Mr. Balfour, in a speech suddenly and unexpectedly made to the Scottish Conservative Club at Edinburgh on October 3, 1904, declared a programme of procedure which placed several barriers and long delays between that moment and the practical realisation of a preferential policy. First, there was to be a General Election. If the Unionists won, there was to be an invitation to the Colonies to a special Conference, convened to discuss the matter. If an agreement were arrived at in this Conference, it was to be submitted to the nation at the next General Election. If the Unionists then again came into power, the arrangement was to be carried into effect. On the other hand, Mr. Balfour, in an Albert Hall

speech on 2nd June 1905, placed Tariff Reform and Imperial Preference in the first line of Unionist policy. Mr. Chamberlain, in a subsequent speech, said that these words justified the hope that when the trial of strength came the Unionist party would find its leaders shoulder to shoulder and at the head of a movement 'which offers to this country its only constructive and fighting policy.'

Matters thus standing, the Duke moved in the House of Lords on the 22nd of July 1905 that 'this House disapproves of any proposal to establish a general or penal tariff, and (2) that this House disapproves of any system of Colonial Preference based on the taxation of food.' We could not, he said, go into a Conference with an 'open mind.' 'The time for us to make up our minds on the principle is before, and not after, the Conference.' He then contrasted, in a characteristic passage, the procrastinating and not very clear policy of the Prime Minister with the decided and definite policy of Mr. Chamberlain. One thing, he said, is certain :—

'No Government and no party can deal with the fiscal question as a whole without taking into account the existence of Mr. Chamberlain's policy and the policy of the Tariff Reform League. I submit that it is the duty of our statesmen and leaders not to concern themselves only with the views and the policy which they have evolved for themselves from their own studies and their own philosophical meditations, but to take into account all the facts of the case, and the existence of Mr. Chamberlain and the Tariff Reform League as facts. They may be convenient or inconvenient facts, pleasant or disagreeable facts, but they are facts with which in any consideration of the fiscal question we have to deal, and which it is impossible for us to ignore. The policy of the Prime Minister up to the present time in regard to Mr. Chamberlain and the Tariff Reform League has been to ignore their existence. But he

will find that they cannot be ignored. The agitation is in the hands of a resolute and determined statesman who *will* have an answer from the country, and *will* obtain that answer whether it will be in his favour or against him.'

The Duke said in 1903 that certain facts hostile to Free Trade could 'not be set aside as if they were not.' Nor could Mr. Chamberlain and the League be treated as non-existent.

Lord Lansdowne, with some effect as a debating point, said that the Duke had never disapproved of preference when it came from the side of Canada, and that he was even now, together with several leading Liberals, a vice-president of the British Empire League, whose declared objects went perilously near to reciprocal preference.

The Duke of Devonshire, as Chairman of the Labour Commission ten years earlier, had been impressed by the clear line of demarcation and frequent divergence of interest between the skilled artisan and the unskilled labour class. He admitted that in many cases a tax upon foreign manufactured goods might benefit the men of the organised trade unions who were strong enough to secure a share in any profits which might accrue to English trades, but he doubted whether the unskilled labourers, always unable to organise effectively, would not be depressed by the change of policy. He was still, in 1905, in favour of a true inquiry by Royal Commission into the whole subject. Mr. Balfour in this year pressed the Duke to undertake the chairmanship of the Poor Law Commission which he was appointing. The Duke was unwilling to do so, partly because he was old and tired, partly because, with his usual modesty, he thought and said, erroneously, that he had not been successful as Chairman of the Labour Commission. But he intimated that if the inquiry could be made expressly to extend to all the causes of unemployment, and thereby to the question whether Free Trade was

a cause of poverty, as Mr. Chamberlain alleged, he might perhaps consent. This could not be done, and the heavy and rather thankless task was accepted by Lord George Hamilton. The Duke used to say at this time, that he thought that poverty and unemployment were due more to extravagance and over-spending and under-saving by all classes, than to any undermining of our industrial position by foreign competition.

The Government had other troubles. In order to save South Africa from economic disaster, due to the scarcity of native labour at that time, and acting on the best advice of well-informed men that could be obtained, they sanctioned, in the autumn of 1903, the experiment of introducing, under careful safeguards, indentured Chinese labourers for the mines of the Rand. This step achieved its purpose and saved the situation in South Africa, but it roused in England a storm of passion among Nonconformist ministers, who thought that it meant slavery, and among working-men, who mistakenly thought that work which they might have had was being given to yellow and pig-tailed Chinamen.

Mr. Balfour defended his position with great courage and skill in the House of Commons. Notwithstanding all their difficulties the Government passed in 1904 the last and greatest of the Irish Land Purchase measures, which are due, all of them, to Unionist action, and have been—together with Sir Horace Plunkett's co-operation movement and his other actions—the real salvation of Ireland. Lord Lansdowne admirably conducted foreign affairs, and a boldly decisive policy safeguarded for some time to come the Asiatic interests of our Empire, and enabled the concentration of naval force to meet advancing dangers near to home. It was in order to carry through this Irish and foreign policy that Mr. Balfour continued to

hold office so much longer than the political situation seemed to warrant.

The increasing disruption of the Unionist party at last made the position untenable. Mr. Balfour, after an impatient speech at Bristol by Mr. Chamberlain,[1] resigned at the end of November 1905, and was succeeded by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, who formed a Government from the survivors of the Gladstonian party. Resignation of a Government who still had a large majority in the House of Commons, and had suffered no decisive defeat in a division, was without precedent. But the majority on the leading question of the day was not real or sound, and more than once the Prime Minister had only escaped defeat by avoiding battle.

Mr. Balfour might well be almost worn out, for the time. He had led the Tory party in the House of Commons since 1891, had led for the Government since 1895, and had been Prime Minister since the summer of 1902, for most of the time in continuous rough political weather. He was accused by all his critics, both of the Liberal, and free-trade Unionist, and Tariff Reform camps, of preferring to dwell in a region of mist, and he was, perhaps, at this time too much fatigued to give a strong, clear, and decided lead to his distracted army.

The Duke of Devonshire, on one occasion during these two years of confusion, said to his sister, 'They all come and tell me that they agree with me, and then they say things diametrically opposite to my own opinions.' To his mind, in the matter of Free Trade as in that of the unity of the United Kingdom, a thing either was, or it was not. It was his singular fortune, and once in conversation he said something to this effect, that he, a plain,

[1] Mr. Chamberlain said in the Bristol speech, *inter alia*, that 'the march of an army was not to be governed by the pace of the lamest.'

matter-of-fact Englishman, had served with two more or less Scottish Prime Ministers, Gladstone and Balfour, who were extremely dissimilar in most ways, and strongly opposed in all their views and sympathies, but were alike endowed with minds too swift, or subtle, for his own apprehension. Certainly he would have been more 'at home' under a chief of the plain, unacademic, and mundane type of Melbourne or Palmerston.

The new Prime Minister, who was, indeed, more of this type, announced that the General Election was to be fought in January. Some suggestions were made to the Duke that the Balfourian and free-trade Unionist groups might co-operate in the coming battle against the Radical foe, and to satisfy his friends he wrote to Mr. Balfour on the 7th December in not very hopeful strain. He said :—

'Some of our friends of a sanguine disposition are of opinion that there might be some possible advantage to the future of the Unionist party, if in the present changed circumstances there could be some further communication between us.

'I am, however, afraid that the last two years have rather increased than diminished the difference of the views which we take on the only question which divides us, and that there is little hope of my being able to contribute to the restoration of that unity in the party which you desire. All that I can say is that, as I told you in my letter of November, the great object of many of us is to prevent the party being committed to Chamberlain's proposals, and that any declarations on your part tending to show the fundamental differences between your own proposals and his would, I believe, be received with very great satisfaction by many of those who have been more or less in agreement with me. I cannot hope that any declarations you may make before the election will relieve me or other Unionists whom you may deem irreconcilable Cobdenites from the necessity of criticism, but they might certainly

materially modify the character of such criticism, and go far to satisfy many who are now in doubt as to your position.

'If you thought it of any use to see me, I am available at almost any time to-morrow; but I really do not think that I can add anything to what you already know as to my views.'

Mr. Balfour replied:—

'Thanks much for your letter. I shall certainly do my best to keep steady to the course on which I have hitherto steered, and to make it as clear as possible to all concerned. This will probably not relieve me of criticism from the Protectionist wing of the party; and, speaking for the Cobdenite wing, you tell me that it will not relieve me of criticism from *them*. These are not very satisfactory conditions in which to engage in a great contest; but we must make the best of them.

'You talk of the last two years having "rather widened, than diminished, the differences of the views which we take on the only question which divides us." I am not conscious of having altered my view on any really important point during that time, and I therefore hope that you have somewhat over-emphasised the diversions of our views upon the only topic on which we either have been, or are ever likely to be, in different camps.'

III

It had been certain for some time that the Unionists would be defeated at the next General Election. But the fiscal trouble and that connected with Chinese labour, turned their defeat into a rout. They were almost swept out of the North and Scotland; they suffered heavy losses in London and throughout the country; seats were lost even in Tory Kent, Surrey, and Sussex. One nephew of the Duke, Mr. Victor Cavendish, was defending his seat for the Chatsworth division of Derbyshire as a Balfourian Unionist; while his brother, Mr. Richard

Cavendish, was endeavouring to hold his for North Lonsdale, another sphere of Cavendish influence, as a very decided free-trade Unionist. The Duke solved the difficulty by letting it be understood that, on family grounds, he would like both nephews to be returned.[1] The Chatsworth division was held, though with difficulty; that of North Lonsdale was lost. Throughout the country the free-trade Unionists fared worse than any other section. The great mass of the Unionist electors were for Tariff Reform, and the Radicals, with few exceptions, declined to waive their own claims to seats. Mr. Churchill proved to be in the right. There was, for the present, no alternative for free-trade Unionists except to cross the floor of the House of Commons or to live in exile from its charms.

Two events immediately followed the defeat of the Unionists. One was an exchange of letters between Mr. Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain, published 15th February 1906. Mr. Balfour, in his letter, defined the objects of fiscal reform as being 'to secure more equal terms of competition for British trade and closer commercial union with the Colonies.' The means he defined as being 'the establishment of a moderate tariff on manufactured goods, not imposed for the purpose of raising prices or giving artificial protection against legitimate competition, and the imposition of a small duty on foreign corn.' These steps, he said, were not, in the opinion of the great majority of the party, 'in principle objectionable, and should be adopted if shown to be necessary for the objects in view or for purposes of revenue.' Mr. Chamberlain, in his reply, agreed to the definition and accepted the policy. Free Trade correspondents of the Duke saw in these

[1] The Duke said humorously to a friend about this time: 'The politics of the family are rather mixed. Victor is a Balfourian, Dick is an out-and-out free-trader, and God knows what I am.'

letters evidence of a 'complete capitulation' of Mr. Balfour. One wrote, 'Balfour appears to me to have hoisted the Protectionist flag.' He had, in fact, ratified the not, at any rate, unreasonable position which, almost without an exception, the successful Unionists, in varying degrees of strength, had held at the elections.

The other event was a meeting on 15th February of the Unionist party at Lansdowne House. The Duke attended, and made a short speech after Mr. Balfour had spoken. He said that he saw no reason why the party should not, under the able leadership of Mr. Balfour, act together with reasonable harmony as a 'Constitutional Opposition.' As to the correspondence published that morning, it appeared, he said, that the Tariff Reform question was no longer a matter for discussion within the party, but had been settled by a compromise between the leaders, which he did not think would satisfy either Tariff Reformers, Retaliators, or Free Traders. Lord Curzon of Kedleston, recently returned from his distinguished government of India, wrote to the Duke to congratulate him upon the 'righteous courage and integrity' of his speech.

The Duke also made, on the 22nd February 1906, in the House of Lords, the last and best of his speeches on the fiscal question. He put forward considerations of real weight, *assuming* that the country remained in the state of mind evinced in the January elections, and they deserve to be quoted in full:—

'I desire to address a few observations to your Lordships, not on any abstract aspect of this great and important question, but on the relation which it may have to the policy of the Unionist party, which is so largely represented in your Lordships' House. My noble friend behind me referred the other day to the exceptional circumstances in which we find ourselves in this House.

My noble friend did not speak in at all too strong terms of the great changes which have been brought about as a result of the late General Election. It is extremely probable that in this and subsequent sessions a great deal more public attention may be directed to the proceedings in your Lordships' House than has been the case in recent years.

'During the last ten years the opinions on most political questions of the majority in both Houses have been in tolerably close agreement, and your Lordships have had little to do more than to give your assent to measures sent up from the other House, or to introduce comparatively unimportant amendments in those measures. This position is now, as a result of the election, fundamentally altered. It cannot be denied that on most political questions the opinions of the majority of the House of Commons are not in harmony with, but are opposed to, the opinions held by the great majority of this House. That difference in the political opinions represented in the two Houses will no doubt, must no doubt, find its expression in the measures which will be sent to you from the other House of Parliament; and it will be for your Lordships and the leaders of this House to consider how far it may be wise, how far it may be prudent, how far it may be the duty of this House, to exercise its constitutional rights in relation to those measures. I feel perfectly confident that the advice which will be given to your Lordships' House will be wise and statesmanlike, and will be based to a very great extent on the wise and statesmanlike advice which on more than one occasion was given to this House by the late Lord Salisbury. But, in my opinion, a great deal depends, not only on the treatment of Bills that may come up from the other House, but on what may be the constructive policy adopted by the Unionist party when at any future time it returns to power.

'If, besides the differences that exist between us on the Irish question, on social questions, on Church questions, on questions of parliamentary reform, the Unionist party

is going to be pledged to a constructive policy of fiscal reform which, whether it be right or whether it be wrong, appears at all events at the present time to be in opposition to the strong opinion of the majority of the country, then in my opinion the Unionist party, which, as I have said, is so largely represented in this House, will find itself in the worst possible position if it desires to exercise any influence whatever on legislation in Parliament. If, as is not impossible, the question of Home Rule should be revived during the existence of the present Parliament, or if, as is more likely, it should be revived in anticipation of the next General Election, if there are any measures dealing with social questions which, in your Lordships' opinion, require a more definite expression of the feeling of the country, if, as a consequence of possible disagreements between the two Houses of Parliament, the constitutional rights of this House are ever threatened, in my opinion you will find yourselves in the weakest position which you could occupy if the Unionist party finds itself committed to a policy which either is a policy of Protection or with any plausibility can be represented as a policy of Protection.

'If I may give an example of what I am trying to point out, I will give you the example of the Home Rule Bill of 1893. In that year your Lordships were able, almost without protest or murmur from the greater part of this country, to reject by an enormous majority a measure which had been passed by a majority in the other House. You were able to do that because you believed, and, as the event proved, rightly believed, that you were supported by the great body of public opinion in the country, but I ask you to consider whether you would have appealed with the same confidence to the opinion of the country if in 1893 your opposition to Home Rule had to be combined with the advocacy of a policy of constructive fiscal reform? If you really expect that the adoption of this policy is going to strengthen you in the country, if you think it is going to make you stronger, then no doubt you will be

justified, not only in principle, but in policy, in persevering with that policy; but nobody can say that in the recent general election there appeared any probability of a sudden conversion on the part of the country to a policy of fiscal reform. I do entreat your Lordships to consider very carefully whether you are justified in policy, however you may be in principle, in linking the cause of the Union, or other causes which are dear to a majority in this House, to another policy which, whether it be right or whether it be wrong, not one of your Lordships three years ago imagined for a moment was a question of present practical politics.'

In this speech also he said that Mr. Chamberlain had raised the great problem as to the causes of the unequal distribution of wealth in this country. He said:—

'I doubt very much whether any analysis, however perfect and complete, will afford an answer to this problem of the unequal distribution of wealth. That is a problem of the highest and greatest importance, and it is one of which, I have not a doubt, we shall in the course of this and succeeding sessions of Parliament hear a great deal. I have never supposed since the days of "Ransom" that Mr. Chamberlain would be in the least unwilling to enter into a discussion regarding the unequal distribution of wealth, and I think it is extremely probable that in the course of this and ensuing sessions he may find many opportunities of discussing this problem with some of the newly returned members of Parliament.[1] But in all the discussions on this momentous subject which he may enter into with the Labour members, I venture to express the opinion that he will find among the projects and plans which he will be called upon to discuss none containing a more Socialistic principle than that which is embodied in his own scheme, which, whether it can properly be described as a scheme of protection or not, is certainly a scheme under which the

[1] In one of his earlier speeches Mr. Chamberlain had described heavy taxation of the rich as the 'ransom' paid by them for their property.

State is to undertake to regulate the course of commerce and of industry, and tell us where we are to buy, where we are to sell, what commodities we are to manufacture at home, and what we may continue, if we think right, to import from other countries.'

At the end of his speech he referred to the Balfour-Chamberlain correspondence. At first, he said, he had thought that it was in the nature of a compromise, but since Mr. Chamberlain, as he was told, had not in any way modified his policy or methods, it could hardly, he thought, be regarded in that light. He said:—

'I think the publication of this correspondence is a step far in advance of anything which we have hitherto heard from the leaders of the Unionist party, and as such it is deserving of the notice of Parliament. I do not desire to exaggerate its importance. We have for a long time believed that this was the policy advocated by the leaders of the party, if not by all their colleagues or by all their followers. I, on behalf of, and in co-operation with, a small number of members of both Houses of Parliament, have taken every means in my power to announce our intention of opposing to the best of our ability the policy advocated by the Tariff Reform League; and all that has happened in consequence of the publication of these letters is that we are obliged now to state as plainly as we can that we are opposed to the constructive policy which is now announced by the leader of the Unionist party.

'It will be a very long time before these declarations can have any practical effect whatever. It will be a long time before the Unionist party and its leaders will be in a position to advocate any constructive policy. Much may happen in the interval, and it is possible that means may be found by which a not inconsiderable portion of the Unionist party may be able either to retain the liberty which they individually possess, or to regain that liberty on this subject. As regards the immediate future, I do not feel that any in-

surmountable difficulty has now been raised. I hold that the Government, supported as it is by the great and overwhelming majority of this country, has a right to a fair trial, including fair treatment in this House. I feel sure that my noble friend the leader of the Opposition in this House holds the same opinion.

'There is, therefore, so far as I can see, not the slightest probability that on many occasions those who hold my opinions will find themselves in a different lobby from my noble friend. At the same time I, as a Unionist, do not commit myself to any expression of general confidence in His Majesty's present advisers. I remain a Unionist, and I claim the right to remain a Unionist, irrespective of any opinions which I may hold on questions which are not connected with the Union. The Unionist party to which I owe any allegiance is a free-trade Unionist party, if such a party may, by any possibility, be reconstituted in the future. As regards the constructive policy which by this correspondence has now been adopted in the name of the Unionist party by the leaders of the Unionist party, I decline altogether to admit any allegiance to the leaders or any responsibility for their action in regard to this policy, and I absolutely decline—I desire that it should be known that some of us, at all events, decline—to accept, as regards the future constructive policy of the party, the leadership of those who have accepted the principles which I find embodied in the letters to which I have referred.'

After the schism of September 1903, the Marquis of Lansdowne had become leader for the Government in the House of Lords in place of the Duke of Devonshire. In 1906 he was leading the majority of that House in Opposition to the Government, a difficult and responsible task. Lord Lansdowne was an old and constant ally, and the marriage of his daughter, Lady Evelyn Fitzmaurice, in 1892, to Mr. Victor Cavendish, nephew and heir of the Duke, had united by a closer bond these two illustrious

houses. There was never any strain in the relations between the Duke of Devonshire and Lord Lansdowne, and they worked together without difficulty in the criticism of the measures which ascended from a Radical House of Commons to the tribunal of the Lords. These measures were numerous, were drawn to a large scale, and had the effect of turning away, in some degree, the attention of the fatigued and perplexed public from the fiscal question, and of promoting some re-accord between the divided sections of the Unionist party.

But the Duke maintained his position of independence. In the autumn of 1906 there was an attempt to organise a new 'League' for the defence of the Union in view of the Government's proposal to introduce that curious measure, faintly resembling Home Rule, which in the end was so contemptuously rejected by the Irish. The Duke was invited to accept the Presidency of this League. He replied at first that he was 'getting much too old to be able to accept any position involving much work, and, more especially, much speaking,' to which, he added, 'I am becoming more and more averse.' Nor did he think that the League was needed. Was there not already a Unionist party in existence with men, funds, and organisation? And how could free-trade Unionists be expected to join a special League while they were excluded from the counsels of the Unionist party? Pressed to reconsider his refusal, he wrote:—

'There may be good reasons for creating a new and special organisation within the Unionist party, but I am not the person who ought to be at its head. I and those with whom I am in the closest political agreement have been virtually turned out of the Unionist party because we could not accept a certain policy to which its leaders have committed it, and I see no sign that this exclusion is going

to be annulled, or that, if a General Election were to take place, a free-trade Unionist would be thought good enough to receive the support of the Unionist party. I feel very strongly that to accept the presidency of the Union Defence League under such conditions would place me in a false position.'

IV

The Session of 1906 was devoured by an Education Bill brought in by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's Government. It was intended to remedy the grievances of their Nonconformist supporters, namely, that denominational schools were, since the Act of 1902, supported by the local rates as well as by the Government grants, that these schools were not under complete public control, and that, in districts where there was a single school, the children of Nonconformists had either Church religious teaching or none. The grievance might have been prevented, or at least diminished, had there been a provision in the Act of 1902 that the children of such parents as desired it in a denominational school should receive separate religious instruction according to the syllabus of the Town or County Council. This had not been done, because the more decided Churchmen, including Lord Salisbury, under whom, as Prime Minister, this measure had been initiated though not completed, thought that it would be unfair unless the publicly provided schools were equally open to denominational instruction. Attention had been held to the outstanding grievance by the refusal of some Nonconformist ministers and others to pay the rate, and the consequent distraints or incarcerations by which they had been sorely afflicted.

The Bill of 1906 proposed the complete transfer of all elementary denominational schools to the public

authorities; it provided that in schools so transferred denominational teaching might be given (in addition to the usual teaching limited by the Cowper-Temple clause), but not in school hours, or by school teachers, and it authorised exclusively denominational religious teaching in the case of schools where a large majority of the parents petitioned to have it, and where the children of the minority could be otherwise provided for. The Duke spoke at length on the second reading in the House of Lords on 2nd August 1906. His speech contained an eminently fair and lucid statement of the history and present position of the question. He denied that the Government had received any mandate 'for the creation of a set of schools in which denominational teaching should, indeed, be permitted, but should be discouraged and placed under disabilities.'

'I am not,' he said, 'qualified to discuss from a theological point of view simple Bible teaching, the teaching of the great truths of Christianity, or any form of religious teaching which supporters or opponents of the Cowper-Temple clause may prefer to call it, but certainly I entertain for the Cowper-Temple clause no such aversion as has been expressed by many on both sides of political opinion in the other House. I recognise that it is accepted as a satisfactory form of religious teaching for children, as opposed to adults, by a great many very sincere and earnest Christians, and by a very large body of parents of children. I recognise also that it is regarded by others as insufficient, and by some as entirely mischievous.'

He confessed, however, that he could, on the other hand, not understand the view of those who asserted that while Roman Catholics or Jews could not be expected to accept this form, it was good enough for all Protestants.

'I do not claim to decide whether it is good enough, or ought to be good enough for all Protestants. It is quite enough for me to know that there are a great many whose opinions are entitled to respect who do not think that it is good enough ; and I regard it as unreasonable, and, what is worse than unreasonable, as intolerant, to attempt to enforce it upon those who hold that opinion, to the exclusion of any more definite form of religious teaching.'

I should like to ask, he said, 'what is the necessity for such sweeping and drastic changes?' The problem to be solved was that when parents in any appreciable number desired undenominational teaching for their children they should be able to obtain it. 'But that does not seem to me to be a problem which ought to be insoluble by means less violent than those provided in the Bill. I cannot think that this not very heroic task makes it necessary to disturb the religious character of every voluntary school, and to remove every security that remains in respect to it, whether these schools be Church schools, Catholic schools, or Jewish schools. There are, not in towns alone, but in the rural districts also, hundreds, and, I think, thousands of them, against which no voice of complaint has ever been raised, which offend no conscience, and which are doing good work to the satisfaction of the parents and of the children who attend them, to whatever religious persuasion they belong. With regard to such schools as these, I am tempted to ask, "Why cannot you leave them alone?"' The Government, he thought, had 'immensely exaggerated the magnitude of the question' with which they were obliged to deal. But for political exigencies they might have proceeded on far less ambitious lines. The House of Lords, he said, should, in Committee, 'endeavour to show the country that there are alternatives to the violent and unnecessary

disturbance of our educational system.' Not until they had done this, and had seen how these alternatives were received, would they 'be called upon to make the final and momentous decision which at some later period we may have to take, and which may involve consequences far wider even than any which are involved in connection with the present measure?'

The Duke took some part in the long proceedings in Committee upon this Bill. It was entirely due to his intervention that an amendment was thrown out, the object of which was to allow denominational teaching to be given in the existing Council or 'provided' schools as well as in those to be transferred. In the end, the question between the majority in the House of Lords and that in the House of Commons came to turn upon the point whether school teachers, who were willing to do so, should be allowed to give denominational instruction. The decision practically lay with the Archbishop of Canterbury. He would not, or could not, give way upon this matter, nor would, or could, the Government recede. The Bill was therefore lost. The Duke of Devonshire in the final division voted on the side of the Government, thinking it better that the House of Lords should accept, than reject, the measure as improved by the considerable concessions already made by the House of Commons.

The loss of the Education Bill was a leading incident in the continuous conflict between the two Houses of Parliament after the General Election of 1906. The Government now indicated their intention of depriving the Lords of the greater part of their powers.[1] Lord Rosebery and other leading men felt that the House of Lords must be fortified by judicious outworks of reform, and Lord Newton, in 1907, brought in a Bill

[1] Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's proposals of 1907 were in substance those carried into effect in 1911.

with that object. It was met by the leaders of the Unionist majority by a motion referring to a select Committee the suggestions made for increasing the strength and efficiency of the House of Lords. The Duke of Devonshire spoke on this motion on the 7th May. He stated the well-known elements of strength and of weakness in the existing constitution of the House of Lords, and approved of the appointment of the Committee. He then said:—

'If urgency exists for finding some means of adjusting differences between the two Houses, it has arisen solely from the events which have taken place within the existence of the present Parliament. I am far from saying that a case may not be made out for endeavouring to find some improved machinery by which differences when they arise may be more easily adjusted. But if this necessity exists it is a new necessity. Up to the date of the present Parliament means of settling differences between the two Houses have always been found. The course of progress and of reform has never been permanently obstructed by the action of this House. This House has never permanently thwarted the clearly expressed will of the country, even in matters in which it held distinctly different convictions and opinions. Instances are not wanting in which experience has shown that this House has been a more faithful and more accurate exponent of the real will of the people than the House of Commons. Take the case of the last reform of the House of Commons. It is true that this House delayed the passing of the Franchise Bill; but it delayed it only for one session, and almost simultaneously with the passing of the Franchise Bill in the next session a Redistribution Bill was passed, to the great satisfaction even of the House of Commons and the great satisfaction of the country.

'I am not surprised that not much reference has been made by speakers on the Government side of the House to the history of the Home Rule Bill. I hope that this House and the country will not forget that history. No more

striking and conclusive proof of the advantage and necessity of a Second Chamber—even an unreformed Second Chamber—has ever been given than that afforded by the history of that measure. If that measure had been passed it could never have been repealed except through the stress of something approaching to revolution or civil war. But for the action of the House of Lords that measure would have been passed; and it would have been passed, as the result has proved, against the will of the country. The Government are again raising the question of Irish Government, but I shall be very much surprised to find that even this Government or this House of Commons proposes to reintroduce either the Home Rule Bill of 1886 or that of 1893.

'The action of this House in the case of the Act for the disestablishment of the Irish Church was a proof that it did not hesitate to defer to the clearly expressed will of the people, even when that will was decidedly opposed to their own strong convictions. I desire to call attention to the canon which was laid down in the most weighty and authoritative words by the late Lord Salisbury in the debate upon that measure, a canon which I believe this House not only acted upon then, but has been prepared and is still prepared to act upon on any similar occasion. Lord Salisbury said:—

'"Again, there is a class of cases, small in number, varying in kind, in which the nation must be called into counsel and must decide the policy of the Government. We must decide by all we see around us, and by the events that are passing. We must decide, each for himself, upon our conscience and to the best of our judgment, in the exercise of that tremendous responsibility which at such a time each member of this House bears, whether the House of Commons does or does not represent the full, deliberate, and sustained convictions of the body of the nation. But when we once have come to the conclusion, from all the circumstances of the case, that the House of Commons is at one with the nation, it appears to me—save in some

very exceptional cases, save in the highest cases of morality, in those cases in which a man would not set his hand to a proposition though a revolution should follow his refusal —it appears to me that the occasion for the action of this House has passed away, that it must devolve responsibility upon the nation, and may fairly accept the conclusion at which the nation has arrived." [1]

'So long as this House accepts that canon for its conduct I do not believe it can go far wrong. Cases may arise in which it makes mistakes in forming its view as to the true opinion of the people. It may from time to time interpose delays in necessary legislation; it may cause friction irritating to the party which may be in power, but it will never permanently obstruct the settled will of the nation, and it will never permanently obstruct legislative reforms clearly and evidently desired by the people, even if in some cases those reforms may be, in its opinion, unwise.

'My Lords, that is the extent of the claim made by this House. This House has never claimed, and it does not now claim, to act upon its own convictions in defiance of the opinions either of the House of Commons or of the nation. So long as this House remains an integral part of the legislature of this country I trust that it will so remain in fact, as well as in name, and that it will continue to discharge those duties which are the true functions of any Second Chamber, and will use its judgment, where the gravity of the case requires it, to secure that the will, the true will, of the people should be ascertained, and, when it is ascertained, that it should be acted upon.'

These were the last words spoken in Parliament by the eighth Duke of Devonshire. Between his first speech in the House of Commons and his last speech in the House of Lords there was a space of almost fifty years. Mr.

[1] What are these 'exceptional cases'? Did Lord Salisbury think that of such kind would be measures for destroying the Monarchy, or the House of Lords itself? These would themselves be 'revolutions,' *ergo a fortiori, &c.*

Gladstone closed his long career in Parliament by a menacing attack upon the House of Lords, who had thwarted his great and perilous design; the Duke of Devonshire closed his by a defence of the actions and the rights of that ancient and noble Council.

V

Now, also, took place the last of the many and splendid entertainments given by this Duke and Duchess of Devonshire. It had been the annual custom of King Edward, on the evening of the Derby race day, to give a dinner at Buckingham Palace to members of the Jockey Club. The Duke dined on these occasions at the Palace, while the Queen dined with the Duchess at Devonshire House, and afterwards there was a ball to which the King came on with his guests. This order of proceedings was duly observed upon the 5th of June 1907, the day on which Orby defeated the favourite Slieve Gallion on Epsom Downs. The Queen, the Princess of Wales, and the Princess Royal dined at Devonshire House, and when the King and the Prince of Wales arrived, the Duke was already there to receive them at the foot of the marble staircase. The house was adorned with all the roses of the season, and with the fairest blooms that Chatsworth could supply, and it was filled with the chosen from the shining aristocracy of these islands. Dance music breathed enchantment, and the garden beyond the terrace was lit by many-coloured lights.

> "The glories of our blood and state
> Are shadows, not substantial things;
> There is no armour against fate;
> Death lays his icy hand on kings."

Host and illustrious Guest were soon alike to pass from this phantasmal world, whereof the impermanency and

dreamlike tissue is then most apprehended when we hear music or behold dancing.

Seven days later, on the 12th of June, the Duke made his last appearance on a public occasion. It was a great day at Cambridge. Honorary degrees were to be given to another son of Trinity College, the Prime Minister, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, and to two of his colleagues, Lord Elgin and Mr. Haldane, to Lord Curzon of Kedleston, lately Viceroy of India, Lord Milner, lately High Commissioner in Africa, and to others. After luncheon in the Hall of Caius College the procession moved to the Senate House. The interior was flooded with sunlight, bright with the red robes of the chiefs of the University, and alive with youthful energy. The wildest storm of cheering broke from the crowded galleries when Lord Milner stood before the chair of the Chancellor of the University, and it was some minutes before the Duke, who evidently took pleasure in this acclamation, could pronounce the ancient Latin words of admission. Later in the afternoon the Duke was present at tea served in the noble cloister of Neville's Court, beneath the library, and near the staircase leading to the rooms of the young Lord Cavendish of more than fifty years ago. In the evening there was a banquet in the beautiful dining-hall of Trinity College, through which have too swiftly passed so many fleeting generations. Here, at the high table, where he had sat as a fellow-commoner, the Duke made, in his now much shaken voice, the last of his many speeches. He referred to the not very successful attempts which had been made to raise a fund for the better endowment of the University, and said, 'I feel that I have not been a good beggar. In the natural course of things you will soon have to be choosing a new Chancellor, and I advise you to try to find some one with a better faculty for begging.'

Next morning I breakfasted at the Master's Lodge, and found there the Duke, Lord Elgin, and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, conversing with the hospitable Dr. Montague Butler. The Prime Minister, now almost as near as the Duke to the close of life, seemed to be solidly and quietly content, revisiting in a high capacity, well-earned by courage and perseverance, the college where he had been a quite undistinguished undergraduate. I said to the Duke, I remember, that I noticed that he had not adopted in the Senate House the new-fashioned mode of pronouncing Latin. 'No,' he replied, 'my Latin is more than fifty years old, and was not much at any time.' This was the last occasion on which I saw the chief in whose service I had felt it an honour for some time to be.

A week later the Duke was staying at Windsor Castle for the Ascot Races. He was indisposed, and unable to go to the race-course. He returned on 20th June in his motor-car to Devonshire House, and that evening had a serious collapse from weakness of the heart. He made some recovery, and spent part of the late summer at his house at Eastbourne. He wrote thence to Lord James of Hereford on the 29th July:—

'I am said to be going on all right, but I am afraid it will be a long time before I am good for anything, if ever. However, my head is fairly clear, and I read the newspapers more or less. I am almost glad to be away from the House of Lords the next few weeks. It seems to me the most awful mess that was ever known. If it was not for that infernal Tariff Reform, I should be for having it out with the Government and the House of Commons as soon as possible, but the party seem to be getting more and more pledged to it every day, and it is a terrible handicap.'

Among other letters expressing pleasure at the news

of his transient recovery was one from the Tory ex-Chancellor, Lord Halsbury. He wrote in old-fashioned, dignified, and manly style :—

'I cannot resist the desire to say how heartily I rejoice, I believe in common with your countrymen, in the restoration to health of one whose high character and splendid service to the State have endeared him to all, and conspicuously to the members of that House of Parliament of which he is one of the most distinguished ornaments.

'It is many years now since we were in the House of Commons together, but then, as now, notwithstanding our political differences, we recognised the sterling straightforwardness and masculine vigour with which you always spoke out what was in your mind the truth and the right. One does not speak thus on ordinary occasions. We Englishmen are rather disposed to suppress the expression of what we may nevertheless feel very strongly, but on such an occasion as this, when we were threatened with the loss of one whose powers could ill be spared at the present conjuncture, I feel I should be doing injustice to my own feelings if I did not say how much you have won the confidence and admiration of your colleagues.'

In September came the death of the Duke's only sister, Lady Louisa Egerton, and he was now the last survivor of the four children who had once lived so remotely at Holker Hall. It has been said that the character of a race comes out more clearly in its women than in its men, because in women the race-type is not so much overlaid as in the case of men by that second nature superinduced by professional occupations. In many respects Lady Louisa strongly resembled her brother, and she was in full sympathy with him throughout the events of his political career. She heard him make his speech on the fiscal question in the House of Lords in February 1904, and afterwards wrote to him :—

'Dearest Brother,—One word to say how I loved hearing your speech, and how proud I felt of one whose every word bore the stamp of truth and conviction. I know that it is that which has made you such a power in the land, and will, I think, have been the means of your twice saving England from the two direst misfortunes it would ever have fallen into. I felt how proud our father would have been to hear you.'

A kinsman and friend of the family, Mr. Alfred Lyttelton, on this sad occasion, wrote to the Duke that 'for forty years and more she seemed to me above almost all women in kindness, wisdom, courage, and a gentle sincerity upon which one could absolutely rely. I valued her affection as a most precious possession, and the gap in your family can never be filled, and must, indeed, bring a sense to you of irreparable loss.' The thought will be echoed by all those who had the good fortune to know this true and great lady.

The Duke wrote to Lord James of Hereford on October 23rd that he was starting for Egypt on the next day, and would be away for four or five months, so that he would 'get entirely out of politics.' He added :—

'I could not have been of much use if I had stayed, as I still get very easily tired, and I think a big speech would settle me. I take a very gloomy view of the prospect. Campbell-Bannerman seems prepared to go any lengths, and Asquith, Haldane, & Co. will do nothing effectual to stop him. His speech does not appear to have been very effective, but I suppose he has got the machine with him. I hear that the Socialists are making tremendous progress, and I do not see who is to stop them.'

Mrs. Strong, then his librarian, was one of the last who saw the Duke in England. She writes :—

'He appointed me to meet him and the Duchess at the British Museum, where he wished to discuss the best

method of exhibiting the Devonshire collection of gems. He was weak and ill, and had to be carried up to the Gem Room in a chair; but his keen appreciation of everything that was shown him, his courteous gratitude to the various officials who tried to make his visit interesting and pleasant, made a deep impression on every one present. When people assure me that the Duke cared little for his collections, that he personally took no trouble about them, but was content to delegate the care of them to others, I like to think that almost the last appointment he kept in London was on behalf of these collections, and at a time when many another man would have shirked the effort and the fatigue. I like also to remember him as I saw him last, standing under the porch of the great Museum, in the soft grey light of the London autumn, shaking hands with the learned men round him, his face lit up by a kindly smile. "You must make out a scheme while we are in Egypt," he said, with reference to the projected arrangement of the gems, "and then on my return we will see what can be done."'

. . . .

Two days later, on the 24th October 1907, the Duke, leaving England for ever, departed to Egypt with the Duchess, and spent the winter months on the Nile.[1] From time to time he received letters from Lord Rosebery and Lord James of Hereford giving the last political news. He was on his return towards England when his heart failed again suddenly, and he died in a hotel at Cannes on the 24th March 1908. As he lay unconscious he was heard to mutter some words, as if he thought he were playing at cards. Then he murmured: 'Well, the game is over, and I am not sorry.'

The coffin containing the body of the late Duke of

[1] The Duke had twice before spent some time in Egypt, once in 1889 and once in 1905. He had frequently spent a short time in early spring on the Riviera.

Devonshire was conveyed from the Riviera to Derbyshire, and after lying for a day and night in the church, covered with the national flag, and visited by all the retainers of the estates, was buried on the 28th March on the rising ground in the beautiful churchyard of Edensor, within the Park of Chatsworth, near to the grave of his father and to those of his two brothers. Among the flowery wreaths was one which bore an inscription by the hand of a Queen: 'In remembrance of our dear Duke of Devonshire, in deepest sorrow and regret, from Alexandra.'

VI

The two Houses of Parliament were sitting on the afternoon of the day when news came of his death, and in both Houses orations were made in honour and remembrance. Some passages from these may here be quoted, as a fitting close to this Memoir. Lord Ripon, once his colleague in the administration of Indian affairs and now leader for the Government in the House of Lords, said :—

'It was the fate of the Duke of Devonshire during his career to be associated with men of various political opinions; but all of us, whether we were his colleagues or his opponents, were always, I am confident, ready to admit, to acknowledge, and to admire the perfect integrity of his conduct. The Duke of Devonshire had no personal objects to pursue. He was animated throughout his public life by no petty or personal ambitions; but, as we all believe, aye, and as we all know, by an earnest and conscientious desire to promote what he in his conscience believed to be for the best interests of his country. Therefore it is that we do but voice the public opinion of the land when we express to-night the sense which we feel that there has been taken from us under the providence of God one of the most eminent of our members. It was not so much by gifts of

eloquence, it was not so much by the commanding qualities which some statesmen possess, that the Duke of Devonshire exercised his influence over his countrymen. It was rather because every man felt the strongest conviction of the straightforward sincerity of his public life.'

Lord Lansdowne spoke of the 'inflexible integrity and simplicity of character' of the late Duke, and added :—

'I doubt whether we are yet in a position to estimate correctly the place which will be assigned to the Duke of Devonshire by those who will write the history of the age in which he lived. He owed that position not to any particular achievement on which you can put your finger, not to any great measures on the Statute-book which will hereafter be associated with his name, not even to his ability as a speaker in Parliament or on the platform. His speeches, indeed, held the attention of those who listened to him, not so much on account of his eloquence as because of his invariable fairness and his ability to do justice to the arguments of those who differed from him. The place of the Duke of Devonshire will, I think, belong to him because he embodied in an eminent degree characteristics which in the opinion of the people of this country most entitle a public man to the admiration of his fellow-citizens : uprightness of character, fearlessness of temperament, and that strong common sense and caution which so peculiarly distinguished him. It was the possession of these qualities that gained for the Duke of Devonshire the esteem of his countrymen ; and, because he possessed them in so high a degree, I doubt whether any Englishman ever had a much stronger hold upon the confidence of all classes in the community. Of the Duke of Devonshire's personal qualities I cannot trust myself to speak. Those who have enjoyed his friendship and have worked with him as colleagues are aware how well he knew how to engage not only the respect but the affection of those who were brought into contact with him.'

Lord Rosebery said :—

'It is not for me to-night to speak of him as a friend. He was the friend of many here. No more loyal, no more honest, no more unselfish and devoted friend could any man have. Nor is it my purpose to speak of his position in the various relations of life which he was called upon to fill. He was the best and most generous of landlords ; he was a high-minded, enthusiastic sportsman ; he was a devoted husband ; he was kind to all with whom business or society brought him in contact ; and he was the most magnificent of hosts. But there have been many in his high position who have been all these things, and many who have shared with him the title in which I think he would have taken the most pride—that of being an English gentleman. More than that, he was one of the great reserve forces of this country. He had filled many offices with great capacity and great industry. Injustice was done, I think, both to his capacity and to his industry by those who did not know him. But it is not even on that that I wish so much to dwell. He was no orator. I do not know any man who spoke with so much previous anguish or so much misery at the time as the late Duke of Devonshire. His speeches were not always enthralling to listen to, though they were listened to with veneration and respect. They were read all over the country as the speeches of no other private person were read, and were read for their close argument and reasoning power. We could have spared a dozen more facile rhetoricians for one speaker such as the Duke of Devonshire. What was conspicuous in him, as has been noticed by my noble friend behind me, was the transparent simplicity, candour, and directness of his character. He had reticences, but they were the reticences of shyness and not of subterfuge. When the Duke discussed any public question with any friends you felt that he was trying to divest himself of prejudices, trying to arrive at the truth and the kernel of the matter, and that, even if he had to change his opinion in the course of discussion, which he

was not ashamed to do, he arrived at a conclusion which he believed to be right, and adhered to it against all odds and in all circumstances. It is men of that kind that form the glory of our country. We have many statesmen who occupy high office or who have occupied high office; and other countries have these. But few countries have men of high capacity, with every temptation to sloth, who devote themselves to the service of their country without the slightest ultimate personal object or ambition. That was the Duke of Devonshire's proud position, and it was for that reason, I think, that the country always sought his judgment and opinion on current events, and why he will leave after him a memory which even men of more conspicuous genius have failed to bequeath. He bore a proud name. There was no prouder name in this House than the name of the Duke of Devonshire. His forefathers have rendered at various times inestimable service to the State; but I greatly question whether in all that long and illustrious line any one of the Dukes or of the Cavendishes will have left a name more trusted and beloved, more justly trusted and more justly beloved, than that Duke whom we mourn to-day.'

In the House of Commons Mr. Asquith, who was leading during the last illness of the Prime Minister, said:—

'In the Duke of Devonshire we have lost almost the last survivor of our heroic age. This is not the occasion upon which it would be fitting to attempt any survey of his long and eminent career, but this House owes, and I am sure will be anxious at once to pay, its own special tribute to him. It is true that it is now many years since he sat upon our benches, but we cannot forget that for the larger part of his political life he was a member of this Assembly, that he held here in succession some of the most responsible offices under the Crown, and that for five years, unusually full of arduous and trying emergencies, he was leader of the Opposition. I am not

using the language of exaggeration when I say that in the closing years of his life he commanded in a greater degree than perhaps any other public man the respect and confidence of men of every shade and section of opinion in this kingdom. That position he won for himself, and by himself, by a life of single-minded devotion to duty. There has been no more splendid example in our time of service which can be rendered to the State by simplicity of nature, sincerity of conviction, directness of purpose, intuitive insight into practical conditions, quiet and inflexible courage, and, above all, I would say, tranquil indifference to praise and blame, and by absolute disinterestedness. Those are the qualities which we are proud to think our country breeds in her sons. They were never more happily mixed, or more fruitfully employed, than in the character and life of the Duke of Devonshire.'

Mr. Balfour said :—

'Of all the statesmen I have known the Duke of Devonshire was the most persuasive speaker ; and he was persuasive because he never attempted to conceal the strength of the case against him. As I put that, it might be regarded as a rhetorical art, but as a rhetorical art it would have been wholly ineffective. In the Duke of Devonshire it was effective because he brought before the public in absolutely clear, transparent, and unmistakable terms the very arguments he had been going through patiently and honestly before he arrived at his conclusions. . . . He had that quality in a far greater measure than any man I have ever known ; and it gave him a dominant position in any assembly. In the Cabinet, in the House of Commons, in the House of Lords, on the public platform, wherever it was, every man said, "Here is one addressing us who has done his best to master every aspect of this question, who has been driven by logic to arrive at certain conclusions, and who is disguising from us no argument on either side which either weighed with him or moved him to come to the conclusion at which he has arrived.

How can we hope to have a more clear-sighted or honest guide in the course we ought to pursue?" That was the secret of his great strength as an orator. As a man he had a singular gift. He had that transparent simplicity of character which gave him the power of arousing and retaining the affections of all those with whom he came into personal contact.'

These speeches express the general impression which had been made upon the minds of Englishmen of all political creeds, by that which the writer in the *Times* well called 'the simple greatness of the character' of their lost fellow-countryman. In a debate in the House of Lords in 1911, Lord Lansdowne, discussing a scheme by which, in a reformed House, the hereditary peers would elect a certain proportion of their number to represent them, said: 'If this system were in force, and if the late Duke of Devonshire were with us still, his name would probably figure on the list sent in by every member sitting on either side of the House. The Duke of Devonshire was a man who never allowed party considerations to outweigh the high principles for which he was so conspicuous.'

A private secretary, or high permanent official, has even better opportunities than a political colleague for understanding the mind and character of his chief. Sir Almeric Fitzroy served the Duke of Devonshire, in the Privy Council Office, during eight years, first in one of these capacities and then in the other, and, in addition to his already quoted reminiscences, he has been so good as to contribute the following general observations to this Memoir:—

'With the death of the Duke of Devonshire the noblest and most commanding figure in contemporary politics passed away. The gap he made may be measured by the ambitions of those who would seek to fill it. There

were many qualified to give more glib impression to the current ideas of the time. There was none so able to weigh them in the balance of criticism and assign their permanent value.

'It was characteristic of the Duke's intellect to test everything in the crucible of experimental logic, and he never subscribed to any deduction that failed to pass that test.

'With no quickness to affirm or deny a proposition, his attitude towards the problem which he had to solve was such that he never left it without having gone to the root of every argument by which it was susceptible of approach. The integrity of his method made it impossible for him to overlook anything that could be said in favour of a course from which he shrank; for his first step was to seek out all that could be urged on its behalf, just as he was wont to challenge investigation of every objection to the line he was disposed to pursue. In the course of eight years' close association with him, at the period of his career when his influence was most assured and authoritative, I had the amplest opportunity of watching the movements of his mind and trying the weight of his conclusions, and I have no hesitation in saying that in his day no more sagacious understanding was applied to the solution of political questions and seldom did more tremendous industry in getting to the heart of them, crystallise in judgments of such impressive and penetrating force. With a sense of duty almost unique there was combined a candour of conscience rare in the statesmen of any age. As Lord Rosebery said in the House of Lords on the occasion of his death, "A dozen rhetoricians could be better spared than one speaker of his type."

'A political reputation such as he enjoyed belongs to history, but the qualities that endeared him to men can only live in the records of their testimony. His was the most transparently sincere and unsophisticated mind with which I was ever brought in contact. Its massive honesty must often have proved inconvenient.

'He was one of the most considerate of masters, as well as the most loyal of chiefs. He gave his confidence without reserve, and once given it was not lightly withdrawn. The man who enjoyed it was sure to have his support in the teeth of any challenge: there was no one more cordial in the acknowledgment of service. One of his favourite modes of expression in regard to any request for information he might make was to add, "But if you find it too much trouble I daresay I can do without it"—a touch of generosity that was the best stimulus to exertion.

'There was an extraordinary simplicity and depth of human nature about him which perhaps came out in his relations with subordinates more effectively than in any other connection.

'His last eight years of office covered the evening of one reign and the opening of another: no man perhaps stood higher in the esteem of the sovereigns he served, not one was so endowed with the counsel which is the wisdom and the strength of thrones. During the busy days that preceded and followed the first demise of the Crown which the country had known for more than sixty years, the Duke's advice and support proved an asset of incomparable value in the arduous labours which fell upon his Department.

'He is gone, and all too soon for the uses of the country he served so well. There was something august, like his character, in the closing scene. It is difficult to sum up in a phrase the varied emotions evoked at such an hour, but in a sense it seemed as if the storied pride of a great line had reached its culmination in the life and death present to the mind; and as the hills on all sides drooped to the last resting-place where he was laid in that quiet churchyard, there might have been felt the full force of the words uttered by the Athenian orator above the ashes of the fallen:—

ἔπιφανων γαρ ἀνδρων πασα γὴ ταφος.'

VII

That careful speaker, who is now Prime Minister, said that in the Duke of Devonshire we had 'lost almost the last survivor of our heroic age.' He must have meant that the age recently passed away had been one of heroic conflict waged by men outstanding in character, and of a certain natural greatness and innate force. In Roman history, extending from the lifetime of the first Scipio to that of Julius Cæsar, there is a period, renowned for all time, when the scene was filled by the men of Plutarch, great and striking figures. Energy inspired alike the political contests at home and the wars by which a strong and fighting race, led by a territorial aristocracy, drove outward the bounds of dominion from the confines of Italy almost to their widest extension. That illustrious epoch, much of the same duration, which contained the first and the second Pitt, Wellington, Peel, Palmerston, Beaconsfield, Gladstone, Salisbury, Hartington, and their coevals, will it stand out even so upon the milder record of the history of England? It may be that the affairs of an empire, when brought to a certain degree of magnitude, impede the creation or destroy the action-power of great and free characters, and that, as the machine grows more complex, those who work it must be skilled operatives rather than heroic statesmen. It is possible that future personal greatness may emerge rather in the sphere of the deeper thought and music than in that either of political action, or of the oratory, poetry, and plastic art, which are akin to action. In Roman history the heroism, if one likes to call it by that name, which had disappeared from civic life, re-appeared in those leaders who built the majestic fabric of the Catholic Church and Doctrine. Force, or energy, is never lost, but is transferred to new

forms or modes of operation, and that which vanishes in Cæsar may return in Saul of Tarsus.

It was certainly felt that the death of the Duke of Devonshire came at a time when we could ill spare men who were courageous, disinterested, and sincere; wise in council, and strong and independent in action. To him, some thought, could, in these menacing times, be applied the lines of Scott on the death of the second Pitt:—

> 'Hadst thou but lived, . . .
> . . . .
> By thee, as by the beacon light,
> Our pilots had kept course aright;
> As some proud column, though alone,
> Thy strength had propped the tottering throne.
> Now is the stately column broke,
> The beacon light is quenched in smoke.'
> . . . .

The moving limits of history are marked only by each successive moment, but every biography—strange commonplace—is brought to a full stop by the hand of death. What further fate awaits the spirits of men of action? If one has watched the face of the dead, and reflected upon the processes by which each spirit is moulded and hammered into shape by joy and tribulation, experience and toil, it is hard to believe that a force of will and mind so laboriously contrived is destined to be dispersed at a point of time into empty vapour, or be drowned in some formless and limitless unity. Almost as difficult a thing it is to believe that in a departed spirit the memory of things past can survive the closure of death. One reasonably may hold that a being so shaped and moulded, although it may have passed through some Lethean stream, will continue to exist and act, notwithstanding separation from that transient and ever-changing form through which here and now it has been manifest.

Be this profound mystery as it may, a man still, in one sense, and that not an unreal sense, lives and acts, if he has deviated not from the virtues of integrity, fortitude, intellectual temperance, and generosity. His name and memory will then assist to maintain or raise the standard of these virtues, and will serve more especially as an example to those of his own race and kindred. In this sense nothing that is good in the life of any man is wholly lost, for the impulse given is transmitted from one generation to another, and the higher and more conspicuous the position the wider and more enduring may be the effect. For this reason men in all times and at all places have desired to commemorate their leaders in war or peace by lofty tomb or graven image, and to enshrine their deeds in remembered poem or in written story.

APPENDIX

Explanation of the circumstances of his resignation in October 1903, given by the Duke of Devonshire in his speech made in the House of Lords on the 19th February 1904:—

My colleagues, who have already made personal explanations, Mr. Ritchie and Lord George Hamilton, were perfectly justified in the statement they have made, that at the time when they resigned their offices they had every reason to believe from the communications which had passed between us that I intended to have taken the same course at the same time. I do not think it is necessary that I should enter at all fully into the reasons why I formed that intention. Those reasons were, in the main, identical with those which have been fully stated by my colleagues. I perhaps could not have formulated so distinctly as they did the reasons for their action, because I had not at the time, and I have not even now, a very clear idea of what were the measures to which we were asked at that time to give our assent, or of what was the policy to which we were asked to commit ourselves. It may be enough for me to say that both the action and the language of the Prime Minister and of some of his colleagues since the first opening of this question had been to me a cause of great anxiety and doubt. I felt myself obliged to dissent from much that was contained in the pamphlet which has been published by the Prime Minister, and from some of the contents of the Memorandum which was circulated to his colleagues at the same time. I also had in my mind that two only of my colleagues had prepared for the Cabinet Memoranda dealing with the proposals which had been put forward by our colleague the late Colonial Secretary, and had made criticisms of those proposals with which I was on the whole in entire agreement.

At the Cabinet which met on 14th September it was clearly indicated that in the opinion of the Prime Minister the opinions of those members who had expressed themselves in these Memoranda were such as to make it impossible that they could give their assent

to the policy which he was about to propose, and that it was not likely that it would be possible for them, with satisfaction to themselves, to remain members of his Government. Sharing as I did in the main the views which had been expressed by my colleagues, I did not see how, if in the opinion of the Prime Minister they could not with advantage remain in his Cabinet, the same considerations should not apply also to my own case. But there was, however, another reason, which was not referred to in the letters of resignation of my colleagues, but which had a great influence upon me, and I think must have had some influence also with them. I think we were, none of us, quite clear as to the nature of the declarations which the Prime Minister might think it necessary to make in his forthcoming speech at Sheffield; but what I felt, and what we all felt, was that, whatever might be the nature of these declarations, it would be impossible for us to continue to be members of a Cabinet in which the Colonial Secretary would be free to advocate principles which we knew he had adopted, which we also knew it was his intention, either in or out of the Cabinet, to advocate publicly throughout the country. Such a state of things would, I think, have been highly unsatisfactory to us, and contrary to the best interests of the public service. It would have been necessary in such circumstances for me either to remain silent—which would have been an intolerable position for myself—or to have taken an open part in combating a policy which my colleague was advocating, which, I think, would hardly have been a course that would have been decent to colleagues in the same Cabinet.

It is quite true that at the Cabinet to which I am referring some mention was made of the possible resignation of Mr. Chamberlain. My recollection, however, agrees with those of my colleagues who have already stated their views on the subject, that that resignation had not been definitely tendered, still less that it had been, or was likely to be, accepted without protest on the part of the Prime Minister. It is also true that on the evening of the same day, after the Cabinet, I had an interview with the Prime Minister, in which he again referred to the possibility of the resignation of Mr. Chamberlain. But, even at that time, it was not presented to me in such a manner as to lead me to understand that a definite tender of resignation had been made, still less that it was likely to be accepted. At a further interview the next day the subject was again referred to, and the resignation of Mr. Chamberlain was spoken of as being extremely probable, if not certain; but it was not until the third day, the Wednesday of that week, that I learned definitely and finally that that resignation had been tendered and had been

accepted. I admit that this communication appeared to me to make a very great difference in my position.

As I have said, I was not even then clear as to the scope and nature of the declaration that the Prime Minister intended to make at an early date; but I understood that it was to be mainly on the lines of his pamphlet, with which your Lordships are all acquainted; and from passages in that pamphlet, and also from communications which took place between myself and the Prime Minister, I thought I was justified in the statement which I made in the letter in which I finally tendered my resignation. The passage is very short, and perhaps your Lordships will allow me to read it:—

'I had hoped to have found in your speech a definite statement of adherence to the principle of Free Trade as the ordinary basis of our fiscal and commercial system, and an equally definite repudiation of the principle of Protection in the interests of our national industries.'

I thought, from the reasons which I have endeavoured to indicate, that I was justified in forming that opinion as to the general character of the statement which the Prime Minister intended to make. I thought at the time, very wrongly I am afraid, that it was possible that my continued presence in the Cabinet might have the effect of, in some degree, restraining that body from any very wide departure from the principles of Free Trade to which I still adhered. Still my position, I acknowledge, I felt to be an extremely difficult one. But from that moment when I was definitely assured of the resignation of the Colonial Secretary my difficulties were mainly of a personal and not of a public character. I pointed out to the Prime Minister that the effect which the fact of Mr. Chamberlain's resignation had on my mind would in my opinion probably be similar to the effect which that fact would have on the minds of those other colleagues who had already tendered their resignations and whose resignations had been accepted. I understood, however, from him that, whatever might be my decision, there was no intention of asking those colleagues to reconsider theirs, or in fact that any reconsideration on their part would be admitted. My difficulty, therefore, was mainly of a personal character; it was whether I should be wanting in loyalty to those colleagues with whom I had been in communication, who had consulted me as to their course, and whom I had consulted as to mine. My first inclination, I admit, was to insist on being permitted to lay this new fact before my colleagues and consult again with them, and, in fact, to place myself to a great extent in their hands. On reflection, however, I considered that, as nothing which I could do would alter their position, I had no right to ask

them to take any responsibility for my own conduct, which affected myself alone, and that my decision must be made solely upon public grounds. I therefore decided that under these new circumstances it would be my duty to remain a member of the Cabinet, and to exercise what influence I might possess in endeavouring to guide or restrain the action of the Cabinet.

There is one further explanation, or perhaps I ought rather to say one further confession, which I have to make. It is quite true, as was stated in the Prime Minister's letter of reply to me, that I saw before I finally gave my decision the letter in which he had accepted Mr. Chamberlain's resignation. I think if I had at that time fully grasped the significance of that letter my decision would have been a different one. But I can only plead in excuse that the letter was only read to me, that I had no opportunity of considering its terms carefully; and I will also ask noble Lords to remember that this was the third day of these proceedings, days which had been occupied incessantly in meetings of the Cabinet, in interviews, and in correspondence, and the strain upon my mind was very great, as I think it would have been on the mind of any man. I was not in a position, my mind was not so clear and lucid as it ought to have been, and I did not, as I ought to have done, fully grasp the significance of the terms in which the resignation had been accepted. On the next day the Prime Minister had left London; I had an interview, however, with his private secretary, and I again had an opportunity of reading the correspondence with Mr. Chamberlain. That more careful inspection of the correspondence, I acknowledge, filled my mind with the very greatest anxiety, and I doubted whether I had taken a wise step in consenting to remain in the Cabinet. I felt, however, that it was too late to recall my decision, and that I could only trust and hope that, notwithstanding the terms of that letter, the declarations which would be made by the Prime Minister would not be inconsistent with those which I had previously expected. With that object, I had, I think, another interview with the Prime Minister's private secretary, in which I impressed upon him to the best of my ability that I trusted that those declarations would be consistent with the opinion which I had formed that the Prime Minister did not intend to depart widely from the principles of Free Trade as the accepted basis of our fiscal policy.

I have stated already in my letter the reasons which induced me to think, after I had read the speech at Sheffield, that I had altogether misconceived the position and the opinions of the Prime Minister. Although I did not then, and although I do not now, know what measures I might ultimately have been called upon to

defend in this House, I did feel that those declarations, to which I have called special attention in my letter, were entirely opposed to the impressions which I had formed and which I had expected to be fulfilled. It would have been impossible for me, when Parliament reassembled, to stand at this table, or on any platform in the country, and to profess myself as a member of the Prime Minister's Government, still a convinced free-trader, as I am, and always hope that I shall remain. That is, I think, all that I have to say on the personal question. I trust that I have not said anything which may make it necessary for any of us ever to reopen that question, which I am sure your Lordships will admit is, and must be, one of extreme pain and difficulty for me.

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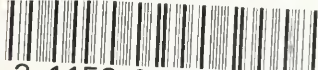

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