CHAPTER I
PARTIES IN THE MELTING POT


THE great overthrow which the new Irish policy had sustained at the General Election of July 1886 seemed, on a superficial view, final and irrevocable. That impression was strengthened by the fact that, but for the unrivalled prestige of Gladstone, the overthrow would have been even more decisive. The position of the Parnellites as the balancing factor in the House of Commons had gone with the suddenness and completeness of a snowfall in May. Leaving aside the Liberal Unionists, the Conservatives alone had a substantial majority over Gladstonians and Parnellites combined, and with the Liberal Unionists a crushing superiority. But the situation was not so simple as these first obvious considerations suggested. Much water was to flow under the bridges before the Liberal Unionists were to be severed from their Liberal affiliations and to become an indistinguishable element of the Conservative Party. On general policy they were still Liberals, and even on the Irish question many of them had as much distaste for coercion as they had for Home Rule. The new party attachments were ad hoc and experimental, and it remained to be seen whether they could bear the strain which events would put upon them. Salisbury, who at Gladstone's suggestion had been sent for by the Queen, was acutely sensible of the delicacy and difficulties of the

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position, and very wisely desired a purely Unionist Government, even securing the Queen's assent to his proposal of a Hartington Ministry. But the relatively small number of Liberal Unionists made this impracticable, and a Conservative administration was formed, with the Liberal Unionists in friendly but vigilant reserve.

The absorption of the Whigs in the Conservative system seemed a very natural development of the near future; but the submergence of the Radical Unionists was still unthinkable. It was not many years since the advent of the republican ex-mayor of Birmingham to Parliament had seemed as ominous a portent as the appearance later of Keir Hardie in a cloth cap, and his name had lost little of its terror for the propertied classes and especially for the landed aristocracy who formed the backbone of the Conservative Party. He was the key to the situation, and his Radical sympathies and his well-known relations with the Parnellites in the past alike made his future activities incalculable. He had tried his fall with Gladstone, and had rolled him in the mud, but he had surrendered none of his general views, and might still be regarded as the most advanced and aggressive figure in politics. There was a widespread conviction that his dissentient attitude was due in part to his temperamental hostility to Gladstone and to his irritation at the failure of his scheme of Irish settlement in the previous summer and the substitution of a Gladstonian alternative. Whether this did injustice to him or not, there seemed no reason why, agreeing with the principle of the late Bill and differing only with its method, he should not himself provide a solution. That, having taught Gladstone a lesson and perhaps expedited that final retirement which had been threatened since 1874 and seemed now so long overdue, he looked to the reunion of the Liberal Party as a strong possibility is evident from his communications with Harcourt. Writing to him (July 19) before the election was quite over, but when the result was assured, he asked him for his opinion as to the course of events, discussed the result of the polls, deplored the division,
which he attributed to Gladstone's determination to deny to him the slightest influence or following, and expressed his annoyance at the idea that Gladstone's conduct should give the Tories a long lease of power. In the course of his reply Harcourt said:

Harcourt to Chamberlain.

Treasury, July 20.—... It is far better that we should now decently bury our dead in the sure and certain hope of a resurrection, not of the same body but of a more glorified form, rather than to have an unseemly battle over the corpse. There will be no occasion therefore for you to defile our ashes. This is the sensible as well as the good-tempered view of the situation, which I assure you Mr. G. takes as completely as any of the rest of us, and he has expressed repeatedly a strong desire to take the course which would best conduce to the reunion of all sections of the Party.

I will not go back on the past. I am not concerned to criticize any of the parties to the transaction. I adhere very much to the views I stated at your house in Birmingham last December, viz. that if Mr. G. insisted the thing must be tried. It has been tried, and for the present has failed. Whether anything else will succeed better remains to be seen. If not, Home Rule will have to be revived in some other form. Whether anything which could have done better could at an earlier stage have been settled between you and Mr. G. I cannot say, but I am sure that after your migration he could not have accepted your ultimatum without altogether alienating the Parnell Party, and to make a proposal which they would not accept was, and always will be, futile.

The great majority of the Unionist Liberals were, and are, nearly as hostile to your views as to those of Mr. G. That is the great difficulty of Salisbury and Hartington. Any proposal which gives any substantial self-government to Ireland will be bitterly and passionately opposed by the Irish Protestants and Tories, and any scheme they could possibly bring forward would be repudiated by both parties in Ireland. They might try bribes, but we shall beat them on that tack...

What will happen in October God only knows—not even Parnell—who probably has not yet made up his mind as to his line of conduct. Even if the Tory Government do not propose coercive measures there will most probably be a long debate on Ireland and Irish policy, and then the Nationalists can obstruct Supply to their hearts' content. I have good reason to believe that Parnell is sick of the H. of C. game, and that he desires to get the eighty-six expelled. I don't think it unlikely that they may end that way, and that so the Irish members will leave Westminster not after our fashion. That of course would only be the beginning of the end, for I fancy
even you are hardly yet ripe for the Crown Colony policy. However, this is all conjecture. . . .

Is there no chance of our accidentally meeting before long somewhere where we could talk over affairs better than it is possible to write.

I met Hartington at Londonderry House last night, and had some chaff, but no serious talk. He expressed surprise that he should meet me in the house of the author of the Union (Castlereagh). I said, "I came to point out to you that the author of the Union ended by cutting his own throat, a warning which I commend to your attention." He would be a great fool if he threw away the very strong position he holds by joining the Tories. . . .

By the way the G.O.M. will be without a house in town. If you are going away why don't you offer him the use of yours? It would be a delicate attention!

Chamberlain replied (July 21) that as to the future if the Irish were wise they would avoid any repetition of their previous amiable practices of obstruction and assassination; if they yielded to the temptation to commit either parliamentary or personal outrages he would advocate crushing them by the strongest coercion. But he volunteered an "accidental" meeting by saying that he was coming to London, and asking Harcourt to give him a dinner in order that he might introduce his son Austen to Loulou.

Harcourt reported the resulting conversation to Gladstone, who replied:

Gladstone to Harcourt.

Coombe Wood, Kingston-on-Thames, August 2.—I have reflected on your report of Chamberlain's conversation. And I remember that, during the worst of all his proceedings after resignation, he was always declaring his anxiety for an accommodation. The test of all such declarations must be in his acts, and the coming election at Birmingham supplies such a test. You appeared to regard his conduct in this election at Birmingham (it must be remembered what he did in the same district on the last occasion) as quite uncertain, and yet to attach some value to his genial words; which I am inclined to regard as worn out by frequent use.

At any rate I see clearly the defining lines of my own position. I am in Parliament to contribute if I can to the settlement of the Irish question, and in no case to impede it. Any settlement that Ireland accepts, I should be very loth to impede. I even ask myself whether it might be possible for the new people to frame some initial plan of federation, and begin by dealing with the Irish part of it.
This node, if possible, would correspond with one at least of Chamberlain's many declarations.

Next to the Irish question I desire to do everything for the reunion of the Party, though with doubts whether this can be effected until Ireland is out of the way, and therefore with a disposition to mislike \textit{prima facie} whatever may seem like a plot to gain time and unity to prolong our present embarrassments. As in the case of Ireland, so in the matter of reunion, I am above all things determined not to be personally an obstacle in the way of what is good.

Events at Birmingham, where Henry Matthews, the new Conservative Home Secretary, was returned with Chamberlain's support, justified Gladstone's suspicions. It was not a hopeful beginning for the reconciliation, or at least the resumption of contact, on which Harcourt's mind was fixed. However he persevered. He conceived the idea of entertaining Gladstone at dinner to meet "the late Cabinet of the House of Commons" before the assembling of the new Parliament; but at Gladstone's suggestion the company was limited to some of his supporters, and Parliament met on August 19 without any further steps towards reconciliation. In the meantime Gladstone had gone to Tegernsee with Lord Acton, and the task of leading the Opposition in the House of Commons at the opening of the new Parliament fell to Harcourt. It fell to him as a matter of course, for there was no one else on the Opposition side who had anything like either his experience or his parliamentary gifts. He adopted, according to his manner, a combative attitude, but qualified it with such wit and good humour that even his foes enjoyed the hearty revels he brought into the House. He had abundant material for his comedy vein in the strange jumble of parties and opinions which composed the Government legions. That confusion was at once apparent in the timidity of the Queen's Speech, whose only constructive proposal was a royal commission to inquire into the working of the Irish Land Act, while on the larger issue Churchill, the new leader of the House, foreshadowed a system of local government in the four countries which formed the United Kingdom. Harcourt likened this love of royal commissions to the passion of
the artist; mentioned by Canning, for red lions. In every kind of picture this man painted a red lion, and the Government evaded every issue by a royal commission.

As the debate proceeded, the breach between the Liberals inevitably emerged to the surface. Chamberlain taunted the Gladstonians with the prospect of wandering in the wilderness for forty years, and when in the course of his reply (August 27) Harcourt was interrupted by Mr. (Lord) Chaplin, he said, "It is preposterous that my right hon. friend the member for Birmingham should, for an hour by the clock, stand here abusing all the gentlemen among whom he sits, and yet that we are not to be allowed to reply to him." He retaliated on him for "the extraordinary soreness" he seemed to display. He was the real author and director of the Government policy. "We may have to wander in the wilderness," he remarked with a sad inflection of his voice, and then, while the Torics cheered, he added, thoughtfully scratching his forehead, "Oh, yes, but that happened to the chosen people." And the cheers were on his side. "But," he continued, looking first at Chamberlain by his side and then pointing to the Tories on the Treasury bench, "they did not follow the first man who invited them to go after the flesh-pots of Egypt." Later in the debate (September 2) he turned his guns upon Churchill as the author of the Belfast riots. What was his object in going to Belfast and calling on Ulster to fight? "There are some places where it is neither necessary nor desirable to poke up the fire." The Orange movement had long been the curse of Ireland. It represented "government by ascendency, by Protestant ascendency, by class ascendency, by race ascendency." Feeling rose high at the weight of these blows, and the Speaker (Peel) called Harcourt to order on the ground of irrelevancy, a proceeding which brought an indignant letter from Gladstone to Harcourt.

Gladstone to Harcourt.

TEGERNSEE, September 6.—I am extremely vexed at the report in Friday's Times of the Speaker's encounter with you. You seem
to have behaved with perfect dignity, but I think he committed the gravest error I can remember ever to have been committed in the Chair. . . . What could be more legitimate than when Randolph's speech was directly relevant to the Amendment, and when it contained a direct reference to the Orangemen of 1798 as a model, you should discuss their conduct: and this even if he had been an ordinary member, much more when you were canvassing the conduct of a minister. You have not suffered, but the reverse: it is Peel who has suffered, for evidently a shock has been given by the proceeding, and it will be difficult to get rid of the consequences. I am very sorry for it, inasmuch as he is a man of excellent qualities and had done very well in a most difficult post. I was not, however, from observation in the last Parliament, without fears of him in the Irish business, and it was on this account that in seconding him I adopted a method which I thought might help to place him on his guard in Irish matters.

Your speech seemed to me admirable, and indeed I am very well satisfied with all that has met my eye. . . .

It has been most wise not to collide with the dissentient Liberals (whom I cannot call Unionists), but the position taken by H. and C. [Hartington and Chamberlain], and apparently agreed to by the followers, is such that matters cannot last long after the real meeting of Parliament without further developments in one sense or another. . . .

Harcourt took his brush with the Speaker quite amiably. "The Tories very furious with my assault on Randolph," he wrote to his wife (September 3). "The Speaker, who is not well, got irritable. Our people were angry, and kept up the fight for an hour after I went away and are to renew it to-day, but I shall counsel peace and moderation. It is too hot for fight. . . ."

But the debate discovered not only the weak places in the armour of the Government; it revealed a sore spot in the ranks of the Gladstonians. The introduction of the Land Purchase Bill, urged by Spencer and Mr. Morley as a corollary of Home Rule, had never been popular with the Party and had been largely responsible for the debacle. In the discussions on the Government idea of the conversion of dual ownership into single ownership by land purchase, Harcourt said that, whatever the merits of the proposal, the action of the Conservatives and the Liberal Unionists on the subject had made it a practical
impossibility. "I believe," he said, "it can never receive the support which would be necessary to the dealing with such vast sums of money." Both Spencer and Mr. John Morley were alarmed. The latter wrote to Harcourt:

Mr. Morley to Harcourt.

Frensham, Farnham, August 29.—I greatly admired your powerful reply to Chamberlain, but I think that your repudiation of the policy of the Land Bill for the future gives him practically the best of it, and leaves some of us, including Mr. G., in a very awkward position. We say that there is an obligation of honour, and next, we say that H. Rule would never work if the Irish Parliament were left with the landlords on their hands. You say—in effect—that the constituencies don't recognize the obligation, and that henceforth you wash your hands of Land Purchase at any price.

You may be right—but I cannot make out why it was necessary to say it now.

Chamberlain, of course, saw his advantage instantly. He at once whispered to me eagerly. "Do you agree with Harcourt? If you don't, you are divided already." I gave him no answer, or an evasive one, but they will now spare no effort to "draw" Spencer and me.

Spencer was no less disturbed. "You went beyond Mr. Gladstone and his pamphlet," he wrote, "for he distinctly says that it is right for us to deal with the land difficulty, while announcing the end of the twinship of the two measures." If it meant that he (Spencer) was to go out of politics it was no great matter; "but John Morley is of great moment, and if I interpret your speech properly you seem to separate yourself from him on this important point." Harcourt, replying to Mr. Morley (August 31), said he thought he had confined himself to Gladstone's declaration (in the pamphlet published after he left for Tegernsee) that "Home Rule and Land Bill were henceforth separable."

Harcourt to Mr. Morley.

... You may depend upon it (he continued) you never can or will have Home Rule with a Land Bill. You may perhaps have it without. The Land Bill did, and always will, kill the Home Rule measure. I am sure this is Mr. G.'s esoteric opinion. I don't think there are half a dozen members of our Party who would vote for any measure buying out the landlords, and if we mean to stick to this as a sine qua non we may as well give up the whole concern. However,
you will observe that as to the future of a Land Bill I was careful only to speak for myself.

When you say "Chamberlain sees his advantage," the advantage is in pinning you to a Land Bill on which he can always smash you, and not in what I said, which would force him into the position of opposition to Home Rule per se.

Meanwhile, the storm clouds were rising over Ireland. Two elections had taken place in nine months. The first, condemning coercion, had raised Irish hopes higher than ever before; the second, cancelling the first and condemning conciliation, had dashed them to the ground. Nor was this all. The state of the peasants had once more touched low-water mark, and even The Times, hostile as it was to Ireland, had declared that the rentals of the weak and even the comparatively strong men would have to be written off as a bad debt. What was to be done? The tenants, it was admitted, could not pay. Were they to be evicted? Parnell gave notice of a Tenants' Relief Bill. The question of the suspension of evictions was the crux of the matter. Gladstone, writing to Harcourt from Tegernsee (September 7), said: "At the same time I feel, more and more, that the appointment of a Commission to inquire into rents is in itself an admission that there is a prima facie case for reduction in certain cases: and that to allow eviction, in such cases, during the examination of the matter, is totally indefensible." He expressed his readiness to come back to support the second reading of Parnell's Bill (which had been amended at the suggestion of the Liberal leaders) if Harcourt thought it necessary. Harcourt wrote (September 10) that he must come back.

... Morley and I (he said) shall be placed in a false and almost cruel position if we are liable to be told by our opponents and by the lukewarm of our own Party that we are rashly acting in the teeth of your judgment—-a thing which in your absence we have no means of refuting.

The information I have at present is that the Hartington party will support the Government in force, and that the Chamberlain section will abstain. The abstention of the latter will be a strong weapon in our hands, but it will be altogether blunted if they can point to your abstention as neutralizing it. Indeed when I said to
Hartington yesterday, "I hear Chamberlain is going away" his reply was, "And I hear Mr. Gladstone is staying away." This will do us great harm and depress the Party all through the country. . . .

Gladstone hastened back, writing letters to Harcourt on the way, in one of which he returned to the question of the Speaker's "sad blunder in your case." "A second such case," he said, "would make his position untenable." The plea for suspension of the eviction campaign was powerfully argued, but the Government were immovable, and Parnell's Bill was thrown out by a majority of 95. With that declaration of war on the peasant, Parliament rose.

II

"Whatever else happens I mean to have a quiet October," wrote Harcourt (October 4) to Spencer, who had written to him on the subject of whether there should be autumn campaigning. Harcourt agreed with Lord Rosebery that it was wise for ex-ministers to be quiet at the moment. He had made no engagements, and meant to make none. Malwood was at last completed, and he was reveling in the delights of the New Forest and writing to Gladstone of the wonders of the autumn tints. "I was never more resolved than I am now that the trees shall not be turned into any other kind of gold," he said with a sly dig at the proposals to fell wood in the Forest for the profit of the Crown. But his plans were interfered with. The annual meeting of the National Liberal Federation to be held at Leeds was approaching, and Mr. Morley, who was to have been the chief speaker, wrote to him asking him to take his place, because Churchill was speaking just before at Bradford, and "you will demolish Churchill, who will need it," while "I am not meant for a demolisher." Harcourt protested, but when Gladstone—"my eye, fairly bunged up by a wasp, is open again 3 p.m."—wrote also entreat- ing him to go and "pound Randolph" he yielded. On his way he called, with Mr. Morley, at Hawarden, from whence he wrote (November 2) to his wife, "This morning was lovely, and we walked about in the grounds,
and the G.O.M. took odd chops at a big tree which will take about as long felling as the Union."

He went on to Leeds (November 3) and duly "pounded Randolph," in a speech of boisterous gaiety. Referring to the future of Home Rule, he recalled the history of all political movements:

... When the Liberal Party proposes some great reform the Tories declare it is mischievous and dangerous, that its authors are wicked and profligate men and so they go on, it may be for ten years, it may be for five years, it may be for one year, or for six months, and then all of a sudden they turn round and find that this measure was an excellent measure, and they say, "Only let us be in office and we will do it ourselves." If this has been the case with Liberal reforms in the past, do you doubt that it will be the history of Liberal reforms in the future?...

"Oh," they say, "Yes, but we succeed where you fail." Well, why? If you are dragging a cart up a hill, and if you have got a strong horse behind it pulling against you it is a difficult job, but if that horse which was pulling against you behind is harnessed on in front it is much easier of course to get up the hill. That is the history of all Liberal reforms. The plans which they declared dangerous they adopt. They say, "See what great reformers we are." That is all very well if it were not that years and generations have been lost by those processes, by that obstinate resistance to things which are afterwards admitted to be just and right; and depend upon it you will find they will in a short time do the same with Home Rule as they have done with other subjects.

There was much correspondence between Gladstone, Harcourt and Mr. Morley during the next few weeks as to policy. Mr. Morley was going on a speaking tour in Scotland, and was disturbed by the demands that he should raise Disestablishment, which would "make the split still more besplitten." Harcourt himself was also being urged by Schnadhorst to go to Wales to raise the banner of Disestablishment, but he declined to complicate an already too complicated situation by raising an issue on which, as a stout Erastian, he never felt very acutely. The position of the Gladstonians as the true guardians of Liberal ideas was made more difficult by Randolph Churchill's proclamation of "Tory democracy," which had naturally stimulated the appetite of the Liberal Party in the country for drastic
reform. Writing to Harcourt (November 16), Gladstone said:

... Randolph, by taking up the Liberal Programme, has, as was to be expected, caused a superabundance of Radical ideas on our side. I do not know how you view this. I will not break with the 200 (the Federation) or the Radical section of them if I can help it. But I am rather too old to put on a brand new suit of clothes.

But Harcourt insisted that if his clothes were stolen he must "for decency's sake assume new garments." In a long letter (November 17) to Gladstone, in which he protested against his practice of "directing to me simpliciter 'New Forest' as if I was William Rufus," he discussed many questions raised by Gladstone, and, referring to the conflict between Austria and Russia in the Balkans, and the danger of England being involved in it, he said:

_Harcourt to Gladstone._

... The old fetish of the "integrity of the Ottoman Empire" is as dead as a door nail and we shall hear no more of it. It seems to me that the Czar is in such a position with reference to Bulgaria that whatever are the consequences he cannot retreat, and must move forward either diplomatically or physically. I very much doubt, if he does, whether Austria will forcibly resist. She has plainly no promise of support from Bismarck, or Kalnoky's tone would have been much firmer than it was. The cocks are all crowing in the cockpit of Europe. The variations and permutations of the several Powers, Germany, Russia, Austria, France and Italy may be infinite in their combination. For us I am convinced there is but one safe and solid position, viz. that of absolute uncompromising neutrality in the quarrel—I hope we shall take the ground as a Party at once, hold it strongly, proclaim it as our policy, and abide by it firmly.

We have not yet recovered the effects of the fatal error of the Crimean War, and we will not let any Government repeat it. ...
His heart still strayed to Birmingham, and when Chamberlain returned from a tour with Jesse Collings in Turkey, he held out an olive branch to him, couched in the following breezy terms:

_Harcourt to Chamberlain._

MALWOOD, December 13.—I am glad to see that you have returned from your ticket-of-leave. The late Home Secretary will wink hard at this breach of prison regulations. You have probably returned from the East in a condition of deplorable ignorance as to the state of civilization in the West, especially in the westernmost of the British Islands. As I am always desirous to enlighten the benighted I feel a yearning to see you. In the New Forest a fez and loose breeches will not attract attention. Pray come and see us. If you are accompanied by the father of the dissolute David (Jesse Collings), the chief eunuch of your seraglio, we shall be all the better pleased. He will find here plenty of Uriahs with an allotment and a ewe lamb apiece, though I fear he has abandoned all these early enthusiasms of his agrarian innocence.

I dare say you think you are the only man who ever built a new house, but that is not the fact. Here we are on the top of a hill. I can promise you that which even Birmingham in its regenerate state can hardly offer you, a country in which the scent of a Liberal within a range of 10 miles shall not offend your nostrils. I live here as a separatist resembling a leper in the Holy Land, and the people as they see me pass by on the other side and cry "unclean, unclean!" There is only one thing that I think could by possibility rehabilitate me, and that is that you should have been known to have visited me in this "lodge in some vast wilderness, a boundless contiguity of shade." I can promise you a warm house and warmer welcome. Ireland shall never be mentioned except with twenty-four hours' notice, and on the top of the bookshelves in my library you will see the "blackguard Pitt," the author of the Union, before whom you may make your daily devotions on the carpet you have no doubt brought with you from Mecca.

You owe me a visit, and if you are an honest man you will pay your debts. You will remember that it is just about a twelvemonth ago that Loulou and I came to see you at Birmingham, when we sat up till two o'clock in the morning endeavouring to mitigate the violence of the furious repealer Jesse, who in answer to all our objections, to all our difficulties as to the abrogation of the Union, contemptuously repulsed us by the reiterated statement that those were "administrative details"—details which since then have overthrown two administrations, and will probably prove fatal to many more. Since that time a great deal has happened, and many things are changed except that I am always yours sincerely.
Chamberlain replied in similar vein. He would rejoice to join him in historical researches, but his engagements made it impossible for him to pay his visit to Malwood until later. However, contact had been resumed, and two events followed a week later which seemed suddenly to bring an accommodation in sight. Two days before Christmas the country was startled by the announcement in *The Times* that Churchill had resigned the Chancellorship of the Exchequer. His conflicts with the old guard of the Conservative Party had reached a crisis over finance, in regard to which he had assumed Harcourt's "skinflint" attitude with more than Harcourt's claim to dictate to the departments, and in a moment of irritation he threw up his office. It was, for him, a fatal miscalculation. He had in five or six brief years gone up like a rocket, but after the explosion nothing of his political career remained. The assumption on which his action was based, that the Salisbury Government could not live without him, proved wrong. For a moment the situation hung in the balance. Salisbury appealed without success to Hartington to take the premiership, and the collapse of the administration or the return of Churchill on his own terms seemed possible. But Churchill's spring was counteracted from an unforeseen quarter. Goschen, whom he had "forgotten," stepped into the breach, thus creating the first official Conservative contact with the Whig wing of the dissentient Liberals.

It was a master stroke, and Churchill's fall was final. But with his fall the appropriation of the Radical clothes was repudiated. Salisbury had no love for other people's clothes, and loathed those colleagues who yearned to wear them. With the disappearance of what he called the "carbuncle on the neck" he was at last master in his own house. But the fact had other repercussions. The Radical wing of the dissentient Liberals had fixed their hopes on

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1 Lord Harcourt used to relate that when Churchill declared that the advice previously given him by Harcourt had prompted his resignation, Harcourt answered, "Yes, but when I resigned I had the Prime Minister on my side."
Churchill as the instrument of their purposes. 'Now that he was gone they found themselves attached to a purely reactionary system, reinforced by one whom Chamberlain disliked even more than a Tory, the Whig "skeleton at the feast."' That same day (December 23) Chamberlain delivered a speech which could only be construed into a desire for reunion, and Harcourt, always eager to snatch at any chance of saving the party ship at once communicated with him, expressing his readiness to co-operate towards that end. From this incident sprang the memorable Round Table Conference.
CHAPTER II

THE ROUND TABLE

Lord Randolph's Resignation—The Plan of Campaign—Chamberlain’s conciliatory attitude—Gladstone's view of a modus vivendi—Preliminary negotiations between Harcourt and Chamberlain—Mr. Morley's suspicions—Meetings of Round Table Conference—Chamberlain at Hawick—The Baptist Letter—The rupture—Mr. Morley's hostility to Chamberlain—Mr. Trevelyan's return to the Party—Harcourt's Derby Speech on the Conference.

It was a cheerful Christmas for the Gladstonians. "My battledore returns heartily (if that implement has a heart) your 'happy Christmas and New Year,'" wrote Gladstone to Harcourt on Christmas Eve. "Whatever else Randolph has done he has given me a merry Christmas," wrote Harcourt to Mr. Morley. The latter was no less cheerful. "You showed so much real good nature," he wrote to Harcourt (December 24), "about the relations between him [Chamberlain] and me that I am sure you will be glad to hear that he wrote me a couple of days ago a particularly cordial and friendly letter (the first for nearly a twelvemonth) wishing me all good things (to-day is my birthday), hoping we should carry as little bitterness as possible into public discussion, etc. I responded in the same vein, and feel much happier in consequence. I don't suppose this has any political motive whatever, but it certainly makes things easier for me."

The two happenings of December 23 had warmed the Opposition atmosphere as much as they had chilled that of the Government. Churchill's resignation and the consternation it had caused in the ministerial ranks, had opened
out a new political landscape, and in the foreground of that landscape was a glimpse of Chamberlain carrying what looked like an olive branch. The two events were closely connected. There were many disagreements between Churchill and his colleagues, on local government, on finance, on Ireland, on foreign affairs. "R. C. gives it to be understood," wrote Harcourt to his wife (December 29), "that he did not go out on finance, but that he withstood Salisbury who in the interest of the Court was thrusting Battenbergism on the Continent and bringing about a European war." But his financial proposals—he contemplated a big succession duty—spread alarm among the landed interest, and were the immediate cause of his resignation. The ultimate causes of the breach, however, were deeper. Churchill was as disruptive a force in politics as Chamberlain, and had less than Chamberlain's continuity of purpose. He had in the past two years swung violently to and fro between the extremes of Irish policy, and in his present phase of Tory democracy seemed to represent within the Cabinet much of what was associated with Chamberlainism. He was entirely distrusted by what he had called "the old gang" of his party, who suspected that he was now little better than the instrument of Chamberlain, and he returned the distrust with the loathing and impatience of his fiery and undisciplined spirit. His dramatic proceeding had very varying reactions on the political leaders. It caused mingled joy and panic in the ministerial ranks. It gave delight to Gladstone. "The question is raised," he wrote to Harcourt (December 24), "whether after all R. Churchill has a conscience. This is good, for it is really material to the country that he should have. Even the poor shrunken decrepit form that was once in my young days stalwart, the form of public economy, may have some life breathed into it."

No one was more directly affected by the event than Chamberlain, who was intimately acquainted with the causes of Churchill's quarrel with his colleagues. If Churchill's coup failed, the leader of the Radicals would
be left as a supporter of an unmitigated Tory ministry. Even if the Whigs joined the Government, they would be a poor substitute for Churchill. Chamberlain had only recently emerged from a bitter quarrel with Hartington and Goschen, and his reconciliation with them proceeded from no real agreement on Ireland and might vanish at any turn of the wheel of events.

Already a change had come over the sky in Ireland which threatened to put a severe strain on his support of the Government. The rejection of Parnell's Tenants' Relief Bill had been a declaration of war on the impoverished peasantry, and the effects were immediate. The tenants on the Woodford estate in Galway belonging to Lord Clanricarde—who had never been seen by his tenants—refused to pay the impossible rents demanded of them, with the result that innumerable evictions were carried out with all the accompaniments of military force, sieges, houseless families by the roadside, and other incidents that lost nothing through the telling of W. T. Stead in the Pall Mall Gazette. This policy of violence was met by the Plan of Campaign, first declared by Mr. William O'Brien and Mr. John Dillon at Woodford—a plan for combined action by the tenants, who were to offer the landlords' agents what they agreed they could pay, handing it over, if it were refused, to a fund for the support of the evicted tenants. The Plan of Campaign was an immediate success, and evoked the inevitable retaliation. Mr. Dillon and Mr. O'Brien were arrested, and a new agrarian war of extreme violence was inaugurated. Chamberlain saw himself in danger of being involved in a bitter attack on the peasantry in the interests of the absentee landlords and at the instance of a Tory Government now unchecked by Churchill's impulsive but humane instincts.

In these circumstances he made the speech of Dec. 23 at West Birmingham which interpreted Churchill's resignation as meaning that the old Tory influence had gained the upper hand in the Government, and urged grounds for a Liberal reconciliation. "I am convinced," he said, "that
sitting round a table and coming together in a spirit of compromise and conciliation, almost any three men, leaders of the Liberal Party . . . would be able to arrange some scheme, etc.” In this mood, also, he wrote the birthday letter which had given Mr. Morley so much pleasure. The atmosphere was peculiarly favourable for a rapprochement. Nearly a month before (November 29) Mr. Morley told Harcourt, after a visit to Hawarden, that Gladstone was revolving the project of a conference. A meeting of the Liberal Unionists at Willis’s rooms on December 7, when Hartington, Selborne and Goschen were very hostile to Hawarden, seemed to put the idea out of the question. Chamberlain had sent a telegram to the meeting from the East. It was, said Harcourt to Mr. Morley, “nasty without being strong. Being interpreted it meant he [Chamberlain] was open to any plan so long as Mr. G. ate dirt.” If not ready to eat dirt, Gladstone was willing to go far. Spencer, who did not believe in reunion at present, wrote to Harcourt (December 13) that “Mr. G. is ready to grovel in the dust to bring about reunion, either from remorse at having divided the Party or because he feels time is against him.” Harcourt himself at this moment thought reconciliation wholly delusive, and writing to Granville (December 14) said, “I feel confident that the motto of the Hartington-Chamberlain league is delenda est Hawarden, and that they will have peace at no price.”

Then came the Churchill bolt and Chamberlain’s speech. Harcourt was convinced of the latter’s good faith, but Mr. Morley was suspicious. “Is J. Chamberlain simply foxing as he did all through the Session?” he asked Harcourt, to which the latter replied on Christmas Day:

... I am not such a suspicious character as you are, and I believe from whatever motive that he really desires a modus vivendi with his old friends and if that is really his wish we should be idiots to balk him. I have written to him a letter of satisfaction on his speech, and expressed a desire on my own part to co-operate in any reasonable plan of reunion. I have also offered to meet him in London if he wishes it. ... There are only two people who can seriously affect the situation now. One is Chamberlain, the other is
Hartington. With the latter we can do nothing. "The former I think should be judiciously handled.

"Let us go in hot and strong for a compromise with our old friends and not mince matters too much if the thing can be done," he wrote next day to Mr. Morley. "After all the smash of a great party is a great evil and one which it is worth making some sacrifice to repair." And on the same day he wrote a long letter to Gladstone urging the acceptance of Chamberlain's olive branch, and discussing the sensational turn of events in the political world:

_Harcourt to Gladstone._

**MALWOOD, December 26.— . . .** You are charitable in your speculations on Randolph's motives. You will think me ill-natured if I quote the saying to me some weeks before the event of a good friend of his who told me R. had said, "There is no chance for any one in this country who does not give it a sensation once a month," and his friend added, "You will see he will do something startling in about a month"—and so he has with a vengeance. This taste for sensations grows like opium eating, and this has been a rattler. For himself I think he has made a great mistake. He has thrown away a bigger position than he will ever make.

When I saw him on his accession to office I said to him, "Whatever you do be orthodox and be economical. Those are the only two virtues of a Ch. of the Exch. . . ." I have always maintained that there never would be a chance for real economy till a Ch. of the Exch. did really resign on the Estimates. I was a little jealous of R. C., for he has taken the prize which, as you know, I very nearly won last March and thereby saved £3,000,000 out of the jaws of Ripon and C. Bannerman. But then I had the good fortune to have the Prime Minister on my side, which R. C. had not—and that makes a difference. . . .

Chamberlain's speech at all events shows that he is in no mind for a combination with Salisbury in any shape, and if he stands out there would be an end of the Liberal Unionists as a Party, which to us would be an immense gain apart from all other considerations. . . .

I am all for making the most of Chamberlain's advances, and from what J. Morley tells me the leader of the Irish Party is not in an unreasonable frame of mind, so that a _modus vivendi_ may possibly be found. . . .

But Mr. Morley was still haunted by the suspicion that Chamberlain was "foxing." "The more I hear of things," he wrote to Harcourt (December 28), "the more do I stick
to the point that, "we ought to be in no hurry publicly to clasp the proffered hand of Chamberlain until we know what he really means." For that an interview between Harcourt and Chamberlain, he said, was indispensable.

The preparations for such a meeting were already in train. Harcourt, alone among the Gladstonians, had remained in close touch with Chamberlain. His letter to him on the Birmingham speech overflowed with enthusiasm and approval. "I am quite ready to carry my spade and mattock to the work," he said. Chamberlain was equally cordial in reply (December 26), and outlined his views, giving precedence to a strong Land Bill as the most urgent necessity, and saying that when he spoke of "three Liberals round a table" he had in mind Harcourt, Herschell and Fowler, as those who had done nothing to embitter differences and to whom he could submit his suggestions in detail. He did not contemplate complete personal reunion as the result of any conference. He expressed himself as bitterly wounded by the injustice and ingratitude of former associates and supporters, and said he felt a period of temporary effacement for himself necessary. Two letters to Harcourt followed next day from Jesse Collings and Dr. Dale of Birmingham. With surprising unanimity they disclaimed any communication with Chamberlain or any knowledge on his part of the overtures they were making. And with equally surprising unanimity they made identical proposals, based on the same facts—Churchill's resignation and Chamberlain's olive branch, the danger of a long Salisbury rule, the rejection of Home Rule by the country leading up to a reunion of Liberals on a common platform, "nobody wearing a white shirt."

Harcourt was in high spirits, and was convinced that everything was coming right. He sent Chamberlain's "Eirenikon" to Gladstone with his enthusiastic blessing, and received his approval of a conference, with reserves. Gladstone did not think the modus vivendi lay in the preliminary framing of a Land Bill, and the postponement to it of the question of social order in Ireland, but rather in ascertaining
whether, if Home Rule could not be had at once, there could be, "a measure worth Ireland's taking in the province of local government with the assent of the Liberals, the Nationalists and the dissentient Liberals. "I am going to pay him (Chamberlain) a harmless compliment in an article . . . in the January *Nineteenth Century,*" he said. "I ought to have mentioned my opinion that Chamberlain, though his power of opposing and damaging in debate is great, has no large following to offer us nor one of which the quality would make up for defect in quantity." He recurred to this theme two days later when, writing to Harcourt, he said:

_Gladstone to Harcourt._

_Hawarden Castle, December 29.—._ It occurred to me on reading Chamberlain that he had not sufficiently allowed for the dual nature of the question before him: 1. What is fit to be done; 2. Who is to do it. On the whole I expect it will be found that the first question practically as well as logically is who are to be the Government.

I am in the pleasant troubles of a birthday, on which Chester reinforces the local P.O. with an extra clerk, and we send up a donkey cart to bring down the first delivery. It is well that my family is tolerably populous, or the business of opening could hardly have been managed . . .

I am afraid Chamberlain falls into a mistake, the commonest of all mistakes in the Liberal Party; namely the supposition that when the power to do harm is great there is a commensurate power to do good. Whereas the useful power is often not a tenth part of the evil one.

I am afraid I cannot stiffly contend for my hasty presumption about Randolph's conscience.

In the meantime Harcourt had left Malwood for London to meet Chamberlain. "Altogether," he wrote to Gladstone (December 29), "I consider the crisis as highly healthy in its developments. Randolph has extinguished himself, at least for the present. The Tories are very indignant with Salisbury for having despaired of going on without Hartington. Hartington is snubbed by the Tories, and the Coriolanus of Birmingham is in a melting mood. Considering what was the state of things a fortnight ago this is surely a great advance."
The meeting of Harcourt and Chamberlain took place at Harcourt's house in Grafton Street on December 30, and writing to Gladstone later in the day Harcourt, describing the interview, said:

_Harcourt to Gladstone._

_Grafton Street, December 30.—._ I insisted as an absolute preliminary that nothing should be done which should bear the appearance of an abandonment on our part of the principle of an Irish legislative body for Irish affairs as a part of the policy for the settlement of Ireland, leaving, however, absolutely open the discussion of the nature and attributions of that body. Chamberlain was, I think, rather anxious to have limited the discussion to Land and Local Government, but he yielded to my insistence on the third capital point. The matter stands thus. He proposes that a certain number amongst us should meet him to discuss—

1. Irish land.
2. Irish local government.
3. What form of Irish legislature could be adopted.

The names which have been suggested by Chamberlain are Herschell, John Morley, myself and H. Fowler. He desired to have Fowler as a financial expert on the land question.

If we should fail to find a common ground we shall be no worse off than we are now. If we succeed we shall be in a much better plight. And in any case, by this evidence of mutual goodwill, we shall have extracted much of the personal venom out of the controversy.

I trust that this overture in principle may receive your sanction. Of course as far as we are concerned the whole discussion would be conducted under your auspices and instructions.

Next day (December 31) there was a further meeting of the two, and a few passages from the Journal will convey the spirit of the negotiations at this critical moment:

_December 31._—Chamberlain came at twelve. W. V. H. read over to him an extract from his (H.'s) letter to Gladstone last night, stating the terms of the arrangement, and Chamberlain tried once more to bolt from the Irish legislature clause, and wanted to substitute for it the words "legislative body or bodies." W. V. H. was very stiff, said it was impossible to alter that, and Chamberlain gave way.

W. V. H. pressed Chamberlain again to have some of his Unionist friends on the Committee, suggesting Trevelyan, and Chamberlain had to consent, though he said he thought they might with advantage have come in later, when perhaps some agreement had been already arrived at. He said he had very little hope of Hartington, who did
not at all approve of this idea of a Committee and told Chamberlain that he was putting himself in the hands of a lot of clever fellows with Gladstone at their back and that he would get the worst of it.

At one o'clock W. V. H. said he believed John Morley was at the Athenæum and would Chamberlain like to see him? C. hummed and hawed, said he had to lunch at Dilke's at two, and perhaps there was not time. I offered to go down in a cab to bring John Morley up, and he could not invent any other excuse, so I did so.

Morley has heard from Brett [Lord Esher] this morning that Chamberlain has been pressing Hartington to form a Coalition Government!

I brought Morley into the room and he met Chamberlain for the first time since the breach of their relations last May. They wished one another a happy New Year, and W. V. H. plunged in medias res so as to avoid any awkwardness. They were both very obviously shy of one another. Subject to Gladstone's approval the Committee is to meet on January 13 and 14, and Chamberlain is to come down to Mafwood on the latter day.

Chamberlain and Morley went off in a cab together. Chamberlain asked Morley to go with him to Irving's box at the Lyceum to-night, and said, "Hang public opinion! Why should we not be seen together?" Morley had not given an answer, and wanted to know from W. V. H. whether he was to go or not. W. V. H. advised him to go. It was a great relief to W. V. H. that John Morley is going to be on the committee. . . . [H.]

Mr. Morley's suspicions were not removed. He desired reunion, but he had less confidence in Chamberlain's good intentions than Harcourt had, and when the latter wrote with furious anger against Labouchere's mischievous attempts to keep the wounds of the Party open, he replied:

95, Elm Park Gardens, January 3.—I don't think it will do at all to put down our foot on H. Labouchere. Personally he carries no weight, but what he says on this business is what all our staunchest friends are thinking. I am as anxious as you to make things easy for J. Chamberlain. But the chances are ten to one against modus vivendi, and then we shall want all our friends: don't let us damp their ardour in the meanwhile.

I doubt the expediency of turning on C. W. D. [Dilke]. He will trim the sails too much in the Birmingham direction. I think I will keep my own hand on the D. N. [Daily News] helm for a few days, if the giant who edits it will let me. . . .

"Oh thou of little faith!" replied Harcourt, "how troublesome you are with your suspicions. You even
attribute the same qualities to others without their deserving it." And he enclosed triumphantly a letter from Spencer welcoming the prospects of the Conference. Gladstone shared something of Mr. Morley's distrust. Churchill's resignation had left Chamberlain in a hole. "We stand midway in his estimation between the Government + Churchill and the Government - Churchill," he wrote to Harcourt. But he approved of the Conference, and at Harcourt's request he sent him an elaborate agenda for the proceedings, and telegraphed to him authority to use ad libitum his letter of December 27 as a public blessing on the coming event. Harcourt thereupon drafted a press communiqué which duly appeared. Everything seemed working for success. Goschen had joined the Government, and damned it in the sight of Chamberlain. The latter had now no companionship on the ministerial side, and, caught between two antagonisms, was disposed to make terms with that which seemed the less objectionable. The Gladstonians were anxious to welcome him, though with caution. "Do be more suspicious" was Mr. Morley's persistent warning. But Harcourt was bubbling over with faith in the honesty of everybody and with joy in the sudden change in the fortunes of the thing he cared for most, the Party. Writing to Gladstone he said:

MALWOOD, January 3.--- . . . I am extremely well satisfied with the issue of the crisis. I am very glad Goschen is to join the Government.

(1) Because he would never have been anything but a thorn in our side,
(2) Because it shuts the door in the face of Randolph,
(3) Because it secures the animosity of Chamberlain,
(4) Because it detaches him from Hartington,
(5) Because he will make a bad leader,
(6) Because he will make a good Chancellor of the Exchequer.
(You see I put that last.) Are these not six good reasons?

Altogether the New Year opens upon us with far brighter prospects than we could have anticipated a few weeks ago. . . .

He was confident of success. "If there is a desire to agree," he wrote to Hartington's private secretary, "the
dullest men will find a way; if there is not the cleverest fellows will fail. ' As we happen to be all very clever men sincerely anxious to agree, I expect we shall succeed, and the Liberal Party by penny subscriptions [an allusion to the gold wreath for Disraeli] will erect a statue to the peacemaker Randolph.' He even had hopes of Hartington. He would come in late to the Conference as he came in late for dinner, he told Chamberlain. In a rollicking New Year's letter to his oldest political friend, James, he said the Round Table would after the Conference go to Malwood, "where I hope you will one day sit at it to settle the details of Home Rule. Some 'earnest Liberals' have applied to take some of the furniture as mementoes. I think of cutting it up into 'chips' and selling them at Hawarden prices. . . . Good-bye, my dear old fellow, and good luck for '87. Let us both be happy in the belief that we are each right and both about to win."

Gladstone, like Mr. Morley, was still full of warnings of an ambush. When the preliminaries were arranged he wrote a cautionary letter to Harcourt in which he said:

Gladstone to Harcourt.

Hawarden, January 7.--. . . In your conversation, you three will represent in one sense 280, and in a fuller sense say 195 votes. They two will represent six or eight? The 195 with firm ground under their feet; the six or eight (if they be so many) floating in the air. While we had better not (I suppose) blazon this inequality, it seems clear that we should say nothing which could seem to show we were not aware of it. . . .

Although one is apt to be too suspicious on these occasions, I think that in the notion of an Irish Local Government Bill, if to be proposed by us, latet anguis in herba. The danger would be the acceptance of a Bill which could be taken for, and yet did not really constitute a fulfilment of our pledge to Ireland. But I do not believe such a danger to be probable—only a thing that we should bear in mind. Chamberlain is under a great necessity of moving. We are not! All our necessity is to avoid a reasonably founded charge of overlooking a pacific overture which might have been accepted without compromise of our policy.

Meanwhile the last obstacle to the meeting was removed by the consent of Chamberlain to the substitution of Sir
George Trevelyan for H. H. Fowler as his colleague at the deliberation.

II

The Round Table Conference met at Harcourt's house, 7, Grafton Street, on January 13, those present, in addition to Harcourt, being Herschell (the Lord Chancellor), Mr. John Morley, Chamberlain and Sir George Trevelyan. The sitting lasted three hours, and was, by common consent, marked by cordial feeling and an unexpected measure of agreement of opinion. "Nothing could be better, more conciliatory or business-like than the tone of all concerned," wrote Harcourt to Gladstone. The discussion was resumed the following day at noon, and continued until three in the afternoon. There was to be no further meeting until Parliament met. In his letters (January 13 and 14) to Gladstone reporting the purport of the conversations, Harcourt said that Chamberlain first propounded a land scheme, well worthy of discussion and consideration, and having "the merit that it does not to any considerable extent pledge British credit or require the raising of large sums of money." From this they passed to local government, agreeing that the authorities should be popularly elected and "established in Ireland on the same principle as we contemplate in England." Then came the burning question of Home Rule:

Harcourt to Gladstone.

7, Grafton Street, January 14.—... We started with the admitted basis that there should be a legislative body for Ireland with an executive dependent upon it for purely Irish affairs. Indeed the Leeds Resolution in principle was frankly adopted. It was thought convenient to discuss the matter with the Canadian constitution as a text. There seemed no difficulty upon any side in adopting the powers of the Provincial Legislatures in Canada as an analogue for Irish Home Rule, the Imperial Parliament and Government standing to this Irish legislature in the same relation as the Dominion Parliament to the Provincial legislatures. . . .

We found no difficulty in assigning to the provincial legislature of Ireland, education, public works and Local Government Board with a responsible executive to administer these departments.

There was considerable discussion as to the control of the police,
Chamberlain was willing to concede the local police to the Irish Government—Trevelyan demurred. We all concurred that there must be a police force (such as the Irish Constabulary) under the control of the Imperial Government to enforce the law so far as it was not within the province of the Irish authority.

We discussed, but did not determine the question of one or two chambers in the legislature.

We came to the conclusion that except for military organization and the Imperial police there would be no necessity for any British administrator located in Ireland, but that Irish business so far as it lay outside the powers of the Irish Government might be transacted by a department in London, i.e. a Secretary of State or other official.

We discussed but did not determine how far (such a Legislature being established in Ireland) the Irish members should sit and vote at Westminster. Opinions did not run very strong either way on this point.

The last and most difficult question was raised by Chamberlain at the close of the meeting. He insisted very strongly on the danger and impolicy of forcing "Protestant Ulster" into the arrangement against its will, and urged a separate system for Ulster. I argued the great difficulty of establishing such a separation, and we left this question over for further consideration.

I think you will be of opinion that in these two meetings we have made very substantial progress. We have obtained the admission of all the principles for which we have contended.

(1) That there is to be a Land Bill which is to transfer the land to the tenant making an Irish local authority responsible for collecting and paying the equivalent of the rent to the landlord.

(2) That there is to be a provincial Irish Legislature with an Irish Executive for the transaction of such Irish business as Parliament shall determine, this business being in fact all Irish local affairs, due security being taken that their powers are not exceeded and that the authority of the Imperial Government in matters not transferred shall be respected and enforced.

There seemed ample ground for Harcourt's cheerfulness. In so far as there had been disagreement, Sir George Trevelyan had appeared more "recalcitrant" than Chamberlain. But Mr. Morley's suspicions persisted, and the Journal (January 14) records that he told Harcourt that "Chamberlain means to 'bolt' on the Ulster question, and break off on that when he wants an excuse." But for the moment all the omens were with Harcourt. Next day Chamberlain and his son, Austen, went to "Malwood to spend the week-end with Harcourt. The conversations
were resumed in the most amiable spirit, and Harcourt communicated the result of them to Mr. Morley (then on a visit to Sandringham) in a letter which is given at length in Appendix I. Gladstone was cordial, but cautious in his reply to Harcourt’s record of the Conference. “It is a great point gained,” he wrote (January 16), “if Chamberlain accepts in terms a Statutory Parliament for Ireland with a responsible executive (I set Ulster aside for the moment). Then as to conferring powers (instead of excepting subjects as we did), in a very able speech Sir C. Russell recently said this was a question of drafting. I hope it may be. But does Chamberlain think it so? I hardly dare as yet to suppose it, for your letter speaks of ‘such Irish business as Parliament shall determine’ and goes on to say ‘this business being in fact all Irish local affairs.’ The comment here goes to the quick of the text...”

In spite of Harcourt’s enthusiastic letter on the conversations at Malwood, Mr. Morley remained vigilant and distrustful. He was against any premature publication of the banns, until they saw what Chamberlain said at Hawick. As to Harcourt’s statement that Chamberlain was not solicitous for his own position in the affair, Mr. Morley said (January 18), “I am utterly and incorrigibly incredulous. He has found out that his egotism, irascibility and perversity have landed him in a vile mess. Those noble qualities are only scotched, not killed. He has proved himself to have no wisdom and no temper. Never more let me be asked to believe in his statesmanship. C’est fini...” “To my mind,” replied Harcourt (January 19), “the least hopeful part of our business consists in your incurable inveteracy against J. C. I believe it to be unjust, but I despair of the task of convincing you of it."

In the Hawick speech (January 24) Chamberlain, apart from an attack on “the noisy ranters who have obtained a temporary popularity by abusing us,” showed no disposition to break up the Conference, and Harcourt sent him his congratulations, and the assurance that “the Old Man is friendly.” He protested, however, against the
bitterness of his references to the Irish, to which Chamberlain replied:

January 25.—... As to the Irish, please bear in mind that I am only human. The brutes have been abusing and insulting me up to the very last moment, and nothing will induce me to turn the other cheek to the smiter. If you want me to be civil to them, you must bring pressure to bear on them to treat me with ordinary courtesy.

During the following week the prospects of reunion improved with the defeat of Goschen in the Exchange division of Liverpool, in reference to which the Journal records:

January 26.—Goschen defeated by eleven at Liverpool. W. V. H. had been dining with E. Hamilton at Brooks's to meet Gladstone, John Morley, Sir R. Welby, Sir A. West and some others. Gladstone had gone home before the news came. W. V. H. said the excitement was tremendous and the exultation of the Treasury officials passed belief. J. Morley was triumphant, but regarded it only in the light of the effect it would have on Chamberlain. He said to W. V. H., "You have let him out of the trap just in time; if he had not had a helping hand from you he would not have got out of it after Liverpool." W. V. H. replied, "He is a useful hound in the pack and worth letting out of a trap." They went on to the Cosmopolitan afterwards, and triumphed over the Unionists there. [H.]

Gladstone, after the Hawick speech, was noticeably warmer in regard to Chamberlain, told Harcourt (January 29) that a real and considerable advance had been made, "for which we have to thank (especially) you," and thought Chamberlain's ideas on land presented "points of great encouragement."

But while Gladstone was writing this letter, Chamberlain was making another speech, this time at Birmingham, in which he attacked the Gladstonians for being "hand-in-glove with their revilers." It was the temper more than the matter of the speech, which went far in the direction of Home Rule, which was disruptive; but the effect was bad. Even Harcourt's obstinate optimism began to fail. Mr. Morley wrote to him:

95, Elm Park Gardens, S.W., January 31. ... Indeed, I do not see how, if we had been in the full heat of controversy, he could
have taken a more unfriendly line than that which marks the speech from first to last. It seems to me to indicate a peculiar want of loyalty to the idea of the Conference, though he had himself prepared it. Whoever heard of one of the parties to a friendly discussion of this kind, with the aim of practical co-operation at the end of it, going out at intervals to fire broadsides into those whom he has just left? I say nothing of the good taste or of the good feeling of such a course. In face of discouraging evidence like this of the frame of mind of our partner at the Round Table, I think we shall really have to consider whether it is worth while to persevere. What do you say?

The question was discussed by Harcourt in a letter to Gladstone, who was at Cambridge (February 1), in which he admitted that though not unsatisfactory in substance the "extremely offensive language towards the whole body of Gladstonian Liberals (as he termed them)" had created "the worst possible feeling amongst our friends." But he urged that a public breaking off of the Conference at that moment would be a very great misfortune, and he asked Gladstone to meet him and Mr. Morley in London on his journey back to Hawarden to decide whether the Conference should go on. Gladstone's reply miscarried, and he missed Harcourt in London, where he waited for him at Euston. From thence he wrote him (February 2) a letter advising no formal break off of the Conference, but adding his opinion that "in no case should signal or telling good have proceeded from any conclusion of an alliance with Chamberlain at this moment." "My feeling has always been," he wrote the next day from Hawarden, "that the battle was for the present mainly out of our hands, but that it would be fought for us partly by experience of Ireland and partly by the proposals and errors of the Government."

No retort was made upon Chamberlain's speech, and Mr. Morley, who spoke at Newcastle on February 9, adopted a conciliatory tone, his only oblique allusion to the Chamberlain speech being the following gentle rebuke:

... The chairman referred to a Canadian settlement. Now I am one of those who think that if you are in a conference there is
some delicacy in treating in public matters which are there dealt with more or less privately. It is a matter of taste and good feeling, but that is the way in which my taste and my good feeling point.

It was a mild form of retaliation, but Chamberlain's amazingly thin skin was penetrated, and he exploded in a letter to Harcourt:

40, Prince's Gardens, February 10. -- . . . You will not be surprised to hear that the tone of Morley's speech at Newcastle is personally most offensive to me. However, I do not intend to allow private feeling to interfere with negotiations which have been dictated by considerations of public policy, and I shall say no more on the subject either to you or to him, although I reserve my right to make a full public reply at the first convenient opportunity. . . .

The prospects of a formal resumption of the Conference were fading, but a conversation between Chamberlain and Harcourt encouraged the latter in collaboration with Sir George Trevelyan to make one more attempt to keep it in being, and Sir George Trevelyan issued invitations for a dinner of the five at his house, 8, Grosvenor Crescent, on February 14. It began inauspiciously. "Trevelyan told W. V. H.," says the Journal, "that just before the dinner Chamberlain had come in and used such violent language about John Morley that he, Trevelyan, thought there would be a personal altercation when they met, and indeed Chamberlain was so cold and almost insulting to Morley that Trevelyan thought the latter would have left the house." At this critical moment, however, Harcourt arrived wearing an enormous orchid, which his son had secured for his buttonhole. There was a burst of laughter at the apparition, and Harcourt, with mock solemnity, said, "When the ambassadors of the contending powers meet it is the custom of the plenipotentiaries to wear the favour of the opposing sovereigns." The jest warmed the atmosphere and the dinner passed off with so much success that the formal resumption of the Conference seemed possible. But it was a fleeting hope. Meeting Lewis Harcourt at Lady Dorothy Nevill's a few days later, Chamberlain said he had written "a letter on disestab-
lishment in poor little Wales which will make your hair curl." The letter, which was written for The Baptist, was reproduced in the daily press on February 25, and blew the Conference out of the water. Under the disguise of a plea for Welsh disestablishment, Chamberlain turned with unbridled fury upon Gladstone's policy as the obstacle to the satisfaction of the claims of Welsh Nonconformists, Scottish crofters and English agricultural labourers. One passage will serve to indicate its temper:

... Thirty-two millions of people must go without much needed legislation because three million are disloyal, while nearly 600 members of the Imperial Parliament will be reduced to forced inactivity because some eighty delegates representing the policy and receiving the pay of the Chicago Convention, are determined to obstruct all business until their demands have been conceded. . . .

The blow was well timed. Gladstone had just returned to England, and, Harcourt having laid the whole position before him, he had arranged to draw up a memorandum on the points agreed on which might be submitted to the Conference. But on reading Chamberlain's article, he wrote to Harcourt (February 25 and 26) that in view of this "denunciation of the policy and the proposals in the mass" the intention must be abandoned for the moment, though he hoped that the ground gained would not be wholly lost. "I hope," he said, "he [Chamberlain] will know, in order to do you justice, that you have been fighting his battle among your colleagues and striving to obtain for him favourable construction and the fullest fair-play." Harcourt's patience was at last exhausted. In a letter to Chamberlain he said:

_Harcourt to Chamberlain._

7, Grafton Street, February 25.—... The whole of your article might be condensed into a single sentence, "Gentlemen, if you will only pronounce that from first to last Mr. Chamberlain has been wholly in the right and Mr. Gladstone mischievously in the wrong then you may have disestablishment or anything you please, but until you humiliate Mr. Gladstone and place Mr. Chamberlain on the pinnacle which is his due neither your objects nor any other Liberal measures shall be allowed to advance." That is the sum and substance of the argument couched in language of the most irritating
character. I need hardly tell you that so long as this tone is adopted by you in public, no amount of private negotiation can be of any avail. Our friends, if they suspected us of treating on such a basis, would naturally regard us as thoroughly disloyal to Mr. Gladstone and the principles we have professed.

I cannot say how much I regret all this. I feel that we are engaged in the work of Sisyphus. As soon as we have with great labour rolled the stone up the hill, you in an outburst of temper dash it down again to the bottom.

You complain of the bitterness displayed against you, but I wish sometimes you would consider how much you do to provoke it, and I fear this last performance will greatly aggravate the feeling against you.

I am afraid you may resent this letter, but I am conscious of having played quite fairly by you, and I should do no good unless I spoke my mind plainly and frankly as to proceedings which can only wreck the objects you profess to have at heart.

Chamberlain to Harcourt.

Highbury, Birmingham, February 26.—... I thank you for writing so plainly. I will do the same. I agree with you that our task is almost impossible—there is so much sensitiveness and feeling on both sides that the difficulties are nearly insurmountable.

You seem to think that I am bound, while negotiation is still incomplete, to take no notice whatever of all that is offensive and objectionable to me in the communications that proceed from leading Gladstonians, and that I am to pass over in silence their repeated asseverations that no change—no concession of any kind is to be made by them, and that I am only to be allowed to come back as they say after sufficient and complete acts of submission and penitence. But I do not found myself only on the speeches of such men as Stansfield, Campbell-Bannerman and Sir C. Russell, although the tone of these speeches is disagreeable in the highest degree. Neither will I refer again to the outrageous attack made upon me by J. Morley at Newcastle—nor to the general line of the organ of the Party—the Daily News—but I must advert to the language used in recent letters and speeches by Mr. Gladstone himself.

When in Wales he took more than one opportunity of nailing his flag to the mast. Every one who reads his recent letters must draw the inference that he adheres to the whole of the policy to which I and other Liberals objected, and that he is not prepared to make the slightest concession. The effect of these statements has been very marked. It is said in the Liberal papers, without exception, that as Mr. Gladstone has declared that he will not give way, the only chance of reunion must lie in my “caving in,” and that this is what I am now doing. To use the words of J. Morley’s organ at Newcastle, I am “furtively preparing for surrender.”
From first to last there has never been the slightest indication on the part of any Gladstonian of an intention to make the slightest concession of any kind in order to meet the advances which I have openly made. . . .

I consider the present situation very grave. Never has party feeling run higher, and a large section of politicians are apparently willing to run any risks, and accept any policy which can embarrass their opponents and make the government of the country impossible. I have no sympathy with these tactics, and if the future programme of the Liberal Party is to include plans of campaign, obstruction and Heaven knows how many wild theories of revenge or destruction, I must stand aside or join to resist them. . . .

In any case let us remain friends—even if it is out of the question that we should be allies.

Harcourt to Chamberlain.

7, Grafton Street, February 26.—. . . The flood tide of what seems to me a very just indignation at the manner in which you have treated Mr. Gladstone and his friends in the midst of what were supposed to be friendly negotiations is running too high at this moment to make it possible to stem it. We must therefore take time to consider what can be done to repair the mischief you have wrought. I will see you on this subject when you return to London. Mr. Gladstone, who is really the most placable of men, writes to me today a letter, which I will read to you entirely free from all soreness or bitterness at your treatment of him (a thing we feel much more strongly than he does), but full of regret at the "unexpected obstacle in the way of any attempt at this moment to sum up the results of your communications, which we should otherwise hopefully have done." He adds that he is "unwilling that so much ground apparently gained should be lost," and he hopes that something may be done to avert such a result. I concur in that hope. But I cannot but feel that it is quite hopeless to expect that any good shall be done if we are to have our noses pulled in public at the time when we receive the strongest assurances of goodwill in private, and if the statements made out of doors are to be in flat contradiction to the representations held out to us at the Conference.

I learned with great surprise that Hartington had derived from you the belief that the question of an Irish legislature and a responsible Government had never been entertained by the Conference, and that you and we had never agreed to anything but a strictly municipal Government.

It is a very bad job, and I wish I saw my way out of it. . . .

Chamberlain to Harcourt.

Highbury, February 27.—You are quite wrong about Hartington as I could prove to you in two minutes if it were worth while. But
is it worth while? Your lecture this morning has pretty well completed the work which your lecture of yesterday commenced, and if it is your intention to abandon the Conference and the hopes raised by it, I shall receive your decision with something approaching a sense of relief. . . .

There has been not the slightest consideration for my position, and apparently I have been expected to make all the sacrifices and to receive nothing in return. . . .

I will only add that if it be, as I understand it is, your intention to bring negotiations to a close, I hope we may be able to agree on the form in which this decision is to be announced.

It is, of course, clearly understood that the proceedings of the Conference will remain secret, and that both sides are perfectly free to pursue any policy they may see fit in the future, and are not to be held committed by anything that has passed in confidential intercourse.

I am afraid that the political future is very dark, but the responsibility does not rest with me.

The correspondence continued at inordinate length, Harcourt countering Chamberlain's suggestion that he and his friends had broken up the Conference by insisting that he and Chamberlain should maintain contact on the subject. Referring in one of his letters (March 1) to Chamberlain's excessive sensitiveness to what the papers said, he remarked:

_Harcourt to Chamberlain._

_March 1._—. . . As to the London correspondent of the Newcastle paper I pay no attention to what he says. That J. Morley has many friends and admirers who look forward to his eventually taking the first place in the Liberal Party I have no doubt is perfectly true, and seems to me quite natural. I dare say they would prefer him to either you or myself, and it is certainly not for me to say that they are wrong. For my part I have no desire to force myself into any position which is not voluntarily accorded, and I have no views whatever except to do for the time being what may appear most advantageous to the Party to which I belong. No newspaper correspondence or lobby gossip will induce me to suspect J. Morley of any underhand proceedings either towards myself or any one else. His good faith is transparent, and he appears to me always to be the soul of honour. If he has any defect in the high position he occupies in the Party it appears to me to be a somewhat excessive distrust of his own powers and claims, and I never saw a man less disposed to be jealous of others or egotistically eager to urge his own pretensions.

He desired me last of all distinctly to assure you with reference to
the article of the Newcastle Correspondent to which you referred so pointedly at Trevelyan's, and to which you again revert in your letter of to-day, that he knows nothing whatever of it, that he did not inspire it and that he had not even read it. When he says that you know as well as I do that it is true. . . .

He tells me that he is in no way responsible for any inspiration of the Newcastle paper.

Having said this I should be very glad if you would in like manner place me in a position to assure him and his friends that you were not in any way privy to the communication which appeared some days ago in the Birmingham Post on the subject of the Conference, and which contained a bitter personal attack on J. Morley contrasting his conduct very unfavourably with that of his colleagues at the Round Table. I now should be pleased to have your authority to remove the painful impression which your supposed sympathy with the language of that communication has produced upon many of Morley's friends.

Chamberlain left this question, with others, to be answered when "we met again." Into the interminable controversies that ensued I do not propose to enter at length. There are piles of letters and documents and speeches before me which it has been my duty to wade through, but which the reader will be glad to be spared. It is enough to say that having torpedoed the Conference, Chamberlain sought to put the Liberals in the position of refusing to proceed with it. This aim was defeated by the action of his colleague in the Conference, Sir George Trevelyan, who was so convinced that the meetings had disclosed a sufficient basis of agreement and that Chamberlain's action had destroyed a reasonable chance of reunion that he separated himself from the dissentient Liberals, and in July appeared in the field as Liberal candidate for the Bridgeton division of Glasgow. The circumstance evoked a new war of words as to who broke up the Conference, Sir George's Unionist opponent, Evelyn Ashley, stating Chamberlain's case with Chamberlain's authority, and Sir George telling his own experience of the Conference. Harcourt replied to Ashley at a meeting at Chelmsford on July 27, and Chamberlain intervened in the controversy with a long letter to The Times in which he charged his opponents with using the Baptist letter as a pretext for breaking off
the negotiations. There was correspondence on the question of publishing the records of the Conference, but the subject died down with the victory of Sir George Trevelyan, only to be revived by Chamberlain in the course of a campaign in Scotland in January 1889. Thereupon Harcourt delivered a speech at Derby on February 27, 1889, in which he incorporated a statement of the facts of the origin, course and breakdown of the Conference, which had been submitted to and endorsed by Mr. Morley and Sir George Trevelyan (Herschell was at the time abroad and inaccessible). That statement stands as the final and unchallenged record of the episode. It does not call for reproduction here, for it goes over the ground already covered in detail. Whether, as Mr. Morley suspected from the beginning, Chamberlain was "foxing" throughout must be left to the judgment of the reader, but that he broke up the Conference is a fact that does not admit of reasonable controversy. It would be idle to discuss his motives. They are perplexing but fairly apparent from any intelligent reading of the documents. Nor need the consequences be enlarged on. They also are apparent in the prolongation and embitterment of an historic struggle, and in the elevation of the Radical Mayor of Birmingham to the seat left vacant by Beaconsfield as the high priest of the Imperialists.
CHAPTER III

PARNELLISM AND CRIME

The Cowper Commission—Mr. Balfour as Chief Secretary—The new Crimes Bill—A scene in the House—' Parnellism and Crime'—Harcourt at Shoreditch—Proclamation of the National League—Mitchelstown—Harcourt's autumn campaign.

WHILE the incident of the Round Table was in progress behind the scenes, the new Government were preparing for that "twenty years of resolute government" which was the Salisbury alternative to conciliation. The path had been smoothed by the political suicide of Churchill and the advent of Goschen, who represented the official association of the Hartington group with the Ministry. This sudden clearing of the ministerial sky was qualified by an event which created a bad public impression. Lord Iddesleigh (Stafford Northcote) had been removed from the Foreign Office, which Salisbury took over, and the sense that he, "the worthiest of them all," as Harcourt wrote to Gladstone, had received "scurvy usage"—he was said to have first learned of the change through the Press—was sharpened by his death immediately after (January 12) while engaged in an interview with his successor. "This is a very shocking event, happening under very shocking circumstances," wrote Harcourt to his wife. It threw its shadows over the new Parliament which met on January 27. The Session, unparalleled in living memory for the intensity of the passions aroused and for the sensational episode that makes it memorable, was dominated from the first day to the last by the great issue that had so long perplexed British politics. On the one side was a Government committed to governing
Ireland by force; on the other, an Opposition committed to governing Ireland by consent. It was an unprecedented situation which offered no ground for compromise, and the struggle moved forward with the bitterness of a death-grapple.

The immediate subject of attack was the Plan of Campaign. This new phase of the agrarian war in Ireland had been attended with extraordinary success. That there was substantial ground for it was beyond dispute. The Cowper Commission in February admitted that the grievances were real and that they were due to the exactions of the landlords, the fall in prices, the restriction of credit by the banks and other conditions which made the payment of rents impossible. The new Under Secretary for Ireland, Sir Redvers Buller, himself declared that the tenants' case was unanswerable. "You have got an ignorant poor people," he said, "and the law should look after them, instead of which it has only looked after the rich." The reasonable demand that evictions should be suspended until rents were revised had been thrust aside, and in one case in which Buller had reported that the tenants were nearer famine then paying rent the wretched people were ruthlessly evicted. The Government had determined on their course, and were not to be deflected from it by the evidence of their own official. Parnell's amendment to the Address—the discussion on which had culminated in a bitter attack by Hicks-Beach, the Irish Secretary, on Harcourt, whom he accused of taking "so complete a bath in Parnellite juice that he had not only changed his principles but had forgotten those he formerly held"—was defeated, and on the same day the Plan of Campaign was declared illegal by the Courts.

The policy was fully revealed with the advent in March of Mr. A. J. Balfour to the office of Chief Secretary in succession to Hicks-Beach. He immediately introduced a ruthless Coercion Bill, which, more drastic in its provisions than previous Crimes Acts, proposed to bring prisoners accused of aggravated offences from Ireland for trial in
London, and to make coercion no longer subject to a time limit, but the permanent instrument of government. Crime ceased to have a fixed meaning so far as Ireland was concerned; it could cover anything that the Minister of the moment chose to bring within its scope. Simultaneously with this savage measure of repression, the Government introduced in the House of Lords a Land Bill. The revision of rents was originally excluded, but in the end the Government were compelled to make the Bill provide the very relief—powers to the land courts to cut down judicial rents for three years—which had been refused the previous autumn by the rejection of Parnell's Bill.

Into the struggle that raged around this secondary theme, it is impossible to enter in detail. It was marked by surprising confusion on the part of the Government. They persisted at first in their refusal to interfere with judicial rents because prices had fallen on the ground that this, in the words of Salisbury, would be to "lay your axe to the root of the fabric of civilized society." But under the pressure from Ulster and the influence of Chamberlain and Churchill they modified their opinion, only to recant at the anger of the landlords, and to recant again when the Ulster tenants' indignation threatened them with the loss of that province to the Unionist cause. So the struggle went forward, and in the end the Government conceded much what Parnell had asked for the year before, and the concession of which then, as Harcourt pointed out, would have made coercion unnecessary.

But all this was subsidiary to the fierce battle that occupied the centre of the stage. Relief to the impoverished tenants was to come too late, and meanwhile the threat of "resolute government" for all time was over them.

Gladstone desired Harcourt to move the amendment on W. H. Smith's motion for urgency for the new Crimes Bill; but Harcourt strongly urged that the first formal attack should be made by Mr. Morley, who agreed with him on the ground, as he wrote to Harcourt (March 15), that it would leave the duty of "replying to Hartington
or J. C. [Chamberlain] to you, who are a "very powerful" debater, instead of to me, who am a "very unhandy debater." This debate, in which Harcourt replied not to Hartington or Chamberlain, but to his old friend James, developed strong feeling on both sides. The discussion on Mr. Balfour's introduction of the Bill lasted five days, culminating in a scene of much uproar, when on April 1 W. H. Smith, the leader of the House, intimated that he would ask the House to accept or reject the first reading that night. Harcourt said this "openly assumed" that Smith had got the Speaker's leave to move the closure. The Speaker protested against what he described as an unworthy and untrue insinuation of previous communication between himself and Smith. Harcourt disavowed the intention, but when, later, on a motion for adjournment, Smith moved that the question be now put, the Speaker, without a moment's hesitation, assented and the division was taken. A scene, new to Parliament, followed, which has been described by one who took part in it:

When the figures were announced Gladstone rose from his seat, and with an air of great dignity walked slowly past the Chair and out of the House, accompanied by Harcourt and Morley. Stillness fell over the House for a moment, but soon the Radicals understood the movement. Parnell rose, and followed by the Irishmen, marched out at the door facing the Speaker, while the Radicals crowded indiscriminately out by all the doors. We left behind only the Tories and the Unionists. I cast a glance at Chamberlain as I passed out; he was very pale and had a dazed look.

II

It was the prelude to the fiercest conflict in the annals of Parliament. Outside the House, public feeling was inflamed by a series of articles entitled "Parnellism and Crime," which were appearing in The Times, and the purpose of which was to show that the Parnellite Party were hand-in-glove with the physical force movement. In his speech in the second reading debate, delivered on April 15, Harcourt denounced The Times articles as "rubbish." He spoke at great length, exposing afresh the Conservative overtures
to Parnell, pointing out that the real object of the Bill was to prevent legitimate combinations among the Irish tenants for protection against excessive rents, reminding James of the fight they had put up together in former days against the judge-made law which had at one time made combinations of working men illegal, and contending that a perpetual Coercion Act was a fundamental breach of the Union, which had been based on the condition that England and Ireland should have equal laws and privileges.

Into an atmosphere charged with explosive elements, *The Times* three days later flung the famous accusation to which its previous articles had been a skilful introduction. The moment was carefully chosen. The division on the second reading of the Bill was fixed for Monday, April 28, and on the morning of that day appeared the instalment of "Parnellism and Crime" which contained the following letter, dated May 15, 1882, and addressed, according to the bold surmise of *The Times*, to Patrick Egan the dynamitard:

**Dear Sir,—** I am not surprised at your friend’s anger, but he and you should know that to denounce the murders was the only course open to us. To do that promptly was plainly [an erasure here] our best policy.

But you can tell him and all others concerned that though I regret the accident of Lord I. Cavendish’s death, I cannot refuse to admit that Burke got no more than his deserts.

You are at liberty to show him this, and others whom you can trust also, but let not my address be known. He can write to House of Commons.

The letter was signed "Yours very truly, Charles S. Parnell," and *The Times*, after admitting that the body of the MS. was apparently not in Parnell’s handwriting, declared that "the signature and the ‘Yours very truly’ unquestionably are so." It was a staggering blow. It made the Opposition reel, and the Government ranks burst into triumphant cheers. Salisbury himself accepted the authenticity of the letter without question, and denounced Gladstone for his association with a man "tainted with the strong presumption of conniving at assassination." The authority of the great journal that had made itself responsible for
the accusation carried conviction even among many of those to whom the revelation was painful; and, although Parnell himself, in the House that afternoon, disclaimed the latter as "a villainous and barefaced forgery," his denial was useless against the wave of anger that submerged public opinion.

In that wave the Crimes Bill was caught and swept forward with increasing momentum. Harcourt, unlike Chamberlain and Mr. Morley, had never had any dealings with Parnell. He disliked the cold temperament of the man, and while at the Home Office had discovered the secret about him which was destined later to destroy him. But he discredited The Times disclosure from the moment it was made, and two days afterwards at a meeting at Shoreditch declared that he accepted Parnell's denial, adding that The Times had not produced any proof of the authenticity of the document, had not stated where it came from or where they had obtained it, but had said to Parnell, "You are to prove that it is not true." It was a reversal of the ordinary principles of English justice. He dismissed the statement made in the Press that the facsimile letter of The Times had actually been seized and lodged in the Home Office when he was Home Secretary as "a deliberate and malignant fabrication," and confirmed Lord Spencer's assertion that in his experience there had never been any evidence of the complicity of the Irish members with crime in Ireland. In the House, where the Government were suggesting that Parnell's remedy was by legal process, Harcourt insisted that the proposal was a sham, for a prosecution for a political libel would certainly fail. A breach of privilege had been committed, and he contended that it was for the House to decide whether a prima facie case of breach of privilege was made out. Members were entitled to protection, and he protested against the withholding of protection for the first time when an Irish member was concerned. Defeated in the House, he carried the demand for fair play into the country. At Southampton on May 4 he said the Liberals had asked for a Committee of
Privilege on the question. He asserted that if such a demand had been made under similar circumstances by any member not an Irish member, it would have been granted. But the Irishmen were offered a substitute. The Government offered to Mr. Dillon and his colleagues that their honour should be "vindicated by the Attorney-General, Sir Richard Webster." It reminded him of the nursery story of Red Riding Hood. And in a speech at the National Liberal Club (July 18) he declared that nothing had discredited the Government and the Unionist Party more than "the base and baseless attempt to calumniate and vilify the Irish Party."

... The real truth (he said) is that the people of this country are a fair and a generous people, and they do not understand a system of forged letters and calumnies like that which the Government in the House of Commons have used their influence to prevent being fairly met by the Irish members as they offered to do.

Meanwhile the struggle in the House, now intensified by the passions awakened by The Times revelations, went forward day by day, the main burden of it falling on the shoulders of Harcourt, whose Homeric duels with Balfour and especially with Goschen made the rafters ring and filled the Press Gallery with the joy of good "copy." Most memorable perhaps was his "dance of death" speech (July 4) in reply to Goschen's "insulting" attack on Gladstone. "You have gone from this bench as a deserter," cried Harcourt, "and we will take care you don't return to it as a spy." But Providence was on the side of the big battalions, and stage by stage the Bill progressed. It passed into law on July 24, and following a visit of Michael Davitt to Bodyke, the scene of the evictions on the O'Callaghan estate, the Government put the second clause of the Act in operation, and proclaimed the National League on August 19.

This drastic act of war shocked even Chamberlain. His old repugnance to coercion flashed up for a moment, and he declared in the country that he had made strong representations to the Government on the subject. "Chamberlain
informs me that he will vote and speak against the Proclamation," wrote Harcourt to Gladstone (August 19). "He seems to have split very much away from Hartington. I think it is of the highest importance that you should yourself make the motion against the Proclamation. Chamberlain said to me it would be much easier for him to support the motion if made by you than if it came from Parnell direct." Gladstone did so, and in the division, on which the Government majority fell to 78, Chamberlain and his immediate Birmingham following voted in the minority. In a speech at Reading Harcourt made excellent play with this momentary recantation. "I am glad there is so much of the old leaven left," he said. "I am glad so much of the scent of the rose clings round the briers of Birmingham politics." But what a position it was; he had approved the Coercion Act, and now did not like to see it put in execution. It was idle to put a man in a cage with a tiger and then to advise the tiger to leave him alone. The National League had been the only obstacle to the exaction of exorbitant rents in Ireland. As Buller had said the tenants looked to the League as their salvation. Now they were left helpless to the rapacity of the landlords.

In Ireland the flames leaped higher. Following the prosecution of Mr. William O'Brien and Mr. J. Mandeville at Mitchelstown, Co. Cork, on September 9, a great meeting at which Mr. John Dillon and Labouchere were present was held in front of the Court House. A Government reporter with a police escort tried to force his way through the crowd. They were driven off, returned to the barracks, and when under cover fired a volley upon the people, in cold blood according to Labouchere, in self-defence according to the police. Three people were killed, and the coroner's jury returned a verdict of wilful murder against the police.

1 At this time Chamberlain was in correspondence with Hartington. The victory of Sir George Trevelyan at Bridgeton had just occurred, and he urged Hartington to consider a scheme of Home Rule. Hartington turned the proposal down on the ground that it would break up the Unionist alliance. See Bernard Holland, Life of the Duke of Devonshire.
But no steps either of inquiry or reparation were taken by the Government, and "Remember Mitchelstown!" became the new battle-cry of the struggle. Gladstone, who was at Hawarden, had wanted Harcourt to lead the case against the Proclamation. "There is not go enough in me nor memory," he wrote (September 6). But in the light of this new Peterloo, Harcourt urged Gladstone to intervene. The debate was one of the most memorable events of a passionate time. Harcourt opened it (September 12) with a semi-legal disquisition on freedom of speech, the note of which was "I claim the right for any meeting, whether in Ireland or England, to denounce the Executive Government. I claim the right for any public meeting to denounce the action of the Legislature." But argument was in vain. Mr. Balfour accepted the statement of the police in their own cause as final, and, in the words of Mr. John Morley, "the slaughter of the three men was finally left just as if it had been the slaughter of three dogs."

III

The close of the Session left Harcourt free to turn his attention to the country in a double sense. His autumn holidays in Scotland, stalking deer with Millais and James and yachting among the Hebrides, were over. The New Forest had become his sufficient playground, and all his spare time was devoted to the garden and the farming operations at Malwood. But "the country" had a political meaning that interfered with these agreeable occupations, and during the autumn he carried out a formidable campaign from Penrith to Lewes on the issue which had now obliterated all other public questions. His work during the Session had greatly enhanced his prestige, and, Gladstone excepted, he had no rival as a platform speaker. The fierce anger that was directed against him by Government speakers and in the Unionist Press—an anger due as much to his powerful gifts of argument and satire as to his own combative manner—aroused an equal enthusiasm for him among his followers, and his autumn campaign this year had a
permanent influence in clarifying public thought and habituating the public mind to the idea of a new attitude towards Ireland. In his speeches he touched every phase of the issue, and anticipated most of the considerations that played so large a part thirty years later in the final controversy on the subject. Thus, speaking at Gloucester (December 20), he said, "I desire Home Rule for many reasons, but for no reason more than that it will reconcile to this country the great Irish population which forms so large a portion of the great American Republic." And at Penrith (November 23) he gave, by anticipation, the answer to the fallacy, so dear to Mr. Lloyd George at one period, that the Irish case was on all fours with the case of the seceding States at the time of the American Civil War:

... The Northern States did not go to war with the South because the South claimed Home Rule. The Southern States had Home Rule, and had no need to fight for it... the meaning of Home Rule being that each community should have its own legislature, its own executive for the management of its own affairs... The Northern States went to war with the South not because the South were fighting for Home Rule—they had got Home Rule—but because the Southern States were fighting for independence and in order to maintain slavery. That is what the Northern States were fighting for... I did what I could to support the Northern States at that time and to save England from the greatest of all crimes in allying itself with Southern slavery at that period.

In another speech (at Lewes, September 23) he dealt with the wastefulness of the policy of oppression. "I wish he [Churchill] would turn his economical thoughts to Ireland. Why, in Ireland, you are maintaining at the cost of millions of money an army such as would be sufficient to conquer a foreign enemy. You are maintaining a military force under the name of the Royal Irish Constabulary; and if Lord Randolph Churchill wants efficient economy I will tell him how to save four millions a year, and that is by giving peace to Ireland." And at Portsmouth (October 27) he returned to the shame and danger of a police employed to suppress "not crime but opinion." Churchill had made the mischievous suggestion that there was some divine
right possessed by the constable. It was because the police in England so clearly understood that they had no power to do more than carry out the law that they were more respected and liked in England than in most other countries. "Once preach to the police this doctrine of unlimited power, once egg them on to unnecessary violence and harshness, and they will become the object of the aversion instead of the confidence of the public." Lord Randolph had spoken approvingly of the action of the American police in the slaughter of Irishmen. Harcourt said that Churchill's language was "more lawless, more mischievous, more abominable than any of the language for which men were being sent to prison in Ireland."

Among his other engagements was an appearance with Gladstone at the meeting of the National Liberal Federation at Nottingham, from which they returned by way of Derby, Harcourt having induced his leader to address a meeting there. It was at the Nottingham gathering that a new force in politics appeared on Harcourt's horizon. Writing to his wife (October 19), he said, "Asquith made a really remarkable speech on which I greatly complimented him. It was the only speech of the afternoon."

In the midst of these activities, Harcourt was discussing with Mr. Morley the wisdom of going with him to Ireland as a counter demonstration to the visit of Hartington and Goschen to Dublin. He was doubtful about the tactical wisdom of appearing on an Irish platform, a view in which he was supported by Gladstone and Spencer. He was all out for Home Rule, but he still had no great affection for his allies. "Dillon is a fine fellow, but not altogether of the best judgment," he wrote to Mr. Morley. And what did "the old serpent of Avondale" (Parnell) say on the subject? "Patriotism does not seem to be a healthy occupation. What a lot they are! Parnell, Dillon, O'Brien, Sexton, all interesting gentlemen in the last stages of debility; only T. P. O'Connor seems in rude health and he is not a patriot. You take care or you won't be fit for a plank bed yourself." Mr. Morley shared his feeling. "I wish to
heaven our allies were Englishmen, with English habits of business," he wrote to Harcourt (November 30) while engaged in discussing the tour with the Irish leaders. "I am neither surprised nor sorry that the counter-meeting at Dublin is damping off," replied Harcourt. "I am sorry that your young and confiding heart is beginning to cherish doubts as to our allies."

In the end the idea of a joint visit was abandoned, though Mr. Morley himself went to Ireland later with Ripon.
CHAPTER IV

"RESOLUTE GOVERNMENT"

Succession to the leadership of the Liberal Party—Harcourt and Mr. Morley—Arrest of Irish Members—Mr. Balfour’s Irish administration—Mr. Chamberlain at Malwood—Harcourt at Oldham—Hostility to Goschen—The Duke of Argyll—Harcourt on Goschen’s Budget—Irish Land Purchase.

During the autumn of 1887 the Press, especially the Unionist Press, was much occupied with an old question, the succession to the Liberal leadership. The change that had come over the face of parties had cleared the field of several possible competitors. Hartington, Chamberlain, and Goschen were now finally out of the picture, and two men were left in apparent rivalry, Harcourt and Mr. Morley. By general consent, Harcourt’s parliamentary gifts were second only to those of Gladstone, but Mr. Morley had won a peculiar position of authority in regard to the great question that held the stage, and the moral distinction that was the note of his political outlook gave him a high place in the regard of the Party. It was assumed in the Unionist press that a violent struggle of ambitions was going on between the two chief lieutenants of Gladstone. It was a singularly unfounded suspicion. From the emergence of the Home Rule issue to the end of his life Harcourt was in closer and more affectionate communication with Mr. Morley than with any other public man. This intimate relation was interrupted in 1893–4 by the clash over the financial clauses of the Home Rule Bill and by the acute differences among Ministers at the time of Mr. Gladstone’s resignation, when Mr. Morley...
did not support Harcourt's claims to the premiership. But in Opposition the two men resumed the old tie. In the innumerable letters that passed between them, letters full of fun and literary allusion as well as of more weighty matters, there is no further hint of a serious breach in their relations or their good feeling. Occasionally Mr. Morley "rubs his eyes" at some outbreak of his colleague, but disagreement rarely approaches a quarrel, and Harcourt is the first to laugh at his own irascibility. "I have not yet worked up my next factious fit," he writes to Mr. Morley (October 8), "but I shall do so in good time." "I am doing nothing here and doing it very well, with much satisfaction to myself and my country," he writes a little later from Malwood. "I wish heartily you would come and help me. You ought not to abandon a friend in so worthy a pursuit." But the invitation is in vain. "I have been confined to my bed for five days," Mr. Morley writes, "and am booked, I should think, for as many more—gastric obstruction, which is much less amusing than parliamentary ditto. Andrew Clark and other learned men are endeavouring to frame new rules of procedure. I shall pass this forenoon in imagination in wandering about the New Forest with you and drinking gallons of lemon squash." And when Harcourt intimated that since Mr. Morley cannot go to him, he will go to Mr. Morley, the latter expresses his delight. "You cannot come at the wrong time, either Wednesday, Thursday, or any other day. . . . I have, however, a little of the feeling of old Johnson, when he was ill, and there was some talk of a visit from Burke. "Sir," said Johnson, "if I were to see the fellow now, it would kill me; he calls forth all my powers." You will have to use your giant strength mercifully."

They had a frank enjoyment of each other's qualities. "Your speech (at Lancaster) is first-rate," writes Mr. Morley (November 23). "The passage about Hartington in Dublin, with his imaginary critic, pueris declamatio fiet, in future times. I would give half my advantage over you in years, if I could have quarter of your gifts of speech."
"Please supply me with some straw; I have a superabundance of mud," says Harcourt, busily engaged at Malwood in making bricks for another speech. In this atmosphere of high spirits and mutual chaff the two friends conducted their discussion of grave matters while in the Press they were represented as engaged in a sleepless duel for the succession to the Liberal leadership. The fact is worth recalling for the light it throws on a later episode and the common view that Harcourt was consumed with ambition and jealousy of those who stood in his way. He was, of course, ambitious. He had the ambition of conscious power; but it was not a petty ambition, and the efforts he made to keep Chamberlain, who had become easily his most formidable competitor for the succession, within the Party fold is conclusive proof that personal supremacy, however much he liked it, was not the ultimate motive of his public action. It was not until December that a new name was started in the Press for the leadership stakes. The Spectator (December 17, 1887), which liked neither Harcourt nor Mr. Morley, introduced Lord Rosebery as the true successor to Gladstone, and the suggestion gave new stimulus to the discussion over the Christmas season. The objection taken to the proposal was that Lord Rosebery in the Lords could do no more "to control Sir William Harcourt in the House of Commons than the driver of a tandem can do to control a refractory leader which is disposed to turn round and look his coachman in the face"—a phase which went the round of the Press.

Harcourt himself glanced obliquely at the discussion on the leadership in a speech he delivered at Derby (February 7) on the eve of the opening of the Session of 1888. It was a speech in which he compared the records of Gladstone and Salisbury in home and foreign politics, and, referring to the Conservative point of view, remarked: "A very witty Frenchman said of the Tory Party—and I think it is a true description—that it is a Party which on the morning of the Creation would have said, 'Let us conserve chaos.'" Alluding to Gladstone, he warned the Government that
even if they got rid of him they would not get rid of the cause he had made secure:

... Great causes (he said) do not perish when leaders fall. The armies of England did not fall when Nelson fell at Trafalgar, and Wolfe upon the Heights of Abraham. Catholic emancipation triumphed after Canning died. It is the object of party organization to keep alive great principles and great causes irrespective of the accidents which befall great men. It is the virtue and the glory of great statesmen that they impress their inspirations upon the generations that succeed them. They plant the acorn. It sends its roots deep into the soil. It stretches its branches to the sky long after its planter is in the dust. And so it is with great principles, and great causes, and great leaders. The great policy of the conciliation of Ireland is grafted and engrained for ever upon the creed of the Liberal Party. It is beyond the reach of changes of fortune and the accidents of life. It can never flag. It will never perish until this great reform in its final feature is embroidered on the colours of the Liberal Party.

“Derby went off very well: good meeting, good speech,” wrote Harcourt to his wife at Malwood. But he was less cheerful after the debate on the Address, on which Gladstone delivered a speech of an unexpectedly friendly kind. “I am going down to Malwood to-day,” he wrote to Mr. Morley (February 10), “to see if the bracing air of the Forest will recover me from the depressing effect of the cold-milk-and-water atmosphere of last night. I don’t feel as if this sort of trumpet call will do much to inspirit the troops.” Mr. Morley agreed that the speech was much too mild, but reported that Gladstone was “mightily incensed to-night” (February 10). The cause of the change was one of those incidents which were becoming the commonplace of the Irish struggle. Patrick O’Brien, an Irish member, was seized at the gates of Palace Yard by mistake for another member, Gilhooley, whom the police desired to arrest. A little later Gilhooley himself was taken by the police under extraordinary circumstances. On leaving the House he was surrounded by about a hundred Liberal members who were hustled by the police before Gilhooley could be captured. The double incident created much indignation, and Mr. Morley wrote to Harcourt, who was still at Malwood, to
come up to take part on the question of privilege. "It seems intolerable," he wrote (February 11), "that a member in attendance on Parliament should find a band of detectives at every exit from the House. It may be hard to define, but surely a hunted member ought to have a certain amount of 'law' given to him. Anyhow, Parnell is in a vicious humour, and will make things uncomfortable. So much the better. Milk and water won't carry us through this business." But Harcourt was still nursing his wrath at the "cold-milk-and-water" episode. "Malwood is delicious and the air very factious," he replied. But he would be to the fore in the debate, and hoped to find a little more fight in the Party. But he had no enthusiasm for the subject. "I doubt," he said, "if much will be made of privilege, and do not think that your doctrine that the police are bound to give a man a run for his life will hold water."

II

But, whatever his not infrequent irritations with his colleagues, Harcourt did not let them appear in public. The spirit of the Party, which was his permanent pre-occupation, had to be kept up, and he returned to the combat with his accustomed ardour. He might belabour his friends in private, but he made up for this by the heartiness with which he belaboured his foes in public, as when speaking at York (April 12) of Mr. Balfour's regime in Ireland, he said:

... Mr. Balfour is a philosopher who has got hold of a Coercion Bill, and a philosopher is a very dangerous person to trust with such a terrible implement as that. Now, emperors and tyrants, and even heroes, are susceptible to human weaknesses, but a philosopher has none. He carries on the most excruciating experiments in vivisection in the interests of science; the palpitations of the victims only add a zest to the experiment. To him the groans of Bodkyke and the shrieks of Glenbeigh are only capital operations which illustrate the science of landlordism.

The rigours of the Balfourian rule in Ireland were one of the main themes of the Session. Resolute government,
with all its accompaniments of evictions, proclamations, imprisonment of members and general ruthlessness, was at its height, and public feeling was profoundly stirred by the exposure of the cruelties of repression. There was much controversy on the subject of the treatment of Mr. Dillon and other prisoners, and Mr. Morley, in raising a debate on June 25 on the operation of the Act, gave the typical case of an old man and his wife charged with taking "forcible possession" of an outhouse after they had been turned out of their holding. Thus, he said, an old man of seventy-five years of age, scarcely able to stand and so deaf that he knew nothing of what went on at the trial, was sentenced to a month's imprisonment for the "crime" of taking shelter from the inclemency of the weather in an outhouse on the holding from which he had been evicted.

In this prolonged conflict over the new coercion methods Mr. Balfour made adroit play with the not very distant history of the repressive measures taken in Ireland under the rule of Spencer and Harcourt. There were wide differences in the two cases. The eviction of the peasantry for failure to pay admittedly exorbitant rents had formed no part of the former system. The measures which Spencer and Harcourt had carried out had been chiefly directed against crime, especially the organized crime largely fomented from America. But there was a sufficient case for the in quoque argument to furnish so skilful a controversialist as Mr. Balfour with abundant material of attack and defence. This was especially so in the matter of the treatment of political prisoners. The severity of Mr. Balfour's methods went beyond the practice of Harcourt, but the fact that political offences had been punished with imprisonment by his opponent gave Mr. Balfour a dialectical advantage, and both Spencer and Harcourt felt that in the circumstances Gladstone's unqualified line of attack on the treatment of political prisoners in Ireland was dangerous. "For myself," wrote Spencer to Harcourt (October 18), "I should have strongly preferred leaving the question alone, or only dealing in a broad way with it, but Mr. G.
plunged so deep that I thought it probable, sooner or later, that he would come to me for our case." He discussed with Harcourt the issue of a statement in reply to Mr. Balfour, but Harcourt was not convinced that it would be wise. Writing to Spencer, he said:

**Harcourt to Spencer.**

**Malwood, October 19.**—... If you stood as clear in the matter of Harrington and others subjected to ordinary imprisonment for political offences as I do in the case of Davitt and his treatment, I should say publish by all means. In Davitt's case I am not certain that the question of prison clothes was ever pressed but, generally speaking, he was treated like a first-class misdemeanant, and that on the ground that he was sent back to prison not as a criminal but as a political offender. Accordingly he did not consort with the other prisoners. He was not confined to prison diet. He had all the books and writing materials he desired. He as I said for Hansard, which I allowed him, though I stated at the time that I thought it would be a serious aggravation of his punishment to read it. In my case the thing is simple enough because for pily Davitt was the only political prisoner I ever had on my hands.

The difficulty I feel about the Irish Government is that though you and Trevelyan appear to have accepted the same principles of action I cannot clearly make out what you did thereupon either in the case of Harrington or of others committed to ordinary imprisonment for political offences. ...

The real point is what substantial relaxations can you show that you made in the case of your prisoners as distinguished from Balfour's. Your letter is very hazy on this point, and there will be plenty of people in Ireland ready enough to trip you up on it. ... I am on the whole disposed to agree with J. Morley that your case is not good enough to make it worth while reopening the discussion. ...

But there was one phase of Mr. Balfour's policy which filled Harcourt with unmitigated wrath. Under the Crimes Act every defendant sentenced to more than a month's imprisonment had the right of appeal to the county court judge, who was in Ireland independent of the Crown. This right, however, became a whip for the back of the appellants themselves, for their sentences instead of being reduced were often increased. A notorious instance was that of Father McFadden, a popular priest of Gweedore, who appealed against a sentence of three months and had it
increased to six. This practice outraged the lawyer's conscience in Harcourt, and when Justin McCarthy moved the adjournment of the House on the subject (April 24) he denounced the increase of sentences on appeal as unconstitutional. It was "brutal and ferocious oppression," and he suggested quite plainly that it had been instigated by Mr. Balfour himself in a speech at Birmingham. Mr. Balfour described the imputation that the judges were receiving inspiration from Dublin Castle as a "foul libel" on them, and temper rose very high, the controversy overflowing from the House into the columns of The Times, to which Harcourt wrote indignant letters. Personal relations became embittered under the stress of these angry passages, and it was at this time (May 1) that Harcourt writing to Spencer added a postscript: "There was a touching and heartbreaking scene in the H. of C. last night when Arthur Balfour renounced for ever his friendship and esteem for John Morley. There has been nothing like it since the celebrated breach between Fox and Burke."

This language would sound a little transpontine if it were not borne in mind that to Harcourt the personal influences of politics were always a powerful motive. On the legal side he was detached and abstract enough, but in affairs the contacts with men counted for much. He had an enormous appetite for friendship, and the attractions and repulsions of personality played an unusual part in his public life. They had no relation to his political sympathies, and the result was often perplexing to those who regarded the social and political spheres as having the same orbits. The fact that Harcourt could never bring his personal friendships into line with his political friendships had something to do with the suspicion that he was insincere—that in private he was one thing and in public another. The matter almost assumed the aspect of a "party" question at this time, in connection with a visit of Chamberlain to Malwood at Whitsuntide. "I was amused," he wrote to Lewis Harcourt, "to get a note to say that 'the Party' are wrath at Joe's visit to Malwood." To this
note he replied as follows to Arnold Morley, then Chief Whip of the Liberal Party:

Harcourt to Arnold Morley.

MALWOOD, Sunday, May 6.—I am amused at what you tell me as to the sentiments on the "Round Table." I don't know who puts these gossiping paragraphs into the newspapers. The pressmen are nothing but a set of eavesdropping funkeys. It is quite true that the "Round Table" is at Malwood, and that I hope on Whitsunday we shall discuss at it much—victual.

The bitterness, jealousy and intolerance of our Nonconformist Radicals is intolerable. They don't understand how people can consort together as friends without some deep conspiracy. I asked Joe to come on the 25th for a few days which he could not do, and he cordially proposed himself for the 18th, when it happens J. Morley will be here. So that the coincidence is accidental. But I am not going to quarrel with all my old friends for all the Ellises & Co. in creation. I have arrived at an age when one does not easily make new friends or part with old ones.

I cannot have them all Non Cons and Parnellites at Malwood. Life would be unbearable on such terms.

I wish you would ask the Press Association to announce that I expect the Pope the same week. I hope to get many Unionists of the most malignant type in the Forest, which is the proper habitation of beasts of the chase. I hope that when Joe is clear off the premises and the house fumigated you will give us a day or two before the end of the holidays.

And to Mr. John Morley, who was disturbed about the comments in the Press, he wrote (May 11) urging him not to be "intimidated by the Press gang":

... If you and I are not fit to form our own judgment and "gang our own gait" in such matters we are poor creatures. Don't do that which would look like weakness in you and a snub to me. If you do I will have you made "Duke of South Kensington" at once.

Harcourt's feeling for Chamberlain was very cordially returned. Later in the year, on November 2, Chamberlain sent a pleasant note to Malwood to tell Harcourt of his approaching marriage to Miss Endicott. Public differences had not obliterated old friendship, and he sometimes flattered himself that Harcourt's observations might be taken in a Pickwickian sense. So he desired to be the first to convey the news of the change in his fortunes. He was on his way
to America by the time this announcement reached Malwood. He wrote at Christmas time from the Riviera, whither he had taken his bride, to acknowledge Harcourt's congratulations and the gift of a cigar case, adding that he hoped their public controversies would not be allowed to interfere with their old and delightful intimacy.

But these civilities did not prevent the two friends from attacking each other with great acerbity in public. "Nothing can be worse or more contemptible than Joe in tone, spirit and temper," wrote Harcourt to Mr. Morley (September 28) of Chamberlain's "kept party" speech at Nottingham. "The insinuation that the Parnellites are only actuated by a desire of money and we by desire of place is 'real mean' and is thoroughly second-rate form. ... I shall certainly not spare him when I have to handle him at Oldham." He fulfilled his promise in his speech at Oldham on October 11 when, dealing with Chamberlain's allegation that Gladstone had forced on the Irish question in 1886, he exposed Chamberlain's previous attempts to force the issue, his negotiations with Parnell, the leader of the "kept party" he now denounced, his Council scheme, his projected visit to Ireland under the auspices of Parnell, the failure of that project because Parnell had a better offer from the Tory Party, his action in overthrowing the Salisbury Government in 1886 in order to bring in Gladstone with a new plan for the government of Ireland, the general objects of which he knew at the time and when he joined Gladstone's Government. "And this is the man," he cried, "who condemns Mr. Gladstone for bringing forward and forcing on the Irish policy, and with holding communication with Irish leaders and with Mr. Parnell."

It was in this speech that Harcourt returned with great emphasis to a phase of the Irish question the magnitude of which he realized at that time more acutely than anyone engaged in the controversy—the bearing of the subject on America and American relations:

... These millions of Irish in America (he said) act and react upon the policy of the United States just as they do on the policy of
England, and of all things in the world that which I most desire is the cordial friendship of America. It is for that reason that I long for the conciliation of Ireland, of the Irish people in Ireland and the Irish people in the United States—first for the good of Ireland, next for the credit of England, and, not least, because I believe that it is absolutely essential to a good understanding between England and America. No one who knows anything of the relations between the two countries can be ignorant of the infinite mischief which is wrought by the bitter and insulting language which men in the position of Mr. Chamberlain address to a great and influential section of the American people. . . .

III

The agreeable mingling of private friendship with public hostility that continued to characterize Harcourt's relations with Chamberlain and James, did not prevail in the case of Goschen, and the duel between these two born antagonists, which continued through the life of this Parliament, reached an acute phase at the end of the autumn session of 1888. Harcourt was leading the Opposition in the absence of Gladstone, and W. H. Smith, the leader of the House, consulted him on the subject of the arrangements for closing the Session. Harcourt intimated to him that he would find it impossible in his (Smith's) absence to act with one who had failed, as Goschen had done, in courtesy to his opponents. Smith spoke to Goschen, who thereupon wrote to Harcourt a letter in which he said:

Goschen to Harcourt.

House of Commons, December 14.—I was sorry to hear from Smith that he had derived the impression from some remarks of yours that you felt more hurt at something I said in my late Birmingham speech than is usually the case with men like you and me, who are accustomed to receive hard blows as well as to give them. We have attacked each other pretty freely during these last two years, and I must honestly say that I have sometimes thought that your attacks on me were marked with an exceptional bitterness, which I confess has given me pain. I now fear that I must have erred myself in that direction, and if that is so, I do not hesitate to express my regret.

In his reply Harcourt administered a severe homily on parliamentary courtesies:
Harcourt to Goschen.

9, Park Place, St. James's Street, December 15.—... To say that I "felt hurt" at your language addressed to me at Birmingham would not be a correct expression. I have been too long in public life and outlived too much abuse to be sensitive on that score. You are perfectly at liberty to speak of me with all the bitterness and hostility which you may feel—and I shall not complain. Within the fair limits of political warfare (where men do not hit below the belt) I am as ready to receive as to deal hard blows with good humour.

That is not the question here.

As I have learned the honourable traditions of English public life—especially as between leading public men—there is a clear and broadly defined line of demarcation between invective however vehement against an opponent and the imputation to him of a base character and unworthy motives. Language of the latter sort in my opinion deserves to be condemned, and ought to be resented. It is beyond the pale of legitimate controversy; it is the use towards an adversary (I say nothing of a former colleague) of poisoned missiles.

I pass by your adjectives without remark—they belong to the vocabulary of common abuse—but when you spoke of me as a "soldier of fortune" in my conduct of the Opposition in the absence of Mr. Gladstone you employed a phrase which no one could fail to understand as intended to convey a charge of base and mercenary behaviour. ... You may denounce as you please my conduct of business in that position. I am responsible for it to my own Party and to the country. But with a proper regard for my own self-respect and that of my friends I cannot allow my public character and personal motives to be grossly assailed.

Of the propriety of such a charge as you have brought against me I shall say nothing, except that it was addressed to a public man who has never served but one Chief, and never acted but with one Party. "Soldiers of fortune" are generally men whose record is of an opposite character.

You speak of the freedom and bitterness of my speeches. I claim to exercise the right of speaking of men and of things as I think of them. That has been the habit of English political life, and he is little fitted to take part in it who shrinks from the encounter. But I cannot charge my memory with any instance in which I have traduced the character or motives of an adversary as you have done mine. If such can be found I should regard it not only with regret but with shame.

As however you express in your letter a regret—not I observe for the grossness of the attack but for the pain it may have caused—I shall take no further notice of it except to point out that private regrets imperfectly obliterate public insults. If I had been capable of imputing to you in a public speech—let us say corrupt objects in your conduct of public finance—I doubt if you would have been
satisfied if I had told you in private that I was sorry you were so sensitive as to resent it, and that if you felt hurt by it I regretted it. . . .

"You strain the meaning of my remarks much beyond what seems to me the natural interpretation," replied Goschen, "and on the other hand you evidently have not realised that a great deal of what you have said about me has appeared to me and to my friends to deserve the language which you use in your letter with respect to my words." He agreed, however, that private regrets were an inadequate reparation for public statements and suggested the publication of the correspondence. This, however, Harcourt, whose anger was now abating, did not ask for, and the incident closed. It had possibly occurred to him in the interval that earlier in the Session he had said something about a "deserter" who was not to be allowed to return as a "spy," and that between a charge of being a "deserter" and a charge of being a "soldier of fortune" there was not much to choose.

With a friend of an earlier date than any of these he crossed swords in public. His friendship with the Duke of Argyll had long since ceased to have any political significance. As Harcourt had advanced, Argyll had receded, and the Home Rule issue had been the last straw to the exiguous remnant of his Liberalism. Argyll's anger at Gladstone's policy expressed itself in vehement speeches and letters, and replying in The Times (October 31) to one of the letters which had dealt with Gladstone's land legislation and the question of rent, Harcourt said:

. . . The Duke of Argyll is a politician whose creed is comprehended in a single article, the divine right of rent. In his view the whole machinery of government exists principally in order to enable a few persons who happen to have the monopoly of the soil to extract from those who cultivate it, not only the uttermost farthing it will yield, but in many cases a good deal more. The necessity for the exceptional land legislation in Ireland and the West Highlands of Scotland arose from the flagrant and intolerant abuse of their legal powers by the proprietors in both countries. It was found absolutely necessary in the interests of humanity to interpose the barrier of a judicial arbitration to restrain an extortion which had worked
incredible injustice. . . . There is no doubt much to be said in theory against a system of legislation which ought never to have been necessary, but the doctrines of the Duke of Argyll, illustrated by the practice of the Marquis of Clanricarde, have been too much for the principle of freedom of contract. Humanity and justice are the indispensable substratum of all law which deserves to be respected, and it was necessary to rescue the executive and judicial authority from the reproach of being accessory to the proprietary system of Ireland and of the Highlands of Scotland. . . .

As the attack on the Duke of Argyll indicates, Harcourt’s ancient feud with the landlords had not cooled with time and experience. It had been the theme of his criticism of the Budget earlier in the year, and speaking at York in April he said:

. . . The great blot on the Budget is the Succession Duty. You know, probably, that on the death of each individual, the State—and I think it is very fair—levies upon the accumulative property a certain proportion for the use of the State under the name of the probate and legacy duty and the succession duty, and personal property is subject to probate and legacy duty; but the rate that is levied on land is very small in proportion to that which is levied upon personal property. Why has that been? Why, because up to this time, the majority in the House of Commons has always been more or less under the influence of the landowners. It is a perfectly recognized fact that the levy for imperial purposes under the succession duties gives an undue and unfair preference to land. The Liberal Party, whether they succeed or fail, mean to record their opinion in the House of Commons that the tax on all kinds of property, whether the personal property of individuals or real property, should be fair and equal between the two. If they were you would realize a sum of money which would enable you to dispense with small and irritating taxes, and give you a fund which might do something for the consuming poor.

It was this feeling that the dice were loaded in the interests of the landlords that was chiefly responsible for the most acute difference he had at this time with Mr. Morley. He had shared much of Chamberlain’s hostility to the Land Purchase Bill of 1886, and he had shared it for much the same reason—that purchase was a concession to a discredited landlordism. After the fall of Gladstone’s Government there had been some reaction against land purchase both amongst the leaders and among the rank and file.
On the other hand, the Tory Government had adopted the principle in the Ashbourne Act of 1887, which provided £5,000,000 for purchase. Mr. Morley, who with Spencer had chiefly inspired the Gladstone land purchase scheme, still maintained that land purchase was a necessary part of the Irish settlement, but Harcourt was increasingly unsympathetic, and Gladstone himself had never been enthusiastic for the proposal, though his judgment had been overborne by Spencer and Morley in 1886. When, therefore, in the autumn Session the Government introduced a short Bill to extend the provision of the Ashbourne Act of 1887, there was a large measure of Liberal resistance, on the ground that any dealing with Irish land for the moment should take the form only of a remission of arrears. Gladstone did not object to land purchase in principle, but he objected to it in homeopathic doses, and said that purchases under the Ashbourne Act were not voluntary and that in 1,198 cases out of 8,000 the Land Commission had found the terms exacted by the landlord so exorbitant that they had interfered and upset the "voluntary contract." Mr. Morley, while objecting to certain provisions of the Ashbourne Act and agreeing on the precedence of arrears, stood by the principle of purchase, and appealed to Harcourt, who was to speak at Newcastle on November 29, to "leave land purchase open as a possible necessity." But Harcourt was now decisively and publicly hostile, and in his speech at Newcastle said he did not think that after the opinion expressed on land purchase at the election of 1886 the proposals were likely to be renewed. The English people would not expend the money of the taxpayers for the benefit of the Irish landlords. The Liberal Government had indeed proposed to give relief and to advance English money for the sake of a nation whom they proposed to conciliate. That was intelligible.

... But what do you think (he said) of advancing millions after millions to people who are denounced, as the Irish are denounced by Lord Salisbury, as robbers and villains and scoundrels, and to be the creditor for untold millions to people whom you provoke, whom
you insult and whom you coerce. All I can say is that a financial policy of that character seems to me to be a policy of insanity.

In this speech he returned once more to the theme of Anglo-American relations as affected by the Irish question. "I ask you to ponder upon it," he concluded. "While you have a hostile Ireland you can never really have a friendly America."
CHAPTER V

TRIUMPH OF PARNELL

Charges against Parnell—Demand for a Select Committee—The Parnell Commission—Harcourt and the Attorney-General—Pigott’s collapse—Harcourt’s speeches in the provinces—Solidarity with the Irishmen—Damages by The Times.

A NEW and sensational phase of the Irish struggle had, meanwhile, begun to engross the public mind. It centred around the person of Parnell. That remarkable man had brought the constitutional movement within sight of victory, and the enemies of Home Rule very naturally regarded the destruction of his moral position as a capital necessity of their case. It is easy to believe the worst of those to whom we are opposed in opinion or interest, and every one who disagrees with us is a potential “Hun.” There is no reason to doubt that the political foes of Parnell were honestly convinced that he was secretly in sympathy with the physical-force party, and that he had subterranean contacts with them. It was an entire misapprehension of Parnell’s attitude. Whether he was opposed to physical force on moral grounds may be an open question; that he was opposed to it on practical grounds is beyond doubt. He was satisfied that in a trial of strength the material superiority of England coupled with the geographical disadvantages of Ireland would make the result a foregone conclusion. In spite of the air of mystery that enveloped him he was no dreamer, but the most practical of politicians, and he was not tempted to turn to idle violence the energies that could be more profitably used in the sphere in which he had shown himself a supreme strategist, and in which he had already achieved such conspicuous
success. He was convinced that the only path to Irish freedom was by constitutional methods, and there are few assertions that can be made with more confidence than that his influence diverted the mind of Nationalist Ireland from ideas of violence to faith in parliamentary agitation. When ideas of violence were revived a quarter of a century later they were revived not in Nationalist Ireland, but in "loyalist" Ulster. It was the example of the Orange Covenant, backed by a rebel army organized to resist the decrees of Parliament and sanctioned by the rhetoric of distinguished statesmen and lawyers, that swept the constitutional movement and the Nationalist Party out of the field before a tidal wave of direct action.

But the political strategy of Unionism in the 'eighties turned mainly upon the idea that Parnellism was only a disguise for crime, and that if the disguise could be torn aside the cause of Home Rule, revealed as a monster of outrage and violence, would be discredited and destroyed. The accusations of The Times had received the official endorsement of the Unionist leaders from Lord Salisbury downwards, and the refusal of the Government to grant a Select Committee of the House to inquire into those accusations had left the air charged with the poison gas of unproved but widely accepted suspicion. Parnell's very natural refusal not to submit an issue so saturated with political prejudice to the arbitrament of a London jury was construed into a confession of guilt, and it seemed that he and his movement were condemned to rest permanently under the imputations which had been so authoritatively made and had remained unanswered. But an incident occurred in the beginning of July 1888 which brought the whole case of The Times to the challenge of facts. A member of the Irish Party named F. H. O'Donnell brought an action against The Times on the ground that the allegations in "Parnellism and Crime" constituted a constructive libel upon himself as a member of the Irish Party. The case collapsed, the judge holding that the plaintiff had made out no case of libel against himself. There the matter
would have ended, but for the fact that the Attorney-General, Sir Richard Webster, who had conducted the defence for The Times, had used the occasion not only to reaffirm the accusations of The Times against Parnell and his party, but to extend them by the production of new letters alleged to have been written by Parnell and Egan. The monstrous unfairness of the proceeding brought the matter to a climax. It exposed the futility of an appeal to the law courts in circumstances of this kind, and the association of the chief law officer of the Crown with The Times, and still more his conduct of the case, shocked the public sense of decency. Parnell took prompt action. On July 6 in the House of Commons he made a personal statement in which he denounced as forgeries the new letters read at the trial by Webster, and alleged to have been written by himself, and three days later he asked for the appointment of a Select Committee of the House to inquire into the authenticity of these and other documents produced by the Attorney-General and involving the credit of members of the House. This was again refused, but W. H. Smith, the leader of the House, offered a commission of judges to inquire into the charges not only against members but against "other persons." The proposal was received with indignant astonishment on the Liberal benches. "The enormity of this sudden extension of the operation," says Lord Morley (Life of Gladstone), "was palpable. A certain member is charged with the authorship of incriminating letters. To clear his character as a member of Parliament he demands a select committee. We decline to give a committee, says the Minister, but we offer you a commission of judges, and you may take our offer or refuse as you please, only the judges must inquire not merely into your question of the letters, but into all the charges and allegations made against all of you, and not these only but into the charges and allegations made against other people as well."

Against this proposal to convert a simple inquiry on specific facts into a roving commission of general political
imputation and insinuendo, the Liberal leaders were in indignant agreement. But Parnell had reached the limits of his patience. He would have the charges investigated, if not fairly, then unfairly. He had made up his mind that he could prove that the letters were forgeries, and that if this were done the general mud-throwing would not count. "I told Mr. P. our views yesterday afternoon," wrote Mr. Morley to Harcourt (July 14), "with the usual effect that we might as well have saved our breath to cool our porridge. Herschell came to talk to me. He is warmly of our way of thinking—that P. ought to have lain low. He hates the proposed commission as a downright bad precedent, unconstitutional, etc. But of course we must now make the best of it." "We must fight for a definite issue instead of a universal mud-bath," replied Harcourt. "I think the thing should be confined to outrage and murder." To Gladstone he wrote (July 18), arguing against any arrangement with the Government as to the judges to be appointed. "It would make us parties and partners in a concern with which we ought to have nothing to do." The hand of the Government was rapidly disclosed. The offer of a commission, made nominally as an act of justice to the Parnellites, quickly assumed the character of a terrific engine for blowing Parnellism out of the water. In the angry debates that followed on the Bill setting up the Commission Harcourt denounced the purpose of the Government in unmeasured terms. The real issue was the charge of complicity with murder brought against Parnell, and the Government were setting up a political inquiry into the conduct of the Land League. He protested against the procedure of Sir Richard Webster, counsel for The Times (he would not in this matter refer to him as the Attorney-General), for opening evidence in the O'Donnell v. Walter case against persons who were not present to defend themselves. This was against the principles of the Bar. The Bill seemed to have been framed in the same spirit of endeavour to confuse the issues as was shown by the counsel for The Times when he brought before the Court matters that the jury were not empanelled
to try. As for the proposal that the charges need not be defined, he said:

... Nothing would shock you; for we know very well that you are racing for blood. What we protest against is that any man, even an Irish member, should be called upon to plead to a sort of hotchpotch, miscellaneous slander. That is not judicial inquiry. You may as well call upon all the members of a particular society to go before a tribunal and prove that they are not disreputable people. That is really the framework and conception of the Bill.

At a later stage (July 31) he accused the Government of being in collusion with The Times on the subject of the constitution and powers of the Commission, and when the Attorney-General for Scotland called for the withdrawal of this "unfounded slander," Harcourt said he would withdraw if the First Lord denied that in settling the terms of the Bill Mr. Walter of The Times had been consulted. W. H. Smith repudiated the suggestion, but being pressed by Harcourt admitted that Walter had called on him, though only as "an old friend," and without any reference to the Bill. The next day there was another heated discussion, Harcourt pointing out that, having stated in introducing the Bill that the inquiry was into charges against members of the House, the Government had now brought in other parties, and by so doing were breaking their covenant with the House. Smith said he had omitted "and others" in his original statement "by a slip"—a slip, as Gladstone pointed out, that was unnoticed and uncorrected by his colleagues who must have been aware of the Cabinet decision. There followed a series of violent duels between Gladstone and Harcourt on the one side, and Hartington and Goschen on the other. In the course of these altercations Harcourt observed, "There are far more adroit men sitting on that bench than the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Goschen). The Rt. Hon. Gentleman the Chief Secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant is much cleverer. He wears a better mask. But if you want to see true bitterness, true unfairness, and true hypocrisy, commend me to the frank innocence of the Chancellor of the Exchequer." Referring afterwards
(December 24, 1889) to the passionate scenes of that day Mr. Morley, writing to Harcourt, said:

... Also, tell the same paragon of sons and secretaries (Mr. Lewis Harcourt) that the ferocious and sanguinary scene between you, Goschen, and Hartington, of which I spoke at Malwood, was August 1, 1888. If Courtney had not intervened, pulveris exigui jactu, blood must have flowed. Mr. G. and I agreed that in the whole course of our parliamentary life, we had never seen such disgraceful violence. You certainly have the knack, and a blessed one it is, of rousing all the worst passions of humanity. . . .

From Parliament, Harcourt went into the country preaching a crusade against the scandal of converting a fair inquiry into specific charges into a mud-bath of political insinuation and propaganda. Speaking at Stoneleigh Park on August Bank Holiday, he said:

... It is not necessary to say much about the forged letters attributed to Mr. Parnell. If you had been in the House of Commons ... you would have seen it was quite apparent that these gentlemen who have been trading on the forged letters know very well that they are forged. Their whole behaviour—their endeavour to escape from a fair straight issue upon the subject of the letters—makes it apparent that they have never believed in them, though they have condescended to use them. Regarding the Irish people, as they do regard them, as a kind of noxious vermin, they think they are entitled to use any kind of poison. . . . You had an example of it in the way The Times dealt with Mr. Redmond. They brought a charge against him of the most dishonouring character. He gave them proof that it was false. They suppressed his letter. They repeated the charge, and years afterwards they put that charge that had been so refuted, and which they must have known to be false, into the mouth of the Attorney-General to repeat in a court of law.

He then described the way in which The Times had insinuated that Gladstone had intrigued against Forster. Harcourt had written a letter himself showing this to be false, and communicated it to the Press. The other papers published it; The Times alone omitted to do so. "If you take the most rabid Nationalist paper, whether in Ireland or America, you will find nothing in it so disgraceful as the conduct of The Times newspaper."

But in spite of protests, whether in Parliament or in the
country, the Government proceeded with their scheme for a general arraignment of Parnellism, rushing the measure through in the end by the ruthless exercise of the guillotine. The Commission, composed of three judges, Hannen, Day and Smith, commenced its sittings on September 17. It sat for 128 days, concluding the inquiry on November 22, 1889. The story of that unprecedented trial—the trial of unnamed men, charged with unspecified offences and deprived of the protection of a jury—does not belong to the subject of this book, and need only be briefly glanced at. The early sittings were occupied, not with the true subject of the inquiry, the authenticity of the Parnell letters, but with the building up of a mass of evidence intended to show that the Irish Party were incriminated in the activities of the physical-force men both in Ireland and in America. Though nominally *The Times* was on its defence, it was the Parnellites who were really in the dock, with the whole resources of the Government brought to bear upon them, and with the Attorney-General framing the indictment. Day by day the strangest medley of witnesses, spies from America, informers from Ireland, peasants from Kerry, priests, policemen, landlords, agents, filled the stage, each adding some trickle to the general stream of defamation.

Parnell waited unmoved. With his vivid sense of realities, he knew that nothing mattered but the letters, and that to the letters the inquiry must come in the end. If he could prove that they were forgeries, the attack would collapse like a house of cards. And he was sustained by the fact that he carried in his sling a pebble more deadly than all the monstrous batteries of the enemy. He not only knew that the letters were forgeries: he now knew the forger, and had served him with a subpoena before the Commission opened. It was this fact, long suspected if not known by the Attorney-General, that accounted for the desperate efforts to establish an overwhelming case against Parnellism before the subject of the letters was broached. But the evil day, though delayed, could not be escaped. On February 20, 1889, the fiftieth day of the
hearing; Richard Pigott went into the box as a witness for *The Times* to prove how he had come into possession of the letters which he sold to that journal. The next day the cross-examination of the wretched man by Sir Charles Russell began, and in a few hours the whole edifice of "Parnellism and Crime" was rocking to its fall. The cross-examination was continued but not finished next day, and when Pigott left the box Parnell turned to Barry O'Brien and said, "That man will not come into the box again."

The prediction was fulfilled. When his name was called at the next hearing on the following Tuesday there was no answer. He had fled the country. A warrant was issued for his arrest on a charge of perjury. He was followed to Madrid, where on March 5 the officers found him at an hotel. "Wait," he said, "until I go to my room for some things I want," and passing into the next room he fired a bullet through his brain. It was a squalid end to a squalid story, but Pigott was, perhaps, as much to be pitied as condemned. He had for years been picking up a precarious living in the gutters of Dublin journalism when suddenly the path to prosperity opened before him through the adversities of his own country. He had tried his 'prentice hand at fraud on Forster, and when he found the Unionists hungry for any evidence that would convict Parnell of complicity in crime he became an easy tool of their necessities. It was not the exposure of his crude and impudent forgeries that shocked the public mind. Incidents of this sort were common enough in the sordid story of Ireland, which, however poor in herself, had always been a rich country for those who betrayed her. The thing that outraged public opinion was the incredible ease with which responsible and highly placed people in English public life had been imposed on by documents which were manifestly suspect and which they accepted without the most elementary inquiries—indeed with the appearance of avoiding inquiries lest they should prove them untrustworthy.

The sensational episode changed the whole complexion
of politics. The Commission continued its labours, but all interest had passed out of its proceedings. Sympathy with the Irish cause had never been so widespread, and the effect was visible during the ensuing months in the results of the by-elections which revealed a tide flowing strongly in favour of Home Rule. Parnell himself had become a popular figure, and it was no longer held to be good tactics on the part of the Liberal leaders to avoid the appearance of public association with him. Writing to Gladstone (March 9), Harcourt said:

... I went late to the Eighty Club dinner last night; the reception of Parnell and his juxtaposition with Spencer was a striking event, and will have a great effect on the public mind and on the future of the Irish question. There need now be no further difficulty on the public recognition of our solidarité with Parnell in the interest of Home Rule. Co-operation with him was always necessary and it is now authentically avowed. In future they will fling the taunt of Parnellite against us in vain. ...

The Unionists were silent and depressed. "I see the Liberal Unionists had to abandon their proposed big meeting last night," Harcourt wrote to Mr. Morley (April 7), "and I doubt if J. C. [Chamberlain] can face the Birmingham public just now." Meanwhile, both in the House and in the country Harcourt was engaged in turning events to account. He delivered a series of speeches at Ely (March 13), Lambeth (March 20), and Bradford (March 28), which he largely devoted to attacks on The Times and the Government. He fastened especially upon the Attorney-General. At Lambeth he said:

... We are going to be asked to-morrow or the next day to vote Her Majesty's Attorney-General a salary of what amounts to about £10,000 a year—the largest salary given to any public officer under the Crown. Well, we propose to ask what the Attorney-General has been doing for the last nine months, and what he is going to do perhaps for the next three months, to earn this salary of £10,000. (Cheers.) Are the services upon which the Attorney-General has been so engrossingly engaged, services rendered to a private client? If so, why is the nation to pay him £10,000 for the miserable residue of his time? But if they have not been so rendered; if they have been rendered to Her Majesty's Government; if the Attorney-
General has been the agent in this transaction, not of The Times newspaper, but of the Government of the Queen, then we have a right to ask how he has discharged those duties. (Cheers.) And depend upon it that before that vote is taken we will have an answer to that question. We shall ask the Attorney-General when he knew about Richard Pigott. We shall ask him what he knew about Richard Pigott. The solicitor to The Times received a letter from Richard Pigott on November 11, telling him under his own hand that he was a man of infamous character who would not be believed in the witness-box. Did the Attorney-General know of that letter? ("Yes.") That I do not know. If he knew of that letter is it possible to conceive that a man could have gone on maintaining for four months the authenticity of the forged letters, that he could have kept Mr. Parnell during the whole of that time under the infamous charge published every day by The Times newspaper, and that he could finally have put Richard Pigott into the box as the witness of truth to swear away the character of the leader of the Irish people? (Cheers.) These are questions which have to be asked and which ought to be asked of a man who is the Attorney-General of the Queen, who is the chief prosecutor of this country, and who is the guardian of the traditions and honour of the English Bar.

In the House, Harcourt took the lead in calling the Government to account, in a succession of attacks culminating on March 22 in an indictment of the Attorney-General, whom he called on to explain how he came to be conducting the case of The Times at all. Did he ask the consent of the Government? Was it a State trial? If not, what right had he to make it impossible for himself to advise the House or to act as public prosecutor in any State proceedings arising from the case? He pressed Webster for replies on the following points:

...1. What did he mean, in the O'Donnell speech, by "other reasons," besides experts, for believing in the forgeries?
2. When did he first know that all rested on Pigott?
3. Was he privy to the letters before publication?
4. Did he know of Pigott's practical self-condemnation before putting him in the box?
5. Why did he not call Pigott till the close?
6. How did he come to vouch for the letters in his official place in the House?

On these points the effect of Webster's replies was as follows:
1. Duty to clients closed his mouth as to the collateral evidence he had in mind.

2. He was not told about Pigott till well into the case.

3. No.

4. Yes, but he was bound to put him in the box. He saw the letter of November 11 (declaring Pigott's guilt) in the middle of December. It was given to the other side five days before Pigott's examination. (This was shown to be untrue by George Lewis, Parnell's solicitor, who stated in the Press that the letter handed to Russell was one which had no reference to Pigott's untrustworthiness.)

6. That was only speaking, as counsel, of counsel's instructions.

Harcourt had in his speech alluded scornfully to the "apology" which had been offered, and which he was sure Webster would disclaim as the work of "some pettifogging attorney." "That pettifogging and cozening knave," said Webster, "stands before you." The debate was prolonged and violent, and in the end the impeachment was voted down by 286 votes to 206. Much was made of the fact that the lawyers, even most of the Liberal lawyers in the House, had not supported Harcourt in his attack on Webster for dishonourable conduct, but in this matter professional etiquette played an important part. Harcourt himself, though a lawyer, never allowed professional etiquette to compromise his public activities, and was always ready to risk the criticism that he was not loyal to his class. When there was a conflict between what he conceived to be his duties as a public man and professional connections he did not doubt which was the weightier interest he had to protect. In this incident time has justified him. His impeachment of Webster remained as a protest against the indefensible anomaly which permitted law officers of the Crown to engage in private practice which might conflict with the proper fulfilment of their public duties, and years afterwards the anomaly was very properly abolished. The general position which Harcourt took up in regard to the duties of counsel was stated by him shortly afterwards in a speech at St. James's Hall (April 11) at which he appeared on the platform with Thomas Sexton, the orator of the Irish Party. On this, the first occasion on
which the solidarity of the English and Irish*Home*Rulers was publicly proclaimed—he said, quoting Lord Chief Justice Coleridge:

... If men, speaking as advocates, make statements without making careful inquiry into the truth of those statements, they are absolutely without excuse, and deserve the scornful condemnation of all men. (Cheers.) That is what I have always understood, and what I still understand, to be the honourable tradition of the English Bar. I hope it still is so, for of this I am sure, that when it ceases to be so the authority of the Bar will carry little weight with the people of England. People would then begin to ask whether there is a different code, a different conception of fair play in the legal profession from that which governs ordinary men in their actions one towards the other.

* The labours of the Commission dragged on far into the autumn, but the public had ceased to note them, and when on February 13, 1890, the report was issued it aroused little more than an academic interest. Harcourt anticipated the production of the report by forcing a debate (February 11) on the question of privilege, accusing The Times of a breach of privilege on the moving of the second reading of the Crimes Bill of 1887 by the publication and comment on the alleged Parnell letter. It was a speech of great weight and learning—"No more dignified, conclusive and unanswerable argument was ever delivered in the House of Commons," said Mr. Frederic Harrison in writing to Harcourt next day—and the Government majority fell to forty-eight. When the report appeared two days later Gladstone consulted the lawyers of the Party as to the course to pursue. Harcourt wrote to Mr. Morley:

Malwood, February 16.—... I am sorry that you and Mr. G. have been confabulating with the lawyers on the Commission. I don't wonder that you are depressed and confused. These same lawyers are the worst company you can keep on this matter. Instead of taking a broad popular view of the question they have entangled themselves in a lot of small special pleading points and are really responsible for all the harm that has been done, and particularly the dribbling on of the case after the Pigott exposure.

I quite lost my patience with R. Reid at A. Morley's the other night when he proceeded to demonstrate how this point and that point and the other had to be met.
If anything is to be made of this business it must be by discarding the lawyers and their quiddities altogether. . . .

He himself promptly set the example by going to Bath (February 26), and delivering a broadside against the Commission as "a solecism, a monstrosity. . . . There has never been anything like it before, and I rather fancy there will be nothing like it in the future. Three very learned and distinguished men, judges indeed in office but not sitting in a judicial capacity, have been sitting to decide upon the character and the conduct of the great body of the representatives of the Irish people. Such a thing has never been heard of in England since the days of the Stuarts; ever since there has been a free Parliament in England Parliament has thought itself a fit judge of its own representatives." So far as personal crimes were concerned, the judges were competent to deal with issues of fact and law. "But of those matters which belonged to political crime, I think they were more unfit to judge than any other three men you could have found in the Kingdom." With this prelude, he turned to the part The Times had played. It stood "gibbeted with the brand of eternal infamy, a monument of lasting disgrace to English journalism, a perpetual record of the base malignity of a political party." From The Times he passed to "the accessories before and after the fact to this criminal conspiracy." As for the character of the Land League, the principle on which it was founded was that the land of Ireland belonged to the people of Ireland. The programme advocated by Parnell and Davitt in 1880 advised two years' suspension of ejectments, and compulsory sale by the landlord at twenty years' purchase, the purchase money to be paid by the State on an improved system of land transfer. If this was a criminal conspiracy, what of all the various popular movements of the past? He ran through a long list of historical parallels from Cromwell, Kosciusko, Washington and Garibaldi down to the Reform Bill, and showed that in every case there had been disturbance before great popular movements were successful. Mr. Morley wrote next day:
A most magnificent speech, my dear Harcourt— spacious, commanding, overwhelming. 'Twill make a thoroughly heavy impression—and restore perfect confidence to our people. Nothing could be finer or stronger.

When the debate on the report of the Commission came on in the House on March 3 it was made memorable by one of the most moving of Gladstone's speeches—"finer, I think, for the last twenty minutes than anything I ever heard," wrote Harcourt to his wife next day—and by a scene between Harcourt and Hicks-Beach, the latter charging Harcourt with a "calumnious" suggestion. Harcourt rose to protest, was greeted with shouts of "Order," and retorted that "there could be no order in the House" unless a member were allowed to repudiate such a charge upon the spot. But the Speaker said he was alone the judge of order, and, with this sanction, Hicks-Beach persisted in his attacks, Harcourt finally seizing his hat and, amid derisive cheering, quitting the House with the remark, "I will not stay here to be abused in this way." It was one of those not infrequent occasions when his anger got the better of his judgment.

The triumph of Parnell was complete. The public were not interested in what Harcourt called the lawyers' "quiddities," but took a broad view of the result of the matter. The mountain had been in labour, and to the plain man it had brought forth Pigott. The verdict of public opinion was unqualified, and it reacted powerfully upon the general feeling in regard to Home Rule. For one brief moment it seemed that at long last the Irish issue was passing like a cloud from the sky, and that in a few brief months Gladstone would crown his career by the completion of the great task to which he had consecrated his old age. The victory of Parnell was formally ratified by The Times, against which he had now brought an action for libel, claiming damages of £100,000. The action was settled by agreement out of court for £5,000, The Times publishing an acknowledgment that it had no legal defence to the action and "no alternative but to come to terms with our opponent or to abide by such a verdict as a jury might think proper to award."
CHAPTER VI

FALL OF PARNELL

Hints of coming Disaster—The O'Shea Case—Correspondence with Gladstone—The choice between Gladstone and Parnell—Committee Room, No. 15—Split in the Nationalist Party—Harcourt and Morley discuss the new position of Home Rule—A difference between the two Friends—Break-down of Boulogne Negotiations—Death of Parnell.

But the clear sky did not last. As the cloud that had hung over the Irish cause so long vanished, another, charged with still more formidable, because real, elements appeared upon the horizon. Writing to Harcourt on February 3, apropos of the action against the Times, Mr. Morley said:

. . . Last night I dined at Brookes's with E. Hamilton to meet the P. of W. George Lewis was there, and told me the state of things as to P. By the time you get this all the world will know that The Times has settled for £5,000. I told Lewis that in my judgment he had done an extremely wise thing, and was very lucky. . . .

He told me much else, which cannot well be written down. I can only say that when the time comes, Walter will have his five thousand pounds' worth of revenge. It will be a horrid exposure, and must, I think, lead to the disappearance of our friend. . . .

The meaning of the dark allusion was understood by Harcourt. For some weeks it had been known to him, as to others in the inner circle of politics, that a petition for divorce in which Parnell figured as the co-respondent had been presented by Captain O'Shea. In this there was no matter of surprise to Harcourt. During his activities at the Home Office he had become acquainted with the secret of Parnell's private life, and the fact was no doubt largely responsible for the attitude he had adopted in regard to
him. He knew that at any time a mine might be sprung which would not merely engulf Parnell and his cause, but would gravely prejudice the interests of the Liberal Party, and while walking in step with Parnell and his supporters he chose to walk warily. Even in the hour of Parnell's triumph he still preserved an air of detachment from the Irish. Writing to Mr. Morley (March 31), apropos of engagements with the Irish members, he said, "I prefer to spend my holidays with Bobby even to the claims of Sexton. And I hope I may still preserve my virtue and die as I have lived without seeing Ireland." His special knowledge of Parnell's life left him no illusions as to the probable result of the action; but among the general public there was a widespread conviction that the new attack on the Irish leader would prove to be as futile as that which had just collapsed so ingloriously, and the bearing of Parnell himself, who seemed icily indifferent to the whole matter, supported this view. Throughout the summer the Home Rule cause, under the favourable wind set up by the Commission, went merrily ahead, and the tale of the by-elections, culminating in a great victory at Eccles, registered the progress. If the storms of November could be weathered the port would be won. In that month there was a clash of events all bearing on the same crucial issue. The autumn Session was to open, the O'Shea divorce trial was to take place, and the National Liberal Federation was to hold its annual meeting. All turned upon the course of the Parnell trial, and as that approached the outlook darkened. "Edward Clarke has some terribly odious material in his hands," wrote Mr. Morley to Harcourt (November 10), "and if he uses it, our man will be destroyed, or at any rate made impossible for a long time to come. I regard it as certain that the Irish will not throw him over in any case, and if they don't, nobody else can." Harcourt was equally gloomy. "We are no sooner out of one storm than into another, and are much like Æneas in pursuit of the Samian kingdom," he replied.

Four days later (November 15) the trial began. As
Parnell offered no defence the hearing might have been limited to the production of necessary evidence, but the presentation of counter-charges against O'Shea gave the Solicitor-General, Sir Edward Clarke, acting for O'Shea, an opportunity to make a full disclosure of the relations that had existed for many years between Parnell and Mrs. O'Shea. The effect was shattering. Mr. Morley, writing to Harcourt (November 18), said:

... We are in about as bad a fix as Ministers were in the explosion of Pigott. Only the effects of the blow will be more lasting, as Pigott had at least the good sense to take himself off from the sublunar stage. I am most sorry of all for Mr. G. The consequences of the dirty malodorous storm will hardly clear away in his time. ...

"Whether they are right or wrong," wrote Campbell-Bannerman to Harcourt, "my belief is the Scotch will not tolerate P. in his position of quasi-partnership with the Liberal leaders." Harcourt himself had no doubt that Parnell must go. He had been present with Mr. Morley at the meetings of the National Liberal Federation at Sheffield, and writing to Gladstone he said:

Harcourt to Gladstone.

MALWOOD, November 22.—... I have to report to you that the opinion was absolutely unanimous and extremely strong that if Parnell is allowed to remain as the leader of the Irish Party all further co-operation between them and the English Liberals must be at an end. You know that the Nonconformists are the backbone of our Party, and their judgment on this matter is unhesitating and decisive.

It was with great difficulty that Morley and I dissuaded Spence Watson from pronouncing publicly to this effect as President of the Federation from the Chair at the great meeting last night. We only did so by representing to him the difficulty in which he would place us who could not speak on the subject without your authority.

I cannot express to you too clearly my conviction that the future of the Liberal Party depends on your making a very clear and authoritative declaration on the subject, and I know J. Morley agrees in this opinion.

Whether it means a severance from the Irish Party I know not, but any other course will certainly involve the alienation of the greater and better portion of the Liberal Party of Great Britain—which after all is that which we have mainly to consider.

I fear from what J. Morley tells me that there is very little hope
that P. will voluntarily withdraw himself, but we cannot wait for that. I foresee that if he appears on Tuesday at the head of the Irish Party in the House of Commons there will be an explosion amongst our friends. They are waiting only out of respect for you in order that the word may proceed from you. But they will not wait long, and I am sure that the sooner you give them the relief they so earnestly desire, the better for all parties.

I have a letter from Campbell-Bannerman who takes the same view as to Scotland.

I assure you I am giving the judgment of quiet and reasonable men and not merely of the "screamers" like Stead. It is very desirable that what is to be done should be done quickly and that you should not appear to be forced by others into that which they so much desire should proceed from the leader of their Party.

I wish we had the opportunity of consulting with you at this very momentous crisis of the Party, but I hope you will come up of Monday prepared to make a communication to P. without delay so that he may know your views before the House meets.

_Gladstone to Harcourt._

_Hawarden, November 23._—It was, I think, very wise to prevent any pronouncement at the meeting of the Federation. But the evidence obtained there is a great fact.

I have been waiting upon the time and on events, and I think both are now ripe. I have advised A. Morley to assemble you and J. Morley to-morrow, the earlier the better.

And I would recommend your sending for McCarthy and asking him whether I am to expect any communication from Mr. Parnell on the subject of the existing situation. He might be reminded, or informed, that in 1882, after the murders in Phoenix Park, he wrote to me the next day and offered to take the Chiltern Hundreds. It might be mentioned to him that the inquiry made is not officious or gratuitous, as unless something proceeds from Mr. Parnell (which would be far better) it would be necessary to make known to him that the last week had been spent in observing the evidences rife in every quarter of a profound movement of the public mind in Great Britain, to say nothing of similar indications elsewhere.

The effect of that observation, corroborated by counsel with my friends, is to convince me that the continuance of Mr. Parnell in the leadership of the Irish Party at the present moment would be, notwithstanding his splendid services to his country, so to act upon British sentiment as to produce the gravest mischief to the cause of Ireland; to place those who represent the Party in a position of irremediable difficulty; and to make the further maintenance of my own leadership for the purposes of that cause little better than a nullity.

It should be understood that in what has been said I do not con-
stitute myself a judge, in any respect or degree, of the merits of the case, but simply take note of the facts, as I conceive that I am bound to do by my duty to the Irish Party and to Ireland at large.

If it is deemed better that this communication should be made by me (which is not my opinion) Mr. McCarthy might be informed that I am due at No. 1, Carlton Gardens about four, and that to allow for casual delays I would ask the great favour of his calling on me about five.

If you and Morley make the prior communication as I have proposed, it might still be well for M. to understand that I could be found at that hour should there be occasion. If you think the indication I have given as to consequences of persistence is premature, that might stand over for the next stage.

At some time or other I should desire to say for myself that my reliance on his exactitude and scrupulous integrity in political communications has not been impaired, and that no change in that respect enters at all into the motive of my present communications.

II

All depended on the attitude of Parnell. He had received the verdict of the Divorce Court imperturbably, and carried himself with his usual cold and haughty indifference to events. Davitt had declared against him, but the Party generally rallied to him, and from Ireland and America there came evidence of popular support. But on the English side of St. George's Channel the feeling against continued association with him was overwhelming, and on the Friday (November 21) there was reason to believe that Parnell would bow to the storm. On Monday, the day before the assembling of Parliament, Gladstone returned to London, and was visited by Justin McCarthy, to whom he communicated his views in the spirit of his letter to Harcourt, his intention being that these views should be passed on to Parnell and his followers. After McCarthy had gone he wrote a letter to Mr. Morley, not intended for publication, in which he indicated what he had said to McCarthy, and continued:

... I think I may be warranted in asking you so far to expand the conclusion I have given above as to add that the continuance (of Parnell's leadership) I speak of would not only place many hearty and effective friends of the Irish cause in a position of great
embarrassment, but would render my retention of the leadership of the Liberal Party, based as it has been mainly upon the presentation of the Irish cause, almost a nullity.

It was a plain issue. The Irish Party had to make a choice between sacrificing Parnell and sacrificing Gladstone, and the sympathy of the English Liberals. Unfortunately they did not know this. If there had been any weakening of Parnell on the Friday it had soon passed. During the week-end he eluded all Mr. Morley's efforts to put him in possession of Gladstone's intentions, and Justin McCarthy was quite inadequate to deal with so critical a situation. Whether he was afflicted by panic or timidity is not clear, but when the Irish Party met on Tuesday to elect a leader for the Session they were left in complete ignorance of Gladstone's attitude, and chose Parnell. The news of the decision fell like a thunderbolt upon the House which was at the moment engaged in the debate on the Address. "I was in the Lobby from 3 to 7," wrote Lewis Harcourt to Lady Harcourt, "but came away at last as I could not bear it any longer. Our men were mad, frantic, cursing, crying—the whole place in an uproar—a horrible scene which I could not stand, so I went and dined alone at the club, and read the medical papers on Koch's cure."

Meanwhile, Mr. Morley had communicated the Gladstone letter to Parnell, and Gladstone himself, profoundly moved by the blow that seemed to have wrecked the labour of years, immediately sent his letter to Mr. Morley to the Press. The Irish members, learning for the first time of the Gladstone letter and realizing how they had been tricked, revolted in large numbers, and summoned a meeting for the following day with the object of undoing their fatal work. With this decision began that prolonged and fateful struggle in Committee room No. 15 which during the ensuing days overshadowed the proceedings of Parliament itself. Parnell's strategy was equal to the emergency. He issued a manifesto in which he sought to divert the issue from the question of his own misconduct to the ground that Gladstone was
contemplating the betrayal of the Irish cause. He disclosed proposals which he said he had received from Gladstone at Hawarden in December 1889, which constituted a severe truncation of the Home Rule scheme. It was the desperate throw of a reckless man, and Gladstone’s reply showed that the so-called “betrayal” was merely a discussion of points intended to explore the ground for the future. For a year this conversation had been so treated by Parnell, and Mr. Morley, who also issued a reply and who had been involved in the negotiations of December 1889, said that as late as November 10, “I was under the most distinct impression that Mr. Parnell did not object to the suggestions thrown out a year ago at Hawarden as subjects for provisional discussion.” Harcourt had not been a party to the Hawarden conversation, and had protested against some of the proposals then put forward, especially against the reduction of Irish M.P.’s to thirty-three, and he now viewed with equivocal feelings the disclosure of proceedings he had not endorsed. He had never liked Parnell, and he shared neither the surprise nor the distress which this new revelation of the man occasioned to Mr. Morley. Writing to his wife, he said:

Oxford and Cambridge Club, November 29.—... I have seen Mr. G. this morning. He has sent his denial of the statement (Parnell’s Manifesto) generally to the evening papers. The blackguardism of the man will now be patent to all the world. If what he said was true (which it is not) it would have been disgraceful to publish it. However, it is very artfully conceived, and it is possible that it may shake the majority against him on Monday.

Poor J. Morley is much cast down. To me I confess it is a relief to have done with such a rascal. I feel some satisfaction in remembering that I have never shaken hands with him. It is all very interesting, and I think may relieve us of many difficulties in the future.

“It is a very dangerous thing to approach an expiring cat,” he wrote next day to Gladstone. “I do sincerely trust that no sentiment either of compassion or of policy will persuade you to do or say anything which may even savour of concession to that man. He is as the lawyers say ‘in mercy,’ which means that he has none to expect,
and if it were suspected even that you had let him march out with the honours of war it would create a very bad effect on the public mind." The warning was apropos of the struggle that was still going on in Committee Room 15. "The Irishmen are upstairs fighting like Kilkenny cats and coming out at intervals to have 'drinks all round,'" wrote Harcourt to his wife next day. "It is said they will not divide till midnight. The numbers are believed to be 2 to 1 against Parnell, and I hear he is raging like a wild beast at the meeting." The tide was going against him, and from America the two most powerful members of his Party, Mr. Dillon and Mr. William O'Brien, had cabled their adherence to the majority in opposition to Parnell's leadership. But Parnell fought on with the desperation of a wild animal, and the scenes in the Committee room grew in intensity as the days passed by. Parnell's new strategy was to extract terms from the Liberal leaders as the condition of his retirement. "I was with Mr. G. yesterday," wrote Harcourt to his wife (December 1), "when he saw Justin McCarthy, who, poor man, was the bearer of a message from P. proposing that Mr. G., J. Morley and I should sign a letter containing certain terms to be binding upon us in the final settlement of Home Rule which he P. undertook to keep an inviolable secret!! This was to be a condition of his surrender. Can you imagine that impudence could go further. You may imagine the answer which was given to this inconceivable proposal." The proposal was received on December 3, when Harcourt, in common with Gladstone and Mr. Morley, was asked to receive a deputation from the Irish Party for the discussion of the terms of a satisfactory Home Rule Bill, especially in regard to the control of the constabulary and the right of an Irish Parliament to deal with the land question. Harcourt declined to meet the Irishmen, and wrote long and fervid letters to Gladstone urging him not to be caught in the net that Parnell was spreading for his destruction.

... It is obvious (he said, December 5) that the retirement if it took place at all is to be only momentary. Healy himself assumes
that Parnell is to return almost immediately. This is what he said: "If Mr. Parnell felt able to meet the Party on the points put forward his voice would be the first at the very earliest possible moment consonant with the liberties of his country to call him back to his proper place as leader of the Irish race."

Whatever you do, whether Parnell retires for the moment or not, upon your acceptance of his dictation he will return long before you can bring forward a Home Rule Bill, and then you will have to deal with a man who has thus spoken of you. . . .

That day Gladstone wrote finally declining an interview with the Irishmen, but expressing confidence in the renewal of relations with them when they had settled the question of leadership. The decision brought the struggle in Committee Room 15 to an end. The majority urged Parnell to bow to the inexorable necessities of the position. He refused, and at last Justin McCarthy rose from the table and left the room, followed silently by his forty-four supporters. Parnell was left behind with twenty-six colleagues, and the breach in the Irish ranks was final and irrevocable. Harcourt, well pleased with the issue of the struggle, went down to Malwood, and writing from thence to Mr. Morley (December 9) said:

. . . Here I am in the harbour of Malwood with two anchors down and topmasts struck—suavi mari, with snow outside and in a comfortable warm house I have been studying the morning's papers. What a scene! O qualis facies et qui digna tabella! It is one the British public will not soon forget. For us I think the issue is quite as favourable as we could have hoped. We have at least accomplished the two main objects. We have saved the Liberal Party and we have maintained the credit of the G.O.M. These are the two capital points and they cannot suffer now unless some great imprudence is committed. . . .

From the battle-field of Committee Room 15, the two Parties crossed the Irish Channel to continue the struggle in Ireland. By this time the Catholic hierarchy had declared against Parnell. "As for the battle in Ireland, which will be at the bottom between Parnell and the Bishops, I will not put any money of mine on those holy men," wrote Mr. Morley to Harcourt (December 10). The passion of Parnell mounted as the forces opposed to him increased, and his
campaign in Ireland, with the forcible capture of the offices of *United Ireland*, and the frenzy of the Kilkenny election, assumed the character of a physical warfare. The tide went against him, and at Kilkenny his nominee was defeated. But the effect of these wild doings on the public mind in England was disastrous, and a by-election in the Bassetlaw division registered the measure of the set-back which had been given to the Liberal cause by the events of the past month. Gladstone was in the deepest despair. Writing to Harcourt (December 18) on his return from a visit to Ireland, Mr. Morley said:

... I called for three or four hours at Hawarden, by command, on my way home. Mr. G. was full of cold, and out of sorts, but with occasional spurts of intense passion at the wickedness of Parnell, the insensate folly of his dupes, and the want of pluck in his nominal foes. Altogether the atmosphere was rather sad and depressing. ... Mr. G. can find no parallel in history to the present Irish dementia, except the furious quarrels among the chosen people in Jerusalem, while Titus was thundering at the gates. I suppose Florence, Pisa, etc., were as mad with faction. ...

III

It was a depressing Christmas for the Liberal leaders. With an election beginning to loom in sight they found themselves in a condition of apparent shipwreck, their cause discredited by their own allies, their relations with the Irish snapped asunder, the tide of public opinion that had been flowing so strongly in their favour turning against them, unable either to surrender their policy or to press it with any prospect of success. Gladstone was in deep gloom at Hawarden, but Harcourt and Mr. Morley sought to keep up each other's spirits by an unflagging exchange of letters turning upon the problem of what was to be done to keep the ship afloat. Harcourt enveloped his anger at events with plentiful flashes of fun. Referring (December 18) to "Joe's speech at Birmingham which was as nasty as usual," he says: "He wants a 'National Party' constructed for his own private advantage, like a public-house of which he is to keep the bar." "I am reading Virgil with Bobby. I desire nothing better. 'Tu regere imperio populos,'
especialiy the Irish people.” “I see old Tollemache is dead of driving twenty miles in East wind. I shall die, but not that way” (this to his son). “I myself cultivate such stoicism as I can. Like Grattan we can say, ‘We sat by its cradle, and we follow its hearse.’ And I at least suffered quite as much from the pangs of its birth as I ever can from the agony of its decease.” Enclosing a photograph of Malwood with himself standing at the front door, he says (December 22): “As Morley will not come to Malwood, Malwood must come to Morley. . . . You will observe that the propriétaire is looking from his front door in vain for the guest who ought to lift the closed blinds of the Morley Chamber (on the left).”

“I always find it best,” he writes to Mr. Morley (December 19), “when I want to clear my head to put my thoughts on paper. I therefore enclose you an epistle nominally addressed to you, really addressed to myself, as to the conditions on which I think Home Rule possible and upon which I am prepared to advocate it.” With this memorandum he opened an elaborate discussion with Mr. Morley of the prospects of Home Rule in the light of the new situation. Harcourt’s main point was that Home Rule rested on two conditions:

(1) That Gladstone should have full powers to make a proposal which should command the consent of Great Britain.
(2) That there should be some authority entitled to express the assent of Ireland.

Parnell had now struck at the basis of this twofold condition. “His appeal to the Irish people rests on the denial of all mutuality. His demand is that Ireland alone shall prescribe the terms of H.R. That is just what Chamberlain flung in our teeth after the Round Table, and that is what we have always denied. I have no hesitation in saying that on such conditions I am as much opposed to H.R. as anyone in the Unionist camp.” Until the conditions 1 and 2 were restored, no progress could be made. Without them “we may mitigate the action of the British occupation, but we shall never procure evacuation.”
In his reply Mr. Morley insisted on the need of a United Ireland. "I would rather see Ireland Parnellite than divided—for her own sake." He was for fighting it out, not in expectation of victory at the election, "but so as to lead our troops in decent order from the field—and what is more important, to save something of what we have gained at such great cost, by convincing the Irish that for once an English party is thoroughly to be relied on." He was against the tactics of postponement. "If I am to be beaten, I should like to face the enemy and not skulk in any ditches."
To this Harcourt replied at great length, his general point being stated as follows:

... In my opinion Parnell for the time at least having fatally checked our positive advance in the direction of Home Rule, we should operate on the negative and defensive lines as against coercion. We can reasonably and justly maintain that though Parnell may have made an Irish Parliament less possible in the present he has not made a policy of coercion on the part of the British Government and the British Parliament more right as against the Irish people who are guiltless of his offence.

Mr. Morley (December 26) persisted in the wisdom of going forward. "To announce that Home Rule is no longer regarded by us as actual, or as practical politics would be instantly to fling the Nationalists back into Parnell's arms. It would be taken to justify Parnell's charge that Mr. G. seized the divorce as a pretext for getting rid of H.R. by getting rid of the leader. ... I see nothing but danger, and still further discredit, if we change our line—though there are many reasons why we should supplement our Irish policy by English reforms." Harcourt's next broadside (December 27) opened:

Your observations are founded on the assumption that nothing has happened and nothing has changed, and that the split with Parnell leaves things exactly as they were. If that is so of course you are right, and there is no reason why the treatment of Home Rule should be varied in principle or in urgency.

I have the highest admiration of the justum ac lenacem propositi virum and of his composure in the midst of fractured worlds, but after all in practical life if an earthquake does knock down the walls
of your house and upset your kitchen fire you must sometimes put off your dinner for half an hour.

He traversed the whole ground of the changed situation and the changed tactics it required, insisting afresh on the element of mutuality as the condition of practical progress. "I am quite willing to satisfy the Irish," he concluded, "but upon one condition and that is that they satisfy us. The one term is correlative and ought to be commensurate with the other. You will never progress with Home Rule unless you give an equal impulse to both these oars—if you pull at one only you will only slew the boat round in a circle."

The inordinately long argument, carried to no definite conclusion, closed on New Year's Eve with a letter from Mr. Morley which ended: "Well, at any rate, I do very cordially wish a happy New Year to all at Malwood. You often provoke me, you occasionally exasperate me, and I really doubt whether I can join your Government, but our good relations have been the pleasantest part of the last five years."

But this cordial intercourse suffered a rude, though momentary shock a few weeks later. The confusion within the Liberal Party showed no sign of abatement, and Gladstone, Harcourt and Mr. Morley were in almost daily correspondence on the course to be pursued. The public was waiting for some declaration of policy, but Harcourt himself refused to be drawn, and urged his colleagues to mark time. He opposed a Party meeting, and was against any definite pronouncements by Gladstone or anything which would commit the Liberal Party until the Irish horizon was once more reasonably clear. Mr. Morley urged him to speak, but he said, "I have always found it a sound maxim 'when in doubt, don't.' I have often regretted having spoken, but never been sorry for having held my tongue, and at this moment I want no encouragement to be silent." "I am amused to hear that my opponents scold me because I don't speak," he wrote to a correspondent; "but I console myself still more with the reflection that they would scold
me still more if I did speak. And therefore despairing to please them either way, I shall in this seasonable weather continue to cultivate my fireside.” It was a busy fireside, for his pen was engaged incessantly in discussions with Gladstone and Morley on the materials of an English policy with which to keep the Party together, and on questions to be taken up while they were marking time on the Irish question. Thus he wrote with great indignation to Gladstone (January 7, 1891) on the revelations of Stanley’s African expedition, one of those “filibustering expeditions in the mixed guise of commerce, religion, geography and Imperialism, under which names any and every atrocity is regarded as permissible.”

... An armed expedition like Stanley’s (he continued) claims and exercises the power of life and death and outrage upon all with whom they meet, powers which are exercised without remorse. They enlist men whom they call carriers, but who are really slaves, driven in by contract by the established slave drivers of the country. They work these men to death, and if they are recalcitrant flog or shoot them... What is really wanted is to concentrate public opinion upon the real nature of these transactions which are the worst form of piratical Jingoism....

IV

But questions like these could not efface the great issue which held the stage, and to burke it in public became increasingly impossible. It was all the more impossible because at this moment another phase of the drama was occupying the public mind. Defeated at Kilkenny, Parnell had gone to Boulogne to meet Mr. William O’Brien, who had come from America to discuss terms upon which reconciliation could be effected on the basis of Parnell’s retirement. Harcourt, always distrustful of Parnell’s good faith, warned Gladstone and Mr. Morley that the negotiations were a sham, a new move on the part of Parnell to involve the Liberals in fresh difficulties and to break the Irish opposition to him into fragments. That this was his object became clear before the negotiations broke off. Meanwhile Mr. Morley had entered into negotiations with
the Anti-Parnellites, and defending himself to Harcourt wrote (January 7):

... I am not exuberantly cheerful myself, but I swear that I'm more of a stoic than you. The crash to me is worse than to you. I believed in this policy, and I had some opinion of Parnell, though no illusions. It has all gone to pieces under the most ignoble circumstances and the time may come pretty soon when the Party will curse everybody concerned. Well, I face all that. All I care for is that the Party, and Mr. G. especially, should come out of it, as little hurt as may be. After all, your view is really just the same.

A few days later (January 13) in a speech at Newcastle, he said, "For myself, win or lose, I will fight it out. When the obscurring smoke of the present strife in Ireland has rolled away, let Irishmen know that they will see the beacon of friendship and sympathy still burning clear on the English shore." He made declarations on the two subjects—the land and the constabulary—which Parnell had raised in Committee Room 15, and was raising again at Boulogne as the condition on which he left it to be inferred that he would retire. Harcourt took no objection to the Newcastle speech, but three days later (January 16) the storm which had long been gathering broke. Mr. Morley wrote to him to say that an emissary had come to him from Mr. O'Brien at Boulogne with Parnell's offer, thus:

Mr. Morley to Harcourt.

1. Justin [McCarthy] as leader of the party recognized by Mr. G. is to go to Mr. G. and procure from him a written assurance for himself and his colleagues, as to land, police, etc.

2. This document to be secret until the Home Rule Bill appears. Then, if the Bill comes up to the mark, Parnell to produce the document as his vindication; if the Bill falls short, the document equally to be produced, as evidence against us.

3. The document secured, then meeting of the whole party to be held—(a) to declare the election of Justin informal, (b) to elect Dillon.

4. Tableau! Parnell retires (i.e. from the chair) and possibly goes to America to raise money (and to figure, I suppose, as the hero of the Irish race with his bride).

All this I sent to Mr. G. He replies as follows, as I have this afternoon told Gill—
1. We must know who is the man with whom we can deal, as we dealt with Parnell. That is their affair, not ours; but they ought to make up their minds. We can only have responsible communications with _de facto_ leader.

2. A document binding colleagues presents great difficulties.

3. On land, we can give no assurances until the Bill now before Parliament has received its final shape.

Harcourt leapt to the conclusion, on the receipt of this letter, that it meant that the Boulogne proposal was being considered. His anger boiled over in furious letters to Gladstone and Mr. Morley. To the former, after stating the proposal as he understood it, he said:

_Harcourt to Gladstone._

MALWOOD, January 17.—... The gentleman who had the impudence to make this proposal to you must really have assumed us to be the gang of conspirators which Argyll has charged us with being. The secret document which is framed to deceive the British public, and which is to be revealed by Parnell if the Home Rule Bill is up to the mark, to vindicate himself and to be disclosed by the other side if we turn out to be the rogues they suspect, is really worthy of the "Beggars Opera."

I feel sure you have left these gentlemen, who propose to us to play the game of Home Rule with marked cards, in no doubt as to the reception they will meet if they ever should send you such a missive. I can hardly bear to think or speak with patience of their daring to suppose we should be parties to such an infamous intrigue.

This proposal is substantially identical with that which, when I met Justin McCarthy with you in Carlton Gardens, we summarily rejected. But more than that—it is the proposal which was deliberately discussed by the ex-Cabinet in your room at the House of Commons when we came to the unanimous resolution which you recorded in your letter that you would not even meet the delegates to discuss the details of Home Rule in connection with the leadership of the Irish Party. We then declared that Home Rule and all questions concerning it were entirely outside the question of the leadership so far as we were concerned, and that it rested exclusively with the Irish Party to determine it without any conditions or assurances on our part in relation to Parnell's retirement. . . .

I am going up to London on Monday to see John Morley in order to make sure that he has not left O'Brien or his emissary under any misconception or expectation that such a proposal could ever be entertained. I am, I confess, a little alarmed at seeing in to-day's paper that O'Brien speaks of Morley's speech at Newcastle as being in a sense favourable to his terms. This would indeed be to confirm
Chamberlain's unjust representation that Morley had knuckled under to all Parnell's demands. This is a matter so vital in my judgment to the character of the Party and certainly individually to myself that I cannot afford to remain in any doubt upon the subject. Even to appear to be treating with the Irish at the present moment as to terms not made known publicly to our own people would deservedly cover us with disaster and disgrace.

In his letter to Mr. Morley, Harcourt was even more tempestuous. "What I confess alarms and disappoints me," he said, "is that such a proposal or even the suggestion of it should not have been at once extinguished by a peremptory negative such as you would present to a gentleman who asked you to be his partner on the understanding that he marked the cards. . . . . Why are we to pay a price for Parnell's retirement? Why are we to say or do anything which we should not have done if he had not disgraced himself? . . . . If he should go, is anyone stupid enough to suppose that the Irish and the English people will not demand to receive an answer to the question, What is the price that has been paid or received? If we have got anything new to say (which I am not aware that we have) let it be said and done coram publico, in the light of day and not as a part of a bargain or a squalid intrigue. I for one will be no party to buying off this Gaul of Eltham with pledges. He will return upon us with his vae victis and cast some other fire-escape into the scale." Gladstone's reply to the fusillade from Malwood was couched in a tone of sweet reasonableness:

Gladstone to Harcourt.

HAWARDEN, January 19.—So you have abandoned the charms of your fireside! I ask myself, why? But my vision is doubtless dimmed by the fact that I am still here, and toasting myself to the best of my ability from morning onwards.

However, apart from the question of the moment, for going and coming, I cannot but agree with you that the circumstances are very grave, as indeed they have been ever since the Divorce Court of last November.

There never, I think, was a time when we had greater need for insight, care, and calmness. But my imagination is less active than yours; and I think I derive more comfort from greater faith in the
combined powers of counsel, which we can bring to bear upon difficulties as they arise.

There is hardly a proposition in your letter which, taken in itself, I should question: and the same sentence applies to your most able and telling letter recently printed.

Yet, in my inner consciousness, I do not seem mentally to come to close quarters with the question in exactly the same attitude as you.

Like you, I shrink from the notion of secret agreements; I view leadership and Home Rule as things perfectly distinct... I mistrust entirely the O'Brien proceedings, and have no faith in their results; I think the arguments against disclosures (of what in fact is not yet formed) stronger than ever, and I cannot conceive even confidential conversation on Irish land, if of a definite kind, as possible until we know how the law is to stand under the present Purchase Bill.

On the other hand, though Home Rule may be killed by another hand, e.g. by Parnell, I am most anxious to have nothing to do with the killing of it, on public and on personal grounds; for, though nothing would be so acceptable to me as political death, I am not at liberty to say with Dido: *Sic, sic, juvat ire sub umbras.*

I look at Ireland through the majority of the constitutional representatives of the country favourable to Home Rule. They have deposed Parnell. I will not, and I think ought not, to suppose it possible that the country will disown its Parliamentary Party... I think Healy and his friends have the strongest claims, political and moral, on both our consideration and our support.

Whether we shall be able to steer the ship through the rocks and the shallows, I do not know, but I know nothing in our antecedents to import doubt among ourselves; and the worst that ought to befall us,... is honourable defeat with the ranks of our Party unbroken...

I suppose the snow is up to your first-floor windows. With us it is just sputtering afresh.

Mr. Morley did not take the Malwood reproaches in the same mild spirit. He wrote:

*Mr. Morley to Harcourt.*

*January 18.*—The whole tone and spirit of your letter No. 2 of yesterday, convinces me that a meeting between you and me would do harm and not good, and you will therefore forgive me if I do not keep your appointment.

I entirely agree with you as to the utterly impracticable nature of the proposal. I conveyed that view to the persons concerned in the plainest words. What have you to complain of? I believe that the Party has made up its mind that I do not fall short in that “honesty, straightforwardness and common sense” which you impressively
urge upon me; but I think it possible to convey sensible decisions in reasonable and considerate terms.

The vehemence and reproach of your language to me is wholly unjustified. It is better that whatever discussion is now necessary should take place in the presence of our colleagues.

Harcourt, full of contrition, expressed "the greatest pain at the thought that I have caused you annoyance":

... I must plead in excuse that I wrote under a feeling of extreme irritation at the nature of the proposal made to us and under the belief—evidently a false one—that Mr. G.'s answer to it had not negatived it or discouraged it, but the reverse. This was due either to some defect in expression or more probably to my own stupidity.

That, however, is not material. My main object is to remove from the mind of the best friend I have the notion that I intended or thought I was giving him pain, and to make reparation if I have.

Loulou will bring you this letter. Pray let me have my No. 2 that it may be burned and be as if it had never been.

Cordial relations were at once restored, but Mr. Morley insisted (January 21) that there was an issue that must now be settled. "Is our attitude on Irish affairs to be that indicated in my Newcastle speech or that of your letter to Mr. Gladstone and me?" Events themselves were shaping the answer. The Boulogne negotiations were breaking down, leaving the Anti-Parnellites more emphatically representative of the Irish majority. A Liberal victory at Hartlepool at this point restored Liberal confidence in the future. "The Hartlepool victory has spread a holy calm over the scene," wrote Harcourt to his wife. In these changing circumstances, the Home Rule issue began to emerge from the clouds of Parnellism, and Harcourt himself, with Spencer, Ripon and Mr. Morley, became a party to the formal assurance settled in Gladstone's room at the House of Commons and presented to Justin McCarthy as the leader of the Anti-Parnellites. These negotiations were specifically dissociated from any dealings with Parnell, and in the midst of them the Boulogne conversations broke off, and Parnell started on the last phase of his desperate struggle for power. Physically broken, rejected in England, in Ireland and in America, he fought his forlorn battle
with the fury of despair. He was defeated at election after election in Ireland, and it became clear that at the general election he would be left with a following that could be numbered on the fingers of one hand. But the imperious temper of the man was unbroken. There was only one possible end to so doomed and defiant a spirit. It came in the autumn. "The startling news of Parnell's death reached us this moment," wrote Harcourt to his wife from Berwickshire (October 7). "What an event and big with what consequences." Speaking at Glasgow next day, he said, "Gentlemen, the voice of criticism and controversy is hushed to-day. It is to be hoped that many bitter memories will be buried for ever, that the unhappy discussions which have raged around him may henceforth be allayed, that the wounds of that distressful country, to which he in times gone by rendered service greatly valued and which will be long remembered, may at last be healed."
CHAPTER VII
HARCOURT IN OPPOSITION

Disputations with Chamberlain—Licensing clauses of the Local Government Bill of 1888—Appointment of magistrates—An attempt to introduce Compensation through the Budget—Harcourt’s victory on Tithe—Quarrel with Chamberlain over free education—The powers of juries—Irish Land Purchase again—Financial controversy with Goschen—Real and personal Estate—Holding over of surpluses—Newfoundland and the Fisheries Arbitration—The Triple Alliance—French suspicions of English policy—The House of Lords question begins to take shape.

From a parliamentary point of view it is doubtful whether any part of his career gave Harcourt more satisfaction than the years from 1886 to 1892. He was always happier out of harness than in. Office meant restraints and compromises, accommodations with this colleague and surrenders to that, and to his tempestuous and imperious temperament these things were hard to bear. In opposition he had more freedom to go his own way and fight his own battles, and as combat was the vocation for which nature had equipped him it was in opposition that he found the happiest field for the exercise of his gifts and his tastes. He was now at the zenith alike of his power and his influence. Gladstone was still easily the most commanding figure in the House of Commons; but he was old, he remained in public life in order to promote one cause alone, and in the general cut-and-thrust of the parliamentary struggle he was little more than a spectator. His partial withdrawal from the conflict and his frequent absences left Harcourt with the main burden of Opposition, and the record of the Parliament is largely a record of his
conflicts with Mr. Balfour on Ireland, Goschen on finance, Ritchie on local government and Chamberlain on any subject that provided an issue. With the last named he still preserved that agreeable private intercourse which had co-existed with their public disputations. They pounced each other mercilessly on the platform and in Parliament, and then were found fraternizing at Malwood as though they had not a disagreement in life. Thus, on the second reading of the Local Government Bill, Harcourt made (April 20, 1888) one of his most hilarious assaults on Chamberlain. "The news spread in ever-widening circles through the precincts of the House that Harcourt was 'up' 'giving it to Chamberlain,'" said the Observer in describing the episode, "and before many of Sir William's treasured impromptus had been wasted on the empty benches the House was full, and the glad sounds of cheers and laughter filled the Chamber. . . . As a personal attack nothing so happily conceived, so brilliant in point and so light in touch-and-go has for years been heard in the House of Commons." It is not possible to recapture the spirit of such a speech, for it lived largely in the circumstances of the moment, but it still makes the sober pages of Hansard burst into merriment with this sort of gay persiflage:

. . . I do not complain at all that my Rt. Hon. Friend the Member for West Birmingham should have pronounced a panegyric upon the measure of the Government. That is easy to be understood; indeed, it was natural because he explained to the House that the plan was his own. I have observed that my Rt. Hon. Friend is always given to the most unbounded admiration of the plans which he himself has originated, and the most unbounded criticisms of the plans of anybody else. He said that three years ago it was his duty to propose a Bill. He said his own draft was, in its main principle, in entire agreement with the Government Bill. Then the Government Bill is a mirror in which he sees his own face, and, seeing his own face, he naturally falls down and worships it. There are some defects, it is true, in the Bill, but then I suppose they are only flaws in the mirror. . . .

His relations to the Government are of a conjugal character, and a man very often thinks himself at liberty to find fault with his own wife when he allows nobody else to do so. . . . He administers his doses in different degrees. It is always treacle for the Govern-
ment, pepper for the Liberals, but he gives the sourest vinegar to the Radicals. We have heard recently of the diplomacy the Rt. Hon. Gentleman has shown on the other side of the Atlantic, but I am sorry he has left those great qualities behind him there. It reminds me of what was said of the witches and warlocks of old—when they crossed the water their power of enchantment ceased.

Chamberlain took his revenge a little later (May 13) when, replying to a speech of Harcourt's at Croydon, he said:

... He is the Major Dalgety of modern politics, and there is a boisterous humour about him which makes it very difficult to be angry with him or to take seriously anything which he may be pleased to say. Sir William Harcourt, like his great prototype, that other soldier of fortune, deals his blows in such a fashion that whilst he is belabouring us we cannot doubt that he would have an equal or even greater pleasure in slashing at his present employers, if his term of service with them had happened to have expired.

A few days later Chamberlain was spending the Whitsuntide recess with Harcourt in the New Forest, and the Press was filled with speculations in regard to this "little glimpse of Arcadia" in which these formidable knights-errant, tired for the moment of knight-errantry, "may have been playing the part of shepherds." The meeting at Malwood at this time was the more significant because Harcourt and Chamberlain were at issue on crucial questions raised by the measure then before Parliament. It is not necessary to enter into the details of the Local Government Bill of 1888, which set up county council government in England and constituted the larger cities counties by themselves. Under this scheme the reform of London government, with which Harcourt had himself sought to deal while he was at the Home Office, was carried out by the abolition of the Metropolitan Board of Works and the establishment of the London County Council. With the general objects of the Bill Harcourt and the Liberals were in sympathy; but there was one proposal to which the strongest objection was taken. In connection with the transfer to the County Councils of powers relating to the control of licenses, it was provided that where the renewal of licenses was refused compensation was to be given, such compensation to be
settled by arbitration, and to be the difference between the value of the house with and without the license. This proposal to create a vested interest in annual licenses was widely resented, by no one more than by Harcourt. Speaking at York (April 12), he said:

... The Bill has this merit that it offers the principle of local option, the principle for which we have long contended. ... But you never see the Tories concede a really good Liberal principle without devising some means with which they think they will be able to defeat it; and so they have done with local option. They have introduced the compensation clauses, they have endeavoured to build up a system by which the locality will have a pecuniary interest, not in diminishing, but in increasing the facilities for drinking. I believe that to be an entirely false principle. There is no vested interest in law in licenses at all; with the exception of a limited class of licenses, there is no restraint upon the discretion of the magistrates; and as regards these clauses I for one—and I speak for myself personally—think them totally objectionable.

It was on this vital subject that Harcourt had attacked Chamberlain, who had said that in his (Chamberlain's) draft bill of 1883, which never came before the Liberal Cabinet, there was a clause for compensating the publican whose license was removed without fault on his part. To this Harcourt, in his speech of April 20, replied:

... The Rt. Hon. Member for West Birmingham told us that more than one Government had been advised that the publicans had a vested interest in their licenses. All I can say is that no Government with which I was connected had ever such advice given to them. ... The Government which was in office in 1883 had to deal with this question. ... It fell to me to make a statement on behalf of the Government, and I then said that there was an unquestionable power in the magistrates—a discretion, no doubt, judicially exercised, but not confined to the personal conduct of the holder of the license—to refuse the renewal of licenses without any reference to compensation whatever. ... What is the effect of this doctrine of vested interest which the Government desire to hang round the neck of this nation? Why, it means hundreds of millions of pounds. There are, I believe, 180,000 licensed houses. Will anybody say that the average public-house would not be worth £1,000? If you once pass these compensation clauses you can never do anything in the future in the direction of temperance. You are better off as you are now. You have only got to convert the justices of England with their present jurisdiction. ... I am happy to think that day by
day they are doing their duty in this respect more than they have done in the past, for it is in consequence of the \textit{a\'ches} of the justices in giving licenses in excess, and in refusing to take them away when there were more than enough, that we have found ourselves in our present position. But if you give these compensation clauses you will, it is true, place this power nominally in the hands of the County Council, but you will place it under conditions in which it will be impossible that it will ever be effectually administered. . . . In the constitution of the United States there is a provision that any infringement of property by a State law is unconstitutional and may be set aside. . . . In the State of Arkansas a law has recently been passed abolishing licensing and public-houses altogether, and certain persons thereby affected appealed to the Supreme Court to get a direction that the law was unconstitutional as being an infringement of their rights of property.

He quoted the judgment of the Supreme Court that the power of the State to safeguard the health and morals of the community, "cannot be burdened with the condition that the State must compensate such individual owners for pecuniary losses they may sustain by reason of their not being permitted, by a noxious use of their property, to inflict injury on the community." Harcourt hoped the House of Commons would take the same view.

He carried the attack on the compensation clauses into the country, addressing great meetings at Golcar and Croydon chiefly on the menace of this "terrible liability." In the Liberal Committee which sat on the Bill he carried the policy of extirpating the licensing clauses \textit{en bloc} from the Bill. "You don't know what trouble I have had," he wrote to Mr. Morley, "in screwing up the G.O.M. (he believed in the Solicitor-General) and (low be it spoken) even Sir Wilfrid Lawson to the sticking point of no surrender." But he succeeded. Feeling in the country was hostile to the proposals, and a by-election at Southampton, fought largely on the compensation issue, resulted in a great victory for the Liberals. "I believe in the truth of what I maintained," wrote Harcourt to Mr. Morley, "that Temperance is the backbone of the Liberal Party \textit{vice} Nonconformity retired." The Liberal Unionists took alarm at
the omens, and declared against the obnoxious clauses, and in the end they were dropped from the Bill. It was a conspicuous victory, and Harcourt's share in it did much to establish that popularity with the rank and file of the Party which was so marked a feature of his later years. In the course of the controversy on the Bill he made a strong indictment of the practice of appointing magistrates for political considerations, and said that the power of the lord-lieutenants in the matter "had been and was now so greatly abused that there must be a reform." Lord Dartmouth, the Lord-Lieutenant of Staffordshire, wrote to him asking whether he "alluded to the appointment of magistrates in the County of Stafford now or for many years past?" In the course of his reply Harcourt said:

Harcourt to Lord Dartmouth.

June, 1888.—... I spoke more particularly of the case of counties where the appointments are made by the lord-lieutenant. I do not consider that the system even in boroughs is at all satisfactory, though modified by the practice of referring the appointments to the town councils. The ground of my objection is that I have observed that on the county benches there is a most undue predominance of one particular class of society and most often of one particular religious creed and political opinion. This I regard as a great evil and tending to diminish the confidence which ought to exist on the part of all sections of the community in the administration of justice. I also stated that the selection of magistrates seemed to be made rather with respect to social position and often to political considerations than to special fitness for judicial duties. It is not uncommon, I think, that young men of high birth and position without any experience are placed on the Bench when maturer and more experienced persons in humbler grades of life are passed over. ... I made no particular reference to the County of Stafford as my remarks were meant to be of a general and not of a personal character. I look forward to the result of the Local Government Bill, with its proclaimed democratic principles as likely to open the way for a reform of this scandal by securing the appointment of magistrates through some authority representative of the general sentiment of all classes of the community; and I should gladly see the proposal adopted to transfer the powers of the lord-lieutenant to the chairman of the County Council, who will be responsible to his fellow-citizens in the county for the mode in which this patronage is exercised.
Harcourt followed up the victory over the compensation proposals by driving the question home in speeches at Belper (June 20) and Stockport, and later in the year (October 9) he spoke on the subject at a meeting of the United Kingdom Alliance at the Free Trade Hall, Manchester. At the Manchester meeting he declared—apropos of the statement in the Press that this was the first occasion that a statesman of his rank had identified himself with the temperance party—that he had been converted to local option as the solution of the drink question by his experience as Home Secretary of the terrible evils which had their source in drink. He discussed at greater length and with a more imposing show of authorities than he had given in the House of Commons the question of whether compensation had any legal basis, and concluded:

... I am not myself against a fair compromise in the settlement of great public controversies. For my part I should be glad to consider any reasonable proposal which would reconcile the public and the private interests in this matter. But it is not a reasonable proposal to found upon an annual license a claim for redemption on the basis of perpetual right. I should be very glad to see this question settled, but I am here in your name to declare that it never can be settled upon the basis of the defunct clauses. ... The principle of local option and the right of the people to control the liquor traffic is established by a concession of both great parties in the State. That can never be revoked. What we have to do is to insist that this principle should be carried into effect without delay.

Harcourt's view on the legal aspect of the annual license was sustained in the Courts later in the year. The Solicitor-General, Sir Edward Clarke, had been responsible for the misinterpretation of the law on which the compensation clauses had been based. His opinion that license holders were entitled to compensation was carried to appeal in the test case of Sharp v. Wakefield. The Court of Appeal decided (December 15, 1888) that magistrates had an absolute discretion to refuse the renewal of any license at the end of any twelve months for which it had been granted, on reason shown. This decision was confirmed in the House of Lords on March 19, 1891.
In the meantime there had been another attempt by the Government to introduce the principle of compensation in the extinction of licenses. The Local Taxation (Customs and Excise) Bill of 1890 sought to embody the Budget proposals of Goschen for buying out the goodwill of licenses which the holders were willing to give up. It was proposed under this scheme to spend £350,000 a year in the extinction of licenses. Harcourt again led the attack on the proposal. Speaking on the first reading (May 15, 1890), he said:

... What would any country gentleman opposite think of a tenant for life, who, under the terms of a settlement, was strictly forbidden from making leases for more than seven years, who, at the end of his period of management, turned round and said, "I have so managed affairs as to grant to every tenant on the estate a freehold interest?"... This purchase operation of yours, involving an outlay of £350,000 a year, will act like the Sinking Fund, which keeps up the price of consols, for it will keep up the price of public-houses all over the country in the interests of the great breweries. ... The evil which you are doing by this Bill, in my opinion, is that you are giving a practical recognition by Statute to a portentous monopoly. ... You are creating by implication in this Bill a freehold property of millions of money which will hang like a mill-stone round the neck of society in this country, and that is an enormous evil. ...

"We are fighting like the braves at Thermopylae, and I think the Persian hosts will come to grief," he wrote to Sir Thomas Farrer on June 19. His anticipation was fulfilled. The cause of compensation was beaten out of field in Parliament and the courts alike, and it was not until a dozen years later that a Conservative Government returned to the policy once more and established the principle of a freehold interest in annual licenses, and the payment of compensation for their extinction.

II

In another skirmish with the Government, in the Session of 1889, Harcourt achieved a personal triumph which greatly enhanced his prestige with the Party. Late in the Session a Tithe Rent Charge Recovery Bill was brought in. It dealt with tithe rent charge recoverable at law, but left
untouched the question of the responsibility of payment as between landlord and tenant. When the motion to go into Committee on the Bill came on in August, Harcourt was leading the Opposition in the absence of Gladstone, and he fell on the Bill with unimpeded impetus. "Nothing could exceed the skill or the adroitness of his operations," said the Observer (August 18) in describing the course of the struggle. "It has been a momentous epoch in his (Harcourt's) career, finally settling the always vexed question of the succession to Mr. Gladstone's leadership in the House of Commons . . . quick to see a point, happy in phraseology, brief in speech, he has invariably said the right thing in the right way at the right time." In a less friendly comment on Harcourt's victory, the Spectator (August 24) observed:

... Somehow it is impossible to keep away from the phrases of the Old Testament when speaking of Sir William Harcourt. The feeble phrases of modern life are altogether insufficient to describe him. It is to the book of Job that we naturally turn for a comparison. Sir William Harcourt leading the Opposition to the Tithes Bill reminds us of nothing so much as Leviathan. "His breath kindleth coals, and a flame goeth out of his mouth. He maketh the deep to boil like a pot; he maketh the sea like a pot of ointment. He beholdeth all high things; he is a king over all the children of pride." The parallel is exact. ... And this time Leviathan has won, which, great and wonderful as he is, he has not always been able to do.

Under the compulsion of his assault, the Attorney-General (Webster) undertook to insert an amendment, substituting the owner for the occupier as the person against whom proceedings for recovery could be taken. It was a fatal concession. Harcourt promptly asked the Speaker whether it was competent for the House to proceed on a new Bill made out of an old one. The Speaker held that where a Bill was so transformed a new one must be brought in, and Harcourt's triumph was complete. He had not only got the admission that the owner was liable, but in getting it he had killed the Bill itself. "That quite clear," said the Observer, "Sir William Harcourt's whole manner
changed. On the instant he became the chief mourner over the stillborn Bill foreshadowed by the amendment of the Attorney-General. It was the dearest object of his heart, the apple of his eye. . . . The Bill he had fought all the week was dead, and no one could say he had done it. On the contrary, he had extolled its merits (in its amended form), and with tears in his eyes besought the Government not to abandon it by the wayside."

"I don't know which to admire most," wrote Spencer to him (August 18) from Homburg, "your searching and crushing criticisms, or your magnanimous offers of support when you had vanquished your enemy and had him at your mercy." Harcourt himself was exultant over the "roaring time" he had had. "It has been a glorious three days," he wrote to his wife at Malwood. "It was worth all the sacrifice I made for it. For me personally it has been a vast success, as the Party gave me all the honours of it, and even the rebellious Storey saluted me as "our leader.'" "Veni, vidi, vici," he wrote to his son. "I administered the fatal blow to the Tithes Bill to-day, and it is dead as mutton. . . . It has been a brilliant run and a fine kill in the open." To Mr. Morley, who was in Devonshire "putting the final strokes to my little Walpole," he wrote:

Harcourt to Mr. Morley.

MALWOOD, August 19.—"Pends-toi, brave Crillon, on a vaincu sans toi." We have had a real sporting week in the H. of C. and run into our fox in the open. There was no fault which the Government did not commit. We thoroughly out-debated them on Monday and Tuesday, and drove them out of their lines. They tried to change front in the presence of the enemy, and then we smote them in the flank. It was really like a chapter in the Peninsular War, and was great fun. The rout was complete, and we captured all their colours and cannon. With incredible folly they left the conduct of a measure which treads on all the corns of the agricultural interest to Webster and Matthews, who don't know the difference between a turnip and a cabbage, and hardly distinguish between a parson, a squire and a farmer. The ignorance displayed by these gents of the sentiments of their own Party was quite comical. Hicks-Beach sat sulky and fuming in a corner, whilst votes were forced down the throats of the county members which will empty many a saddle at the general
election. They will never be forgiven for proposing to county court the tenant farmer for tithes.

Altogether it has been a very "nasty one" for the Government and the Session has gone out like a tallow candle with an ill savour. . . . Thank God the Session is over, and we are down at Malwood for life. . . .

But Harcourt's victory, though singularly complete in itself, was not final. When in the following Session, the Government brought forward a revised Bill, nominally conceding Harcourt's demand that the owner and not the occupier should be the person against whom proceedings for recovery of tithe should lie, it was found to be short of the undertaking. Harcourt insisted that the Bill did not completely transfer the burden of paying the rent-charge from the occupier to the owner, or abolish the process of distress, nor did it arrange for the diminution of the tithe where this was necessary. He declared that the tithe in fact became rent and a personal debt to the landlord, who would have the right to distrain. In these circumstances he returned to the attack with the same formidable energy that he had displayed in regard to the previous Bill, fighting the battle of the tenants not only in Parliament, but on the platform and in letters to the Press. In the end the leader of the House, W. H. Smith, asked him to meet Hicks-Beach with a view to settling amendments to the Bill, and Gladstone was disposed to agree to that course. Harcourt, however, declined to make himself responsible for the Government measure. Writing to Gladstone (July 2), he said:

. . . Any such action on my part which would be regarded as "squaring and being squared" by the Government would be wholly useless and carry with it no weight or authority in our Party.

Troops will follow their officers when they lead them on, but may very likely shoot them in the back when they run away.

I think you are under some mistake as to the feeling of our Welsh M.P.'s on this question. Their hostility is absolute and irreconcilable, and they would greatly resent any such transaction on our part as that proposed. They are already too suspicious of us, and such a proceeding would convert their suspicions into certainty. . . .
The hostility of Harcourt again triumphed, and the Bill was withdrawn. In the following year, the Government brought in a third Bill on the subject, and this time they were successful. Harcourt was again constantly in his place, taking up minute points that arose in connection with the measure, but he no longer aimed at defeating it, for it conceded what he had fought for throughout. In reviewing the history of the struggle in Committee, he said:

... The Bill of 1889 was a most unjust measure, for it proposed to throw the whole burden on the tenant farmers of England. We, however, opposed it, and were fortunate enough to defeat it. Then came the Bill of 1890, which also in our opinion contained many provisions which were extremely oppressive with regard to the occupiers, and this Bill we likewise defeated. The result is the present Bill, which in point of fact embodies the principle for which we contended. ...

III

"What a marching life is mine," said Charlemagne, and Harcourt could have applied the saying to himself without exaggeration. The sounds of combat were rarely absent from his path, and most public issues in which he was engaged resolved themselves into personal duels which he fought with enormous enjoyment. No period of his career was more prolific in these encounters than that covered by this Parliament. In one of these his private relations with Chamberlain suffered a temporary eclipse that threatened them with a final rupture. In the debate on the Address in 1890, Mr. (Sir) Arthur Acland referred to the absence of any reference to free education, and in the course of the debate that followed Chamberlain said he should vote against Mr. Acland's motion, because the Government had accepted the principle of free education, and had promised to deal with it when they had the opportunity. He was not prepared to displace a Government pledged to free education in order to substitute for it a Government pledged only to postpone free education and other reforms to a project of constitutional change which would probably take years to carry out. Harcourt taunted him with the abandonment
of his earlier principles, and the temper of the House rose high as the two combatants exchanged verbal blows with unusual asperity. Harcourt reminded Chamberlain that he had pledged himself in 1885 to take office in no Government which would not carry out free education. He then joined the Government of 1886, presumably because he knew they intended to carry free education. Chamberlain retaliated that his pledge had been not to join a Government which "excluded these proposals from its programme."

There are glimpses of the temper of the discussion in the subsequent letters that passed between Harcourt and Mr. Morley. "J. C., with the face of a demon, told me on Friday night that I owed him an apology for my violent demeanour towards him during your speech," wrote the latter (February 23). "I saw he was 'going for you' on the bench," replied Harcourt, "and like a wise man kept out of his way as probably, if he had borrowed a bowie-knife from his American connections, he might have eviscerated me. . . . I nearly burst out laughing as I was speaking at seeing H. James holding down J. C. by main force as he was writhing with rage and nearly flying at my throat."

There followed a heated exchange of letters, in which Chamberlain said that the continuance of Harcourt's provocation in debate would in the end make it impossible to maintain the old friendly relations. Harcourt replied that Chamberlain's support of the Government in dropping free education, and his scornful attack on the Liberals who had protested against that proceeding, had called forth his own retort; but he admitted that he had overstated Chamberlain's declaration in 1885. "It is possible that I spoke more warmly than was necessary," he said, "but I confess that I did feel very strongly as to the line you adopted and the language you employed towards us." Chamberlain insisted that he had not been aggressive in tone, and said that in medieval civil wars it had been the practice of old personal friends when they met in battle "to salute and pass on," seeking other combatants. In
the end they agreed to meet and talk over free education. It was not until the following year that the boon was conceded, and then it came by a side issue. Goschen's grant from the probate duty in relief of local rates was applied in the Scottish Local Government Act of 1889 to the payment of school fees. What had been given to Scotland could not long be withheld from England and Wales. The proposal in 1891 to extend it to England was welcomed by the clerical friends of the voluntary schools, who feared that, if action was deferred until a Liberal Government came into power, fees in board schools only would be paid and voluntary schools would be starved out. From these mixed motives, the Free Education Act of 1891 became law, and school fees were abolished, to the mutual satisfaction of Harcourt and Chamberlain, although the satisfaction of the former was clouded by the absence of the principle of popular control for the new policy.

Another controversy in which he was engaged at this time attracted much attention. Harcourt had a great passion for the law, but a still greater passion for liberty, and as his career at the Home Office had shown, he had no special reverence for the sanctity of judges. In a debate on the Jury Law (Ireland) Bill on May 14, 1890, Mr. (now Mr. Justice) Darling quoted from an Irish pamphlet which asserted that "the jury in a criminal case had an unquestionable right to find a verdict of guilty or not guilty on the law and facts of the case without regard to the direction and instructions of the judge." On the reading of this quotation Harcourt ejaculated "Hear, hear," whereupon Mr. Darling said:

Did not the Rt. Hon. Gentleman know that when juries disregard the direction of the judge upon a point of law their verdict would be set aside, and there was no limit to the number of times in which the case might be set down for trial until the jury learnt what the Rt. Hon. Gentleman had not as yet begun to appreciate—that they had no right to disregard the direction of the judge on a matter of law.

Harcourt could not allow to pass without challenge "a statement of which a layman ought to be ashamed."
The statement which had been challenged was this—that a jury in a criminal trial had no right to find a verdict irrespective of the direction of the judge. He should have thought that there was no English citizen who did not know that that right was the foundation of our liberties.

There followed a discussion in The Times in which Harcourt pounded his opponent with an overwhelming array of authorities on the question of the unrestricted rights of juries. He showed that in the England of the past the independence of juries had acted as a practical check on the harsh administration of the law, and that, especially in political trials, it had helped to secure the constitutional rights of English citizens. Justice Maule’s saying, “You are a British jury, and you can do what you please,” was, he said, nothing less than a compendious formula for the liberty of the subject. “On that the whole thing depends. If Mr. Justice Maule’s predecessors on the Bench had been ‘able to do what they pleased,’ we might by this time have been almost in the condition in which the Russian citizens find themselves to-day.” He enlivened the controversy by recalling and correcting a quotation by Mansfield with which the judge sought to fortify his erroneous decision in the case of the Dean of St. Asaph. Mansfield had recalled Pulteney’s ballad:

For Sir Philip well knows
That his innuendoes
Will serve him no longer
In verse or in prose,
For twelve honest men have decided the cause,
Who are judges of fact, though not judges of laws.

“Unfortunately for Lord Mansfield,” said Harcourt, “this was one of the rare occasions on which that great judge was wrong both ‘on the facts and the law,’ for the true version of the last line of the stanza ran as follows—‘Who are judges alike of the facts and the laws.’” In commenting on the controversy, the Birmingham Daily Post expressed the plain view of the matter when it said (June 9), “Which-ever side has in logic the better of the argument, liberty is
on the side of Sir William Harcourt. . . . Mr. Darling's theory would have upset the acquittal of the Seven Bishops. . . . In trials for political offences it would be a sore blow at liberty and the freedom of the subject if juries were to understand that the judge's statement of the law is arbitrary direction, and not, as we believe it to be, merely expert assistance."

IV

"If you don't come down here this Easter I will never return to London," wrote Harcourt to Mr. Morley from Malwood (April 1, 1890). "There is a menace for you. You have no idea how superior the blackbirds are when compared with the Welsh members." But Mr. Morley did not go to Malwood. He went to Ireland instead to "grind up" Mr. Balfour's new Land Purchase Bill which was creating some disagreement among the Liberal leaders. Mr. Morley wrote to Harcourt on the Good Friday that he had seen Gladstone, who "would like to damn it (the Bill) wholly. He spoke bitterly of the Land Bill of 1886 as the worst political failure he had ever associated himself with." Mr. Morley himself, after examination in Dublin, found the Bill very vulnerable, but he urged Harcourt not to "shut the door to purchase" entirely, especially as Mr. Haldane and Sir Edward Grey were disposed to support the Bill. But Harcourt was immovable. "I am living the life of a Hants squireen scratching my pigs and picking my flowers," he told Mr. Morley (April 8); but he mingled these bucolic pleasures with strenuous letters to The Times, in which he protested against land purchase being "sustained on the tortoise of British credit," and attacked Chamberlain for his support of a policy he had so bitterly opposed four years before. Chamberlain had rested his opposition to the Gladstone Bill on the fundamental principle that British credit should not be pledged for the Irish landlords, and had argued, "as it seemed to me with great force, that 'whatever security was considered good enough for the British Government
ought to be good enough for the Irish landlords.' . . . But as soon as a Tory Government proposes to rest the fabric of Irish land purchase on the final tortoise of English consols, Mr. Chamberlain not only becomes the enthusiastic supporter of [the plan, but waxes bitter against anyone who hesitates to approve it." Chamberlain, replying in The Times (April 16), said:

. . . When Sir William Harcourt goes abroad, I have no doubt he takes with him a letter of credit from his banker, which the latter has given to him on the strength of the balance which Sir William has left in his hands. Does Sir William Harcourt consider that under these circumstances his expenditure on the continent rests finally on the tortoise of his banker's credit. . . .

Harcourt retaliated (The Times, April 19) that the banker abroad to whom he presented his letter of credit knew nothing of him, but looked to his banker at home as his security, and recalled Chamberlain's argument on the Gladstone Land Purchase Bill of 1886:

. . . I should make it a cardinal principle in any future legislation that if this security is good enough for the British Exchequer and for English and Scotch taxpayers, it is good enough for the Irish landlords, and in any future scheme I believe it will be found impossible to put the risk upon any but the right shoulders—in fact to keep the risk where it is at present.

The duel was resumed in the House on the second reading of the Bill, when Chamberlain described Harcourt as one "who is always under the unfortunate delusion that everybody in the world is inconsistent except himself." Harcourt retorted that Chamberlain had produced "many plans, all ingenious, all remarkable, but all different." Dealing with the Bill he insisted that if the rents in Ireland were 20 per cent too high, they ought to be reduced without pledging national resources. The British taxpayer, he said, was to advance thirty-three million sterling on Irish land at a price that could not be obtained in the market, and to receive on it a rent 20 per cent less than it now yielded. The safeguards proposed against famine years were like the walls of sand a child built up, one round another, on the
seashore, until a wave came and swept them away. The rents would have to be collected under a regime of coercion. There was no real security except the consols which were at the back of purchase. If these proposals were forced upon the Irish tenants against their will he asserted that there would be no dishonour in their repudiation. The Government were creating a precedent which would be equally sound for every other demand of a similar character.

Harcourt’s determined opposition to the Bill brought him into sharp conflict with Mr. Balfour.

The resistance to the Bill continued in the autumn Session, and in October Harcourt wrote what he called “a tract” on the subject which he distributed among his colleagues. In sending it to Gladstone (October 13), he said, “I am sure we shall not get any Liberal support for the advance of large sums of English money even if the results of the expenditure were as beneficial as I believe they will be the reverse.” Gladstone agreed that “the landlords have no claim upon us now, but that of general equity,” but he did not “undervalue the Party advantage” of getting the question out of the way. Harcourt kept up the struggle against what he regarded as the endowment of Irish landlordism into the next Session, when the Land Purchase scheme finally became law.

It is only possible to glance briefly at the subject which engaged Harcourt’s mind more than others during these years of opposition. One of his critics compared him with the elephant whose trunk was equally adapted to picking up a pin or uprooting a tree, and the jest was true enough, not only as a description of the emphasis of his methods but as an indication of the wide scope of his interests. He ranged with equal freedom over the whole field of affairs, and if his amazing industry sometimes picked up pins with excessive elaboration it was never to the exclusion of the great themes of government. Among these themes, none occupied him more than finance. In his view that sound
finance lay at the root of good government he came, perhaps, more closely into the central current of the Liberal tradition than in any other respect, and during this Parliament he devoted himself untiringly to the technical criticism of Goschen's financial policy. He would have been among the last, I think, to deny the solid character of some of Goschen's achievements, and where he differed from him the judgment of time has not always gone in his favour; but the controversies which he carried on with him in Parliament and in the Press remain as a permanent contribution to the principles of public finance. The change in the form of national accounts introduced in 1887—the separation of the sums borrowed for the purpose of local loans from the national indebtedness—which Harcourt severely criticized, and against which both Gladstone and Churchill protested, was defended by Goschen on the ground that it made for lucidity. His view that local loans represented permanent assets and should not be entered with National Debt has been endorsed as sound policy. There was no substantial disagreement between Harcourt and Goschen on the value of the conversion scheme of 1888, and Harcourt confined his criticisms to such details as the commission allowed to the banks for managing the conversion.

In his attacks on the estate duty of 1889 he foreshadowed many developments of the future, and protested against the discrimination between personal and real estate. Speaking at the Free Trade Hall at Manchester (March 22, 1889), he said:

... Mr. Goschen proposes that all property under £10,000 is to be exempt from the tax. I do not object to that. That involves the principle of graduated taxation, and the Conservative Party will hear more of that before they have done. Let us see how it is applied to real property and personal property. If a man leaves £10,000 to be divided among six children the duty will be paid on the £10,000 before it is divided, and therefore each of the six children will pay their share of that duty. If a man leaves £50,000 in realty and it is divided among six children, it will not be paid upon the £50,000, but as each of them will get £8,400 it will be paid upon none of it at all, and therefore the £10,000 personally will pay £100 of
duty and the £50,000 of realty will pay nothing at all. Is it possible to conceive a greater injustice than is committed in taxation of that kind? Oh, Mr. Goschen has had to go to school to the country gentlemen with whom he has taken service, and he has violated every principle of sound finance in this "estate duty," in this most unfair incidence of taxation.

Since his battles with and for the railway companies in the 'sixties he had been sensible of the injustice of the immunity of land value from the burden of taxation, and, referring to the fact that, under Goschen's proposal, the tax on personal property was paid on the whole value as it was at the moment while on real property the tax was not paid on the market value at all, he said: "There are fields outside Manchester which may be let for £3 or £4 an acre, but which are worth thousands of pounds for building. But the tax is payable on twenty-four years' purchase on the miserable nominal rental paid at present."

There was a sharp conflict between Harcourt and Goschen in 1889 on another financial issue. The Government proposed to join the Sugar Convention for suppressing sugar bounties, which had been signed by the majority of the Powers interested, the exceptions being the United States, France, Brazil, Denmark and Sweden. The signatory Powers bound themselves to cease giving bounties to sugar manufacturers and to exclude all bounty-fed sugar from their ports. Harcourt brought all his weapons of attack into play against a proposal which violated his views as a Free Trader, which placed a heavy burden on the consumer, restricted trade, limited our sources of supply, and invited retaliation from countries with which we refused to deal. He appealed in a speech at Bromley (May 8, 1889) for assistance to "get rid of the most mischievous proposals ever made." Largely owing to his resistance the Treaty was never ratified.

But the most formidable and successful of the attacks launched by Harcourt against Goschen's finance was that on the Budget of 1891, especially in respect of the bookkeeping which allowed the holding over of surpluses that
would normally be paid into the Treasury, for certain purposes of defence in connection with works extending over a period of years. Harcourt's ground of attack was twofold. The proposal meant the objectionable introduction of what was known in foreign countries as "the extraordinary budget"; and it deprived Parliament of the control over naval expenditure. The carrying over of certain balances into the next financial year—done in the present case in the interests of the Naval Defence Act—was a proceeding which Goschen had opposed in the past and defended now on the ground of continuity of naval policy, for which he was willing to "weaken the control of Parliament." "What, to weaken the control of Parliament over the defences of the country?" cried Harcourt. "Yes," replied Goschen, "because we shall have a stronger Navy, and I am sure the country will forgive any little complication that may be caused." On this excellent opening, Harcourt retorted that it was the very speech Charles I might have made in favour of ship money had he been "a Liberal-Unionist Chancellor of the Exchequer." The controversy, which became involved with the discussion of naval defence, continued throughout 1891, culminating in a correspondence in the autumn between the two controversialists, which was afterwards published as a Blue Book, but which was of too technical a character to call for detailed attention here. In all this laborious investigation of taxation and sinking funds, Harcourt was conscious that there was little popularity to be won. "The truth," he said in a letter to Sir Thomas Farrer (October 26, 1890), "is (as Gladstone often bitterly complains) that it is impossible to get the country to pay any attention either to reduction of expenditure or to payment of debt. The wealth of the nation is increasing at such an enormous rate, as shown by the growth in the produce both of death duties and income tax, that no one cares a d—. There is no tax that really presses severely on anyone, and therefore the nation is disposed to 'live like a gentleman.'" But the indifference of the public did not
damp his eagerness in regard to a theme whose intricacy engaged his passion for intellectual controversy. Occasionally his haste to plunge into battle alarmed his more cautious chief. Thus we find Gladstone writing to him in reference to the Budget of 1887:

134, Piccadilly, April 21.—... Goschen promised a humdrum budget. I believed him and stayed away. I hear that he has just introduced the worst budget I ever heard of—and that you are going to speak on it to-night. Is this politic? I have never, I think, known the opinions of the responsible Opposition about the budget given on the night of its delivery, certainly not when any serious opinion was called for. It may be antiquated imbecile prejudice on my part, but I hope you will give indulgent consideration to what I have said. ...

A speech of yours to-night will come before the world surrounded by a lot of sciolism and rubbish now always vented on the budget night.

But if the subject was dry and left the public cold, Harcourt knew how to illustrate his arguments with a picturesque humour which drove his points home to the dullest mind. Thus, speaking at Ringwood, April 20, 1892, in the course of a general arraignment of Goschen's finance, he said:

... I do not know anybody who has been more ingenious in what I may call financial acrostics than the present Chancellor of the Exchequer. ... The year before last Mr. Goschen declared his surplus to be £1,700,000, but in order to make it up he borrowed exactly the same amount. (Laughter.) That is surplus number one. In the year that has just expired he has declared a surplus of one million, but in order to make that up he has borrowed £1,800,000. That is surplus number two. (Laughter.) Plain folks like you and me would call that a deficit of £800,000; but then, you know, we are not heaven-born financiers. (Laughter.) In the current year Mr. Goschen estimates a surplus of £200,000. But how is it procured? He tells us he is going to borrow two millions to pay his way for the year. commonplace Englishman might be disposed to call that a deficit of £1,800,000, but philosophers and first-rate financiers have a terminology and a notation of their own which are not understood of the vulgar. You will see, therefore, that these surpluses are in point of fact—What shall I call them? I do not like to use hard words—are financial delusions. (Laughter and cheers.) Addressing a company which consists mainly of householders, I think I can make you understand this system of finance. You desire, perhaps, on the 1st of January
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to have a modest balance at your bankers—a very proper thing. But your Christmas bills are, unfortunately, greatly in excess of your receipts. We will say that you owe your tradesmen £1,800. Well, you must have a balance, and there is nothing easier than to borrow £2,000 from your bankers, and so you will have a balance of £200. (Laughter and cheers.) As the conjurer says, "That's the way it's done." (Laughter.)

No detail of finance was too remote or too small to escape Harcourt’s appetite for figures, and side by side with his major conflicts with Goschen he carried on minor skirmishes with the Treasury officials, now attacking E. W. Hamilton on the subject of Treasury book-keeping which was "past praying for or scolding at," and now (March 30, 1890) carrying on an argument with Algernon West on the proposition "that the Inhabited House Duty is a bad duty, and that it would be better to repeal it than to take 1d. off the Income tax":

. . . It would be much greater relief to the class you want to relieve viz. the householder of moderate means with a life income and a family. Thus—if a man has £600 a year and lives in a £100 house 1d. on income tax would represent 600 pence; his house duty would be 900 pence or 50 per cent. more. House duty is also very unequal in its relation to income. The man of small means spends say one-sixth of his income on his house. But the swell with £10,000 or £15,000 a year lives in a country house rated at £300 or £400. In his case the reduction of 1d. income tax would represent 10,000d. or 15,000d. and that on his house duty 3,000d. or 4,000d.

In the case of the poor professional man who has to keep up appearances his house rent is probably one-quarter of his income. . . .

VI

There was a revival in July 1891 of the familiar theme of Tory journalists that Harcourt and Mr. Morley were quarrelling over the succession. While the public was being entertained with these fictions, the subjects of them were engaged in that almost daily correspondence which continued unbroken with short intervals to the end of Harcourt's life. The spirit of it may be gathered by one or two quotations. Thus Mr. Morley, writing to Harcourt from Lowestoft (July 2), says:
Your letter of Tuesday has come on here, and right glad I was to have it.

As it happened, I had just been laughing at a communication to the Tory papers here, that our relations were violently strained, that my illness was merely diplomatic, that I had come here to announce to Mr. G. my withdrawal from the Party, etc., etc., etc., unless you, etc., etc., etc. . . .

"Our quarrel is thoroughly believed in, and nothing will remove the impression except a protracted residence on your part here," replies Harcourt from Malwood next day.

"I am prepared to kill anyone who dares to affirm or even to think, that any place ever was, or could, or will be, so delicious as Malwood is at this instant. The luxe of leaf and flowers is indescribable and unimaginable."

Mr. Morley was at the time staying with Gladstone, who was in deep anxiety about his eldest son, who died under an operation a few days later. Writing to Gladstone on the subject (July 5), Harcourt said:

... I know you have all the consolations which your tried faith can afford, and that you will feel that under the painful circumstances a prolongation of life would only have been an increase of misery to you all. But when all is said the death of the first-born is a bitter trial. I suffered it many years ago with a darling child, and the grief has never passed away from my heart. . . .

Just before this bereavement Gladstone had been in communication with Harcourt on the alarm that Salisbury was committing the country to Italian engagements in the Mediterranean as a counterpoise to France. Writing to Harcourt (July 2) from Lowestoft, he said:

... Both Morley and I are vexed at the stupid wrong-headedness and étourderie of the Daily News about the Triple Alliance and the Mediterranean. Balance of power in the Mediterranean! It is Italy herself who has disturbed it by inflating her navy. The self-complacency to-day founded on the satisfaction of the Germans at their own folly is really asinine. What they have really got is an opinion of a Cabinet, that is to say of Salisbury, and that opinion, the day after he quits office, is not worth the paper it is written on. I believe the country is altogether disposed to avoid entangling engagements. . . .

"As to the Triple Alliance," wrote Harcourt to Mr. Morley (July 3), "you are right to suppose that I am an
out-and-out anti-balance-of-power man. But I doubt if we shall do much good by going further than emphasizing Salisbury's assurance that he has engaged us to nothing." The alarm passed, but it was not the only incident that made relations with France at this time a little perilous. The dispute between France and Newfoundland in regard to the Newfoundland fishing grounds had been submitted to arbitration between the French and British Governments; but the colonists refused to consent to arbitration except on condition of the withdrawal of the French from their coasts. Caught between the two fires, the Government had to choose between offending France and offending a British colony. A Bill was brought in (March 19, 1891) which practically involved the right to coerce Newfoundland. Harcourt described the Bill as "offensive in character and in the circumstances unnecessary"; but he did not oppose it, lest, in the words of Gladstone, such action should be "misrepresented as a refusal to legislate in support of the fulfilment of treaty obligations." The situation was delicate, and raised the whole question of the limits of colonial autonomy. Mr. Morley was emphatic that the Government must be supported.

Mr. Morley to Harcourt.

March 22, 1891.— . . . We Liberals are the Party of arbitration. How can we support the colonials in their stubborn refusal of arbitration? We made an agreement in '85; Granville made it, Salisbury took it up, France accepted it; yet in face of this united agreement, the colonials refused that too. In short what they say is: We will have our own way, and nothing but our own way, even though it brings you into war with France. Surely this is an intolerable position, and our Liberal talk about the virtues of arbitration is moonshine, if we accept any such position.

Nobody is stronger for respect for colonial autonomy than I am, but it is new to me that autonomy means liberty to refuse legislation necessary for the fulfilment of treaties made by the Imperial Government.

It comes to this, that every colony with responsible government may make what demand it pleases in respect of a foreign power, and then may force us into a war to back their demand up.

You and I generally agree about these things, and I hope that no temptation to bully the Government will draw our Party into a
thoroughly dangerous position. I know that there is danger on the other side too—the colonial side—but that must be faced. It is less grave than the mischief of discrediting arbitration, and the risk of a trouble with France.

**Harcourt to Mr. Morley.**

MALWOOD, March 26.—... I have no desire whatever to make political capital out of this business. It is far too serious for that, and I had already preached to our people the necessity of observing our pledges in regard to arbitration.

I don't wonder the Newfoundlanders don't think much of arbitration, for as far as I can see they have not a leg to stand upon.... The situation of the Newfoundlanders is no doubt intolerable, and if the French were disposed for a "swap" we have plenty of useless islands and settlements to offer them à la Heligoland, but from what I see in the papers to-day they turn up their noses at Gambia. I suspect they don't mean settling as long as we are in Egypt. It would be a queer retribution if the occupation of Egypt was compensated by the loss of Canada; but if Newfoundland goes at the mouth of the St. Lawrence—under coercion—it is not difficult to foresee what are likely to be the consequences in Canada. It is a piece of desperate bad luck for H.M.'s Government, but Governments suffer a great deal more from ill-luck than from 'ill-conduct'....

Fortunately the situation was relieved by a more accommodating attitude on the part of Newfoundland, and the Government Bill was dropped after a second reading which Harcourt opposed as unnecessary and unintelligible in view of Newfoundland's changed action. "The pretence that such a futile proceeding was necessary to satisfy France was ridiculous," he wrote to Gladstone, who replied:

HAWARDEN, June 3.—I thank you very much for your letter, and from my nest I have watched with much satisfaction the progress of affairs so far as we are concerned in it.

1. No doubt you were quite right in helping the Government out of the mire as to their Newfoundland Bill. As I understand the matter:

(a) The Bill broke the pledge of Secretary Labouchere about disposing of the rights of the Colony without its consent.

(b) It broke the pledge conveyed to the House of Lords in the first announcement of the Bill, when Kimberley supported it because it was to be a temporary measure.

(c) They made the poor House of Lords pass a Coercion Bill not because it was wanted, but that they might see whether or not it would be.
(d) They tried to get the H. of C. to read second time on the same grounds and they failed. . . .

These incidents had a bearing upon a much larger problem which was beginning to take shape. The first hints of a new European equation were becoming apparent, and the position of this country in relation to it was the subject of growing public concern. On the one hand the Triple Alliance had been renewed, and on the other there were indications of an approximation between France and Russia. Salisbury stood for the doctrine of "splendid isolation," on which he had the support of the Liberal Party; but there was a growing suspicion in France that this country had leanings to the Triple Alliance, and the recent arrangement by which the Government had ceded Heligoland to Germany, followed by the suggestion that we contemplated entering into naval engagements with Italy, and by the visit of the German Emperor to England, had added to the disquiet. Some extracts from the correspondence between Gladstone and Harcourt will indicate what was passing in the minds of public men on the new grouping of the European Powers, and this country's attitude towards it.

Harcourt to Gladstone.

45, Brook Street, W., July 11, 1891.— . . . All the world for this week has been entirely engrossed with emperors and ceremonies which have been very dignified and fine.

I was invited—*for the first time since 1886!*—to Windsor. The Queen was amiable and inquired sympathetically after you, as did also the Emperor and the Prince and Princess of Wales. The Guildhall speech was very pacific, but the words of military monarchs seldom correspond to their deeds, and I never forget poor Granville's declaration in the House of Lords in June, 1870, that the peace of Europe had never been more secure. . . .

At the garden party at Marlborough House I saw M. Constant, the French Secretary—Waddington is absent owing to the death of his mother in France. He entered into conversation on the subject of the Triple Alliance and the feeling in France as to the suspected complicity of England in the transaction. I assured him that I felt convinced that Salisbury had not in fact entered into any binding engagements; that he was a timid man in action, and knew the toleration and support he had received from us was entirely due to
his adoption of a policy of peace and neutrality; that in any event we did not and should not recognize any right of the present Government to engage the responsibility of England in the future; that our policy was one of absolute disengagement from continental combinations of every kind, and that we maintained the right of England to act as her interests demanded when the occasion arose unfettered by any alliances or understandings of any description. I told him I felt justified in assuring him that these were your views, and that he might so inform Waddington. This seemed to give him much satisfaction. He came to see me again this morning, and I have spoken to him again in the same sense.

I am quite averse to your being brought up to London again, but it has occurred to me as possible that I might address a letter to you on this subject to which you could write a reply for publication, which would do much to soothe the irritation in France. Another course is that under your instructions I should call attention to the matter in the Appropriation Bill, and deliver your sentiments on the subject with due notice to the Government.

My idea is that we should confine ourselves strictly to emphasizing the declaration of the Government that no binding engagements existed and that the freedom of action by this country in the future has not been in any respect impaired or compromised.

I feel strongly that whatever may be our opinion as to the policy of the Alliance itself we should abstain from any criticism of the action of the Powers who have entered upon it.

An occasion offered last night of recording our liberation from the obligations of the Cyprus Convention. It is a good thing to know that we are delivered from this monstrous incubus bred of Dizzy’s Eastern phantasies and his eager desire to add the false jewel of Cyprus to the British Crown.

I shall be glad if you will let me know what you think as to a more formal and explicit expression on the Triple Alliance made by you or by your authority, and in what form you think it should be made.

Gladstone to Harcourt.

Hawarden Castle, July 12, 1891.—I. I have thought it well to write to Rosebery about the Triple Alliance that he might be prepared for some utterances. But I have said nothing which restrains you from speaking when you please. As regards the choice between your speaking and an exchange of short notes with me, I should like to weigh it, and perhaps if you see anyone whose advice will be useful you would consult him. I shall be much inclined to do as you may prefer; but if I am to write, not too soon.

3. I have a great respect for your memory, but I think Granville’s declaration, founded on what Hammond told him, was simply that there was a remarkable absence of all difficult and critical matter from the correspondence of the Foreign Office.
Gladstone to Harcourt.

Hawarden Castle, July 15, 1891.—. . . I propose to await Rosebery's answer to my letter on the Triple Alliance before coming to any conclusion, as I am sure he will be susceptible on the subject and will regard as serious any statement from me, especially if written and therefore documentary.

Meantime I fear I may have misled you, for when you spoke of our exchange of letters I thought you meant something very brief. I think you are perfectly free to put forth for yourself such a statement of views as that contained in the letter you have now sent me. But this with another detailed exposition from me, a combination of ex-ministers writing formally on foreign affairs, without any reference to their ex-Foreign Secretary, would be taken as a slight to him which I am certain that you would be the very last person to desire... . .

4. Granville's first declaration in 1870 was what I referred to; his second on July 11 rather surprises me, and I do not think I was aware of it. Thunder came from a clear sky; and so it may again. A clear sky; for though the world knew France and Prussia would fight, there was nothing to determine the time. . . .

Is the Government of Cyprus in abeyance?

Harcourt to Gladstone.

Malwood, September 8, 1891.—. . . The Triple Alliance and the ridiculous fuss made over it here, which Salisbury endeavoured too late to counteract, has evidently led to a counter-irritant on the part of France and Russia, who have now, it seems, got the Porte into their Party. This Dardanelles scare is the first fruits of this disturbance so gratuitously invited, and I suspect has led to some definite démarche on the part of France for the evacuation of Egypt. A joint demand by France and Turkey backed up by Russia for our departure would be one equally difficult to yield or to refuse, and I suspect that the German partnership would look on, and laugh, and say, "if you choose formally to join us well and good, we may see what we can do for you; but if not it is not our affair; look out for yourselves." For my part, come how it will, I should be devotedly glad to get out of Egypt. It makes us what we ought not to be, a continental power—for Egypt is politically part of Europe, and involves us in all the tracasseries of continental politics.

It is much easier for Salisbury to evacuate than for us—and I would give a good deal to see him driven to it. . . .

Gladstone to Harcourt.

Hawarden, September 14, 1891.—. . . I think as I believe you do that while little is said about foreign affairs there is a great deal to say. The line adopted about the Triple Alliance has been to offend one party while giving us no hold or claim upon the other. You
observed, no doubt, certain proceedings attributed to the Belgian King. He may hear of them to his cost. It is one of the very formidable chances of the coming crisis that the two colonial powers may compensate one another at the cost of their diminutive northern neighbours. Again as to Egypt; the moment there is a case for imputing to us the intention of remaining permanently, that moment we do what Nicholas proposed to us in 1852 and thereby cost himself the Crimean War.

In the postscript of a letter to Mr. Morley (September 6, 1891), Harcourt emphasized even more strongly the dangers of the situation:

It seems to me that the infernal folly of the Triple Alliance and its puffering here by Stead and id genus omne of asses which forced on the rapprochement of France and Russia is already beginning to bear its mischievous fruit in that sore to which all peccant humours fly in the East. The business of the Dardanelles and the Porte’s adhesion to Russia is the first move in the game, but it seems clear to me that the real attack will be on Egypt and our occupation, which will bring forth some demand, on the part of Turkey nominally and France and Russia really, for evacuation. And what answer is to be given? What pretext can be found for evading our pledges upon our occupation? Let us pray that this plague may not break out in our time, O Lord, but in that of Salisbury.

It is not possible to deal with Harcourt's general activities in opposition, but a reference may be made to one subject which was much discussed in public and in his private correspondence during the later years of the Parliament. The question of the reform of the House of Lords had been raised in March 1888, on a motion of Labouchere, and it passed through various aspects of debate in the following years. Harcourt gave prominence to it in speeches at the National Liberal Club (July 16, 1890) and at Derby (August 13, 1890), declaring "that the antagonism between a reactionary House of Lords and a Liberal House of Commons is the great political question of the future." But his correspondence with Mr. Morley and Gladstone showed that he was much more alive to the objections to the various reforms which were discussed than he was to the advantages that would result from them. "If you are to have a second chamber," he wrote to Mr.
Morley (December 27, 1889), "you had far better have one which is moderately stupid and tolerably timid, which is what you have got now." "I don't believe in 'mending' the House of Lords," he said in another letter to Mr. Morley... "There are some things, e.g. the Papacy, which cannot be reformed. They may die, but they will not change."
CHAPTER VIII
LIFE IN THE FOREST

Delights of Malwood—Mixed Society—Visit of Mr. Gladstone—
A trip Abroad—Familiar Correspondence—Appointment of
Magistrates—Lord Rosebery’s Pill—Mr. Morley’s Walpole—
Death of E. W. Harcourt.

"A DELICIOUS sun—beautiful west wind—the
Forest a paradise. How can you all be such
fools as to occupy yourselves about politics?
I have forgotten they exist." So wrote Harcourt to Mr.
Morley from Malwood (March 5, 1888) in the vein of lusty
extravagance that habitually pervaded his correspondence.
Few men have had so hearty an appetite for life as he
enjoyed throughout. He was often angry, but, except under
bereavement, he was never unhappy. "I spent a happy
birthday yesterday in the bosom of my family," he writes to
Mr. Morley (October 15, 1891). "I have passed the grand
climactic and have nothing to regret or desire, and feel
that I have had more than my due share of good fortune in
life. The result of my political tour has been to restore
me to equanimity. I am disposed to think that we shall
not have a majority at the election. I believe otherwise
I should feel like a man sentenced to be hanged." It was
an exaggeration, for he loved the smell of battle, and he
was happy in office as well as out. But it is true that much
as he delighted in battle his deepest pleasure was found in
the woodlands and among his own people. "Here we are
safe and sound at home and delighted to be here," he wrote
to his wife from Malwood (September 4, 1890), whither he
had returned from a visit to an oculist at Wiesbaden.
"I screamed with joy as I entered the gates. It is worth
while going abroad to realize how inferior all foreign parts are in comparison to Malwood. . . . How glad I am to have no more couriers, no more pfennigs, no more foreigners of any sort. This place seems so delicious and quiet. I fear you will not find Lou lou here when you return. He has been like a good angel to me. . . ."

His boyish delight in his new home in the Forest was the constant theme of his letters from Malwood. There never had been and never could be such a place. The trees, the flowers, the skies filled him with a perpetual ecstasy, and he threw as much passion into the details of his life in the New Forest as he was accustomed to throw into his attacks on Goschen’s budgets or his assaults on the Unionists. He was more concerned because the rooks did not build in his beech trees than he was because his Party was out of office, and wrote to Spencer for enlightenment. “I find that rooks in this Park build freely in beech trees,” replied Spencer from Althorp (April 19, 1889). “I suppose in one old plantation there must be twenty beech trees with nests upon them.” “I am sorry to learn that it is the individual perversity of our rooks and not their general instinct which prevents their building in our beeches,” replied Harcourt. “I should imagine from their aristocratic tendency that they are adverse to Home Rulers.” If he was proud of his garden, he was always ready to poke fun at his farming. “I am conducting agriculture here on the most scientific principles,” he wrote to Spencer. “I have almost attained a dairy herd which will give no milk, hens which will lay no eggs and pigs which will not sell. So I am almost qualified for the gold medal of the Royal. . . . I go out with the harriers here most mornings at 6 a.m.”

He liked other people to enjoy the Forest with him, and his doors were always open to friends or enemies. “We have had a few people off and on—Jews, Liberal Unionists, infidels and heretics—and such like,” he writes to Mr. Morley. “We have also had some convicts like Wilfrid Blunt—altogether mixed. Lady Gosford who
lives below our hill keeps up an anti-cyclone of Tories and Orange-folk. . . . Bobby is in great form, and I chiefly hold his clothes whilst he plays cricket with the village boys. Indeed I do nothing with the greatest zeal and success.”

When Mr. Morley, recovering from an illness, consents to join him he writes (January 11, 1888):

We are quite enchanted at the thought of getting you here. You will have a bedroom and sitting-room opposite to one another and a bathroom between at the end of a passage, and need never emerge except when you are more bored with yourself than with other people.

I have here a collection of the most unreadable books, which I do not believe anyone but yourself would ever open.

Before you leave you shall be taught to milk a cow, make butter, set a hen, and all things which an educated man ought to know.

We shall have no one here till the end of next week, when E. Hamilton comes, so we shall be able really to enjoy your society. Though any day you wish it the Forest can produce the finest assortment of Tories of the best quality. . . .

When on another occasion Mr. Morley excused himself for not going to Malwood because “a guest who is a cough and nothing else is no joke,” Harcourt replied, “We greatly prefer you with a cough to anyone else with clear lungs. . . . So pray come down.” Among his visitors was Gladstone, who spent some days with him in the New Forest during his visit to the West Country in June 1889. In this connection, the Pall Mall Gazette made a comment to which Mr. Morley jocularly refers in writing from Haslemere to Harcourt:

*June 8.— . . . I feel sure that you would regard it as misplaced delicacy on my part if I were not to call your attention to the truly sensible suggestion below. It is one of those things that only need pointing out, and then all mankind instantly see its propriety, and only wonder it was not done before:—*

Malwood is indeed a charming retreat. The dominant thought as we quit it is that it is almost too good for Sir William Harcourt; we all feel that a man like John Morley could make fifty times a better use of it, and that Sir William could do the State many a worse service, than by handing it over by deed of gift to the great litérateur and statesman who honours him by ranking as his colleague.
Sir William Vernon Harcourt on the Terrace at Malwood, 1809
I have had a week of pure solitude here—save for the company of a couple of housemaids and my chef. A capital hermit was spoiled when I joined you men of debate. But I confess that my mind often turned to Malwood, and I wondered how you were getting on. It must have been very pleasant to you to have the old chief under your roof, and he is always delightful in private life. . . . No hurry about the deed of gift. The autumn will suit me perfectly.

"The artifice by which it is sought to conceal the origin of inspired communications is too well known to escape detection," replied Harcourt gaily. "Your close connection with the P.M.G. led at once to the discovery of the authorship of the paragraph, though the hint is somewhat nakedly expressed. The predatory instincts of the party of progress have seldom been so frankly revealed. I shall be ready to make the surrender on one condition, that I shall be allowed to reside here as much as I like—a condition which has always been offered to you, but which you have certainly failed to fulfil."

With the advance of years and his absorption in the sylvan pleasures of Malwood, Harcourt's wanderings became limited to the needs of his political campaigns. The autumn holidays in the Highlands were over, and his occasional visits to the Continent were brief and generally concerned with health considerations. "I got back here yesterday," he writes to Spencer from Malwood (October 25, 1889), "delighted to be at home, for we have been dreadful 'gad-abouts' lately, the giddy young things having actually dragged me to Paris and up the Eiffel Tower. Since that I have been knocking about in Wales, at Hawarden and at Mentmore." "So frisky and vivacious are we old birds," he writes to Mr. Morley on another occasion, "that we are meditating to slip over for a day or two from Southampton to St. Malo to look at Mont St. Michel, which we have never seen, but shall be back at the end of the week—when the shadows of the stump will be upon me—Trunco non frondibus efficit umbram."

But the only prolonged absence from Malwood during these years were due to disquiet about his eyesight, which necessitated visits in August 1890 and August 1891 to an
oculist at Wiesbaden. From thence he wrote to Lewis Harcourt (August 7, 1891):

... Having left London to escape the Lobby the first thing we lighted on was — at breakfast at Aix-la-Chapelle. There he was, poor devil, for three weeks, and no wonder he fixed on us as a Godsend and proffered his services as a guide, but he did not know where the Cathedral was, and had evidently never heard of the existence of Charlemagne. However, we showed him about. The Cathedral, where Charlemagne was dug up 300 years after his death sitting up in his marble chair, with the Bible on his knee and his sacred Joyeuse by his side, and his crown on his head (I should like to have seen him), is very interesting with its great octagonal walls and ancient marble pillars from Ravenna. ...

The visits to Wiesbaden gave him the opportunity of renewing acquaintance with the Rhineland, and checked the progress of his eye trouble. On his return in September 1891, he wrote to Spencer: "I picture you to myself out cubbing at 5 a.m. with two bottles of Elizabeth at your saddle bow like John Gilpin and a bath of Althorp mud on your return. My Kur has been a complete success. I shall set up next season as a Homburg physician, and prescribe miscellaneous waters and a diet of unripe fruit and salads." On these excursions he was generally accompanied by his eldest son, upon whom, as the years went on, he continued to lean with increasing confidence, and for whom his affection showed no abatement. Praise of Loulou from any quarter filled him with childlike delight. "Apropos," wrote Mr. Morley to him (April 5, 1891), "I said to Rosebery last night, 'Do you know the one thing that I really envy Harcourt, more than his brains and more than Malwood?' He gave my riddle up. As Loulou may read this I reserve the answer." "I appreciate and am grateful for what you say of Loulou," replied Harcourt. "It is impossible to say too much. I cannot be satiated with his praises." On another occasion Mr. Morley (February 7, 1889), referring to his heavy public engagements, to which Lewis Harcourt as the Secretary of the Home Counties Liberal Federation contributed, said, "It is quite true that they are working a willing horse to death, but
strange to say the most cruel load on the poor brute's back is laid by one, L. V. Harcourt, who lives at ease in the New Forest, and who is in other respects one of the most humane young gentlemen in the world. I am very bitter against him." "I agree that L. V. H. is a monster," replied Harcourt, "but if you suffer under him at a distance what do you think must be my fate who live under his tyranny? It never occurs to me not to do as I am told."

He was in no haste to see his son, whose health continued delicate, in Parliament, and Loulou on his side preferred to stay outside and play the amiable tyrant to his father, over whose tempestuous spirit his own mildly masterful manner exercised a growing and salutary influence. "I always know when Loulou is angry," Harcourt used to say, "because then he becomes inaudible," and it was generally agreed that the son's imperturbable serenity acted as a perfect foil to the father's stormy temper. The inseparable couple, conspicuous as much by the contrast in their girth as by their similarity in height, became a standing theme of the lobby writers and the caricaturists. "I hope you saw Furniss's lobby picture of L. in Punch," wrote Harcourt to Mr. Morley. "One's first picture in Punch is an event and he has earned it." "My wife," replied Mr. Morley (August 28, 1888) from Grasmere, "feared Loulou might be hurt at finding himself in Punch. I assured the good soul that this was fame, and that L. would be delighted, and that I only hoped and really believed that he had now his foot fairly planted on the ladder which would land him on the top of this glorious gibbet. What a good saying is that of George Meredith's that politicians are like the adventurous rustics, who swarm up the greased pole, too often to find the leg of mutton at the top badly tainted!"

From Harcourt's letters in these days a few extracts will serve to show the spirit of his familiar correspondence.

(To Mr. Morley.) I don't agree with you as to home-brewed swipes. If you don't take care I will brew at Malwood and make
you drink the results. I prefer the corrupt Bass and the corrupter Guinness.

(To Mr. Morley.) . . . Poor Lightfoot was top boss in the Tripos in my year. He was a very good fellow as well as a learned man and I liked him much. He ought not to have died so soon—I suppose it was the result of a regular life. All my Cambridge contemporaries are dead, and I don’t know a soul there who is not twenty years my junior. . . .

I am glad you are going to Brighton, not abroad. It is a great mistake making efforts after good climates. They always fail. You see poor Lightfoot died at Bournemouth. If he had stayed at home he might be alive still. We act on this principle. . . .

Why do you go to Liverpool? It is a God-forsaken, hopeless place. You might as well go to speak at a Church Congress at Canterbury.

(To Mr. Morley.) . . . I agree with Mrs. Morley in wishing you could take more care of yourself—for after all, you philosophers are frail creatures and you “o’er inform your tenements of clay.” For my part being a Philistine, when my finger aches I go to bed and I wish you would do the same.

(To his wife.) . . . Abercorn asked me across the table if I would drink wine with a Duke. I said, “Oh yes, I never visit on anyone hereditary infirmities.” Natty was there and spoke with pleasure of our coming to Tring. Arthur Balfour is to be there, so we shall have good fun. . . .

(To Mr. Morley.) . . . I confess there are three people whom I relish in public life, Salisbury, Balfour and Hartington. They are all so excessively unlike what the vulgar would expect them to be. . . .

(To Mr. Morley.) . . . I am truly sorry for Asquith’s calamity (the death of his wife). He is far and away the best of our youth.

(To Lewis Harcourt.) . . . I sat up till 3 a.m. this morning (!!) reading Stanley on Westminster Abbey and collateral history of the thirteenth Century, which is a good deal more interesting than the nineteenth. People’s heads were always cut off at the psychological moment, which solved many difficulties. . . .

(To his wife.) . . . I spent two hours this morning with Rosebery at Durdans, and had luncheon there. I was not on the whole dissatisfied with his state of mind, but he does not have the children with him, and talks stuff of the necessity of their attending to their studies, which I laughed at.
(To Mr. Morley.) . . . You are a good deal more of a soul than I am, who delight in being of the earth earthy. Please explain to me why there are not great women in the nineteenth century as there were in the eighteenth and seventeenth, especially in France amongst the "High Life." I don't mean the professional littérateurs. It is your business to explain this. You have read of the one and seen the other. You can't make a Reine of our "Margot."

(To Mr. Morley, two days later.) . . . I can't pass your "named varieties" (as the florists say) of the sex through the 4th standard. I never knew but one really clever (in the male sense of the term) woman and she was very disagreeable. These females who play at being intellectual and expect you to take them au sérieux bore me to extinction. They always remind me of an amateur playing on a violin—a very distressing performance. I sat by a woman at Homburg, who before the fish deluged me with metaphysics which she said she had already débité to Mr. John Morley. "I shifted my trumpet and only took snuff," and she was a pretty woman too, more's the pity. . . . I doubt not you have a photo of her on your table. . . .

(To Mr. Morley.) . . . If you will quote Horace here are the sentiments of the groves of Malwood:—

Sperat infestis metuit scundis
Alteram sortem bene preparatum
Pectus . . . . . . . . .
Rebus angustis animosus atque
Fortis appare; sapienter idem
Contrales vento nimium secundo
Turgida vela.

My top sails are double reefed, and I never felt less disposed to "start before the gale."

(Your Hiberniae won't scan; it is a false quantity both in verse and in politics, and, as Sydney Smith said, the equivalent of a faux pas in a woman.) As to Newcastle—damn Newcastle. . . .

(To Mr. Morley.) . . . The sloth of the country is upon me and I feel like a vegetable in winter. Whether lethargicus fit pugil will come about I know not, but I don't feel like it. If the gentlemen who speculate on the supposed aspirants to the lead of the Liberal Party knew the real sentiments of those individuals and how little they desired the thankless office (compared to which the task of an Irish pig driver is a pleasant one) they would be a little astonished. For my part I wish them all very heartily in the place in which probably they will one day find themselves.

(To Mr. Morley) . . . Do come here if you can. Besides, as you
know I am always much more reasonable in the country than in London.

(To Mr. Morley.) . . . Talking of the removal of pieces from the board, what do you say to the removal of the great German Tanjandrum himself?

It is not a pleasant prospect to have Europe left at the mercy of a hothead who seems also to be a fool. If I had doubted this before, the glorification of him by Stead would have tertiified me of it.

(To Lord Randolph Churchill.) . . . I find I was right in my recollection that Hudibras is the authority of the derivation of "old Nick." The lines are:

"Nick Machiavel had ne'er a trick,
Though he gave his name to our old Nick!"

Macaulay says, "Out of his surname our countrymen have coined an epitaph for a knave, and out of his Christian name a synonym for the Devil."

Macaulay, however, makes a profound observation worthy of your notice: "Wise men, however, have always been inclined to look with great suspicion on the angels and demons of the multitude."

In his character of Squire of Malwood he launched a formidable indictment against the packing of the Hampshire Bench. Writing to Lord Northbrook, the Lord-Lieutenant of the County, who had declined the nomination of certain Liberals and Nonconformists to the Bench on the ground that it had "not been customary to nominate magistrates without the recommendation of the Bench, upon which they would act," he said:

Harcourt to Lord Northbrook.

Malwood, December 22, 1890.— . . . You say that "it has not been customary to nominate magistrates without the recommendation of the Bench upon which they would act," which is very much as if the Lord Chancellor should say he could nominate no judge except on the recommendation of the bench of judges, or the Prime Minister no bishop without the recommendation of the bishops. Your view appears to be that the magistrates are a self-recommending co-optative body like the old corrupt corporations, and that therefore the Lord-Lieutenant, as the representative of the Crown, has no real responsibility to the country in the matter. . . . You might just as well in this county leave it to the political committee of the
Carlton Club or to a habitation of the Primrose League. . . . In my opinion it is a very serious misfortune that the labouring classes should be made to feel that the administration of justice is a privilege confined practically to one class, socially, religiously and politically, and it is in human nature that a bias so absolutely one-sided should make itself felt, and I attach more importance to the social than the political exclusions. . . .

Northbrook promptly retreated from the ground he had taken up and accepted the responsibility for the nomination, whereupon Harcourt pointed to the fact that out of 250 magistrates on the Hampshire Bench he believed there were not half a dozen Liberals. "They consist one-half of Tory squires, the other half of half-pay captains—indeed if you look through the list it reads like a general court martial, and I have no doubt the law administered is very much of a martial description." He described the men whose nomination had been refused, and proceeded:

. . . Every one of these men are fit and proper men to be upon the Bench! They are excluded partly from their politics, principally perhaps, for their religious opinions, most of all certainly on account of their social status. They are not supposed to be fit to associate with the squires or the sporting captains. All this is very bad and has the worst possible effect upon public opinion. . . . I may be wrong, but I think if I was to offer you a sovereign for every Non-conformist you could find on the Hants Bench, it would not ruin me even at this time of Christmas bills. . . .

In his tastes he belonged to the eighteenth century, and he was scornful of all modern tendencies. The rage for athletics filled him with a boiling indignation, and when the masters of the public schools discussed the question of discarding Greek he delivered his soul on the subject in a letter (December 27, 1890) to a correspondent in the course of which he said:

_Harcourt to a Correspondent._

. . . The absolute and complete subordination of work to games is the distinguishing feature of the modern curriculum, both at the Universities and the Public Schools, and the accomplices, perhaps the ringleaders, in the movement have been the Masters themselves. Indeed I have heard of one school where the Masters are avowedly
selected by the honours they have taken in gymnastics in order to give a prestige to the school.

Forty or fifty years ago as I well remember cricket was not unknown, football was occasionally played, boat-races were enjoyed, but they were the relaxation not the occupation of youth in statu pupillari. The Senior Classic, the Newcastle Scholar, could hold up his head even in the presence of a demon bowler. And the Senior Wrangler might take rank with "the Stroke."

But all this is changed. Youth is naturally stimulated by the love of praise, and boys will pursue that which brings them honour. Everything conspires to the same end. We live under the rule of a sensational Press; there is much racier "copy" to be got out of a match than out of a tripos. There is more fame to be acquired by a goal than by an Honour.

Far be it from me to disparage the dominant idol of the hour—though like Juggernaut it tramples down the "humanities" in its worship. I dare not place myself so much out of harmony with the fin du siècle. I will not question the supreme claim of athletics over letters and science in the training of the young. Nevertheless there used to be some moderation in these things once—no one is moderate in anything now. Everything has to be "boomed"—it is so remunerative to the "boomers"—so exciting to the "boomed," and we are in the height of a "muscular boom." . . .

In a society where wealth and luxury are greatly on the increase it is inevitable that our public schools and universities should tend to become more and more the lounge of the rich and the idle, and less and less the training ground of honourable industry and laborious merit. It is this and not compulsory Greek that deters parents from sending to the University boys who have to fight their way in the world. If the Universities are ever to recover the place they once held in the intellectual life of the nation it will not be by lowering the standard of learning but by upholding the honour of work.

Harcourt's letters to Mr. Morley, which were the most continuous feature of his correspondence, ranged over literature and history as well as politics and gossip. He was insistent in his praises of Walpole, who was his ideal statesman, and critical of the younger Pitt. Referring to the fact that Mr. Morley was engaged on the life of Walpole, he wrote (September 16, 1888):

Harcourt to Mr. Morley.

... I am glad to know you are doing Walpole—though I fear you are not worthy of him. I doubt if your philosophical and casuist spirit can really sympathize with his fine and brutal antagonism to damned nonsense, which is sometimes called the "spirit of the
age." So it is, and a very " degenerate age " too. I am a thorough eighteenth-century man in disposition, education, sentiment and connection. I abhor Daily Telegraphism, Pall Mallism and sensationalism of all kinds—likewise even more Kultur and Geist, Matthew Arnoldism, and all the troop of emasculate enlightenment—" Men with long hair and women with short."

Have you ever tried upon Mr. G. an encomium on Walpole? I once told him I thought W. the greatest Minister who ever ruled in England. He did not like it.

It is all nonsense about his corruption. He paid the fools to do what the wise men told them—a very good bargain. After all it was the Philistines who made England just as the idéologues ruined France.

They are, however, perishing so fast under the jawbones of asses that I fear there is little left for us in the future.

Do come here. It is quite divine—the flowers, the woods, the prospect, the air. As I look over Southampton Water over the sea of woods you might fancy yourself at Como or Maggiore. . . .

The best idea of what Walpole was is, I think, to be found in the letters of the man who was not his son.

Writing to Mr. Morley, apropos of the announcement that Lord Rosebery was writing the life of Pitt, he said:

Harcourt to Morley.

MALWOOD, September 10, 1891.— . . . It is a courageous attempt to challenge the last, best piece of Macaulay—his Pitt in the Encyclopædia; and even if he was to fail (which he will not) he could say magnis tamen excidit ausis. He will not satisfy me unless he is very severe on the last five years of Pitt's life. From his resignation in 1801 there seems to me to have been nothing great about him. Whether he really resigned on Catholic Emancipation is a question as dark as that of the Man in the Iron Mask. If he did, his return in 1803 and his offer to return in 1801 was mean to the last degree. His attitude towards Addington from 1801–1803, whom he regarded as his " powder monkey " (you will recognize the phrase), was contemptible. He lost the respect of his only respectable colleagues the Grenvilles. He truckled to the King in his eagerness for office, due I fancy mainly to the intolerable pressure of his debts. Another sad and striking feature of his closing years was his solitariness. He died without a personal friend. When he left Bath he was known to be moribund. But no one seems to have gone near him at Wimbledon except Lord Wellesley, who was a comparative stranger. Even Canning, though a strong political adherent, does not seem of late years to have been on intimate terms with him. He was unloved and I suppose like Napoleon unlovable. To him applied in a terrible degree the saying of Pascal " Je mourrai seul."
I shall be curious to see how R. treats the behaviour of Pitt at the Union on the Catholic question. I have examined this matter pretty carefully and have come to the conclusion—

(1) That Pitt authorized Castlereagh to give the Catholics to understand their claims would be conceded.

(2) That he promised Lord Clare they should not.

(3) That he deliberately suppressed his authority given to Castle-

reagh both from the King and Clare.

(4) That having failed in his point and having declared that as

"a man of honour he was bound to resign" the "man of honour"

threw over his engagements to get back, and offered the King within three months of his resignation to abandon the Catholics if he would only take him back, and underwent the humiliation of having this dishonourable offer declined.

When Mr. Morley had completed the chapter of his book concerned with the constitutional history of the British Cabinet and its development under Walpole, he sent it to Malwood with a request for final observations. Harcourt, who had already sent the fruits of earlier researches on the subject, replied in a long memorandum which is reprinted in Appendix II to this volume partly on account of its intrinsic value and partly on account of the light it throws on Harcourt's passion for the study of constitutional his-
tory, and especially of eighteenth-century history. He was

an avid student of the growth of British institutions, and
always desired to trace any modern practice to its constitu-
tional beginnings.

III

Just before Christmas, 1891, Harcourt was summoned to Nuneham by the news of the serious illness of his brother. The passing of his oldest companion is recorded in letters to his wife.

Harcourt to his Wife.

Nuneham, Midnight, December 18.— . . . I never saw so com-
posed and brave a scene. I was not allowed to see him till the
Oxford surgeon came at 8 p.m., when he told me that death was at
hand. I then went to his bedside. He was perfectly conscious,
and said "how glad he was they had sent for me," and that "we
had always been good friends." He begged me to take care of
Susan [his wife] and called her "poor little thing." I think his
mind ran more on her than on anything else. He then told me of his estate arrangements and his provision for Miss Payne. He asked the doctor "whether he thought it would last through the night." He said to me, "Our span is short." I said he had led a good and useful life, but he said he wished it had been better. He told me it was unfortunate that Aubrey was not here, and that "he had a misgiving that he should never see him again," and that "it would be a sad end to his tour." All this in a tone of the greatest composure and fortitude which I could hardly have believed possible if I had not seen it.

* I write this at twelve o'clock at night in order that you may have it by early post on Sunday. He is still alive, but cannot live through the night.

December 19, 5 a.m.—It is all over; our dear brother passed away in perfect peace. To me it is a great sorrow—the end of a friendship of sixty years, and I have so little left of a once numerous kindred.

At 10 p.m. last night I sent for the clergyman, and the parting scene with Susan took place in his presence. She was much affected, but bore up well. Her lot is very desolate. She is left the house for her life, as my brother said to me, "so that she may not be turned out." . . .

December 19, Evening.—I sent you fragmentary notes of the past sad night. I am still lost in amazement at my dear brother's calmness and composure throughout. He really seemed like a man starting on some ordinary voyage troubled by nothing, disturbed by nothing. He asked after you, spoke and thought of every one—especially Susan. Asked how long he should last, and almost at the last breath inquired whether he had any pulse left. . . . At the very last he sent a message to Susan to say he was "passing away in peace without any suffering." I had no conception it was so easy to die. . . .

Edward Harcourt's only son, Aubrey, was travelling in Australia, and in his absence Harcourt was left with the full responsibility of administration. "I don't know what I should do without Loulou, who as always is everything to me and to everybody," he wrote to Spencer. He was concerned about the future of Nuneham. It was left, unentailed, to Aubrey to do what he liked with. "What that will be no one can tell," wrote Harcourt to his wife. "Those who know him best think he will never live here, and will get rid of the whole place and everything belonging to it—a strange result of all my poor brother's care and
devotion to it.” The anticipation was not fulfilled. Aubrey, who had suffered a bereavement in youth which left a permanent effect upon him, remained unmarried, and spent much of his life in travel; but he exercised the freedom his father had given him in the spirit of Edward’s wish, and kept Nuneham as a heritage of the Harcourt family.
CHAPTER IX
CLEARING THE DECKS

Differences on the retention of Irish Members at Westminster—Churchill and Chamberlain—Lord Rosebery's views on Foreign Policy—Panegyric on Gladstone—A brush with Chamberlain—The Hartington leadership in the 'seventies.

The Parnell episode threw a shadow over the fortunes of the Opposition at a most critical time. After the exposure of the Pigott forgeries Home Rule seemed to be caught on the tide of assured victory. The discredit attaching to this exposure involved the Government, and accentuated the drift of public opinion towards the policy of appeasement to which Gladstone had given the authority of his unequalled prestige.

Resolute government was in full operation under the administration of Mr Balfour, and the eviction of tenants, the imprisonment of members, the suppression of public meetings and all the accompaniments of coercion were the daily theme of the Press and of Parliament. But the English appetite for this coarse diet was soon satisfied. The country grew weary of "resolute government." The change of temper was no new experience. Throughout the history of England in Ireland the most constant feature had been the periodic exercise of force, followed by a phase of indifference if not of goodwill. Again and again, in the sixteenth century as much as in the nineteenth, action and reaction had followed each other in rhythmic sequence. The policy of force so often entered on, had always broken down in the end, and Salisbury's experiment of "twenty years of resolute government" was visibly doomed to suffer the fate of his great ancestor's similar experiments.
in the sixteenth century. The tide of public opinion, as indicated by the by-elections, began to flow steadily against the Government, and it was apparent that whenever the appeal to the country was made, Gladstone would be returned with a Home Rule majority. But the revelations of the Parnell divorce case, and the subsequent civil war in the Irish ranks, came like a killing frost upon the spring. For the moment it shattered the hopes of the Liberal Party, and seemed to make it doubtful whether the cause for which alone its great leader remained in public life could be a winning issue at the approaching election. The difficulty was aggravated by the fact that there had been, as indicated in a previous chapter, disagreement among the Liberal leaders on vital questions affecting the form of the Home Rule scheme which should be submitted to the new Parliament in the event of victory at the polls.

Of these questions, the most important was that of Irish representation at Westminster, in regard to which every variety of opinion prevailed. The subject was discussed in numerous letters that passed between Gladstone and his two chief lieutenants, and in many conversations. Harcourt, who remained a stout advocate of representation at Westminster, urged on his colleagues a discreet silence as to the details of the prospective measure, and was angry at the demand of Mr. Asquith, who was assuming a prominent place in the counsels of the Party, that the leaders should take the country more into their confidence as to their intentions. He scolded Spencer for discussing representation at Stockton, and writing to Mr. Morley said:

_Harcourt to Morley._

_MALWOOD, October 27, 1889.—_ . . . Though Spencer is altogether in my sense of keeping the Irish members _sans phrase_, I am sorry that with unnecessary candour he exposed so much surface to the enemy. He is one of those children of light who has all the innocence of the dove, and but little of the craft of the serpent. To give in at this moment to "Asquithism" is only to play into the hands of malignants like Atherley Jones and George Russell. I don't profess to be a profound political philosopher, but I fancy I know something of political strategies. To go debating about these
difficult matters in public merely to gratify the impertinent curiosity of people some of whom cannot and some of whom will not understand them is really to throw away the game. It is like a number of unarmed black men walking up to the rifles merely to be shot down. If we have the sense to keep our own counsel they may hammer at us in vain, but if we allow ourselves to be engaged in the morasses of the "Irish Members at Westminster" we shall be routed horse and foot.

"All right, my dear Harcourt," replied Mr. Morley.
"Mum shall be the word. . . . I won't let out whether I'm for colonial H.R. (Home Rule) or federal H.R., or Manx H.R." Harcourt was still more disturbed at this time by a proposal to compromise on the basis of a diminished Irish representation at Westminster. Writing to Gladstone, he said:

Harcourt to Gladstone.

MALWOOD, October 27, 1889.—. . . I was rather disturbed to hear from Rosebery that in your discussions after I left Hawarden opinion seemed to have inclined to a diminution of the number of the Irish members. I confess that this seems to me of all solutions the one which it is least possible to defend. If Irish members are to remain at Westminster for Imperial purposes such as peace and war, commercial treaties, free trade and protection, Colonies, India, foreign policy, confidence in administration, etc., etc., for what possible reason is their voting power on these matters, which are of the first importance, to be diminished? . . .

The proposal of course is supposed to get rid of the objection to Irish interference with British domestic affairs, but though it may lessen the amount it does not really touch the principle of the objection. When parties are pretty equally divided fifty Irish votes may be as decisive as one—say on the English Church Establishment, and when you have once conceded the objection to Irish interference, you don’t get rid of it any more than the young woman did of the baby by saying it’s such a little one. . . . I confess the more I think of it, the more I am convinced we ought resolutely to adhere to our own reticence on this matter till things are much more developed than they are at present.

Gladstone to Harcourt.

HAWARDEN, October 29, 1889.—On the subject of reticence, I agree with you to the nth. My object is that we should remain absolutely free as to our dealings in the matter of retaining Irish members, until the critical time comes; so that we may duly appreciate the public opinion as it may then be, which we cannot now
accurately know. The more suggestion, the more discussion there may be among ourselves, the better; but let it be purely academical, absolutely without prejudice; aiming only at "more light" as Goethe said in his closing hours.

I own I think you deviate a little from sound doctrine, when you use words which would shut you off from any one of the possible alternatives; (not least if it be one towards which several minds are at present inclining). For myself I shall claim and hold to a rollicking liberty of choice. I hope my epithet a little attracts your sympathy.

"I send you a characteristic letter of Mr. G.'s," wrote Harcourt to Mr. Morley, enclosing the foregoing. "It means 'Hold your tongue, and by-and-by I shall get my own way.' He hangs the hope and belief that ultimately he will carry his own plan of 1886 unaltered as to Irish M.P.'s and all the rest. Don't he wish he may get it!"

For himself, Harcourt observed very carefully in his speeches during the summer and autumn of 1889 at Hertford, Salisbury, Hanley, the National Liberal, and at the Liberal Federation at Manchester, his own policy of avoiding the discussion of the details of Home Rule, devoting himself to the declaration of the principles of self-government and to the exposure of the failure of coercion. He believed that the art of defence was attack, and was as industrious in denouncing his opponents in public as he was in arguing against his friends in private. He rejoiced at the trouble which Churchill caused Chamberlain at Birmingham in the autumn of 1889, but his gratitude did not prevent him from attacking the "bumptious ignorance" which Churchill had displayed in his allusions to the circumstances under which the Act of Union was accomplished. Churchill, pleading "not guilty," sent him a speech which he had delivered at Bath on the subject, whereupon Harcourt, always eager for a historical argument, replied (November 30, 1889) with a long dissertation on the iniquities of Pitt and the Union, in the course of which he said:

Harcourt to Lord R. Churchill.

... Your main argument is that Scotland hated the Union and became reconciled to it and that Ireland will do the same. I do not
agree—Scotland from the terms of her Union was on the whole governed by Scotchmen for Scotchmen, from the time of John, Duke of Argyll, to that of Dundas.

Ireland has always been governed, not by Irishmen or for Irishmen, but by Englishmen for the bastard Anglo-Irish, what is called the "loyal minority." . . .

As to Scotland, in spite of the Union she always had a good deal of her own way. She hanged Capt. Porteous in spite of Walpole and Queen Caroline, and by the help of the Duke of Argyll (a different sort of man from the present) got off scot free. If the Irish could hang the Governor of Kilmarnock with impunity they would think better of the Union. . . . And now, my dear Lord Randolph, you have brought all this on yourself by your good-humoured note which shows you bear no malice. . . . In the idleness of the Forest I have inflicted on you the lectures I ought to have delivered at Cambridge.

Let us pair off our reciprocal inactions and begin with a clean slate. I am now the aggressor. We shall not agree on the Union, but I wish you all success in Central Birmingham.

But though in the conflict between Churchill and Chamberlain his sympathies were with Churchill he had no doubt as to which of the two men would win. "R. C.'s speculations on the future of Joe are of little value," he wrote to Mr. Morley. "The two men are made of very different metal. It is like soft metal against hard steel, and cool vindictiveness has far more staying power than passionate spite." He was scornful of Chamberlain's idea that he could make Toryism the instrument of Radical aims. The programme he had imposed on it—Tithes, District Councils, Land Purchase, Free Education—"are all odious to the Tory mind," he wrote to Mr. Morley (January 9, 1890):

_Harcourt to Mr. Morley._

. . . The P.M.G. like the fool it is talks of Goschen's coup. No Government makes a coup which dissatisfies its own party; it is always repaid by sulkiness caused by abstention. The idea that it is to gain by popularity with the other side shows a crass ignorance of practical politics. Forster's Education Bill lost the Radicals in 1874, and did not gain the Tories. The same was true in 1885 with our miserable semi-Jingoism in Egypt, Afghanistan and the Cape. You can only have a strong Government by acting on the lines and in sympathy with the sentiments of your own Party. Peel had to learn this in 1845 and Dizzv in 1868. What did household suffrage avail him
at the General Election? What good were Lowe's surpluses and Gladstone's bribes in 1874?

These are the elements of politics of which all 'able editors' and some statesmen seem to be ignorant.

If Joe really was to succeed in inducing the Government to adopt a Birmingham programme he would secure the destruction of the Tory Government and the Tory Party, and Salisbury knows a trick worth two of that.

If the dissensions in the ranks of the enemy gave him pleasure, the dissensions in his own ranks filled him with rage. A fissure in the Liberal Party, which was destined to split it in twain ten years later, had begun to appear with the emergence under Lord Rosebery of an Imperialist group within the ranks. In Imperialism Harcourt saw the thing he most detested, jingoism, in a thin disguise, and its appearance as a challenger for the control of the Liberal Party seemed to him to threaten the very ark of the Liberal covenant. "Spencer was very angry about Asquith joining the Imperial League," he wrote to Mr. Morley, "and said he was greatly disappointed in him." His own disappointment also was great, for he recognized the new force that had come into the ranks. Writing to Mr. Morley from Frampton Court, Dorchester, in January 1890, he said:

... Our young men like E. Grey, who can speak, won't. Asquith who will never do a day's work for us in the House goes about the country doing mischief and gladdening the heart of the Unionists and the P.M.G. It is really too bad. He knows quite well the decision which has been taken, and like a bad whist player deliberately endeavours to force his partner's hand. I wish I was going to speak soon. I would give him "a piece of my mind." When we kicked up the devil's own row on the Vote on Account in relation to the Parnell inquiry, you remember how the Israelites grumbled at Moses and Aaron, and you have not forgotten the Webster Debate.¹ These are the gentlemen who call out for "more vigour." The truth is, what they like is to stand by with their hands in their pockets and order the front bench to do all the fighting and then abuse them for their pains.

With the tendencies of Lord Rosebery on foreign policy he was no more pleased. His personal relations with

¹ Referring to the abstention from voting of the Liberal lawyers on March 22, 1889, after Harcourt's arraignment of Webster.
Lord Rosebery were cordial, and he strongly urged him to accept the chairmanship of the new London County Council. "I have written to Mentmore to-day to urge him to accept," he wrote to Mr. Morley (January 27, 1889). "Loulou is there and so I shall hear to-morrow what is the latest phase of that varium and mutabile temperament." When Lord Rosebery took the office, Harcourt merrily telegraphed his congratulations in the words, "Turn again, Primrose." But later he objected to the line Lord Rosebery took in the House of Lords. Harcourt generally approved of the foreign policy of Salisbury, which he held to be a reversal of that of Beaconsfield, and he said the Liberal Party were unanimous against carping at the Government on the subject. "I cannot admit the right of a single member of the Party to appear to commit us at this critical moment to an opposite opinion," he wrote to Gladstone (June 19, 1890), asking for a meeting of the ex-Cabinet to consider the action of the Government on the African and Heligoland question. "I fear we are fundamentally at issue with Rosebery on these questions, and, if it is so, I think the sooner we make up our minds the better." Gladstone summoned the meeting, but said he thought Harcourt was unnecessarily alarmed. "I hope," he said, "we shall . . . dismiss from our minds all preconceptions and assumptions that we are at variance until we have evidence in that direction, which I think will not be forthcoming. . . ."

Gladstone was always a little suspicious of the impetuosity of Harcourt, but he was still more sensible of his unrivalled parliamentary powers, and relied increasingly on his support both in the House and in matters like the Committee on Procedure, in which he sat and wrote his letters while his combative colleague fought the battle. His growing deafness was disarming him in active warfare. "As to health and strength, and I think voice, I can make a good report of myself," he wrote to Harcourt from Amalfi (February 12, 1889). "But the wall of deafness between me and the outer world, which has been for some time in course of being built up, gets higher and higher, and
certainly the builder has been busy since we left England." Harcourt was critical of his leader as of most people, and occasionally alluded to him in his letters by such jocular names as "our occidental Christian Chinee." But these levities did not affect his general feeling of affection for him and his delight in serving him and singing his praises. When in his reading he came across some new historical fact bearing on a constitutional point, he would promptly write off to Gladstone announcing his discovery, and in one of his letters to him Gladstone said that he was one of the few men left who seemed to remember that we had a constitution. On Gladstone's eightieth birthday, Harcourt, in a speech at Derby, delivered a moving panegyric on his chief in which he used with great appositeness some passages from Tennyson's "Ulysses." Referring to the speech, Gladstone, writing from Hawarden (December 31, 1889), said:

_Gladstone to Harcourt._

... I could not, in leisure and with reflection, express in the manner I could wish my thanks for your more than kind, and far more than just, words concerning me.

It is not the first, though it is the most conspicuous time, when you have made me ashamed and humbled (no bad thing I admit) by the exercise of your great faculties for a purpose in which, because it is a kindly one, they seem to find their most congenial, and really I think unrivalled, exercise.

Take my thanks such as they are, hasty, bungling and confused, and only believe the feeling they express will not readily pass away. ...

But, among his colleagues, it was Mr. Morley with whom Harcourt continued to be in the fullest sympathy and agreement. When Parliament was not sitting the two statesmen maintained constant communication on policy and electoral prospects, on the results of contests and the enemy's manœuvres, on meetings in England and the doings of Mr. Balfour in Ireland. In their different manners they were admirably matched, and kept the ball travelling with mutual enjoyment. "I have got your two letters with all the satisfaction in life," observes Mr. Morley
on one occasion (August 8, 1891). "You always stir me up, and make me feel in a good humour—except the not frequent occasions when you make me feel in a bad one."

When in the autumn of 1890 Mr. Morley, who had been in Ireland, became involved, as a witness of the provocative action of the police in Tipperary, in a controversy with Mr. Balfour, Harcourt's warm backing evoked from him the remark (October 5, 1890), "That is what I call being bon camarade, and I care as much for that as for anything in public life. J. C. [Chamberlain] had the gift—but it's uncommon, eh?" The correspondence between the two was always enlivened by an atmosphere of fun. Thus Harcourt, writing to Mr. Morley from Malwood (October 28, 1890), observes:

... It is premature for you to resign already. I have no doubt we shall all do so the morning after the next Government is formed.

... The only thing that strikes me is that it is a bit hard on the poor innocents throughout the country who are "beating their flanks" to return a Liberal Government to power to act together for common objects.

Poor folk, how little they know the coachmen for whom they are harnessing the team.

To which Mr. Morley retorts (October 30):

... As to your parable of the coach. I have no ambition to be a coachman. I am only the owner of a small but high-nurtured moke, on which I want to be allowed to trot briskly and pleasantly along by the side of the Liberal four-in-hand, cheering the mighty Jehus on the box. Why do you quarrel with me for that? The worthies whom you think so badly used are not harnessing the team for me—and that's what I want you to let me tell them. Besides, I think that I work as hard in the business as they do, and if I'm to have no voice in the route, they may go to the devil, and so I mean to tell them pretty frankly. Addio.

And Harcourt rounds off the parable with the customary invitation to Malwood:

... The grazing in the Forest is supposed to be particularly favourable to mokes, and after a hard winter they are not found to be very high-nurtured.

Pray don't allow the great Liberal Party to fall into the evil ways of the great philanthropic-religious Emin Relief Expedition with
their unedifying controversies. Let us wallop our own niggers with
discretion and in secret, and if we have weaknesses don’t let us peach.
I must say I think the G.O.M. taking him altogether has come
very well out of his big job. After all there are none of us who could
talk so much and do so little harm to ourselves and anyone else. . . .

II

As the Parliament drew to an end and a new appeal to
the country approached, the breach between the Liberals
and the Liberal Unionists widened. Gladstone still seemed
to think that the break with Hartington at all events was
not final. He lamented the drift of the great Whig families
from the popular cause, and saw in it the premonition of
sinister changes. The death of Granville, one of the last
of the stalwarts, affected him deeply, and writing to Harcourt
on the subject (April 2, 1891), he said: “The severance of
the higher Liberals from Liberalism may in its remoter
consequences touch the foundations of the monarchy, and
is to me a subject of unceasing sadness, quickened by the
event of this week into an acute form.” Harcourt did not
share Gladstone’s view about Hartington. Writing to
Mr. Morley, who was at Biarritz with Gladstone, he said:

_Harcourt to Mr. Morley._

_MALWOOD, December 30, 1891._—I am glad to have such a bright
account of you and your “young pal.” . . . I am amused at Mr.
Gladstone’s illusions about Hartington. Nothing I think is more
obvious than that Hartington is destined to be at the head of affairs
as soon as we go out, which will be about six weeks after we go in.
I myself have a great public respect as well as personal regard for
the man. He has the immense advantage—so rare in this “fin de
siècle” of having no “d——d nonsense” about him. He is almost
worthy to have lived in the eighteenth century. He is also free
from the petty malignity which infests other friends of ours, and
altogether, I dare say, would govern England quite as well as she
deserves to be governed. I was much pleased at receiving a kind
letter from him inviting me to stay at Chatsworth over the Sunday
for the funeral [of the Duke of Devonshire], which shows that public
differences do not obscure old friendships. . . .

So far as Chamberlain was concerned, the finality of the
rupture was clear. “I feel sure now that he [Chamberlain]
will join Balfour in the fullness of time,” wrote Mr. Morley
to Harcourt (October 25, 1891). "They have strong and real admiration for one another, and he won't mind taking the second place, if that is the price of being able to pay out his old friends." In public the antagonism between Harcourt and Chamberlain had assumed a sharper character as the controversy proceeded. There had been a somewhat embittered correspondence in the public Press in July of 1891, following upon a speech by Harcourt at Holloway in which he had recalled Chamberlain's declaration for Home Rule (also at Holloway) in June 1885. Chamberlain retorted that the speech from which Harcourt quoted was in favour of his national council scheme, "which at the time was accepted by Mr. Gladstone, Sir William Harcourt and Mr. Parnell as a satisfactory solution of the Irish question, but which has since been thrown over by those gentlemen in favour of a totally different scheme brought in by Mr. Gladstone." Harcourt denied that any scheme of Chamberlain's had been "thrown over" by Gladstone, himself or Parnell, "because I know of none that was ever in a position to undergo that process," and laid stress on the fact that Chamberlain now described his scheme both as one for "a national council" and (in the same letter) as one of "national councils."

. . . The distinction between the two things is as vital as anything can be, as was well pointed out by Lord Salisbury in his celebrated speech at Newport, when he insisted that the objections to several smaller autonomous local bodies were much greater than those which applied to a single central government. It shows, I think, through how many phases Mr. Chamberlain's mind has passed on this question that even now his recollection is so confused as regards the real character of the plan he intended to advocate at Holloway. . . .

Chamberlain retorted by comparing Harcourt to Alice in *Through the Looking Glass*. "'She is in that state of mind that she wants to deny something; only she does not know what to deny,' said the White Queen. 'A nasty vicious temper,' said the Red Queen." Later in the year Harcourt was so outraged by the bitterness of Chamberlain's attacks on the Government of 1880–5, of which Chamberlain was
himself a member, and by his general "vilification of Gladstone," that he prepared a detailed memorandum in view of Mr. Morley's visit to Lancashire. "You are the best fellow in the world," said Mr. Morley in acknowledgment. "That piece about the Shipping Bill is worth silver and gold. How J. C. will love us. 'Tis a pity, but justice must be done, and if he strikes at Mr. G., he strikes at other folk." Mr. Morley executed justice accordingly, and Harcourt wrote to him, "Bravo! you have 'hit him hard; he has no friends.' It could not have been done better. . . . I have a calf here [Malwood] ready to be killed. When are you coming?" And when a few days later Mr. Morley repeated the chastisement, Harcourt said, "I really must choke you off J. C.'s throat. It is a case of cruelty to dumb animals. Come here and inspect the pigs."

But these public jousts did not affect the personal good feeling that continued between Harcourt and Chamberlain, and when a few weeks later there were alarming reports in the Press as to the state of Harcourt's eyesight Chamberlain sent anxious inquiries on the subject. He had given up all hopes of reunion, but he loved an opponent who was a hard hitter and had no petty vices, and on personal grounds he treasured his friendship. Harcourt replied:

Harcourt to Chamberlain.

Malwood, November 14, 1891.—Very many thanks for your most kind letter of inquiry. I am happy to be able to reply that I was never better in my life or more fit for my favourite occupation of doing nothing. I really see as well as I ever did in my life. The story of failure of eyesight is all a lie, the resource of London correspondents in want of "copy" in November. The truth is that some two years ago I had some trouble with one eye for which I consulted the great oculist at Wiesbaden. Being at Homburg this year I saw him again, when he gave me a most satisfactory account and found me much better than when he first saw me in 1890, so that I have been relieved of all anxiety and never trouble myself about the matter except when these lying devils excite the hopes of my foes and the sympathy of my friends. It is really no use contradicting them; they would only invent for me some worse disease.

They have, however, done me one good turn in eliciting from you expressions of regret which I assure you I highly and cordially reciprocate.
I hope we shall always continue to fight on the same good terms which we have hitherto found practicable. Heaven knows how little I wish to win! I am a good deal too fond of a quiet life relieved by an occasional "turn-up."

Loulou is hard at work as usual shooting and organizing and bags, sometimes a bird, sometimes a constituency. He grows every year in grace with God and man, and is the joy of my life. Little Benjamin [Robert Harcourt] I grieve to say is doomed to Eton next Easter, and the sunshine of our house will be eclipsed.

Pray remember us all to your charming wife, and tell her she owes us a visit here for nursing your early loves at Malwood. My regards also to the chip of the old block, slight Austen.

And a promise from Chamberlain to visit Malwood in the spring followed. He admitted that the omens pointed to the overthrow of the Government, but thought that the Gladstone coach would soon be upset. The expectation that the General Election, which could not now be long delayed, would result in the return of Gladstone was general, and during the autumn of 1891 there was much private and public activity on the part of the Liberal leaders. Harcourt, as often happened, cultivated in private a rather gloomy attitude about the Party future, in contrast to the jubilant tone he adopted in public, and, replying to one of his letters at this time, Spencer said:

*Spencer to Harcourt.*

North Creake, Fakenham, September 30, 1891.—... You seem in the dumps over politics, but I cannot see why. We have got through the Parnell smash with a success which shows our political constitution is stronger than anyone ever thought it was, and every one who enters politics knows that there never is a time when rocks do not frown in every sea we have to traverse, and difficulties with men and measures are facing the leaders in every direction. It certainly is a wonder why men who can make a choice of professions like to enter such a career, but we are all past having a choice and must make the best of what we have to do. But you are the last person to whom I should address a homily and I the last to give one, for I take it you like politics far better than I do, as much better as you are so much more successful and powerful in their pursuit. . . .

III

In his speeches in the country—at Ashton-under-Lyne, Glasgow, Derby and elsewhere—Harcourt foreshadowed
a programme including the settlement of the liquor question, disestablishment in Wales and a change in the economic condition of the agricultural labourer's life. He was present with Mr. Morley on October 2 at the conference of the National Liberal Federation at Newcastle at which the famous Newcastle Programme was formulated. On this occasion Gladstone was present, and made an important declaration of policy on Ireland and foreign and home questions. In the course of the speech, which included a tribute to Harcourt's success in disposing of the "monstrous and enormous claims for compensation" (for licenses) which the Government had set up, he made a reference to the emergence of the new "Labour Party." The report of the Council of the Federation had referred to this fact as a disaster; but Gladstone took quite a contrary view on the subject, observing that "it is for the benefit of us all that there should be a considerable increase of the number of Labour members in Parliament." In December, before Gladstone's departure with Mr. Morley to Biarritz, there was a conference at Spencer's house, Althorp, between Gladstone, Harcourt, Morley, Rosebery and S. and in sending a story of the "great palaver" to Harcourt said, "Mr. G. is in great form, and like a two year-old. I think I never saw him in better spirits or less anxious and excited." A fortnight later (December 21), Mr. Morley sent the same story of Gladstone's vitality from Biarritz. "I have never known him so gay, buoyant and inexhaustible," he said; "We talk mainly on literature and men of the past, and far-off things and battles long ago—with very rare excursions towards Schnadhorst and the retention of the Irish members." "A far younger man than either you or I," he wrote a week later.

In the middle of January, Mr. Morley returned, leaving Gladstone behind, and writing to Harcourt he said:

_Mr. Morley to Harcourt._

95, Elm Park Gardens, January 17, '92.—Here I am once more in my own den. I arrived last night from Paris, where I wound up my trip with three extremely lively days. I had a good talk with
Renan at his house; ditto with Taine at his; I dined with a score of literary and political notables at a sort of Griffion’s Club; and I had lunch with Ribot at the F.O., to say nothing of hearing Floquet at the Chamber, and seeing the Taming of the Shrew at the Français, and a very funny piece at the Bouffes.

It was a particularly pleasant end to a thoroughly successful outing. Mr. G. has been in his most charming mood, from start to finish; not too vehement, nor preoccupied, nor over-exercised about big things, nor little ones either. We talked hardly any of the politics of the day, but his stream of reminiscence of the politics of other days was worth all modern politics put together. He is a delightful comrade, and splendid old fellow. . . .

He proceeded to relate to Harcourt the substance of his conversation with Ribot, who was concerned about Salisbury’s Guildhall speech, the attitude of England on Egypt, the anti-French tone of the Standard and Times, concluding with a record of a disagreement with Schnadhorst about the campaign. Harcourt replied:

Harcourt to Mr. Morley.

MALWOOD, January 18, 1892.—I was delighted to hear that the truant had returned, and that he has had such a skillish time with his young pals.

I am very impatient to see you, but that can only be by your coming to Malwood. If you wish to know why Mæcenas himself cannot extract me from my Sabine Farm, read Horace, Ep. Lib. i. 7.

"Officiosaque sedulitas et opella forensis
Adducit febres ct testamenta resignat.
. . . . . Vates tuus ct sibi parces
Contractusque leget; te, dulcis amice, reviset
Cum Zephyris, si concedes, et hirundine prima."

I find in my Horace a note on Contractus which just fits me—
"Contractus in parvum cubiculum quod facile vaporetur, jacens in lectulo, involutus vestibus."

So you have returned at once to your old amusement of defying Schnadhorst. Rash Titan! You will resist in vain. I have long ago discovered that and have ceased to struggle against 'Aráxyx.

This war of the Gods cannot be prevented, and I have sent Loulou up with a handful of dust to compose the strife. He will make you fall on each other's necks. . . .

You seem to have had a gay time in Paris and an orgy of libation and politics. There was a lovely irony about your exposition to Ribot of Rosebery’s views on Egypt. You see what that wiseacre Dilke has been saying on the matter? Have you read E. Dicey on
the subject? It is a nasty subject quacunque viâ. I foresee that it may drive us into one or the other of the Continental alliances—which is anathema maranatha.

Before Gladstone's return a storm, which involved Gladstone and Harcourt in some controversy, arose apropos of the leadership of the Party in the 'seventies by Hartington, who had now become Duke of Devonshire. It arose out of an accusation by The Times that Gladstone had treated Hartington with ingratitude in 1880 in superseding him in the leadership, after he (Hartington) had reconstructed the Party pulverized by Gladstone. Wemyss Reid in the Speaker took up the cudgels on behalf of Gladstone, and suggested that Hartington only stood aside after failing to form a Government of his own. This angered Harcourt, who, in a letter to Gladstone, now at Paris on his way home, said:

_Harcourt to Gladstone._

18, Albemarle Street, _February 24, 1892._—... A very foolish and mischievous discussion has arisen here in the newspapers originating in a silly and utterly unfounded attack by Wemyss Reid in the Speaker charging as an offence against Hartington that he tried to form a Government of his own in 1880. It is specially annoying to me as I know of my own knowledge that it is untrue. From the relations in which I stood to him in the House of Commons during his leadership I must have been amongst the very first to have known if he had contemplated such an attempt. The absurdity of the whole thing is that, if the charge were true, it involves no imputation on H. He was naturally and constitutionally sent for by the Sovereign as the recognized leader of the Opposition to form a Government on the resignation of the Ministry. It was not only his right but his bounden duty to do so if he saw any prospect of forming a strong and stable administration. I have always understood that he from the first represented to the Q. that you alone could undertake the task. Under pressure, as I suppose, he agreed to ascertain personally your views, and being in possession of them declined the office, and repeated his advice that you should be sent for. Nothing is more certain than that beyond ascertaining your views he took no other steps towards an attempt to form an administration.

Without the knowledge of those views he had no means of satisfying the Queen that he was justified in refusing to obey her commands. In all this he seems to me to have acted in a perfectly constitutional and straightforward manner as indeed he was sure to do. There is very strong feeling here in which I entirely share that this attack upon him in the Speaker is most unjust and unfounded. J. Morley
and I are doing what we can to induce Wemyss Reid to desist from a proceeding which is most injurious to the interests of our Party. What aggravated the matter is that the mouth of Hartington is necessarily closed.

Gladstone replied in a long memorandum in which he pointed out that the dispute had originated not with the Speaker but with The Times, which had accused him (Gladstone) of gross personal ingratitude to Hartington, a charge which he thought to be "one of the blackest that can be lodged against any public man." On the question of fact as to whether Hartington endeavoured to form a government he held that the Speaker spoke the truth. "For, on his return from Windsor Lord Hartington inquired of me whether I would become a member of a cabinet of which he was to be the head. My reply was in the negative; but it, and the reasons for it, are not relevant to the present purpose." Replying to Harcourt's animadversions on Wemyss Reid's discussion of subjects which the Privy Councillor's oath and the seal of confidence between colleagues prohibited Hartington from dealing with, Gladstone explained at length, with various precedents, what could and could not be discussed, and then proceeded:

_Gladstone to Harcourt._

... Upon these three matters, I am certainly with and not against the Speaker. My judgment, were they matters of opinion, might be a biased one: but they seem to be purely matters of fact. One matter of opinion, however, I cannot wholly omit. When a gross and cutting charge had been made against me (and also I believe echoed in some quarters), and when I saw the Speaker (with admixtures in which I have no concern) take up the cudgels to defend me against this charge, I did not think I could honourably leave Mr. Wemyss Reid in ignorance of an important part of his case, and I made known to him that Lord Hartington had not abandoned his task without an effort (what effort I did not say), although I also said that I could not think he was to blame for having so acted. I had at some sacrifice left the charge in The Times unnoticed, but I could not allow friends, in their efforts to defend me, to be prejudiced by want of information on material facts.

It was an awkward situation, Reid attacking Hartington in the Press, Harcourt attacking Reid to Gladstone,
Gladstone defending Reid to his colleagues. An explosion seemed imminent. Mr. Morley wrote to Harcourt imploring him not to intervene in the matter publicly.

Mr. Morley to Harcourt.

... His [Reid's] position, armed as he is with Mr. G.'s letter, is simple enough, and nothing that you can say will affect it.... If the thing goes further, Mr. G. will have to come forward with his story, and any collision between him and you would mightily scandalize our Party. That is what I am thinking most about. Brett's letter to-day 1 puts the case for Hartington as clearly as possible. Why more?

I am willing, if you like, to join you in writing to Mr. G., urging him to leave things as they are. At the same time, I fear that he may feel bound not to leave Reid in the lurch. If so, he'll write something. So much the worse. Why need you intervene? Hartington is well able to take care of himself, and one word from him will settle the question. Your authority is superfluous. The public will take his word. If he does not care to descend into the arena himself, why should you? Don't let the conflagration spread, if you can help it, and keep out of it.

Harcourt contented himself with writing a further letter to Gladstone replying to "his precedents for public statements of what has passed between individuals on the formation or failure to form administrations," but concluding that "it would be a great blessing if the thing would blow over as everything does in time." The position, however, was critical, for in effect the implication of Harcourt's argument was that Gladstone's communication with Reid was not in accordance with constitutional practice. Gladstone, however, was in no humour to quarrel. He thanked Harcourt for his frankness and kindness. "Indeed between friends frankness is kindness." He gently repeated his axioms as to what were and what were not privileged communications, and concluded: "'Sufficient for the day,' says Sydney Smith, 'is the nonsense thereof.' So I bid you good-bye until to-morrow." Next day (February 29) Gladstone was back in London, and Mr.

1 In The Times of February 24, 1892. This letter was written by Mr. Brett (Lord Esher), after consultation of Hartington's correspondence on the subject and his own Journals written at the time.
Morley, still active to keep the peace, wrote to Harcourt:

... I saw E. W. H. (Hamilton) at Downing Street this afternoon—and urged him to let it all lie as low as can be, and above all things, not to have any syllable of writing from Mr. G. He quite sees this, and will do his best. I think it will be all right.

It was all right. Gladstone and Devonshire preserved silence in public, and in the midst of many other events, the opening of Parliament, the death of the eventual heir to the throne, etc., the storm subsided, and was forgotten.
CHAPTER X

GLADSTONE'S LAST CABINET

The Liberal Revival—Mr. Balfour Leader of the House—Mr. Morley and the Eight Hours Bill—Lady Carlisle causes searchings of heart—Ulster demonstration—General Election—Gladstone’s health—Difficult Cabinet making—Lord Rosebery’s reluctance—Proscription of Labouchere—Harcourt’s eyesight.

WHEN the new Session of Parliament opened on February 9, 1892, Gladstone was still, by his doctor’s commands, abroad, and the duties of leader of the Opposition fell to Harcourt. It was the seventh session of the Parliament, and under the influence of a striking Liberal victory in Rossendale (Hartington’s old constituency) Harcourt was urged to demand a dissolution. He was entirely opposed to this course. “Upon what ground can a Government be called upon to dissolve while it still commands a majority of between 60 and 70?” he said, writing to Mr. Morley:

Harcourt to Mr. Morley.

MALWOOD, January 28.—... I know there is wild talk of obstruction so as to make it impossible for the Government to get along, but of all policies that seems to me to be the most shortsighted. If as we believe we are going to have a majority at the election, could there be anything more stupid than ourselves to set the example of such a course and thereby instigate and justify them in following our example... They are never tired of talking of the methods they will employ by the help of the House of Lords to force us to a dissolution at once as soon as we come back, and then these wiseacres want us to invent an instrument by which they can effect their purpose without the House of Lords....

From St. Raphael, Gladstone wrote to Harcourt against pressing for a dissolution, though he thought “a taunt
for not dissolving may be fair enough." "Any motive of active aggression is nonsense, excepting from H. Fowler who was here on Sunday in his most formidable vein," wrote Mr. Morley to Harcourt (January 29). "You and I may shrink in our pusillanimous way, but he won't, etc., etc., etc. The cock won't crow twice before he'll have been detected in making a deal with the Tory Whip at the back of the Chair."

* On the eve of the critical session which would almost certainly see the Government out of office, the Opposition were not a wholly happy family. The intentions of Lord Rosebery were obscure. He had done splendid work as Chairman of the London County Council, but had now gone to Naples, privately intimating that he was "no longer in public life." "How tiresome all this sort of thing is," wrote Mr. Morley to Harcourt (January 26). "My plan is so much better—to say to myself that I am going to leave public life. I get all the comfort of that prospect, without plaguing other people." Harcourt replied:

_Harcourt to Mr. Morley._

MALWOOD, January 28.—I am sorry for what you tell me about Rosebery, though not surprised. After all it is pretty Fanny's way and we have survived a good deal of it for many years. I am very glad to know that you never inform anyone except yourself of your fixed intention to retire from public life. I hope you may be trusted to keep that a secret.

I am not really sorry that Rosebery is not to return to the County Council. It is impossible for Cæsar to come back as a private soldier. It is only presidents of the United States who return to their desks.

Besides, I know no one except Spencer who can at one and the same time work a County Council, hunt the Pytchley and settle the details of Home Rule. _Non omnia possumus omnes._ For my part when there are big things to do, I like to have plenty of time to think over them before making the irretrievable plunge. I wish that much greater men would sometimes do the same, and we should be saved from many of the difficulties with which we are now surrounded. I confess the more certain our victory appears to be the less I am able to foresee what we are going to do with it. However _alors comme alors._ It is like the sensation on board ship in a heavy sea; it seems impossible that you should surmount the great waves as they come at you, but somehow or other you do, if only the crew
stick together—it will, however, be a motley crew, and we shall have to depend for its discipline on the instinct of self-preservation.

When a few days later Mr. Morley wrote saying that he could not attend the semi-official dinner of the leaders on the eve of the opening of Parliament, Harcourt wrote:

Harcourt to Mr. Morley.

Malwood, February 4.—I think on the whole you are rather worse than Rosebery. I should like to take you both and shake you in a bag.

The notion of your not coming to the dinner on Monday is preposterous. It is of the nature of a Cabinet dinner, which by the British Constitution overrides all engagements. You must know the sinister rumours to which your absence on such an occasion would give rise. It would certainly supply the well-informed London Correspondents with materials for a week. There would be several hundred different versions of our final quarrel. There is nothing more to say about it than that you must come. As to your having people at home—what people? Was für Leute? I guess without your telling me. It is a sort of Cato St. conspiracy, but I will take care that you are arrested with the dynamite. It is no joking matter. You have got to come, so there is no use saying any more about it.

When Parliament reassembled (February 9) it was strangely shorn of its prominent figures. Parnell no longer sat, impassive but foreboding, his hat a little tilted over his pallid face, in his old seat below the gangway; the amiable W. H. Smith had gone from the Treasury bench and his place was taken by Mr. Balfour, and Hartington had vanished to "another place." In Gladstone's absence, Harcourt replied to the motion on the Address, and after alluding in sympathetic terms to the deaths of the Duke of Clarence and of the late leader of the House, he fixed on the suggestion for the alteration of the relation between the Treasury and the Bank of England as the chief point of attack on the Government programme. He accused Goschen of "fumbling with the currency of the country," and contrasted what he regarded as his casual and personal way of raising these great problems in after-dinner speeches in the country with the weighty procedure
of financiers in former times, illustrating his argument by abundant historical examples. He was, as Gladstone said, "one of the few men alive who seems to be aware that we have a constitution," and was always peculiarly sensitive to any departure from constitutional practice. His allusions to Ireland were largely concerned with the insults to the Irish people in ministerial speeches, and referring to the Prime Minister as the chief offender—it was the time of the "Hottentot" speech—he reminded him that, as Lord Robert Cecil, he had in an eloquent passage given the real cause of Irish backwardness. "I am afraid," Lord Robert had said, after describing the causes usually given, "the one thing that has been peculiar to Ireland has been the Government of England." He commended the whole passage to the conscience of Lord Salisbury. Writing to Gladstone on the debate on the Address, he said: "I was obliged to find topics in Goschen's currency abor-tions and collateral topics. I learn that even the Tories were pleased to hear him saluted as a 'fumbler' in finance. I glided over Egypt as somewhat rotten ice, and tried to fix attention on the incredible indiscretions of Salisbury's Exeter speech." Of the new Leader of the House, as leader, he formed an indifferent opinion. "The only reputation which is really rising," he wrote to Mr. Morley, "is that of the deceased W. H. Smith by comparison with his predecessor and his successor. Randolph fell through temper, Arthur through over-education and philosophy, the worst qualities perhaps of the lot because the least necessary."

His own reputation was at the maximum, but the feeling towards him was extraordinarily mixed, even on his own side. The Parnellites were more bitter against him than against the Tories. Their bitterness was accentuated by his opposition to the motion for amnesty to the dynamitards, and he was attacked with extreme venom. William Redmond suggested that he was ungrateful to the Fenians, for Fenianism had had a good deal to do with convincing him on the Home Rule question, but Harcourt assured him
that, on the contrary, it was Fenianism that prevented him adopting Home Rule sooner than he did.

From Parliament, Harcourt made an excursion to the East End to strike a blow in the County Council election campaign which was then in progress. In a speech at Whitechapel (February 17) he attacked the vices of London government as the Tory Act had left it. On the subjects of the unity of London and the rating of ground landlords he made declarations which are still relevant:

... When in the Liberal Government I was responsible for affairs, I introduced a London Government Bill which made London a whole, which included within it the traditions and the resources of the City of London, and which made the Guildhall the headquarters of the municipality of London. That, in my opinion, is the principle which is just. It is the only principle upon which London reform can be finally founded, and I venture to say with Lord Rosebery that is, perhaps, the most important of all the changes which will have to be made. ... In my opinion, the exemption of the ground landlord from the payment of rates is the greatest injustice. The whole expense of the improvement of London has been placed to the extent of millions of money upon the occupier. As the leases fall in the ground landlord who has contributed nothing derives the whole advantage. In my opinion that is an unjust provision. There is a great cry of confiscation raised. It is always my experience that the men who cry out loudly against confiscation are the men who have derived advantage from plunder themselves. ...

The election ended in a great triumph for the Progressives, who won eighty-three seats to the Moderates' thirty-five. "Saturday's victory," wrote Harcourt to Arnold Morley (March 8), "is no doubt a very great event. Amongst its incidents it is a good thing to have brought out Rosebery and made him fly his flag again. I am sorry not to have seen the countenances of Causton and J. Stuart. They must have shone like Moses in his descent from the Mount, and the oil must have run down the beard of S. Montagu." A less happy omen for the future disclosed itself a little later when a private Miners' Eight Hours Bill produced a sharp cleavage on the Opposition front bench. Writing to Lady Harcourt (March 24) Harcourt said:
... We had a good debate and division last night on the Conspiracy Resolution. To-day we have the eight hours for miners, a very difficult and embarrassing situation. J. Morley is bound to vote against for his Durham miners who are dead against it. I am equally bound to vote for it, as all the Derbyshire miners are strong in its favour. Mr. G. is not to vote at all. Most of the Front Bench will, I think, vote for the Bill. It is not an agreeable situation, but it will have great consequences in the future as the question will not sleep. ...

- There was a big majority against the Bill, though Chamberlain and Churchill with other ministerialists supported it; but the support given to it by the bulk of the Liberals caused grave concern to Mr. Morley, who was deeply committed against the eight hours' policy. Writing to Harcourt, he said:

Mr. Morley to Harcourt.

95, Elm Park Gardens, March 26, 1892.—... Pray, believe how much I feel your friendliness in writing, and how thoroughly I am alive to your constant goodwill and indulgence to me. I have never known a stancher comrade, and only one as staunch.

I cannot conceal from myself how much Wednesday’s vote changes my relations to the front bench. You will be bound after that vote to bring in an Eight Hours Bill. I will have no part nor lot in any government that brings in eight hours Bills. Other labour questions will undoubtedly follow, when the same divergence will reappear. That has taken place which I apprehended. The Labour Party—that is, the most headstrong and unscrupulous and shallow of those who speak for Labour—has captured the Liberal Party. Even worse—the Liberal Party, on our bench at any rate, has surrendered sans phrase, without a word of explanation or vindication.

I do not complain and I do not blame. I only note the facts as they are. And for the present I don’t know that I need do more. Sufficient for the day is the evil. ...

Harcourt to Mr. Morley.

Malwood, March 27.—... This does not seem to me the moment for argument. I think you know the reasons sufficiently by which my course has been governed. But I may be allowed to say this much. We have breasted like the companions of the old Ulysses many stormy seas together. O passi graviora. ... I am an older and more weather-beaten salt than you are, and believe me nothing ever really turns out as badly as it promises.

I have never concealed from you my opinion of the dark impossi-
bilities of the future. Even with you I don't see how we are to carry on, without you it is out of the question. Rather than find myself severed from you I would ten times over desire to lose the election. A great responsibility lies upon you. Permit me to say to you, you have no right to quit the ship, and leave the crew to their fate. It may be we shall hang separately, but at least let us hang together. You must admit that the decisive moment has not yet arrived. Let me entreat you not under your present state of feeling to say anything in public which is irremediable. Give at least spatium requiemque dolori.

Good-bye my "trusty frien" till to-morrow.

The eight hours' question was not the only matter that troubled the waters for the Opposition and caused a certain disagreement between Harcourt and Mr. Morley. Another subject that involved collision was emerging from a passive and academic phase into the sphere of practical politics. The Women's Liberal Federation, of which Mrs. Gladstone had been president, was rent into two factions, one of which, led by Lady Carlisle, demanded that woman's suffrage should be a plank in the Federation platform, the other being opposed. On the women's question Harcourt remained, as he had always been, a frank Philistine, rejoicing in the most antiquated views in regard to the place of women in society. He would have welcomed the disappearance of the Women's Liberal Federation altogether, and was anxious that Mrs. Gladstone should resign. Writing to Gladstone, he said:

Harcourt to Gladstone.

MALWOOD, April 17, 1892.—I am (as I doubt not you and Mrs. Gladstone are also) pestered by the feuds of the Ladies' Federation to which justice could only be done by the author of the Θεσμοθείας. The excellent but somewhat ductile Lady Aberdeen has tried her hand at compromises which seem to have all failed.

Lady Carlisle is on the "warpath" and in the presence of that redoubtable Amazon counsels of peace are in vain. It seems that last week, having dragged A. Morley out of bed, she then appeared at John Morley's breakfast table with the copy of a letter she had addressed to Mrs. Gladstone which J. Morley has sent to me. It is a production full of cajolery mixed with menaces of what will occur if she is not allowed to have her own way.

John Morley writes to me full of perplexity, but to me the situation
is very clear. It resolves itself into one simple point. Is Lady Carlisle to capture "the machine" and to "boss" the Women's Federation? And if she does is it possible for Mrs. Gladstone and the other ladies to remain? . . .

There seems to be only one practical question, viz., whether the present majority should remain, fight and be beaten, or whether they should quietly retire. Having heard all that was to be said I had no doubt that the latter was the most dignified and least injurious course, both for the sex and the Party. . . .

Lady Aberdeen writes to me of hoping to exercise a "moderate influence," but you might as well try to moderate Niagara as to moderate Lady Carlisle. Her great object is, of course, to keep the name of Mrs. Gladstone at the head of an association which she is in fact to control and to work for her own purposes. . . .

It seems to me that the true ground on which you and Mrs. G. should withdraw your patronage is the fact of the split without condescending on any particulars or pronouncing on the merits of either Party, but regarding your Presidency as possible only in the case of a united association. . . .

"I am thinking," replied Harcourt, in reply to a letter from Gladstone, "of composing a comedy to be entitled "As you don't like it," with our Rosalind [Lady Carlisle] as the heroine and myself as the melancholy Jacques of the Forest." "As you know," wrote Harcourt to Mr. Morley, "I absolutely forbade my belongings to have anything to do with the concern (the W.L.F.) from the first as I always foresaw it must end in an ugly row. . . . I am suffering under deluges of female correspondence which satisfy me more than ever of the total incapacity of the sex for public affairs." Mr. Morley did not share Harcourt's attitude. Replying to him (April 19), he said:

Mr. Morley to Harcourt.

It is preposterous to expect that, if you invite women to form federations for party and political purposes, they will not eventually demand the franchise, which is the regular instrument for such purposes. If you want to keep women out of votes, you must keep them out of federations.

However, I don't argue the question. I think your line dangerous in view of the election, and I have written half a dozen sentences to Mrs. Gladstone to say that my view is against resignation—if she cares to know my view, which after all is of no importance to anybody but the owner.
"Why in heaven's name are you so solicitous about the election?" replied Harcourt (April 20) from Malwood, and continued:

Harcourt to Mr. Morley.

... I thought we were all agreed that we were profoundly indifferent to that event. I would rather lose twenty general elections than submit myself body and soul to Countess Rosalinda. As Mr. Augustus Model said, "I will never be taken alive."

I agree with you altogether about Federations—especially female federations, and hold altogether with Aristophanes on those subjects. I have still, in spite of my recent progress in revolutionary principles under your tuition, preserved a sneaking regard for the old British constitution, and I mean to stick to it in spite of the patriots—male and female. What, however, is much more important than all federations is that I observe from my oriel window the clouds coming from the S.W. and I feel like Elijah, or perhaps Ahab, at the prospect of rain.

"I like your lazy good-tempered letter and your lazy good-tempered speech," replied Mr. Morley (April 21). "Unlike you, I care not whether your advice is taken or mine. There are two main divisions of fools, as I have always heard—those who give advice and those who don't take it."

"Yes, I am lazy and good-tempered, my dear J. M.," Harcourt replied (April 24), "and if you ever prevent me from being the first I shall certainly cease to be the last. I am coming up to London on Tuesday only to vote against the women. After that I think I shall go to South America or some well-settled country and leave the affairs of the United Kingdom with confidence in your hands and Mr. Blaine's."

The visit to London to "vote against the women" was in connection with Rollitt's Women's Franchise Bill, which was defeated on second reading by the narrow majority of 175 votes to 152 in a division in which the parties were indiscriminately mingled.

II

By this time the shadow of the General Election had fallen over Parliament, and the drums of battle were sounding in the country. In Ulster a great Unionist Convention
was held in June to rally the Orange forces against the Home Rule scheme, which was certain to follow the General Election, of the result of which there was now little doubt. "Men of the North, once more I say we will not have Home Rule," was the text of the Duke of Abercorn, who presided over the gathering of 12,000 delegates at Belfast. Colonel Saunderson, one of the Ulster leaders, had invited Harcourt, in a letter to *The Times*, to be present. "I have never witnessed a good Belfast 'faction fight' which I believe is about this time in season," replied Harcourt gaily, "and I am sure that under your proffered safe-conduct I should find it at once an entertaining and instructive spectacle for those who like myself belong to the party of 'Law and Order.'"

_Harcourt to Colonel Saunderson._

. . . When your hypothetical insurrection is a little more advanced (he continued) and war is actually declared, I may perhaps take advantage of your offer and select a place as spectator on your staff.

I do not know if your campaign contemplates a march upon London against the Crown and the Parliament; if so I might meet you half-way at Derby, which was the place where the Liberals of the last century encountered the "loyal" and "patriotic" Highlanders who disapproved of the "Act of Settlement" and resolved to resist it.

They also were a "powerful section" of the Scotch people, who objected to a transfer of their allegiance.

I presume that might be the point where the rebel army would effect its junction with the ducal contingent from Chatsworth under the command of the Lord-Lt. of the County. . . .

In the meanwhile I fear I must trust to the ordinary channels for information as to the mobilization of the Orange array. But I can assure you that I shall watch your strategy with interest and try to alarm myself as much as I can manage.

But though he did not go to Ulster, Harcourt was active in England, delivering speeches in London, Bristol and Braintree. Speaking to the Eighty Club (March 25) on the adoption of Liberal policies by a Conservative Government, he said:

. . . My observation leads me to believe that the political animal is very much like the natural animal—(laughter, and hear, hear)—
and each of them has its appropriate diet. There are graminivorous and there are carnivorous animals, but if you feed a lion on bread and butter—(laughter)—or a horse upon beefsteak, well, you get a sick lion and you get a horse that is very much out of condition. (Laughter, and hear, hear.)

In his speech at Braintree (May 26) he dealt with Salisbury as the "Malaprop of Politics," and suggested the collection of his "blazing indiscretions" to illustrate "things one would rather have not said."

... First of all a good many years ago there was the famous Conservative surrender, when Mr. Disraeli was denounced as an unprincipled adventurer for giving household suffrage to the Boroughs. Then there were the Irish people compared to Hottentots. Then there were the Queen's subjects of India who were disparaged as "black men," because a native of Hindustan presented himself as a candidate to an English constituency. Then there were the "hereditary and irreconcilable foe" of England, the Irish people, "a hostile Ireland on our flank." Then for the rural districts there was the offer of circuses as a substitute for village councils. ... They (the Tories) have taken advantage of every possible excuse to postpone giving life to these rural communities—giving what I have ventured to call "The Village for the Villagers"; to breathe if it were possible some reality into the farce which is called the Parish Vestry; to give to these men a real interest in their own affairs, something to relieve the dull deadness and monotony of their daily toil; something that is worthy of English citizens; not the circuses with which the Prime Minister of England mocked them. ...

With the prorogation of Parliament on June 28, the appeal to the country was made. "I am sorry not to see you this side of Niagara," wrote Harcourt to Mr. Morley. "I go into the fight with good hopes much raised by my Manchester visit. The meetings marvellous. ... What is far more important is that we have a report from Bobby's tutor saying that in his first six weeks he is facile princeps in his class, and as he has come home with an honourable scar on his chin obtained in cricket his future may be regarded as assured." At Derby, he found things "as right as a trivet," but he told Mr. Morley 'there were cries from the Midlands—"they evidently fear proximum Josephum." His own majority, 2,000, though "not to be
sneezed at," was less than he expected 1; and as the polls came in he feared, "the worst of all results, a small majority."

"I lead a pleasant life here," he wrote from Derby to Mr. Morley in the midst of his contest, "chiefly in interviews with panic-stricken M.P.'s who insist upon my attending their death-beds like a fashionable doctor." Having secured his own seat at Derby, Harcourt went on a whirlwind campaign in the doubtful constituencies, speaking at Nottingham, Hull, Chesterfield, Eastbourne, and Lymington.

"There's an example for you," he wrote to Mr. Morley. "After Tuesday in next week I hope to be at peace at Malwood. I shall have much need of it. Apart from the physical fatigue I am so deadly bored at saying the same thing over and over again."

When the election results were complete, the state of parties in the new House was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Liberal and Labour</th>
<th>274</th>
<th>Conservatives</th>
<th>269</th>
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<tr>
<td>Nationalists</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>Liberal Unionists</td>
<td>46</td>
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<tr>
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<td>355</td>
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<td>315</td>
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Commenting on the result, in a letter to Mr. Morley, Harcourt said:

_Harcourt to Mr. Morley._

45, Brook Street, W., July 10.—... It is a great thing anyhow—si non datur ultra—to have extinguished the 1886 majority of 116. That is what has come of all the virtue and the intelligence, the rank and the wealth, and the beer, the Diceys, Argylls, Saundersons, T. W. Russells, Chamberlains, Hartington and Co. It is a great thing to have accomplished if we do no more.

As to the future, that must take care of itself. It is a situation which would have suited the game of Palmerston or of Dizzy, whether it can be handled by sublimer spirits remains to be seen... I have been delighted by a sentence I have just read in R. L. Stevenson's last book. "I can't see what anyone wants to live for anyway. If I could get into some one else's apple tree and be about

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1 The figures were:

| Harcourt | 7,507 |
| Roe      | 7,389 |
| Hextall  | 5,546 |
| Haslam   | 5,363 |

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twelve years old and just stick the way I was eating stolen apples, I don’t say. But there’s no sense in this grown-up business sailorizing, politics, the piety mill and all the rest of it. Good clean drowning is good enough for me.”

Come and be twelve years old and get into my apple tree and just stick that way eating stolen apples. It is better than sailorizing (with Rosebery), politics, or the piety mill.

III

Back at Malwood, Harcourt sent out warning epistles to some of his comrades, the nature of which will be gathered from the following extract from his letter to Mr. Morley (July 13):

Harcourt to Mr. Morley.

. . . Above all don’t allow yourself to be committed to any cause at present. I have preached the same doctrine to Spencer who tells me he is summoned to Hawarden. I know the old plan will be tried of “nibbling” each man separately and the intense dislike there is to having anything like joint consultation or common action. It was this which did the mischief in 1886 when Spencer, Granville and yourself were “bagged” separately and not a word said to Hartington, Chamberlain, Dilke, myself and others. If I were asked to Hawarden (which I shall not be) I should say I did not feel at liberty to commit myself without a full consultation of all the principal people in London. . . .

Harcourt himself was not free from suspicion of “nibbling” new members, and there was much discussion in the Press on the subject of “conferences” at his house, 45, Brook Street, which were assumed to imply that he was lukewarm in the matter of giving precedence to Home Rule, and was formulating a Radical English programme of his own. Mr. Morley was himself somewhat disquieted by these activities, which, indeed, seem to have left a lasting impression on his mind. “I cruise under the green flag, come what will,” he wrote to Harcourt (July 17). “If we founder at least let us go down with honour.” He was concerned about Gladstone, to whom the result of the election and his own diminished majority in Midlothian had been a sore disappointment. Writing (July 16) to Harcourt, he said:
... But I must tell you, strictly between ourselves, that the physical decline, in consequence of the reaction from the lofty hopes of a three-figure majority and all the rest of it, rather alarms me. More definite, alas, is the danger in which he finds himself in the region of sight—now seriously threatened. A tragedy indeed. Only let us take care that the last scenes of Act V. shall not be unworthy and ignoble. . . .

"As to the future, I am as you know deeply bound to Ireland, my only pledge, and tied in honour to public life, when I am prosecuting it against nature," Gladstone wrote to Harcourt when on his way to Braemar (July 14). "Nevertheless I see these things—had we not put English, Scotch and Welsh questions well forward we should probably have had no majority at all. Ireland herself has by her incidents a good deal damaged herself and us." Harcourt was, in fact, not against proceeding with Ireland forthwith, and urged the repeal of the Coercion law at once as a challenge to the House of Lords, but in view of the exiguous majority he insisted that the only way to hold it together was by a strong Radical programme. "When Parliament meets in February next," he wrote to Gladstone (July 16), "we must be prepared to produce bills on (1) Temperance Reform and Local Option, (2) Village Councils with control of schools, (3) Registration reform and one man one vote, (4) Payment of members, (5) Welsh Disestablishment. This I think is the very minimum of what we should bring forward and is only a fraction of what you pledged us to at Newcastle." To Mr. Morley, who suggested that the disappointing result of the election was because they had gone "too fast and too far," he wrote:

Harcourt to Mr. Morley.

MALWOOD, July 15.—. . . I will not argue with you on the question of "too fast and too far" at present though I do not agree with you. When the Whigs left the Liberal Party they forced the pace and it will go on with accumulated velocity.

In a big storm safety is sometimes to be found only in "cracking on" and we must "run" the ship, she can't "lay to." We must play the parts of "daring pilots in extremity." So I will say to you as William IV did to Codrington at Navarino, "Go it, John." . . .
But a more urgent question than the programme now occupied the minds of the Liberal leaders. The Tory Government had decided to meet the new Parliament, but this departure was only a matter of form, and the constitution of the new Cabinet filled the early days of August with agitated meetings, and infinite comings and goings, which make the Journal at this period as full of movement as a dime novel. Gladstone's difficulties turned chiefly upon Lord Rosebery and Labouchere. In the case of the latter, there was a strong demand from the Radicals for his inclusion in the Government, but the action of Labouchere on the Civil List grants had created great resentment in high quarters, and his proscription became a heated subject of controversy. An extract from the Journal, relating to an interview between Gladstone and Lewis Harcourt, will indicate the nature of the difficulty:

August 2.—... Gladstone went on to speak of Labouchere, saying that there seemed to be a conflict of opinion between Spencer and W. V. H. as to the objections at Windsor. W. V. H. is under the strong impression that the exclusion applies to all Office, but Spencer thinks it only meant the Cabinet. Gladstone wishes this to be cleared up by Spencer or W. V. H. writing to Ponsonby to ask for particulars. Gladstone added that he thought very strongly that the Queen had an absolute right to decide on all questions affecting her household, in which he includes such questions as that of invitations to and receptions at Court. He said, "The Queen has been very good about some similar questions which have arisen, for instance, Lord Melbourne's case, throughout which she stuck to him, but then there was the satisfactory verdict which I in my simplicity of mind thought a just one, but I believe that was not the view taken by many people at the time."

He said of Labouchere, "I do not like to leave any of our hard workers out or seem to treat them badly."

I told all this on my return to W. V. H., who said he would certainly not write to Ponsonby on the matter, as their conversation had been quite explicit, and was to the effect that the Royal exclusion of Labby applied to all Office generally. ... [H.]

A week later the Journal records Gladstone as "much disturbed at the Queen's insistence on the exclusion of Labouchere," and eventually the Government was formed without a place being found for him.
The case of Lord Rosebery was the entirely contrary one of inducing him to join the Government. In the midst of the perturbations following the election he had gone to the West of Scotland and was understood to have decided to go out of public life. "Pray come to town at once," Harcourt wired to him (August 1), following his telegram with two urgent letters, in the course of which he said:

Harcourt to Lord Rosebery.

45, Brook Street, August 1.— . . . You will have seen in the papers the account of Mr. Gladstone's illness.

Though naturally everybody puts the best face upon it, still it is impossible at his age not to regard every serious ailment with great anxiety. I need not picture to you what are the heavy responsibilities and cares which fall upon us all in such a situation. Nothing except the most cordial desire to help one another can enable us to meet the difficulties with which we are face to face and acquit ourselves with decency and honour in the presence of what may be in store in the future. I greatly mistake your character if you should be unwilling to give us your aid and counsel and support in this critical conjuncture. . . . There may be decisions of the greatest importance to be taken at very short notice. I feel sure you will not be wanting in the offices of friendship to your friends who so much desire and need them.

The Journal records (August 4) that "John Morley is to go to Dalmeny to-night to see Rosebery and put pressure upon him"; and two days later: "W. V. H. and I went to see John Morley on his return from Scotland. He said that he had brought his bird with him, and that he, Rosebery, would now in all probability join."

The course of the negotiations may be briefly indicated by extracts from the Journal:

August 10.— . . . J. Morley writes that Rosebery arrived in London last night and will see Gladstone to-morrow. . . .

August 11.— . . . Algy West told me at dinner at Armitstead's to-night that it was all up with Rosebery, and that he definitely declines, but gives no ground except disinclination for Office and politics.

The interview between Gladstone and Rosebery was most touching and painful, and they were both nearly in tears. . . .

August 13.— . . . John Morley left luncheon at Spencer's to go to see Rosebery in Berkeley Square by appointment, but at 4 p.m. sent
us a letter to say that he "found our curious friend flown"—he does not know where.

August 14.—... Gladstone will submit Rosebery's name to the Queen to-morrow, but tell her that he does so without authority, and ask her to write a personal appeal to Rosebery on her own behalf.

August 15.—... Herschell returned again at 3 o'clock with the welcome news that a telegram had arrived at Carlton Gardens at 1.30 from Rosebery at Mentmore saying "So be it." What a relief that it is not now necessary for Gladstone to humble himself by asking the Queen to put personal pressure on Rosebery, or for the Cabinet to be in the position of having R. amongst them as the nominee of the Court after declining to join at their and Gladstone's request.

August 16.—... Rosebery sent a note to Brook Street to W. V. H. this morning with a large framed photo of the Hermes at Athens—said he had always intended it for W. V. H. when he brought it back from Athens last year and sends it now as an atonement for all the worry and anxiety he has caused to his colleagues for the last few days, which, however, he says are nothing to what his own sufferings have been.

W. V. H. went to see Rosebery at 2.30 on his way to the renewed meeting at Carlton Gardens. He did not return till 7.30, said he found Rosebery very cheerful, and had a long talk as if nothing had happened. He told Rosebery that if he had not joined us the Government would have been ridiculous—now that he had it was only impossible. ...

In the task of constructing the Cabinet there were many other troubles, of which there are abundant glimpses in the Journal. There was a disagreement between Harcourt and Gladstone as to the proportion of high offices to be allocated to the House of Lords. On the evening of August 14 Harcourt wrote:

Harcourt to Gladstone.

45, Brook Street, August 14, 8 p.m.—I think it necessary to place on record the opinion which I expressed this afternoon that the proposed distribution of the principal offices in the Cabinet as between the House of Lords and the House of Commons is one which will not meet with the approval or support of the Liberal Party. More than half of what are considered the places of greatest emolument and dignity are assigned to the Peers. The significance of this constitution of the Cabinet is emphasized by the fact that one of the greatest spending departments is placed in the Lords. Tory
Governments in the last forty years have set a much better example in this matter than recent Liberal administrations. I entertain a profound conviction that this arrangement will give rise to great discontent in the House of Commons, and will probably prove fatal to the Government. Campbell-Bannerman, who came in at the end of the discussion, expressed strongly the same view which John Morley and I had placed before you, and I know it is shared by Arnold Morley and by Edward Marjoribanks, who in this matter, I doubt not, reflect the general opinion of the Liberal Members of the House of Commons. Until Rosebery's decision is announced I suppose this matter cannot be regarded as finally concluded. I greatly wish that, as on former occasions, you had had the opinion of Herschell on this matter and not alone that of the peers who have never sat in the House of Commons and who are not aware of the dangers of carrying the claims of the Lords to such extremities.

... If this had been a matter which involved only the consideration of persons or places I would not have ventured to offer an opinion on a subject on which I have no right or desire to intervene. But as it carries with it what I cannot but regard as the recognition of undue claims of predominance for the House of Lords, which must have for the future serious bearing on the great struggles that lie before us, I feel that I cannot be silent or allow my convictions of coming disaster to remain in abeyance.

No former precedents can be of any avail in the presence of the increased and increasing strength of democratic sentiment in the Liberal Party and their indisposition to acquiesce in the paramount claims of the Peers. I feel that besides all the tremendous difficulties which you have to face and the powerful opposition you will have to encounter you will add the greatest of all discouragements, that of a dissatisfied party.

Gladstone's reply is not preserved, but its nature is indicated in the Journal:

"Gladstone takes the view that we are so weak in the House of Lords that it is necessary to strengthen ourselves there by the importance of the offices of those men who are with us. W. V. H. says, 'You might as well try to strengthen the ocean by pouring into it a petit verre of cognac,' and that above all things we want to be strengthened on the Front Bench in the House of Commons." On the proposal that Sir George Trevelyan should be Minister of Agriculture, "W. V. H. said, 'Why, he doesn't know the difference between a horse and a cow,' to which Gladstone replied, 'But
perhaps he might learn that.'"

About one man there was remarkable unanimity. "It was agreed at Spencer's that the only man apparently fitted for every office was Campbell-Bannerman." [H.]

In the midst of all this turmoil, the figure of Gladstone moves with singular forbearance and wisdom. "I am the man who has to do all the butchering," he says, rather pathetically, referring to the exclusions and disappointments he has to cause. On the constitution of the Cabinet and the question of programme he is urbane and tolerant. He is sensible of the difficulties, but "is not difficulty the nurse of manhood?" he writes to Harcourt. In discussing programmes, he says (July 18) he does so because "there have often been Governments, even long-lived Governments, with small majorities." "All this," he says, "seems to be written on the assumption that I am doomed to be the head. But before going into what would follow I shall hope to talk to you freely and familiarly on the smallness of the resources I have to place at the command of a new Government, while undoubtedly the 'country' will ascribe to me a considerable share."

IV

Meanwhile Parliament had met. There had been an intention on the part of the Government not to present a Queen's Speech; but the intervention of Harcourt, supported by Gladstone, resulted in the constitutional practice being followed. Mr. Asquith was selected to move an amendment to the Address, declaring that the Government did not possess the confidence of the House and the country, and the amendment being carried by 350 to 310, the Salisbury administration went out of office, the court circular announcing the fact in what were regarded at the time as unprecedented terms: "Lord Salisbury tendered his resignation, which Her Majesty accepted with great regret." On August 18 the new Cabinet went to Osborne to kiss hands. In the course of a minute record of the evening, the Journal says:
MINISTERS AT OSBORNE

... Crossing to Cowes from Portsmouth our ministers passed the steamer returning with the ex-ministers, our men took off their hats to them and Cadogan waved his in reply.

H. Ponsonby was very civil and agreeable, and they were hustled into the dining-room to feed at once. After luncheon the old privy councillors were marshalled into the drawing-room, where they stood in a long row opposite the Queen, who was sitting with Connaught and Lorne on each side of her at a round table on which were the seals. When they were all there and ready to begin it was discovered that Kimberley (Lord President), and Charles Peel, Clerk of the Council, were absent, and they could not be found for fully five minutes, the whole of which time the line of new ministers stood facing the Queen in absolute silence. W. V. H. said he never saw people so uncomfortable.

The new privy councillors were then brought in and knelt round the table and had the oath administered—the others then singly knelt and kissed hands and received the seals without a word being spoken to any of them. After the Council was over Rosebery, Spencer and W. V. H. were told that they were to have audiences. W. V. H. asked Ponsonby what the Queen was going to say. He replied, "She wants to know who will communicate with her and tell her what is going on, as, of course, Gladstone cannot do so and wants to know if you will do it." W. V. H. said this was very awkward and he should not know what to say, as he could not possibly undertake this except at the wish of Gladstone and by his request. When he went in to have his audience the Queen said, "How do you do, Sir William, I hope you are well?" W. V. H. replied he was, and added, "I hope, Madam, you will feel that our desire is to make matters as easy and as little troublesome to you as we can possibly do." She bowed, but said nothing and then asked, "How is Lady Harcourt? Terrible weather is it not? and so oppressive." And that was all! [II.]

A few days later Harcourt was at Osborne again, when the atmosphere was warmer. "The visit to Osborne was pleasant," he writes to Lewis Harcourt (August 31). "H. M. is very gracious to me and seemed pleased with the young Home Secretary [Mr. Asquith]. She told me I had grown very like the Archbishop."

In the midst of this hurry of events, Harcourt was called on to go to Derby, where his re-election, on his acceptance of the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer, was challenged by a factious opposition. The result of the election was the return of Harcourt by a majority of 4,900.

This event over, and the new Government being at last
complete, Harcourt left for Wiesbaden to consult the oculist whom he had visited in previous years. The question of his eyesight had been the subject of repeated discussions in the Press, and of recurrent concern to his colleagues. Writing to him a few weeks earlier, Gladstone said:

_Gladstone to Harcourt._

_Hawarden, July 22._—Forgive my taking a great liberty. Since my incident at Chester I have often thought sympathetically of you because I had heard that you were in some way menaced as to vision. Now though mine is a slight affair to all appearance and may be altogether temporary, I have at once of course under advice taken rigorous care: have renounced reading newspapers and almost all letters, and have reduced my dearly beloved reading of books virtually to zero. But I am under the impression that you work your sight relentlessly: and I also recollect or seem to recollect your doctrines about medical advisers, and I cannot help feeling some misgiving lest you should be running unnecessary or aggravating necessary risks, and doing yourself less than justice.

I may in all this be as visionary as I am intrusivc, but I know you will forgive it. The singular depth and force, with which you always feel for others, cannot but a little incline others a little to feel about you, and may have the incidental disadvantage of their manifesting a right sentiment in a wrong way.

I find writing much less injurious than reading, and I do it a good deal in spectacles somewhat darkened. I hope it will cause some reform in my handwriting and thereby benefit my friends.

From Wiesbaden, on September 7, Harcourt gave Gladstone a cheerful account of his interview with the oculist (Pagenstecker), who found him better in all respects than when he first saw him, "pronounces the right eye perfect, and is confident it is not likely to suffer from the disease which affected the left eye."
CHAPTER XI
STRUGGLE OVER UGANDA

Leadership of the Party—The Chartered Company and Uganda—Harcourt against the annexationists—Lord Rosebery's fear of a second Khartum—Gladstone between two fires—A compromise with Lord Rosebery—A dragon at the Treasury—Buckingham Palace drains—Skirmishes with the departments.

The new Government, the last over which Gladstone was to preside, entered office under cheerless omens. There was a majority, but it depended entirely on the Irish vote. In England and Scotland the verdict of the polls had been indecisive, and it was notorious that the measure of the Liberal success had been due less to the advocacy of Home Rule for Ireland than to the emphasis that had been laid on the proposals for domestic reform put forward in the Newcastle programme. In such circumstances nothing but a stormy and unprosperous voyage could be anticipated. The cause which had alone kept Gladstone in public life had passed under eclipse, and all that could be looked for was a vain reaffirmation of the policy to which he had consecrated the later years of his life, prior to his final retreat to the peace of Hawarden. The fate of the Government that he had formed with so much difficulty must soon pass into the control of other hands, and the question of the leadership of the Liberal Party, which had been so long a theme of discussion in the Press, would assume an urgent aspect. The new Cabinet introduced one commanding figure to high office in the person of Mr. Asquith, who went to the Home Office, and brought others—Campbell-Bannerman, Bryce and Fowler—into more prominence in the affairs of the Party. But
the succession to the leadership seemed to rest with Harcourt, who had long been, next to Gladstone himself, the most able parliamentarian on the Liberal side in the House of Commons, and had been the leader of the Opposition in the absence of his chief. But though his claim to be regarded as the natural successor to Gladstone was indisputable, the feeling in his favour was by no means unanimous. He commanded in an increasing measure the confidence of the Radicals, for though it may be doubted whether he was ever a Radical in temperament in the sense that Chamberlain had been a Radical, he had advanced intellectually to conclusions that made him more acceptable to Radical opinion than any other leader of the Party. The objections to him were less on account of his opinions than on account of his temper, which time did not subdue and which often made him trying to colleagues. In the House of Commons, however, he had no real competitor for the leadership whenever it should fall vacant, and, though Spencer and Lord Rosebery were in other respects possible leaders, the Liberal objection to the head of the Government being in the House of Lords was so strong that it was held to exclude them from the choice. It was, therefore, with the apparent certainty of the reversion of the premiership, that Harcourt took office for the second time as Chancellor of the Exchequer.

He found himself at once in sharp conflict with Lord Rosebery on a question which threatened to imperil the new Government before it had well been launched. Among the legacies left by the late Ministry to their successors was that of deciding the future of Uganda. This subject was a part of much larger questions which were beginning to assume ominous proportions in the field of external politics. During the previous twenty years "the dark Continent" had been penetrated by the adventurers and distributed into spheres of influence by the statesmen, and in its development the aspirations of those countries which looked for "a place in the sun" were chiefly centred. Here, as in so many other fields of adventure, Great Britain
had a formidable start, and North and South the keys of the Continent were in her keeping. At the Cape the bold and imaginative genius of Cecil Rhodes was beginning to dream dreams which were soon to take shape and substance, and at the mouth of the Nile this country was still in that indeterminate position which the withdrawal of France and the events that followed upon it had dictated. Between these two spheres of British influence, though far removed from both, lay the territory of Uganda. Alike in geographical situation and in climate, its significance was great. Whoever controlled it, controlled the sources of the Nile, and its situation on the northern shores of the great lake of Victoria Nyanza and on the path of any practicable route from the North to the South made it of especial importance in connection with the future of the whole Continent. As early as 1875 Gordon had been sent there as envoy, and two years later Emin Pasha had visited the district, but it was Stanley who was really responsible for the opening up of the country. It was his report of the people and the conditions there that first attracted missionaries, French Catholics and English Protestants, to Uganda. The results were not wholly happy. There were dissensions between the Mohammedans and the Christians and between the Christian Catholics and the Christian Protestants. Mwanga, the tyrant of Uganda, was driven into exile, but was reinstated in 1889 by allying himself with the Christians, and in the November of that year the approach of a caravan under two officers of the British East Africa Company gave new confidence to the Christians, who accepted a British flag, and were taken to have acquiesced in British protection.

Meanwhile Dr. Peters was advancing towards Uganda in charge of a German expedition also sent nominally to the aid of the Christians. He arrived in February 1890, and succeeded in securing a treaty from Mwanga which the German Government afterwards disavowed and which Mwanga promptly forgot. Later in the year the British East Africa Company sent an expedition under Captain
Lugard to strengthen their hold on the country. Lugard found the two Christian factions still bitterly hostile, with Mwanga inclined to support the French Catholics. He induced him, however, to assent to a protectorate of the Company in a treaty signed on December 24, 1890. Lugard’s character inspired confidence, and produced some measure of peace between the Christian factions. He erected a fort at Kampalla near the king’s palace, and when war followed between Mwanga and Kabrega, king of the adjoining territory of Unyoro, who had given refuge to the now exiled Mohammedans, he aided Mwanga to defeat his rival. The position thus consolidated, Lugard went South-west to open up the country and establish trading stations, and with the help of the remnant of Sudanese soldiers left behind by Emin Pasha, built a fort on Lake Albert Edward and another at the foot of RuwenzorI. When he returned Uganda was in civil war, Mwanga having been driven to the islands with his Catholic friends. Lugard drove the “enemy” from the islands, brought Mwanga back, assigned the country of Buddu to the Catholics, forbade propaganda, declared freedom for all three religions, and seemed to have completed the pacification of the country when he received orders from the Company that the protectorate was to be abandoned and that his forces were to be withdrawn.

This was the position when the new Government came into office. The Company were in financial difficulties, and could not afford the cost of continuing the enterprise. The Salisbury Government had shown no inclination to back the Company or to take over the responsibility. Salisbury himself, in a despatch on August 25, 1891, had regretted the proposed withdrawal of the Company, but made no suggestion except that Mwanga should be given £1,000 a year on condition that he observed the treaty with Lugard and behaved well towards all Christians. This reserve was due in part, no doubt, to the general European situation and the desire to avoid any provocative action. Feeling was still feverish in regard to the Triple Alliance,
and French opinion viewed with suspicion the attitude of this country towards Germany and the continuance of our occupation of Egypt. France was herself entertaining dreams of expansion in Central Africa, had an expedition of her own in the vicinity of Uganda, and had no desire to see England strengthen her position in Egypt by establishing an unchallenged control of the head waters of the Nile. In these circumstances Salisbury made no move towards annexation, and, though the Company secured money which enabled them to delay the withdrawal of Lugard, it was only a respite, and when new instructions were sent to him to evacuate the country by December 1892, the Government still gave no hint of assistance. The only action of Salisbury indeed was to forbid Lugard to arm the loyal natives carrying out the evacuation, on the ground that this would be a contravention of the Brussels Act of 1884.

But with the change of Government there was a revival in powerful quarters of the agitation for preventing the evacuation, and in the middle of September Harcourt took violent alarm at the attitude of the Foreign Office on the subject. He had in the previous year been chiefly instrumental in Parliament in defeating the provision for the survey in connection with the proposed railway from Mombasa to Uganda, and though the grant had since been made his hostility to any extension of our commitments in Central Africa remained. It was all the stronger because he regarded the evacuation of Egypt as an honourable undertaking to which we were committed, and viewed with disfavour any action which could give the world the impression that so far from fulfilling that undertaking we were engaged in strengthening our grip upon Egypt. Writing to Gladstone, he said:

_Harcourt to Gladstone._

Treasury Chambers, September 20, 1892.—I am very much exercised in my mind at the news from East Africa and Mombasa. As you will have observed the East African Company have "thrown up the sponge" (being as I imagine insolvent), and a determined
Effort is being made to force the British Government to take to the damnosa hereditas. Rosebery has circulated a Memo. (for our consideration but not expressing his own sentiments), by Sir P. Anderson (of the F. O.), in the highest jingo tune advocating the annexation of the whole country up to the Albert Lakes with a view to the "reconquest" of the Sudan via the Upper Nile.

Sir G. Portal telegraphs on September 15 saying that as the evacuation by the Company is to take place in December we must send up "runners" at once to take possession ourselves. Captain Lugard threatens all sorts of horrors if we do not occupy at once. Bishop Tucker swears he will remain at his post and die—in short every sort of bogey is invoked to involve us in this horrible quagmire, which will be as bad as Khartum.

Captain Lugard declares that as "an officer holding H.M.'s commission he has pledged his own honour and that of the British nation to remain there for ever." And in order to facilitate the process he has just annexed two other provinces larger than Uganda, and has provided for the "honour of the British Nation" by garrisoning them with a few thousands of Sudanese russians—the refuse of Emin Pasha's force—whom he himself describes as "undisciplined freebooters."

The Company have ordered evacuation because "the occupation is so costly" and because the "territory yields no funds," ergo the British Government are to undertake it! But, even if we are capable of such a folly, how is it to be done?

It takes three months to march from the coast to Uganda; are we to send British troops up there and establish a regular administration? There is not time, even if we wished it, to get there before the evacuation by the Company, and when there we should have no means of communicating with the occupying force. The railway is projected but not built, and I hope never will be. If we embark in this desperate business we shall have no end of trouble with the French and Germans, as indeed we already have.

Cui bono? Is it trade? There is no traffic. Is it religion? The Catholics and Protestants (as they call themselves) are occupied in nothing but cutting each other's throats, with their bishops at their head. Is it slavery? There is no evidence that there is any slave trade question in this region. But this is plain that there is no labour to be got for railroad or any other purpose except slave labour.

I see nothing but endless expense, trouble and disaster in prospect if we allow ourselves to drift into any sort of responsibility for this business, and devoutly hope we shall have nothing to do with it.

The Company have made this terrible mess, and they must bear the responsibility. As Sir P. Anderson points out in his memorandum, Sir J. Kirk and those who knew what they were doing depre-
cated going to Uganda at all, but advised to advance gradually from
the coast.

I have no doubt the Company are raising all sorts of alarms in
order to blackmail the Government, and to compel us to entreat
them to remain, in which case they would demand a subsidy.

I am sending round some notes on Anderson's mem. in a cabinet
box, but I wrote to you direct as the matter seems very urgent,
and nothing will be more dangerous than half measures.

During the next few days Harcourt's pen was busy in
drawing up memoranda for the Cabinet against annexation,
and in writing to his colleagues to inflame them with his
own indignation at the proposal. "I will die a thousand
deaths rather than have anything to do with it," he wrote to
Mr. Morley, who was in Dublin. "I have saved the situa-
tion as regards the Uganda annexation," he wrote to Lewis
Harcourt (September 23). "I have a letter from Mr. G,
this morning showing he is all on our side, but saying he
had abstained from writing till he knew my own views. I
have letters of dismay from J. Morley, Lefevre and Asquith.
The two last insist on a Cabinet, and I have written to
Mr. G. supporting this demand." With Lord Rosebery
meanwhile he was engaged in fervid correspondence. One
letter will serve to indicate the sharp difference of view
between them:

Harcourt to Lord Rosebery.

MALWOOD, September 23, 1892.—I owe you most sincere thanks
for your very kind and amiable letter. You may be sure that it is
with great reluctance that I differ from you upon any question, still
more on one of such far-reaching importance as that of Uganda.

The first difficulty I feel is that we are absolutely without adequate
information on a matter on which we are called on for instant
decision. One of the most material points on which we know
nothing is the view of the late Government on this subject. I
should wish very much to know what they did or intended to do
when it was made known to them that the African Company intended
to evacuate Uganda. The first order of evacuation (afterwards
suspended) must have been more than a year ago (I should be glad
to have the exact date). The order was a second time given. Surely
some papers between the late Government and the Company must
exist on this subject. Or did the late Government anticipate
no evils from evacuation? Not a paper has been presented to
Parliament as between the Government and the Company except, I think, on the subject of the railway. The first thing I think we ought to have is a print of all that has passed between the late Government and the Company since its Charter. This we ought to be in possession of before we can decide how to deal with the Company or with Uganda under present circumstances.

My next difficulty is that you do not give us an inkling of your own idea as to what we are to do or how we are to do it. You wish us to decide the general proposition that evacuation is to be prevented without knowing at all how or by what means. I think the two questions are absolutely dependent and cannot be considered apart from one another.

You bar British soldiers, but it is plain a large force of some sort will be necessary even to hold Uganda and keep up a line of communication for 800 miles to the coast and to cope with all the internal differences and the threatened enemies, Mohammedans, Mahdists, etc., outside. If Uganda is to be held by the British Government it must be in a very different fashion from that in which it has been held by the Company, with no communication or knowledge of what is going on there for a twelvemonth.

If the views of Sir Percy Anderson and Captain Lugard are to be acted on (as they surely will be before long), if we occupy not only Uganda, but Ankole, Toru, Unyoro, the Albert Lakes and the sources of the Nile, meaning Equatoria, the price must be an immense one. Are these to be Indian troops? If so there are grave objections to that. Or are they to be the ruffian Sudanese of Emin whom Lugard has left—men who would be a greater curse to the country than any from which it at present suffers?

You ask if I don’t “fear a great disaster.” Frankly speaking I do not. I can quite see that it is the game of Lugard & Co. to play on our fears in order to force their policy upon us or induce us to give them a subsidy—the worst of all resources. But if there was it is not our fault. Non habeo in fæderæ veni.

In Gordon’s case the Government sent him to Khartum. (I.e. he was sent by Granville, Hartington and Dilke who settled it in a quadrille at Waddesdon without consulting the Cabinet.) He was our plenipotentiary. Lugard had no authority to “pledge the authority of the British nation,” as he impudently phrases it. There is one thing quite clear to me, that in nothing we decide or do shall we attribute any weight to Lugard’s action or opinions, or entrust him with any authority. . . .

I think it a salutary lesson that the Stanley-Emin Relief expedition has opened the eyes of the British public a good deal to the import-

1 Dilke has denied any knowledge of a “quadrille at Waddesdon.” The matter was settled at a meeting at the War Office when Ministers interviewed Gordon.
ance of these philanthropic-missionary-civilizing pretenders. As long as you keep to simple missionaries attending to their own work or discoverers like Livingstone going unattended amongst the savages they are safe enough. But when you come to militant bishops that want (?) annual expeditions, plundering and robbing and killing right and left, it is quite a different thing. These national rivalries, "spheres of influence" and land grabbing are the cause of all the danger and disasters. If your argument of the danger to Bishop Tucker is good for anything it is good for this, that if any religious fanatic or any hare-brained militaire choose obstinately to place themselves in danger they have the power to commit the nation to untold sacrifices of blood and treasure and to permanent annexations which are most impolitic and dangerous. It seems to me we cannot take too early or too firm a stand against such an admission of unlimited liability for men who are not our servants.

The Company did not go to Uganda for the beaux yeux of the missionaries, nor for slave trade, nor for civilization. They went there, as Sir P. Anderson says, because their hands were forced by the Germans. It was from jealousy and "earth hunger" that they occupied a place which was of no value and which they cannot hold.

It is the same spirit which inspires the whole of P. Anderson's memorandum and the letters of Lugard. We are to effect the reconquest of Equatoria and occupy the Albert Lakes and the whole basin of the Upper Nile. Why? for fear of the French, the Germans and Belgians, etc., etc. This is Jingoism with a vengeance. We are to have a "Wacht am Nile," and our drum and fife band is to play 

Sie sollen nicht ihn haben
Den freien Britischen Nile.

The Nile is to be a freehold from its source to its mouth, and Uganda is the point on which it turns. It is because I am deeply opposed to the policy of annexation and conquest and international rivalry that I view our committal to the first step with the greatest dread.

At all events it is not a path on which we can enter in a hurry or without the greatest circumspection, and I am sure the Cabinet will deliberate upon it with a full sense of all the grave consequences it involves, both now and later.

By this time the papers relating to the action of the Salisbury Government were in Gladstone's hands, and he wrote to Harcourt (September 23) that, after reading them, "there is no Uganda question, properly speaking, for decision. It has been settled by the Company and the late Government. . . . I enclose three letters which I have written to Rosebery to-day, besides two telegrams —and I am not yet at luncheon time." He tentatively
suggested to Harcourt that they might endorse Salisbury's suggestion of £1,000 a year to Mwanga if the Company could not find the money and acted prudently. "I admire," he wrote next day, "the penetration with which you detect and expose the true motives of the Jingoes for an Equatorial Empire. . . . What I have felt is a great anxiety to save Rosebery from the position in which he would find himself (as I think) when the Cabinet met. But he has pressed on so fast and so far that I have (reluctantly) suggested to him a Cabinet for Friday, 30th." "The last days have been horrible," wrote Gladstone to Harcourt (September 28) in a letter in the course of which he said: "...I am not willing at this moment sharply to close every door, lest we drive our friend to despair." The issue had become mainly a struggle between Harcourt and Lord Rosebery, with Gladstone strongly backing the former, but eager to avoid a breach with the latter. It was a critical situation that seemed to offer small hope of compromise. If Lord Rosebery wished to remain in Uganda without sufficient information, he felt that Harcourt and those who were with him wished to evacuate without sufficient information. He was impressed by the strategic importance of Uganda especially in view of the designs of other Powers, by the dangers of civil war between the Christian parties, and by the likelihood of a disaster for which he would be held responsible, though it was the result of a policy which was not his policy. In writing to him Harcourt passed to the larger issues at stake:

_Harcourt to Lord Rosebery._

MALWOOD, September 27.—... What seems to me to be at issue is a whole policy. Are we to attempt to create another India in Africa? The next goal on which the annexationists are bent is fully revealed in the communication of Major Wingate of April 24 (Mem. on the effect on Egypt on the withdrawal from Uganda), a most significant document. It is my conviction that we have already as much Empire as the nation can carry. If you give the heart too much work to do by extending the limbs and the frame beyond measure you enfeeble its action, and it succumbs. It is said, "We have India and Canada and Australia, why not Africa?"
That is like a landowner who, having secured many great estates which he can with difficulty manage, thinks it an argument for buying more and mortgaging those which he has for the purchases. That can only end in bankruptcy. I am amused at the people who call themselves Imperialists. I always remember the first pages in Gibbon on the "moderation of Augustus," in which he shows how for the first two centuries of the greatest and wisest Empire that ever existed the cardinal principle was the non-extension of the Empire, and whenever it was departed from they came to grief. I hear we meet Monday, and I am sure we shall do our best to agree as far as we can.

Fortunately the rupture that seemed imminent was avoided by an expedient which postponed the evacuation for three months. Writing to his son from Balmoral, where he had now gone as Minister in attendance, Harcourt said:

Balmoral Castle, October 3.—... The Uganda Cabinets were a ticklish business. I saw Mr. G. on the Wednesday as soon as he arrived in London, found him wonderfully fresh and very firm in his determination on Uganda. Rosebery reported equally firm on the other side. It seemed almost certain that when we met on Thursday there would be a breach—but I devised the three months' compromise, and suggested it as soon as the Cabinet met. We then adjourned in order that Herschell and I might settle terms with R. We went to the F. O. R. requested me to state my view and took it down from my lips, he writing it out. He then accepted it without demur in the form in which you have seen it in the papers, and Cabinet met Friday morning only to ratify what we had done. So far so good for the present.

He had gone to Balmoral with some trepidation, for he expected to find the Queen unfriendly on the subject of Uganda and Ireland. But he was agreeably disappointed, as extracts from his letters from Balmoral to Lady Harcourt show:

... I had a little talk with H.M. after dinner. She was kind and cordial, but only la pluie et le beau temps. After dinner we had a celebrated fiddler, which of course bored me much. ...

... She talks no politics to me as yet. ... However that may have to come. I told Ponsonby that I should say that I believed Ireland to be somewhere North of Uganda. ...

... Yesterday our whole talk was of her dolls. She is much delighted at the notice taken of them, and says she was devoted to them till she was fourteen. ...
... Having happily escaped up to this time WE are going to talk seriously to me about Uganda. Of course the tone of the whole entourage here is of the most vehement Jingoism. ... 

... I was interrupted this morning when I was writing to you by a summons to a "solemn palaver." It has however passed off very mildly and satisfactorily. When you are face to face with her she is always very courteous and kind, and I soon shunted the conversation on to domestic affairs and family gossip. ...

Writing on his return to Malwood to Gladstone he said, "She [the Queen] has no missionary propensities—on the contrary she said they were very troublesome people, and as Empress of India pronounced a warm eulogy on the Mohammedan religion." There was an agreeable exchange of compliments between the Queen and Harcourt after the Balmoral visit, the Queen presenting Harcourt with a fine engraving of his grandfather, the Archbishop, and Harcourt sending her in return an engraving of Richmond's drawing of the same prelate and a copy of the Harcourt Papers containing the royal correspondence.

Meanwhile the conflict over Uganda was being shelved. Harcourt had revived the proposals originally made by Salisbury, one of which was that the territory should be reconveyed to the Sultan of Zanzibar. "To my surprise and satisfaction," wrote Harcourt to Gladstone (October 20), "Rosebery embraces this idea very cordially, as you will see from the enclosed letter." But a fortnight later it was agreed to send a commissioner out to Uganda to advise on what course should be pursued, and with this arrangement the troublesome question was postponed for a season. But the incident was an ominous beginning for the new Government, and indicated a fundamental breach between Harcourt and Lord Rosebery on external policy which became increasingly difficult to bridge. Their personal relations, however, were still cordial, and in the midst of the quarrel we find Harcourt writing to Gladstone, apropos of the death of the Duke of Sutherland:

... There is one thing at least to the good—you have a Garter for Rosebery. You may remember what I said to you in London on that subject. It is more important than you may suppose. I hope
you will lose no time in intimating to him your views as to its destination. He has seen it so often go to others who have very inferior claims, and now we have no one left who has any claim at all.

Gladstone replied that he thought that at the moment it would not be a gracious thing to do, as it might be looked on as an attempt at conciliation; but he changed his mind, offered the Garter to Lord Rosebery, and it was accepted.

The shadow of a still graver African problem that was to disturb the future appears momentarily in a passage in the Journal at this time:

October 31.—W. V. H. returned from Lord Rothschild’s at Tring, having spent Sunday there with Cecil Rhodes and Randolph Churchill. Rhodes is quite ready to take over Uganda and work it as a province of the South African Company for £24,000 per annum, though the East African Company want £40,000 per annum to keep it on. He also wants to take over the administration (as part of the Cape) of the Bechuanaland Protectorate from H. Loch, who is spending £100,000 per annum of British money in it, while Rhodes would run it for £40,000 per annum. He says that in a few years the Transvaal will be so flooded with English at the mines that there will be a majority there for annexation to Cape Colony. He talks hopefully of his telegraph line going through the Cape to Cairo. W. V. H. is delighted with him, likes his hard sense and knowledge of affairs, and says even Jingoism is tolerable when it is done “on the cheap.” [H.]

Harcourt changed his view of Rhodes’s political aims later, and said of him “Mr. Rhodes is a reasonable man. He only wants two things—slavery and protection.” But he always retained his personal liking for him, and in the present instance was entirely with him in favouring the amalgamation of Bechuanaland with the Cape, a subject on which he had a few heated words with Ripon, the Colonial Secretary. “Of course H. Loch does not like to part with his own little despotism, and desires to keep his own niggers for himself, but this ought not to influence us,” he wrote to Ripon. And when Rhodes’s proposal was rejected Harcourt wrote snappily to Ripon on the subject of the grant from the Treasury to Bechuanaland:

... In dealing with these Cape cels it is necessary to have sand on one’s hands.
The only terms I have consented to or can consent to is that the grant in aid is not to exceed £100,000. I will not go into any question of expenditure last year or any other year.

Later events were to show that the control of Bechuanaland had more significance than Harcourt attributed to it. Rhodes's eagerness to take over the territory assumed a new character in the light of the Jameson Raid. It was on the frontier of the Bechuanaland Protectorate, then about to be transferred to the administration of the Chartered Company, that the troops for the invasion of the Transvaal were mobilized.

II

It must be admitted that Harcourt did not always make it easy for his colleagues to entertain amiable feelings towards him. Like another famous knight he was easily led on one condition, that he had his own way. If he did not have his own way he gave his colleagues no rest, and his personal affection for them put no check upon the vehemence of his criticism.

There was no man in public life for whom he entertained warmer feelings than Spencer. He recognized the high and chivalrous qualities of that wise and unassuming statesman. He saw in him the perfect flower of a tradition that was passing away, and hasty as he was with his pen I find no allusion to him in his letters which is not couched in terms of respect and affection. But Spencer was now at the Admiralty, and every head of a spending department was the natural enemy of the stern guardian of the public purse. He had returned to the Treasury with all his old passion for economy, fortified by a determination to carry out far-reaching reforms in taxation. As early as July 21, before the new Parliament had met and while the Salisbury Government was still in office, the Journal indicates that he was preparing for his campaign:

E. Hamilton came to luncheon. W. V. H. told him to prepare for equalization of the death duties, graduated taxation, especially income-tax, a repeal of all Goschen's acts for special loans, they being paid off by suspending the sinking fund for one year. [H.]
But the revision of taxation was only one part of his task. He preserved the now forgotten tradition of Treasury control over expenditure, and entered on his conflicts with the spending departments with his usual delight in controversy on details. Replying to Spencer, who had sent him a return of "English ships matched with either Russian or French" (the German Navy had not then become a serious factor in the calculations of the experts), he said:

Harcourt to Spencer.

II, Downing Street, November 29, 1892.—I am much obliged for the comparative list of ships which, though it does not give the information I asked for, at least gives me the means of finding out for myself what I wanted to know.

The Admirals are up to their well-known "tricks and manners." In order to swell the list of foreign ships and to prove the inferiority of the British Navy they have stuck into the list about thirty foreign ships which are not yet launched and will not be for three or four years to come. I have marked these vessels in red on the list. The British ships on the other hand are all vessels already launched. . . . The table really proves what I have always affirmed that at this moment in armour-clads and first-class cruisers the British Navy is a match not only for any two Powers but for all the Powers of the world. If you look at my list of the eight unmatched iron-clads left over (after providing for all the French and Russian ships), you will not find it easy to discover their equivalents in the other navies of the world.

The Italians have some big ships, but most of the Germans are of a very secondary class.

I am quite willing of course to enter on the discussion of ships building as well as ships built. But the two questions must be kept separate. Let us first settle the question of our position in respect of ships actually built. . . .

The resources we have in an immense marine experience in steam navigation as compared with France and Russia and the other Powers is the most real foundation of our extraordinary superiority.

We can build when we please four ships to their one, and we can man ten ships to their one with mariners who understand the work, which theirs do not. No account is taken of the "eyes of the fleet," with which we are provided in the swift transatlantic steamers with which the mercantile marine is to provide us. I hope you will have these tables corrected so as to show the actual state of things in ships launched, and then, if you please, have a separate table of ships building on either side. This is the only reasonable way of dealing with the question.

I should very much like to debate the matter with you and your
admirals if you will come up any day this week. I dare not walk into the Admiralty alone; I should probably be put in irons. . . .

I send you my notes on your tables, which I wrote off in a hurry last night after studying them. I sat up till two in the morning, as to me this is a favourite pursuit which I have followed for many years, but never with such advantage in materials. I am really as great an advocate of British maritime supremacy as any jingo, for I regard it as the great security for our neutrality, but I like to know what the actual facts are and to confound the panic-mongers.

In this spirit he bombarded Spencer with demands for further returns, annotated them with industrious criticisms, entered into minute comparisons between class and class of ship and nation and nation, and indicated that he proposed to print the tables "for the Cabinet." The gentle Spencer mildly protested:

*Spencer to Harcourt.*

**Admiralty, December 5.—**I am attending to both your letters. (1) Will it not be a somewhat novel proceeding for the Chancellor of the Exchequer to circulate a paper as to ships? I can quite understand his replying to one which the First Lord may circulate, when the time approaches for the Cabinet to consider the naval estimates.

I certainly should propose to circulate information, and I hope I should not do it in a garbled way with all the old tricks which a friend of mine attributes to admirals who are my advisers. . . .

*Harcourt to Spencer.*

**Dear Spencer,—Peccavi.** You are right and I am wrong, and it is not for me, as the old Scotch woman said, to "take the word out of the Minister's mouth." Yours sincerely, W. V. Harcourt.

III

The formidable bark of the watchdog at the Treasury penetrated all the offices in Whitehall alike. No department that had the audacity to spend money escaped the attentions of a man whose inexhaustible vitality kept half-a-dozen conflicts going concurrently with ease and enjoyment. He threw as much gusto into picking up pins in the Office of Works as he displayed in uprooting trees in Uganda, and even the drains of Buckingham Palace became the subject of a blast of comic fury, as when writing to E. W. Hamilton he says:
Treasury Chambers, October 16, 1892.—I return the collection of papers which record the sanitary wisdom of what Lefevre calls the joint policy of the Office of Works and the Treasury. It is very entertaining reading. I think the official correspondence between the Home Office, the Office of Works and the Treasury on the subject of my W.C. in the year 1886 is really a monument of departmental industry and sagacity. It would have enlarged even Dickens's ideas of the circumlocution office and the way not to do it.

The protracted correspondence on the subject of whether £120 should be spent on repairing a drain declared to be dangerous under H.M.'s apartments in Buckingham Palace is an admirable illustration of the practical working of a constitutional monarchy. I confess myself to be a little impatient of these pedantic absurdities.

However, I agree with you that there is little use in crying over spilt sewage, and what we have for the present to do is to conduct our business like our drainage on principles more conformable to common sense. I will therefore not enter into any more criticism of the past, but endeavour to put this matter, which is of real importance, on a sound footing.

I think the departmental enquiry suggested by Lefevre is the right thing, and I shall be glad to set it at work at once. You seem to regard the Office of Works as the whipping boy of the Treasury, and when you can cut down nothing else you stop up the drains. This is like the economy of great personages who, when they are obliged to reduce their expenditure, always begin by cutting off the charities.

From the drains at Buckingham Palace he turned to the misdemeanours of the Post Office, whither Arnold Morley had gone as Postmaster-General. He was indignant at the limitations then put upon Post Office savings in the interests of the bankers, and writing to Arnold Morley, said:

Treasury Chambers, November 1.—... I don't expect any good is coming out of that Nazareth of the Post Office and the obstructives by whom you are surrounded, but there is one thing which I wish you would consider which would be very useful, very popular and above all things cost the Exchequer nothing (rather profit it). I have always thought it a gross injustice to have placed so narrow a limit on the deposits in the P. O. Savings Bank as £30 a year and the investments in stock. This, as I happen to know from having to make investments of this kind for servants and people of this class, is a very real restriction on thrift. It is the only real way that many people have of putting by money at all. The restriction is really made for the benefit of the private bankers, and they are the bitter opponents of reform. If you choose to propose an extension of this, I am quite ready to fight the bankers....
He was equally anxious to fight the Post Office itself on the question of colonial penny postage. "I have seen dear Henniker Heaton to-day," he wrote to Arnold Morley (November 16) ! "He seems to me to have a great deal more sense than any of your Post Office people." He wanted to have figures showing the cost of an all-sea penny postage. "Don't allow yourself to be bullied by those 'permanents' who think a great deal more of fighting Henniker Heaton than of benefiting the human race." When the information duly came, he was filled with wrath at the official "Objections to Ocean Penny Postage." Writing to Arnold Morley (November 25), he said:

... I did not think it possible that any man who had passed an examination for the civil service would have written such unmitigated nonsense and feeble twaddle. What I have asked for over and over again are some facts and figures upon which an opinion can be founded, but this the Post Office either cannot or will not give, but maund on with this wretched inconclusive stuff. . . .

His marginal comments on the "Objections" make breezy reading. Thus, "Because you have an express, therefore, you can't have a slow train. Oh! sagacious administration." "Nonsense." "Still greater nonsense." "What has that to do with it. If you can carry a card, you can carry a letter." And so on.

IV

His reappearance at the Treasury had coincided with the emergence into prominence of the question of bimetallism. At the request of the United States Government a Monetary Conference had been summoned to which the British Government was to send representatives. The question of bimetallism, a burning one at the time in America, became a subject of much controversy in England also. Harcourt, who believed that "a man who was not a mono-mettallist was a mono-maniac," would have preferred to have had nothing to do with the Conference, but found himself committed to take part in it by the previous Government. "I had a short conversation with Goschen on the subject before he left the Treasury," he
wrote to Gladstone (August 28). "It is quite plain that he found himself between the devil and the deep sea, with Salisbury, Balfour and Chaplin as bimetallists on the one side, and his own mono-metallic convictions on the other, with a side glance at the influence of the Manchester cheap-money men at the election." The Americans wanted the Conference to be held in London, but Harcourt, like Goschen before him, declined on the ground that this would give the impression that this country favoured bimetallism. "In these days of contagion," he wrote to E. W. Hamilton, "I can't have London infected by an incursion of insane bimetallists. It would be too embarrassing to have to treat them as if they were composes mentis." In the end the Conference was held at Brussels in November, England being represented by C. Freeman, Bertram Currie, Alfred Rothschild, and Sir Thomas Farrer, with one bimetallist, Sir William Houldsworth. "Good men and true (what Gladstone calls 'sane' men)," wrote Harcourt to Farrer. "With such a garrison I shall feel that the fort is safe." His own views on the currency question will be gathered from the correspondence which passed between him and Hucks-Gibbs at this time (Appendix III). The Brussels Conference, as he and Gladstone had expected and hoped, was entirely futile, ending in the passing of a pious resolution. When the subject was revived later (February 26, 1895) on a resolution supported by Mr. Henry Chaplin, Harcourt was charged with having rendered the Brussels Conference sterile. He gave conclusive evidence that the overwhelming opinion of the nations represented was hostile to the United States proposal, and pointed out that in all periods of agricultural distress there had been the same demand for the depreciation of the currency, but that the issue of paper money had not at any period improved the position of the poor. They knew perfectly well that when the price of wheat was five times what it now was agricultural wages were 50 per cent. lower.
CHAPTER XII
AN INTIMATE PORTRAIT


BEFORE turning to the final episode that led up to the crisis of Harcourt's public life, I venture to break the narrative and turn aside to take a look at the man at close quarters, as he appeared to those who worked with him, enjoyed his fun, came under his lash, and saw the cloud and the sunshine chasing each other across his brow. When he returned to the Treasury he had as one of his private secretaries Sir L. N. Guillemard, K.C.B., who has been good enough to place at my disposal his memories of his chief, which I append. He says:

"Looking back over my official life I think that the luckiest day in it was that on which I was appointed private secretary to Sir William Harcourt.

"I had just finished six years of service under Government, first in the Home Office, in those days a sleepy temple of dull routine, and later in the Treasury, where, though the atmosphere was more stimulating, the work of a junior was in those days somewhat pedestrian. My youthful ardour was waning, the ordinary clerical work was beginning to be rather dusty on the palate, and symptoms of boredom began occasionally to supervene. I hankered after a freer and a fuller life and, by good fortune, I got my chance.

"I confess frankly that I started my work as private secretary with some inward qualms. I knew that my chief did not suffer fools gladly, and I was afraid he might
find me by his standards a fool. I had heard disquieting accounts of an overbearing disposition and a violent temper. I need not have been afraid. From the first I found him the kindest of friends, the most stimulating and generous of chiefs, the most delightful of companions. After a few weeks I felt as if I had always known him. The years which I spent as his private secretary count amongst the happiest in my life: they were certainly some of the fullest. The work was absorbing and varied: one saw the inner working of Government and knew the secrets and the gossip of the Cabinet: one met all the most interesting people, and heard the best of talk. But the supreme interest to me was the personality of my chief.

"Intellectually dominant he was, and one realized that from the start: but it took a little time to realize what manner of man he was, not as an intellectual force, but as a human being—how strange a complex of the unexpected and the contradictory, compact of humanity and humour, with the tenderness of a woman where he loved, with the heart of a boy, and the temper of a child, yes and often of a naughty child, perverse, unreasonable, petulant, mischievous.

"It was an ungoverned temper. I don't know whether he had ever tried to govern it, but if he had, it beat him. He was ever a fighter, reckless and self-confident, and it was part of his exuberant nature to rejoice in his own personality, failings and all, to let himself go and damn the consequences. I fancy he felt so sure of his real friends that as far as they were concerned he thought he could do what he liked, and that other people could go hang. Be this as it may, there is no doubt that his temper handicapped him through life, robbed him of the full reward of his abilities, made many enemies, lost him some good friends, and sorely tried many more.

"But his temper, as I knew it, though ungoverned, and often exasperating, was never 'nasty.' It may, if stories are true, have been different in his earlier life. I can only speak of the man as I knew him, and in the days when I
worked for him he had begun to mellow, and he mellowed fast.

"I worked with him day in and day out, for three years, in fair weather and foul, in success and failure. I was the victim of many explosions, but I never remember one that left me sore. It was worth while to suffer the dressing down for the apology which always followed, conveyed sometimes by the spoken word, more often by some friendly remark or the touch on one's shoulder of a large hand, but always with a humour that robbed it of all embarrassment. In a way both the explosions and the apologies brought him nearer, reduced the gulf between our ages and our capacities, and made me feel at home. Like the man who was described by his wife as 'more a friend than a husband,' he was more a friend than a chief.

"It is always difficult to analyse a complex personality and pick out the salient characteristics which constitute individuality, but I think that what struck me most was his versatility and many-sidedness. He would be by turns a scholar, bringing out of his treasure-house things new and old, a statesman reviewing problems in the light of cool logic and ordered reason, 'a first-rate fighting man' revelling in the dust and the sweat of the fray, and at times a great jolly boy.

"His vigour and vitality were extraordinary. They were to scale with his enormous frame. When he was in the vein his talk was burgundy to other people's claret; when he was well he made other people seem feeble and anaemic: when he was ill, he was ill with all his might, and resorted to Gargantuan remedies. It was rumoured in his family that he knew of one remedy only, blue pill, of which he was alleged to keep a cake and consume slices thereof in secret.

"His joy of living was phenomenal. Scholarship, literature, hard work, holidays, the strain of battle, the relaxation of repose, friendships, enmities, the beauty of nature, the charm of women, his own wit, other people's wit, good company, good food, good wine, good tobacco,
he savoured them all. At the banquet of life he was a mighty trencher-man, sure of his head and his stomach, shirking no course, mixing his liquors recklessly, with occasionally a quite audible smacking of the lips.

"As I write, many memories come back to me. Memories of Downing Street. Long days of work, full of interest and incident, days enlivened by pleasant society, brilliant talk, flashes of wit: days disturbed by constant explosions or illumined by genial calm. We were often harassed, often tired, but never, thank the Lord, dull.

"Memories of a visit to Cambridge, to our common Alma Mater, the result of a conspiracy, engineered by Montagu Butler, the Master, and Henry Jackson, best of Trinity men, the object of which was to compose an ancient feud.

"I had played a humble part in the plot, and I remember well how as I entered the Great Gate I felt like a nervous mahout in charge of an enormous animal of unlimited powers and uncertain disposition, for whose behaviour I should be held responsible. But all went well: the visit was a great success and to the accompaniment of toasts and mutual compliments the hatchet was cheerfully and even roisterously buried.

"Memories of Malwood, and these are best of all, for it was there he was at his best. It was there that he really enjoyed himself, loafing about the garden in summer, or in the winter solacing himself indoors with talk and books. It is there I like to remember him, in his study. It was always very warm (he loved a 'frowst'), and he blossomed in the warmth.

"I can see him now sitting by the fire, or padding about the room with his elephantine tread, from the table with its litter of open books to the book-shelves, perpetually lighting cigars and laying them down half-smoked in unsuitable spots.

"And all the while he talked, better talk than I have ever heard, before or since. He had apparently read everything and forgotten nothing, and when the string of his..."
tongue was loosed, out it all came—literature, history, politics, anecdote, scandal, the whole flavoured with Attic salt and illustrated with Rabelaisian exuberance. He would pass from one to the other with an unexpectedness that left one breathless. In the middle of a talk of Sophocles or Cromwell, there would come a premonitory gurgle, and before you knew where you were he would be rolling his tongue over some ridiculous story, or some foible of a pompous contemporary: and before the chuckles which had convulsed his huge frame had died away, one would be back with Napoleon or Cobbett’s *Rural Rides*.

"Feasts of reason? Those evenings were banquets of reason and unreason. The courses might sometimes overlap: they might even be served all together, as it were a haggis, ‘fine confused feeding,’ but there was no indigestion in it, and one rose from table ‘asking for more.’"

"Memories of official life.—One day a certain man came to lunch. He was clever and amusing with a good conceit of himself, and, responding to the stimulus of good company, he began to talk more and more freely. As ill luck would have it, he brought up the subject of American wives, on whose characteristics he touched humorously. It was a somewhat delicate topic, in view of the nationality of his hostess, of which he was evidently unaware, and the conversation was adroitly turned. Was it allowed to continue in safe channels? I trow not. The devil of mischief was awake in Sir William, and with a deft touch he switched the talk back again. Then the fun began. Not once but again and again was the unfortunate man pushed by kindly hands off the forbidden ground, only to be met and gently led back again. It was no good trying to save him. Flattered by his host’s evident interest in his talk and sympathy with his views, he finally went off the deep end and splashed about.

"It was one of the funniest scenes I have ever witnessed. Symptoms of hysteria began to manifest ‘themselves first in the hostess and then in the rest of the party. The host alone remained calm, Grandisonian, and encouraging.
Unconscious of his indiscretion, the little victim played to the last, and left well pleased with himself, leaving behind him a company exhausted with varied emotions.

"An inveterate smoker, Sir William smoked cigars all day long, or rather he half- or quarter-smoked them, and then left them anywhere and forgot them, in arm-chairs or drawers or Cabinet boxes, or in his pocket, or under his pillow in bed. He kept his cigars for choice loose in his pockets, and produced them at most unsuitable times, for, if the desire to smoke came upon him, the steps to gratify the longing were apparently automatic and unconscious.

"I remember one awful moment. It was the annual selection of sheriffs, and he sat on high as President of the Court, robed like Solomon in all his glory. Suddenly he was seen to begin an exploration of his pockets with every indication of a set purpose. 'Good Lord,' said Loulou, clutching my arm, 'he can't be going to smoke.' 'If he finds a cigar,' I replied, 'he will undoubtedly put it in his mouth, but the worst may not happen. Let us hope he has no matches.' ¹ Apparently he had none, for the crisis passed, and the Bench remained unprofaned.

"Private secretaries, that patient and meritorious race whom Disraeli described as 'the gentlemen who are kind enough to assist me in the discharge of my public duties,' are sometimes accused by common persons who know no better of taking too much upon themselves. Be that as it may, nothing annoys a self-respecting private secretary so much as when his chief, by an unauthorized act of independent volition, gets hold of a paper which he is never intended to know about at all, or gets hold too soon of a paper which he will at a suitable time be allowed to see. Every good nurse who takes a pride in her charge knows that blacking, though useful in the house, is not a safe food;

¹He never carried any matches. And he never smoked cigarettes. One day he was out of cigars, and his son offered him a cigarette: he declined, saying, "No thanks, my dear boy, I have no petty vices."
batter pudding on the other hand, while nourishing, should be consumed not at breakfast but at dinner.

"It may have been some suspicion of this maternal solicitude on the part of his staff which prompted my chief occasionally furtively to enter our room when unoccupied, select a file at random and carry it off as a dog conveys a bone. He might then, if he had nothing else to do (or indeed equally if he had other work which ought to be done), with his own hand write and despatch privately a letter which undid weeks of patient spade work by his prudent assistants. At other times if the subject interested him he would let himself go and give his fancy free play.

"I remember one case, where a new junior had to be selected for the Treasury. The file contained a record of the subjects of examination and the marks obtained by each man, and it came back with a long discourse on education as a test of ability, which concluded with words to this effect: ‘I see that Mr. Blank obtained high marks for history, which is good, and none at all for political economy, which is even more creditable. So promising a public servant must not be lost to the Treasury.’ I cannot now remember whether Mr. Blank was appointed or not.

"In connection with a certain matter, action had been taken by a solicitor to the Office of Woods which aroused the fury of my chief. ‘Tell Cuffe,’ he said, ‘to come over at once.’ I tried to explain that Cuffe (now Lord Desart) was solicitor not to the Office of Woods but to the Office of Works, but he refused to listen. ‘Send for him at once. Will nobody ever obey me when I give directions?’ I telephoned to Cuffe, who was luckily a person of considerable humour, and explained the position. On his arrival he was received with a torrent of reproach and censure, which lasted perhaps a quarter of an hour. The open and notorious incompetence of himself and his department was dealt with at length, and the enormity of his present action illustrated with a wealth of historical knowledge bearing on the causes of the fate which overtook Charles
the First when he endeavoured to ride rough-shod over the liberties of a free people. Cuffe sat perfectly unmoved and said nothing, until Sir William paused for lack of breath, and asked him whether he had any possible excuse to offer. 'Only this,' replied Cuffe. 'All you've been saying may be quite true, but it has no more to do with me than with the babe unborn. It isn't my department, and I don't know what you are talking about.'

"Instantly the flood of talk was turned upon me. 'Why was this not explained to me; why have I been allowed to waste my time like this?' 'I tried to tell you, sir,' I replied, 'for five minutes, but you would not listen'; and at this, the humour of the situation began to dawn upon him, and finally overcame him. 'There appears,' he said, 'to have been some misunderstanding, the blame for which I do not think it will at this moment be necessary or indeed profitable to apportion. Let us all go in to lunch. If Mr. Cuffe has no other engagement, I hope he will honour us with his company.' After lunch I asked him whether he would like me to send over for the real offender. 'I think not,' he said. 'It is never wise to overdo things, and I do not really think I could do it all over again. After all, roughly speaking, justice has been done.'

"One day, as I was sitting at work, he came into my room holding a paper in his hand. 'My young friend,' he said, 'I would invite your special attention to this document. It is of an unusual nature. You will observe that, contrary to my habit, I have written it out in full myself. You will also observe that it is in the form of a letter which will be signed by yourself. You ask me what is the reason for this unusual procedure. It is a perfectly fair question, and I will give you a straightforward answer. My reason for the course I have adopted is that I am not sure whether the terms of the letter will commend themselves to the recipient. In fact I rather anticipate an aggrieved rejoinder. In that event, we will revert to our normal methods. You will draft a letter for my signature explaining that the first letter was incorrect and unauthorized, and I will sign it,
thus obtaining credit for rectifying the errors of my staff. It is by these small amenities, he concluded as he left the room, 'that the wheels of official business are greased, that honour is given where due, and the value of discipline impressed upon the young.'

"I remember that quite in my early days, I was given a bit of work to do that was important and had to be done in a hurry. I sat up most of the night and, though I say it who should not, did it very well. The next morning I came into his room feeling rather like a retriever who has accomplished a particularly difficult find, tired but happy, and expecting to have my head patted. Directly I got past the door I saw that the storm-cone was hoisted. We began going through the papers, and at last came to the memorandum at which I had worked so hard. He took it up, and read bits of it. Then followed a series of the internal noises which I had learnt to associate with disapproval, and at last he tossed the paper at me saying, 'a very slovenly piece of work; you cannot have taken any trouble about it.' I suppose I was tired and I know I was bitterly disappointed, and, as in the case of the Psalmist, 'my heart was hot within me, and at last I spake with my tongue,' dwelling in heated and voluble language on the trouble I had taken and the unfairness of his treatment. Suddenly I realized to my horror that I was actually scolding my chief—this terrible man of whose temper I had heard so much. The fountain of my eloquence was dried up, and I stole a look at him expecting to be dismissed on the spot. And what did I see—a sort of benevolent uncle with shaking chins (a sure sign of fair weather) and amused eyes. 'Never lose your temper, my young friend,' he said, 'you will no doubt have observed that I never lose mine. When you are in a calmer mood you shall explain your memorandum to me. It may not be so bad after all. Meantime let us pass to the other orders of the day.'

"One day the bell rang violently, and he was found, sitting at his table, ominously calm.

"The table was of ample dimensions, and furnished with
stationery on the lavish scale reserved for cabinet ministers. On it was a massy\Emph{e} double inkstand, loaded in both barrels and a varied assortment of pens. As for paper there was within easy reach a hutch, six-rabbit size, stocked with paper, note paper, letter paper, octavo, quarto, foolscap, with envelopes to match, sufficient to stock a fair-sized shop. 'I have,' he remarked sadly, 'no pens, ink or paper. Howcan I do my work?' The phrase became a household word, and ever after when the weather looked threatening, one irreverent private secretary would ask of another: 'Anything really wrong, or is it a shortage of pens, ink and paper?'

"From time to time he would take a dislike to a paper or a letter, and refuse to deal with the one or answer the other. On such occasions the orthodox routine of the staff was to take no notice, treat him like a trout which has been 'put down,' wait a day or so and then, keeping well out of sight, put the fly over him again well cocked. Occasionally, if he was feeding freely, he took it with a rush, and all was well. More often he rose short, or took no notice, and the fisherman retired baffled, to try again another day.

"If he really made up his mind not to deal with a paper, it became a forlorn hope. Direct appeals fell on deaf ears; artifice failed dismally; he seldom gave himself away, but he remained undefeated. If worried by the too frequent appearance of the document he would hide it behind a bookcase or elsewhere, and if asked for its whereabouts allude to bad staff work—'I keep secretaries to find papers, not to lose them.'

"I remember one letter from a tiresome but influential supporter of the party in the country whom he loathed. The man wrote rather a nice letter, making an eminently reasonable request. It was clearly a thing to be agreed to, and the letter was accordingly given him in the ordinary course of business with a suitable reply. Would he sign it? Never. The beastly thing was put on his table in the morning, sent to him at the House of Commons,
forwarded to him in the country. It came back as it went, or, worse still, did not come back at all. Letters from the prominent supporter became numerous and decreasingly courteous. The thing became a nightmare, and at last the head Whip called in despair and made an urgent appeal.

"'My dear Ellis,' he said, 'this sort of thing is getting intolerable. I must change my staff. From our good friend Salteena, did you say, twelve letters, and no answer? Inexcusable.' 'I think, sir,' I interposed, 'you have seen the file more than once.' 'Impossible,' he replied, 'bring it to me directly.' I brought it, and, after a glance at it, he resumed, 'Draft a letter for my signature, and begin with these words: 'Your request is most reasonable and I hasten to agree to it. I regret that, owing to the remissness of my private secretary, the matter was not brought to my notice earlier.' See that I sign it to-day.' Then, after the Whip had gone, 'This, my friend, will teach you not to try and make me do what I don't want.'

"After I ceased to work for him, daily intercourse ended, but I still saw him constantly, first in the years when, though freed from the cares of office, he still stayed in the fighting line, and later when, in the evening of his days, he had finally put off his armour; and it was pleasant to watch how, as the summers passed over his head, and as peace gradually 'gat hold' of him he mellowed.

"The antagonisms and enmities, heritage of his fighting prime, died away, though not without a struggle. The old war horse was out at grass, peacefully enjoying the pasture and the repose, but to the last it was wise to look out for his heels. Those whom he loved (and he had a genius for affection) he loved more.

"To the end he kept his joy of life, and notably his understanding of youth, and his sympathy with the young. He never grew old. 'Whom the Gods love die young.'

"Of the Great Assize he will, I believe, have no fear. 'Capable de tout,' as his familiars described him, he will probably approach the judgment seat with a confident,
possibly with a swaggering gait. And with reason, for if the recording angel has any humanity and any sense of humour, 'si mentem mortalia tangunt,' he will before closing the ledger marked W. V. H. have cancelled the debit side with the explanation (for the satisfaction of the celestial auditor-general) 'Quia multum amavit.'

"Meantime may the dust lie lightly on him."
CHAPTER XIII

HOME RULE ONCE MORE


THE Session of 1893 is memorable in parliamentary annals for more than one reason. It was the most prolonged in modern experience, continuing through the summer, the autumn and the winter until February 1894. It witnessed the last phase of the greatest parliamentary career of the nineteenth century, and one of the most heroic personal achievements in political history. Gladstone's genius never burned more brightly than during this session in which, now in his eighty-fourth year, he fought the longest and fiercest battle of his public life with a skill and passion that he himself had never surpassed and no one else in living memory had equalled. The story of this great episode does not belong to this book, for Harcourt, immersed in his Budget, in his own Bills, and in his conflicts with the departments, which will be dealt with subsequently, had only a subsidiary part in the struggle. Perhaps it was because of the multiplicity of his tasks and the demands made on him in the House, where, apart from Home Rule, he was charged with the burden of leadership that he was excluded from the committee which Gladstone selected during the winter to draw up the details of the Home Rule Bill. Perhaps there were other reasons for the exclusion. An entry in the Journal on November 17, 1892, throws an equivocal light on the matter:

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... Spencer came this morning to see W. V. H., and after beating about the bush for some time said Gladstone wished to appoint a Committee of the Cabinet to draft the Home Rule Bill and "would W. V. H. mind not being on it?" W. V. H. said he was delighted to be excluded. Spencer very shy and nervous about the proposal, evidently did not know how it would be taken. All's well that ends well!

The Committee proposed is Gladstone, Spencer and John Morley, with Bryce as a specialist on constitutions. W. V. H. said that, though he had no desire to be on it himself, he must have some man there who would have some regard to the views of the English people on the question. He suggested Campbell-Bannerman. [H.]

Later on (January 6, 1893), Spencer pretty clearly indicates why Harcourt was excluded when, replying to a letter from Harcourt, he says, "Possibly I.e [Gladstone] dreaded the well-known opposition which was sure to be given to the measure, in whatever shape it was produced, from the most prominent person in the Cabinet."

There is another glimpse of a not wholly harmonious Cabinet in a reference in the Journal to a Cabinet meeting four days later. "Rosebery and W. V. H. sat on a sofa behind and away from the others whilst the discussion was going on, though taking part in it. Their ostentatious position apart from the rest seemed to make J. Morley and Spencer nervous and uneasy. Spencer at one time came and sat down between them, but W. V. H. said, 'Go away, you have no right here, this is the English bench.'" The causes of friction arose in some measure from temperament, but still more from differences on principle. The question of Irish representation was still unsettled, and was the subject of much heated debate and correspondence. In the Bill as eventually laid before Parliament the "in-and-out" method was adopted, that is to say, eighty Irish members were to sit at Westminster, but they were not to vote on motions or bills referring only to Great Britain. This proved to be agreeable to no party, and in the end Gladstone and Mr. Morley conceded to the Liberal Unionist opposition the principle of the retention of the Irish members for all purposes.

But Irish representation was not the only subject of
disagreement in the Cabinet. The financial clauses of the Bill were the ground of much controversy in which Harcourt took an active part, propounding a scheme to Gladstone and then finding himself "bound in candour" to point out objections to it on the ground that under it the Irish contribution to the Imperial Exchequer "may dwindle away and in the end disappear." Writing to Mr. Morley on the same subject (January 18), he said:

... It has been pointed out to me that my financial scheme—admirable as it is in its simplicity—has a fatal defect, viz., that if your friends are once secured on a fixed payment which is adequate to all their wants they may reflect that it is not necessary to pay taxes at all. ... What it proves is that the best plan which is possible is impossible—an observation which applies to a good deal else in the same connection. ...

* It was on this subject that the most serious breach in the relations of Harcourt and Mr. Morley occurred at the critical moment of the introduction of the Bill. On the morning of the day on which he was to move "the first reading of the measure, Gladstone received the following letter:

_Harcourt to Gladstone._

11, Downing Street, February 12, 1893, 10 p.m.—I am extremely sorry to trouble you at this supreme moment, but I have received notice this afternoon in a letter from J. Morley that the financial plan of the Home Rule Bill has been changed in most material particulars without my knowledge or any consultation with me.

As far as I can understand the change proposed in Morley's letter it is one to which I cannot assent, and against which indeed I feel bound formally to protest, as it is one I could not possibly defend.

The proposal as stated to me is that if the Excise is lowered the whole loss in Ireland is to be borne by the Imperial Exchequer, and if it is raised for a great emergency only half the increment is to come to the Imperial Exchequer. That is to say if you raise a million more on excise in Ireland for the defence of the Empire you are to give over £500,000 of it to Ireland for domestic expenditure which requires no augmentation.

This is really to hand over to the Unionists a weapon with which they will smite the Bill under the fifth rib.

I can only express a hope that you will not think it necessary to announce any such alteration in your speech, so that there may be time to consider this vital matter before the Bill is printed.
I find much uneasiness amongst all the members of the Cabinet at not having the opportunity of seeing the Bill in its final form before its introduction, and I only abstained from pressing the matter upon you on the assurance from Morley that there had been and would be no change in the financial arrangements.

All this confusion seems to have arisen from the attempt to introduce the consideration of the disputed and disputable question of quota into a scheme which was expressly framed to exclude it altogether.

To Mr. Morley, Harcourt wrote at the same time setting forth at greater length "the absurd consequences" of the proposed change, and continuing:

... When you say that you have settled this matter in consultation with Welby I suppose you had both forgotten for the moment that such an office as that of Chancellor of the Exchequer exists, and that it has some responsibility.

I must request therefore that this change in the financial plan may not be announced to the H. of C. till it has been properly considered before the Bill is printed. . . .

There followed a sharp exchange of notes between the two old colleagues which left its mark for a long time on their intercourse, and which cannot be wholly dissociated from the events of a year later:

Mr. Morley to Harcourt.

Irish Office, February 13, 1893.—As we are to have a Cabinet to-morrow, it is not necessary that I should trouble you with a reply to your letter. I can only say that, as at present advised, I am quite as determined to resist the clause as it stood, as you are to insist upon it. Your reference to my consultation of Welby is quite uncalled for. I did so with Mr. Gladstone’s sanction, and that is enough. What you do is ostentatiously to hold aloof from the business, and then when others do the best they can, you descend upon them with storm and menace.

That you should have on such a morning written as you have done to Mr. G. is the kind of thing that Brougham would have done, and nobody else that I have read of in modern public life.

Harcourt to Mr. Morley.

II, Downing Street, February 13.—I am too old to quarrel with any one about anything, and therefore shall regard your angry letter as not written.

I don’t remember the incident in Brougham’s career to which you refer. You are so much better up in history than I am that you
will be able to tell me what that Chancellor did when the Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant entered the Court of Chancery and pronounced judgment in his place without communication with him and contrary to his known opinion, and in addition altered the text of an important legal bill on the eve of its introduction without notice to the head of the law and contrary to the decision of the Cabinet.

We differ apparently fundamentally as to the principles of administration. I doubt however if you will find that Mr. Gladstone agrees with you that the Ch. of the Exch. is a quantité négligeable in questions of finance.

But, as you say, this may keep till to-morrow. If you had thought fit to consult me yesterday, as you might easily have done before instructing the draftsman to alter the Bill, I think I could have given you very good reasons against such a proceeding.

In the meanwhile you must forgive me if I try to keep up the constitutional fiction that a Ch. of Exch. has something to say to finance, if it were only for the sake of keeping up the discipline of the department.

Gladstone offered Harcourt a Cabinet meeting to consider the subject of Irish excise next day, and in his speech avoided reference to the point. Harcourt sent him another severe criticism of the proposal on February 15. He took no part in the debate in the House, and the Journal on February 14 records, "W. V. H. was out of the House during the financial part of the speech [Mr. Balfour's reply], and when he returned Fowler said, 'Balfour has been making in the House your speeches in the Cabinet.'" There was much heated discussion in the Cabinet that followed on the subject, and in the end the financial proposals were modified much in accordance with Harcourt's wishes. Ireland was to be empowered to levy new taxes and her Imperial contribution was fixed at one-third of her ascertained income, in addition to the yield of any imperial tax levied for the express purpose of war or any special defence. This proportion was not fixed on the quota principle, but represented roughly the actual contribution of Ireland to the Imperial Exchequer, i.e. the difference between Irish Revenue and Expenditure. This amount was, however, to be temporarily reduced by a grant of £500,000 on account of the Irish police. Harcourt was so satisfied with this arrangement that his most weighty contribution to the discussion of the
Bill (July 24) was a defence of the financial clauses, in which he showed that the relatively small contribution of Ireland to Imperial taxation did not mean that Ireland was more lightly taxed than Great Britain. It meant that the taxation was swallowed up by the cost of civil government in Ireland. Thus the cost of police was 2s. 10d. per head in England, 1s. 11d. in Scotland and 6s. 10d. in Ireland. "That," he said, "is the cost of resolute government."

II

Nothing of the conflict behind the scenes was reflected in the House, and Harcourt (to whom Gladstone had transferred the duty of communicating with the Queen) did not fail in his reports to Her Majesty to convey the impression that the struggle was going well for the Government. Referring to Gladstone’s speech in introducing the Bill, he said, "In point of eloquence and power it was equal to the best achievements of his prime. If there was less of the fire of his younger days, it had all the mellow dignity of age, and the appeal at the close to the last work of his declining years was singularly impressive." And, describing the scene when the debate on the introduction of the Bill ended, he said:

... But at the close there was a striking and pathetic spectacle when the aged statesman of eighty-three walked up from the Bar to the Table to present his Bill, and the whole audience felt that it was a sight they would never witness again. The Liberal Party rose as a body to salute a Chief, who, whatever may be thought of his policy, has fought with unexampled pertinacity and courage a desperate battle—qualities which Englishmen are never slow to recognize and admire.

During the Easter and Whitsun recesses, the Unionists carried on a widespread campaign against the Bill in the country, and when the House met on May 8 to begin the discussion in Committee it was evident that the struggle would be severe. It turned largely upon the question of the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament, and Henry James moved an amendment specifically declaring that the
authority of the Imperial Parliament “shall remain un-
affected and undiminished over all persons, matters and
things within the Queen’s dominions.” A few days before
Harcourt had written to Gladstone begging him to adopt
James’s clause on the ground that it would please English
voters and could not reasonably be objected to by the Irish-
men, as it proposed to retain for the Imperial Parliament
only such supremacy as was already in force over the self-
governing Dominions. Gladstone accepted the amendment
in the abstract, but wanted it deferred to a later part of the
Bill. In the end the James amendment was adopted and
a good many other concessions made to the Unionists
which, while unacceptable to the Irish, did not mitigate the
hostility of the Opposition. After the application of the
closure in Committee on June 28 the temper of the discus-
sions grew more bitter, the feeling culminating in a
lamentable scene on the last day of the closure time table
(July 27), when Chamberlain made his violent attack on
Gladstone. “The Prime Minister calls ‘black’ and they
say ‘It is good’; the Prime Minister calls ‘white’ and they
say ‘It is better.’ It is always the voice of a god. Never
since the days of Herod has there been such slavish adula-
tion.” What followed is recorded in the Journal:

July 27.—... There was a loud outburst at this and cries from
the Irish of “Judas.” Mellor (the Chairman) put the question
amidst indescribable confusion. Part of the House went out
into the Division Lobby, but all the Tories remained shouting for
the word “Judas” to be taken down, and refused to leave until this
was done. In the midst of this Logan walked over to the Front
Opposition Bench, and began arguing with Bowles, Hanbury
and Fisher, who sit behind it. They shouted at him that he was out of
order standing up. He said he would put himself in order by sitting
down, which he did on the Front Opposition Bench. Fisher [W.
Hayes Fisher] at once struck him on the back of his head, seized
him by the collar, and threw him off the Bench. There was a general
scuffle, in which E. Marjoribanks crossed the House, seized Logan by
the shoulders, and took him down to the Bar. At the same time a
sort of general free fight took place at the top of the gangway between
the Tories and Irish, fists being freely used. Saunderson, Willie
Redmond, young Allen, and others, were conspicuous in the middle
of it. The Serjeant-at-Arms, John Burns, Rees-Davies and E.
Marjoribanks made their way into the middle of the combatants, and gradually separated them. All this time there had been consultation at the Table between Balfour, Churchill, Mellor and Vicary Gibbs, which resulted in the Speaker being sent for by Mellor. His arrival was greeted with loud cheers from all over the House. Mellor made a statement to him of what had taken place about the "Judas" cries. The Speaker then stated his view of the matter, but was met by constant cries of "Yes" and "No," and in despair and some temper he sat down, saying, "Then I call upon the Leader of the House to inform me what did occur." This put Mr. Gladstone about a good deal, but he reported what he could of it, complaining that his eyes and ears did not serve him very well. Arthur Balfour corroborated him, and, several men having stated that T. P. O'Connor had used the word "Judas," the Speaker called upon him to withdraw, which he did very adroitly by apologizing if by any words of his the scene had been caused in which two of his friends had been physically assaulted. The Speaker then left the Chair.

In September the Bill was rejected in the House of Lords by a vote of 419 to 41, and the work to which Gladstone had devoted his later years was left to other and very different hands to accomplish.

Apart from the Irish issue which held the centre of the stage during this unprecedented session, there was much to engage the mind of the Government at this time. The year had opened with another episode in the indeterminate and perplexing story of England in Egypt, and in this connection once more there was a difference in the point of view of Harcourt and Lord Rosebery. The incident arose through the action of the new Khedive, Abbas, a boy of fifteen, who in January dismissed three ministers who were regarded as friendly to England. Cromer took a high line in the matter and refused to recognize the Khedive's nominees, and in this he was supported by Lord Rosebery, who in the name of the Cabinet informed him that so long as England occupied Egypt her advice must be followed by the Egyptian Government. Harcourt, who had always been hostile to the permanent occupation of Egypt, took strong objection to Cromer's insistence that the Khedive must be made to yield "at all costs." Commenting on Cromer's statement that the coup d'état (of the Khedive)
was prearranged with French and Russian Consuls-General, Harcourt wrote:

... We are now able to understand what Lord Cromer means by "at any cost," viz., a conflict with France. The means that he proposes is a military coup d'état by England displacing by armed force the Egyptian officials in those departments, and also to take military possession of the Egyptian telegraphs. ... It is hardly necessary to say that this amounts to the annexation of Egypt, a claim to our right of exclusive possession, and is an entire breach of the European understanding on which our occupation rests. ... The danger was removed by a compromise. The dismissed premier was not reinstated nor the Khedive's nominee appointed, but a third choice was made for the post. In this way the Khedive's humiliation was avoided, but the British troops in Egypt were reinforced at the beginning of February as a reminder that the forces of the Crown were behind Cromer.

III

With two other colleagues Harcourt was at the time in conflict on the question of estimates. As usual his indignation on the subject of national expenditure was directed against the war departments, and the fact that those departments were in the control of such moderate men as Spencer and Campbell-Bannerman did not diminish his resentment, for his view was that his struggle was not with the heads of departments, but the aggressive admirals and generals in the background. His industry in conducting these controversies was unwearied. If he was supplied with tables drawn up by the officials, Harcourt replied with tables of his own drawn up on a different classification, and called for the official comments on them. He was encouraged in his attempts to cut down the estimates by the approval of Gladstone, who wrote to him from Biarritz (January 1), "Both the heads (Spencer and Campbell-Bannerman) are men who I think might, not dislike being supported against professional oppressors." Fortified by this sanction Harcourt wrote to Spencer a letter in which he said:
Harcourt to Spencer.

MALWOOD, January 4, 1893.—... I answered that I was glad to receive that information and that I would do my level best to "support both the heads against their professional oppressors," and that I was delighted to be assured they "would like it." But I at the same time expressed my grave doubts whether "both the heads" and I had the smallest influence or control over the professional oppressors who were absolute masters of the situation, the consequence of which is that we shall have the honour of presenting to Parliament the greatest warlike estimates that were ever voted by the House of Commons in time of peace....

Goschen boasted in all his budgets that there were no supplementary estimates on army and navy, but that they had kept within their votes. «But nous avons changé tout cela. I suppose they had some control over their people. We appear to have none. Besides this there are large supplementary estimates in all the civil departments, and we are promised a great increment on every vote for next year. For new ministers are always delighted to earn a reputation in their departments by profuse expenditure.

Verily in six months we have out-Heroded Herod and out-jingoed the Jingoes. We have annexed more territory and spent more money than any Government that preceded us. The Tories are great fools if they do not do all they can to keep us in office, for, if we remain in, we shall have forfeited for ever the right to criticize any folly of which they could be capable. No wonder they are fond of tu quoque's. We manufacture enough to last them ten years.

I don't know who is going to find the money or ask Parliament to sanction all this. I am however acquainted with one person who will not.

Even the most amiable of men have their limits of forbearance, and Spencer and Campbell-Bannerman, to whom a letter similar to that written to Spencer had been sent, replied, each in his own fashion, with some natural asperity:

Campbell-Bannerman to Harcourt.

WAR OFFICE, January 6.—Estimates. I do not know what gadfly has stung you and caused such a jobation as you have launched at me. Other people besides the Treasury are doing their best to keep down estimates, but while there is no difficulty whatever in propounding general principles, there is a good deal in keeping in check the actual growth of requirements.

It is by no means the easy thing it was ten years ago; and I doubt very much if the country would support any violent upsetting of recent arrangements even in the interest of immediate saving, however convenient. I will do, and am doing, what I can; but I
honestly tell you if anything would slacken my zeal it would be to be fulminated at from mid-air!

All I can promise is that I will bring things down as much as possible.

As to a supplementary estimate, if one is necessary, why is it? Simply because Goschen cut down too far, and because too sanguine a view was taken. That is no discredit to us. The sum spoken of here was a good round figure to give for answer to a first inquiry; the reality will be far short of it; and even the sum named included the Maplin money. I am glad to bring that degree of comfort to you!

Seriously you need not be afraid; the departments will not be unreasonable; let 11, Downing Street be equally sensible, and all will go well.

"When I get letters from you," wrote Spencer (January 6), "I never quite know what they will be, whether I must expect banter, anger or serious argument. Whatever they are, they always point to friendly conclusions in the near or distant future." And, after replying to Harcourt's criticism, he concluded, "I cannot banter like you, but I fear I can be angry. I am not so now, and I do not pretend to argue against you, although I can be obstinate when I think I am right."

Harcourt thereupon turned his guns upon another department. Writing to Mr. Arthur Acland, the Minister of Education, he said:

_Harcourt to Mr. Acland._

MALWOOD, January 9.—You remember Hogarth's picture of the old steward in the "Rake's Progress" holding up his hands in horror and despair at the extravagance of his young master. Well, that is just my moral and physical attitude at this moment. I have just sanctioned an additional £250,000 or thereabouts for your department, and here you are like Oliver asking for more! There are sixteen of us, and at your present allowance of increment that will add just £4,000,000 to the estimates.

We already promise to be the most extravagant Government that has ever held office in this country. . . . The War Office has already its quarter of a million of supplementary estimates, with a prospect of double that amount of increment for the estimates of next year. This is indispensable to save us from instant invasion, and to satisfy the generals and colonels, who are almost as exacting as professors and artists. The navy want more ships to replace those they have
sunk in time of peace. The Board of Trade are bound to satisfy the
demands of the Labour Party. The Home Office has requirements
on behalf of factories and workshops. Ireland is a bottomless pit;
Scotland wants hundreds of thousands for railways to the Hebrides;
the Post Office has fresh demands and diminished income; the Board
of Agriculture is convinced that the ruined landlords can only be
saved by more officials at higher salaries; the Colonial Office requires
more money for new empires; the Foreign Office must be supplied
with greater means for making the influence of England more felt
throughout the universe; the Office of Works has splendid projects
for Haussmanizing the metropolis and erecting more public buildings,
which will more exceed the estimates and be more unfitted for the
purpose for which they were intended than those which have gone
before; a higher rate of wages by way of centimes additionels in every
department; and, as if this were not enough to ruin the most over-
flowing exchequer, you come down upon me with the men of science
and the men of art, compared with whom the daughters of the horse-
leech are mild and moderate extortioners.

I have always observed that an English gentleman, when he finds
that his expenditure largely exceeds his income, has a certain regu-
lated order in his compulsory economies.

1. He cuts off his charities.
2. He reduces his expenditure on bric-à-brac; perhaps he sells his
china and his pictures and finally his books.
3. He retrenches on the education of his children.
4. When reduced to extremity he may give up his orchids.
5. He might even diminish his stud.
6. Or reduce his game.
7. Rather than go to the workhouse he might even reconsider his
establishment.

I remember a story of a former Duke of Devonshire who called
in a friend (C. Greville) to advise him on the head of retrenchment
in his household, and when told that it might be superfluous to keep
four confectioners he replied with simple dignity, "After all, a man
must have a biscuit." . . . It is the business of my office to resist
such a policy. . . . I have been brought up in the old-fashioned
principles of public economy, and I shall not regret it if my last
political efforts are made in its defence.

But this tilt at the Minister of Education was only an
interlude in the major conflict with the Admiralty, which
continued with unabated vigour. The attitude of France
was still the source of much disquiet, and the controversy
between Harcourt and the admirals turned on the compari-
son of the British and French navies, with special reference
to the relative values of big ships and small vessels. Harcourt prepared notes on the French navy, and the Admiralty retaliated with notes on his notes. They prepared tables, and he prepared counter tables, and when the Admiralty refused to accept his reading of figures he retaliated by giving it in the House. Writing to Lord Rosebery in the midst of this controversy, he said:

**Harcourt to Lord Rosebery.**

II, Downing Street, February 18.—... I think you will like to see the enclosed lists—they will gladden your Jingo soul. They are the result of a cross-examination conducted by me at the Admiralty of the whole Board in their cocked hats. So you may rely on the list as authentic.

It includes all the ships completed and which will be complete this year, for all the navies of the world.

- You will see that we are two to one as against the French in first-class battleships (armour-clads), on which the real dominion of the sea depends. Our superiority in the other classes is almost equally marked.

At the end you find a classification of all the navies of the world.

In the head of great cruisers of high speed and heavy armament our superiority is still more overwhelming.

I have only one scruple in sending you this paper, and that is lest you should draw the natural inference that the wisest and most prudent thing you could possibly do is to go to war at once, when you can easily destroy all the navies in existence.

The French will not be able to add another ship to their list before 1896, so you can finish them off this year, and the rest (as the Irishman says) at convenience.

Then we might have a little repose—possibly even a surplus. . . .

It was a striking and impressive sight last night to see the old man walk up the House with the H.R. Bill to be presented at the table. . . .

These struggles with the departments were the normal prelude to the preparation of the Budget, which Harcourt introduced on April 24. The past year showed "a miserable mouse of a surplus" (£20,000), and the estimates for the coming year indicated a deficit of one-and-a-half millions. He had intended to carry through his scheme of death duties, but he was compelled to delay that expedient because the produce of the death duties would not be immediate, and in these circumstances be balanced his accounts by another
penny on the income tax. In his speech he delivered a sort of swan song on the tradition of economy:

... I believe the Prime Minister and myself are the last representatives of the vanished creed [economy]. The saying has been attributed to me that every one is a socialist now. I do not know whether I ever said that, but this I will say—there are no economists now. Financial economy has gone the way of political economy, and a Chancellor of the Exchequer preaching against extravagance is the "voice of one crying in the wilderness." We hear a great deal about the stinginess of the Treasury. I wish the Treasury had a little more power, as it has the will to be more stingy. ... The Chancellor of the Exchequer may hold up his hands in despair, like the old steward in the "Rake's Progress," but the money is spent, and, as the French say, "the wine is drawn and you must pay for it." After all, the causes of this are not far to seek. Economy was possible, was necessary, and even popular, in former days. Governments were compelled to be economical. The people demanded it, and the House of Commons supported it. Sir R. Peel was an economical minister. At that time the nation was poor; capital was deficient, trade was bad, the weight of debt was crushing, and taxation relatively to the resources of the people was enormously heavy. People were then obliged to "attend" to the pence because they had no pounds to "look after." But now the condition of things is changed; the nation has grown rich, taxation compared to the resources of all classes is relatively light, and this is probably in proportion to its wealth the most lightly taxed nation in Europe at the present time. Therefore it is, perhaps, not unnatural that any one who comes forward with a proposal for increased expenditure is welcomed as if he had discovered a new pleasure. Private members with large hearts and small responsibilities take up some favoured scheme or some favoured class of the community. They demand higher wages, greater pensions; they desire that the State should undertake new duties, fresh responsibilities, larger expenditure. We are eager to create new empires here and annex fresh territory there, to reduce postal charges all over the world, to relieve more rates, to undertake lifeboats, etc. The country is well organized, the House of Commons well canvassed, and one afternoon, in the gaiety of our hearts, we pass a Resolution unanimously which is to cost us a few millions when it comes into full operation some years hence. ... I belong myself, as I have said, to the old school, and I would gladly see less money spent, for I think a good deal of it is wasted. But, if I may reverse an old saying, I would say that those who call the tune must pay the piper. I cannot, however, honestly say to the House of Commons or the country, "If you choose to spend the money, you cannot afford it," for, as I have said, the wealth of the country has increased and is increasing year by year.
You may find yourselves in temporary straits, but there is no occasion for apprehension or disquiet. The condition of your affairs is sound, solid and prosperous. The resources of the country are ample and are always accumulating.

Prior to the introduction of the Budget, Harcourt had brought in a Local Option Bill, the principal object of which was to give the localities—the wards in the towns and the parishes in the country—by a direct vote of the ratepayers the power to prohibit the issue of licenses. It stipulated that the majority was to be two-thirds. The Bill also provided for Sunday closing by the will of a simple majority. The subject was one in which he had long been interested, and replying to a interruption, he said:

... An hon. member opposite challenged me, I thought with an ironical cheer, as to the date of my conversion on this subject. That question was once asked me in the House of Commons, and my answer—it was a true and sincere answer—was that it was from the date when in the responsibilities in the Home Department I had cognizance of those causes of crime which led many a man, aye, and many a woman, to the loss of liberty and life, and brought them even to a shameful death. Those are thoughts and reflections which are not easily effaced from the mind and conscience ...

But though the Bill was given a first reading, it was still-born. It evoked criticisms from one side and contrary proposals from the other. One group of the temperance party wanted Sunday closing to be made universal; another advocated the Gothenburg system, and brought forward in the House of Lords a rival measure, sponsored by the Bishop of Chester, for setting up limited liability companies to sell drink to the public under popular control, the profits to be applied to public needs; a third policy, that of the Church of England Temperance Society, proposed the reduction of licenses with compensation.

In addition to all this a Local Veto Bill for Wales, which Harcourt supported, was introduced, and, referring to the debate on it, Harcourt, in his customary letter to the Queen (March 15), signalled the appearance of a new figure, destined to play a conspicuous part in the affairs of the world. "There were some good speeches made on both sides,"
he said, "especially one by a Welsh member, Mr. Lloyd George, the young member for Carnarvon Boroughs."

But among the new forces on the Government side, Mr. Asquith had the most conspicuous place. He was in charge of the Employers' Liability Bill, and he introduced the Suspensory Bill, which, as Harcourt told the Queen in his official communication, was "brought forward as a preliminary to Welsh Disestablishment," its purpose being to "prevent for a limited time the creation of new interests in Church of England bishoprics, dignities and benefices in Wales and Monmouth." Harcourt was much impressed by Mr. Asquith's promise, and in a letter (April 15) congratulating him on "the splendid success of your great speech," he said:

... The brilliant manner in which you have exceeded the high expectations of your friends, both in and out of the House of Commons, is a supreme pleasure to us all and to none more than myself. It is a mighty strength and encouragement to a Party to have the prospect in the future of such a champion, and to look forward with confidence to the spes surgenti's Juli. ...

Harcourt himself was chiefly occupied in his departmental work and in relieving Gladstone of many of the tasks of leadership in the House, but he took his part in most of the debates, and was particularly active in support of the Parish Councils Bill, which fulfilled one of his most long-cherished aims, that of making village life brighter and more democratic. He supported the motion (March 24) in favour of the payment of members on the ground that a nation cannot adopt democratic principles and a democratic suffrage without accepting the consequences which naturally follow. "I have never believed in the theory which I know is entertained by some people," he said, "that you should take the wise and the good in order to administer the affairs of other people. That is the principle of a patronizing aristocracy or of a beneficent monarchy; that is not the basis of representative government." In his multitudinous records to the Queen of the course of the debates he did not spare his opponents. Thus, referring (March 1) to a
long debate on "the stale subject of Bimetallism," he said:

... The old fallacies of those who seek for the sake of their own advantage to raise the price of commodities by tampering with the currency were paraded once more with wearisome iteration. The debate was opened by Sir Meysey Thomson in rather a tiresome speech, and seconded by Mr. Samuel Montagu, the Jew banker. Mr. Gladstone at once replied in a firm and decided tone, speaking with great vivacity and force and treating the subject with all the light sarcasm of which he is such a master. Mr. Goschen replied in a speech which much astonished the House, which had been used to a totally different language from him. It was impossible to discover from his utterances which side he intended to espouse upon this vital question, upon which the commercial interests of the country depend.

The motion though ostensibly only declaring in favour of renewing the conference at Brussels and urging the delegates to discuss some new method of currency, was in fact directed to the overthrow of the single gold standard which has existed ever since the great war in this country, and which is believed by all sound financiers to be the basis of our commercial system, which has made London the money market of the world.

After dinner Mr. Chaplin rehearsed the whole bimetallic syllabus, and ended with a strong personal attack on the English delegates at Brussels, i.e. to those who maintained the monometallic system. To this Sir William Harcourt made a warm reply. The division was taken at twelve o'clock, and bimetallism was defeated—it may be hoped finally, by a majority of 81 to the great confusion of its leaders, Mr. Balfour, Mr. H. Chaplin and now Mr. Goschen. There was a good deal of cross voting. Some ministerialists voted for the motion, and many Unionists, including Lord R. Churchill and Mr. Chamberlain, supported the Government.

IV

This candid method of handling affairs led to some friction with the Queen. She was in no cordial frame of mind about the policy of the Government, and writing to Harcourt early in the Session, said:

Queen Victoria to Harcourt.

WINDSOR CASTLE, February 26.—The Queen thanks Sir Wm Harcourt for his regular and full reports of the proceedings in Parliament. She cannot, however, help saying that they fill her with grave anxiety. The measures lately introduced seem to her to tend towards the disruption of her Empire, and to the disestablishment of the ancient and venerated Church of England so bound up as it is with the Throne.
You seem to the Queen to be playing with fire, and she cannot think that loyal servants of the Crown can desire the results which they are likely to arrive at.

The Queen thanks Sir William Harcourt very much for his inquiries after her dear Granddaughter Princess Alice of Hesse. She has been very unwell this winter, and has had a bad attack in her ear from which however she has now happily recovered.

To this indictment, Harcourt replied with firmness, recalling to the Queen's recollection his letter to her in 1885, in which he expressed the opinion that "when the Government of that day was defeated by a combination of the Tory Party with the Irish Nationalists on the basis of an attack upon Lord Spencer's Irish Administration, and a pledge of amnesty to the Maamtrasna murderers, the old system of Irish Government had for the future become impossible, and that it would be necessary to resort to a new departure and a different policy." He said the Home Rule Bill conceded a far inferior degree of self-government to Ireland than that which "by the unanimous consent of Parliament and the Crown was granted in the year 1782 to what is called Grattan's Parliament," and he told the Queen in round terms that the country wanted the question "settled and put out of the way upon some moderate and reasonable footing," pointing to the results of the elections since the Bill had been introduced as his evidence on the point. As to the Welsh Bill, he said it did not involve the fate of the English Church, "though he agrees in the opinion lately expressed by Lord Derby that the spirit of the age is not favourable to ecclesiastical establishments as such. The real strength of the Church of England," he continued, "does not lie in her establishment or endowments." . . . "The case of the Church in Wales is in fact analogous to that of the Irish Church, the disestablishment of which Sir Wm. feels sure that the Queen recognizes to have been a just and necessary measure. It is impossible to justify or maintain an establishment for the benefit of a minority of a people." He concluded with a touch of that skill with the "trowel" which he shared with Disraeli:
. . . Sir William humbly trusts that he will have the Queen's forgiveness for endeavouring to show that, even if mistaken in his views in the character of one of the most loyal and devoted servants of Her person and the Crown, he is incapable of promoting any policy which in his conscience he believes would be injurious to Her Empire or Her Throne.

Sir William begs kindly to thank Your Majesty for informing him of the recovery of Princess Alice of Hesse. Her singular beauty and charming simplicity and grace left an impression not easily effaced.

The Princess and her brother appeared to Sir William like a prince and princess in a fairy tale. And he was especially struck with the pretty and graceful manner of the Grand Duke's affectionate devotion to the Queen.

The Queen replied through Ponsonby, who wrote:

*Ponsonby to Harcourt.*

**Buckingham Palace, February 27, 1893.**—The Queen has carefully read your letter received this morning.

Her Majesty says she certainly cannot remember a combination being effected between the Tory Party and the Irish Nationalists or any pledge being given by the Tory Party to amnesty murderers. But she does remember your advice given to her to oppose the Irish Nationalists' demands for a separate Parliament, which many of that Party explained were only the first steps to separation.

The Queen fully believes in your loyalty and patriotism, two characteristics which have not always been conspicuous among many of those who are now your friends and fellow-workers.

*Harcourt to Ponsonby.*

**11, Downing Street, February 28.**—It does not become a loyal subject to argue with the Queen.

If I were only conversing with you, I should remind you of the arrangement made by Lord R. Churchill with the Nationalists in 1885 that if they would turn out the Gladstone Govt. the Crimes Bill should not be renewed. The meeting of Lord Carnarvon with Parnell. The strict and effectual co-operation of the Parnellites with the Tories at the General Election of 1885. Hartington's speech in the Maamtrasna debate and at the dinner to Spencer in 1885.

However this is now ancient history. *Tempora mutantur.*

I am now engaged in shutting up public-houses and gin-palaces instead of Irish members.

Pray express to the Queen my humble thanks for the gracious expression towards myself, and offer my excuses for my absence from
the Drawing Room to-day as I am up to my chin in bimetallism to encounter the redoubtable Chaplin on that interesting topic.

_Ponsonby to Harcourt._

_WINDSOR CASTLE, March 3, 1893._—The correspondence of the last few days was solely between you and the Queen—so I told her of the contents of your letter. And she gave me no orders to reply. Therefore I only now write to thank you for yours, which tell me much which I did not know before. I cannot find Hartington’s speech pledging himself to amnesty murderers, nor did I know that Lord R. Churchill promised on behalf of his Government that they would not bring in a Crimes Act.

All the papers I have looked at, and my recollection of the conversation I had at the time, compel me to believe that Lord Carnarvon made no compact with Parnell—Lord Carnarvon denied that he had done so.

So we must leave off in disagreement—I believe my friend Lord Carnarvon, you believe your friend Mr. Parnell.

_Ponsonby to Harcourt._

_ST. JAMES’S PALACE, March 8, 1893._—My dear Harcourt, I am sorry I misread your letter, but am glad to find that you did not accuse your late colleagues of amnestying murderers.

I saw Spencer yesterday and explained to him that our correspondence had become academic as H.M. had dropped it—tho’ I had not. Yours very truly, Henry F. Ponsonby.

There was a further source of trouble a few weeks later. In Parliament the Opposition had adopted extreme obstructive tactics, and in his letters to the Queen Harcourt expressed himself on the subject with more freedom than discretion. This gave dissatisfaction, the nature of which is indicated in the following correspondence:

_Queen Victoria to Harcourt._

_VILLA PALMIERI, FLORENCE, March 29, 1893._—The Queen thanks Sir Wm. Harcourt for his full and regular reports. She does not like to enter on controversial subjects, but as Sir Wm. Harcourt so often refers with apparent indignation to the “obstructiveness” of the Opposition, she must observe that nothing could equal the obstructiveness of the Liberal-Radical Party when they were out of office, and that they have not much right to expect similar tactics not being pursued now. Besides, which Sir Wm. Harcourt must remember what a very strong and growing repugnance there is to Home Rule, and what a dread there is of the Bill passing, and how
this feeling is increasing in Ireland. Can the Govt. then wonder if great efforts are made to resist it—especially to resist the attempts to force it through in so great a hurry?

Harcourt to Ponsonby.

Treasury Chambers, April 5, 1893.—... I am not sorry to think that for the present at least my daily "news letter" (as it is called in India) is to be superseded, as it only earns me reproaches which may be just but which are not pleasant.

I have done my best to give a fair and impartial report and tell an unvarnished tale—and often sat up half the night when I was tired to death to accomplish the task. But I find that is not at all what is wanted, and that if I don’t chant a high Tory anthem on all occasions I only give offence—and that your pure Tory atmosphere does not tolerate the intrusion of any light but that to which it is accustomed. I am sorry for it, as I think it is sometimes an advantage even in the most august stations to hear both sides and to learn what are the views and sentiments of the majority of the H. of Commons and even of the responsible Government; indeed I can recall the times in the good old days when this was not impossible. But I find I was right when I told you the "initiative" would not do.¹ I am the last person in the world to force unwelcome truths on unwilling ears. I shall therefore in the future confine myself strictly to the narration of events without note or comment and leave to sound politicians like yourself to expound their bearing. You will filter out any noxious Liberal pollution. . . .

Ponsonby to Harcourt.

Florence, April 9, 1893.—It is always a real pleasure to the private secretary when the Queen and her Ministers agree, and therefore I am glad to perceive that Her Majesty and you have the same object in view.

She advises her ministers to listen to the other side, and you say that it is an advantage to her to hear both sides, and with this laudable object you both endeavour to promote each other’s happiness. I am afraid that neither fully relish the advice. No doubt it has its drawbacks—as the Irish judge said, "it often upsets one’s decision to hear the other side." But I think you are mistaken in supposing that your comments are "not wanted."

She reads your letters carefully and she discusses them, but she will have her say in return. Nor will I admit you are right, though when I spoke to you I thought you were, in saying the "initiative" would not do. I now think she expects it. You must not imagine that she considers you are wrong in telling her what you think, but

¹ This refers to a discussion in which it was suggested that Ministers should initiate the consideration of public questions with the Queen.
then you must not consider her wrong in telling you what she thinks. And, Mr. Gladstone always praises her for her "frankness."

The weather has been lovely, and H.M. visits the galleries and the churches, where the monks and priests gaze with wonder on the Mohammedan who wheels her chair and the legs of the Highlander who carries her cloak. . . .

*Harcourt to Ponsonby.*

'II, Downing Street, April 12, 1893.—Many thanks for your good-natured letter. You are always good-natured. I am in the unfortunate position of being compelled all day and all night long to "hear both sides," especially the other side. If I enjoyed the prerogative of protecting myself from hearing anything but what I approved I have no doubt I should gladly avail myself of it. But you will admit that I shall be wise to avoid controversies when it would not be becoming in me to "answer back." I remember a very wise saying of dear old Dizzy in this connection: "I never contradict, but I sometimes forget." This appears singularly applicable to the present situation.

We are going on grinding the old tunes on the old hurdy-gurdy here without producing any effect on either side on the votes of the H. of C. or the opinion of the country.

After this incident Harcourt’s official letters to the Queen lost something of their former liveliness, but they continued to be excellent summaries of the proceedings in the House, enlivened with personal jottings about the speeches of members and the incidents of the debates.

At no period of their long and not always harmonious association were the relations of Gladstone and Harcourt pleasanter than during these closing months of the former’s public life. The two statesmen were in constant communication on a multitude of subjects, and were generally in complete agreement. Gladstone’s letters were now generally touched with the note of farewell, as when writing to Harcourt (December 9) on the London "Betterment" Bill, he concluded, "Pray do not let it hamper you or Asquith, both of whom probably understand the subject much better than I do," or when dealing with the conduct of business in the House, he said (September 16):
I only wish I could presume that this was the last of the incapacies by which I was to be burdensome to my colleagues; but I hope to scramble through the year without more defalcation by truancy, and as to what is beyond. *Quid sit futurum erat fuge quere.*

There is a touching picture of the venerable leader in a letter from Harcourt to his son (May 30):

. . . I had a rather painful interview with Mr. G. this morning. He began by telling me that his eyesight was almost altogether gone, and that he could not read MSS. at all and hardly a book. His mind was evidently much confused, and we could make little of Irish finance. J. Morley came in whilst we were talking, and was very amiable and reasonable. Mr. G. was much taken aback when we told him that we could not reach the financial clauses before July. He has evidently no idea of the task before him. It is all very sad. He made a most inefficient speech in the H. of C. this afternoon, almost incoherent, and very weak in voice and manner. It distressed all much. You would say he was twenty years older than he was before the holidays. . . .

But there was no apparent loss of power in his letters to Harcourt dealing with the graver affairs that arose as the Session proceeded, whether in Parliament or abroad. On foreign policy, as on finance, he and Harcourt had common ground, and in the discussions which took place during the summer on the subject of Egypt they were in full agreement. Harcourt drew up the provisional terms of evacuation with the right of re-entry, and in the debate in the House raised by Dilke on the subject there was a preponderance of opinion on the duty of fulfilling the undertaking to withdraw. But the moment was not opportune. Public feeling was still much disturbed in regard to the attitude of France, and at the end of July the relations of the two countries assumed a threatening aspect over the French ultimatum to Siam. Harcourt was away at the most critical moment of the affair, having, with his son and Millais, gone with the Brassesys for a sail in the Channel in the *Sunbeam*. Owing to a mistake by an official on the spot, the French were reported to have issued orders to our two little gunboats at Bangkok to clear out of the place before they began their *blocus*. The report created the greatest alarm. Late at night
(July 30) Gladstone summoned a Cabinet meeting for the next day, and in at least one London newspaper office a leader was in type announcing that we were at war with France. Happily the mistake (due to an imperfect knowledge of French on the part of the official) was found out during the night, and the storm passed as suddenly as it had arisen, the Siamese bowing to the French ultimatum. But the incident was symptomatic of the feverish state of Anglo-French relations then and for some years to come. Harcourt came back to find the danger over, and writing to Lord Rosebery (August 4), said:

... I must write you a line of congratulation on your brilliant success in the settlement of Siam.... However, last Saturday I braved the danger, and entered the port of Havre at the critical moment, and was not made a prisoner of war. You little know how much of your success on that fatal Sunday depended upon the appearance in Rouen of the brave crew of the Sunbeam, which carried terror into the souls of the French. . . .

Of the personal incidents of this time, one or two claim brief notice. The relations of Harcourt and his elder son continued of that mutually absorbing nature which had been their character for thirty years. Approaches had been made to the younger man to become a candidate for Parliament, but he preferred to remain as his father's private secretary. Harcourt, however, was anxious that he should have an independent career, and the Office of Woods and Forests becoming vacant, he wrote to his son urging him, if it was offered him, to accept it. In the course of a moving letter (September 11) he said: "You are young, I am old. You are coming on, I am going off. My time, certainly in public life, is not for long. I should like to feel that you are settled and independent, and that when I am gone you had a life and occupation already settled for you." He glanced at an eventuality, which at this time seemed assured, when he added, "Of course if patronage of this kind ever fell into my hands it would be more difficult for me to give it you than if it came from Mr. Gladstone." Lewis Harcourt's reply was:
I do not wish to take or do anything which would cut me off from my work with you, in which I think I am of some real use at times.

2nd. It would be denounced as a "job" (which it would be), and would damage you and the Govt.

3rd. It would cut me off altogether from political life, which I am fond of.

So don't let us think any more of it.

Bless you.

Harcourt persisted. "I know very well that you want to look after me at your own expense. This however I do not intend you should do," he said. But the son was adamant. "The place where I am happiest and of most use is by your side, and I want to stay there," he wrote, and Harcourt telegraphed, "Bless you for your letter. I accept your decision gratefully."

In September Harcourt, his wife and his eldest son went to Italy, calling at Wiesbaden for a consultation with the oculist on the way. Writing to Ponsonby (September 22), he said:

... I start for foreign parts Friday next. This happy nation will be better governed for the next weeks than it has been all the rest of the year. There will be no Parliament, no ministers and no permanent heads of departments in London, and everything will go well.

I hope you will not allow Rosebery to disturb your slumbers by alarms as to foreign affairs—I will take care of the Triple Alliance at Como, and if necessary engage the French and Russian fleets in the Mediterranean.

It was a happy holiday which recalled old memories. Writing to his sister Emily from Venice (October 15), he said:

... I cannot be in this place without having my mind and my heart full of the recollections of our youth when we first saw it together more than forty years ago. Since that we have had many sorrows, but also much happiness. But amidst all my memories there is none more charming to me than that of our Italian tour in our early days. I have been once since to Venice with Loulou when he was ten years old, when we travelled together alone, and we were as close friends then as we are now. He remembers it all as if it were yesterday, and it is a great joy to me to have lived to come
back to it again with him after twenty years. I wish you were with us, and it would make the revival perfect. . . . I spent my sixty-sixth birthday here yesterday, an age which when you and I were here I thought it impossible to reach, and with Lily and Loulou I feel very grateful and happy in the home which makes me so happy and surrounds me with affection and care. . . .

From Florence (October 20) he wrote to Gladstone a gay letter of his experiences and meetings with old friends, which began:

Your letter from Hawarden of the 16th reached me here to-day oppressed with all the delightful sensations of a truant who has escaped from school. Alas, regardless of their doom the little victims play; no sense have they of ills to come, of cares beyond to-day. I am sure it must be extremely wrong, because it is so exceedingly pleasant. . . .

Refreshed by his holiday, Harcourt returned to England to carry out his winter offensive against the shameless people, admirals and generals and statesmen, who wanted to dip their hands deeper into the public purse.
CHAPTER XIV

GLADSTONE RESIGNS

The Naval Scare—Struggle over the Estimates—Lord George Hamilton’s Motion—An Admonition from the Queen—Gladstone threatens Resignation—Perturbation at Biarritz—Declaration against the Lords—An “Outrageous Canard.”

WHEN Harcourt returned from Italy the crisis in the fortunes of the Liberal Party which had long been foreseen and had been periodically discussed was imminent. It was plain to all men that the close of the public career of Gladstone was only a question of weeks or months. He had remained in office far beyond the normal limits of nature, and with the defeat of the Home Rule Bill in the House of Lords the last bond which attached him to public life was broken. He could not hope, after this second failure, to carry to a successful issue the policy which alone had kept him in politics for the past nine years, and with that hope gone his sense of duty no longer opposed an obstacle to the enjoyment of that rest to which he had long looked forward. In any circumstances, it may be supposed, the end would not have been delayed, but the storm that arose in the autumn on the subject of the Navy estimates definitely hastened his decision. It brought him into sharp disagreement with most of the prominent members of the Cabinet, and even Harcourt himself was not prepared to carry his opposition to the Admiralty proposals to the extreme limit urged by his Chief. It was a time of panic, and Gladstone had no disposition to enquire his career as the instrument of what he felt to be an unreasoning fear.

For some time one of those periodical naval alarms which are familiar in our history, and which so easily seize
a people whose life is dependent on the sea, had been gathering force. Ever since the renewal of the Triple Alliance, and the understanding between France and Russia there had developed a spirit of disquiet in the relations of England and France. There was a conviction in the latter country that the Salisbury Administration had been too friendly towards Germany, and the suspicion expressed itself in a series of incidents, in Central Africa, in Egypt and in the East. The momentary panic over the Bangkok affair indicated the state of nerves into which the official world had fallen. The fever, as usual, focused itself on the most vulnerable spot, and the controversy over the Navy, waged by Harcourt with the Admiralty at the close of 1892, was resumed in the autumn of 1893 in a much more combustible atmosphere. The Press was now in full cry, with the pacifist, W. T. Stead, heading a sort of holy crusade for "two keels to one," and Fleet Street pouring out comparisons of the British fleet and the French fleet. The scare was aggravated by the terrible disaster to the Victoria, which was rammed by another battleship, the Royal Sovereign, in the Mediterranean in June 1893. The calamity caused much concern as to the administration of the Navy, and led to many discussions in Parliament and much controversy in the Press.

In these favourable circumstances the Admiralty put forward proposals which marked a further great advance in naval expenditure, the increase over the normal Navy estimates of 1888–9 (i.e. before the Naval Defence Act) being some four and a half millions, and three millions over the estimates of the preceding year. Into the details of the discussions which Harcourt carried on with the Admiralty it is not necessary to enter fully here. He kept the argument mainly to capital ships, and refused to be alarmed by the fact (curiously parallel with the situation twenty years later) that French naval policy aimed at the multiplication of mosquito craft. Harcourt opened his campaign by revising the Admiralty's comparison of British and French first-class battleships, and writing to Spencer said:
Harcourt to Spencer.

II, Downing Street, September 28, 1893,— . . . You will see therefore that if the French and the Russians sent every first-class battleship they had into the Mediterranean we could match them there ship for ship and still have ten first-class battleships equal to the whole of the French force available for any purpose in the Channel.

If that is not an overwhelming naval superiority, I don't know what is.

The timidity of these modern admirals and sea-captains, I confess, dismays me.

In the good old days there was a firm belief, which realized itself, that one Englishman was equal to three Frenchmen, but now apparently the faith of these scared tars is that one Frenchman and half a Russian is equal to three Englishmen. Nothing else but such a belief could account for the naval panic.

As regards the great cruisers which will command the distant seas our superiority is even more overwhelming. It is quite obvious that there are not six vessels if you put the whole world together that could meet our fleet, which is more than three times that number.

But, as Brassey well points out, numbers are not the only test. He has taken the trouble to analyse their relative tonnage displacements. He shows that the nineteen British first-class battleships (as admitted by the Admiralty) have a tonnage of 230,500 as against a tonnage of 107,145 for the ten French ships, and if you add, as he proposes, six more ships to the British first-class you will have a tonnage of 290,000 British against 107,000 of first-class French, that is to say a superiority of three to one of the British over the French.

Added to this of course nearly half the British are new ships, and therefore presumably superior in pattern, speed and guns to the French ships in the corresponding class. Upon this in his letter to me Brassey observes, "In each case we see that the superiority in tonnage is greater than the numerical superiority. We build larger and more costly and presumably more powerful ships than those laid down by foreign powers. Hence a mere comparison of numbers will not fairly represent the relative strength." If it is said that the French have laid down four or five new ships, I observe in the French list that the earliest of these ships will not be completed before '96, and the others in '97, but even if we were not to build another first-class ship till '97 we should still, when these French ships were completed, have a majority of ten vessels over the French.

I am very anxious to bring your admirals to book in particulars, and not to let them ride off in vague generalities.

I should like very much to have their specific observations on the case as I have stated it. . . .
"As far as my humble opinion is worth anything, I prefer the experience of the Admiralty to that of Brassey in regard to classification," wrote Spencer (October 29), in sending Harcourt papers drawn up by Sir William White and Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge, and he proceeded to reject the method of reckoning naval strength merely by capital ships:

* * * Where we are dangerously weak (he contended) in case of a sudden outbreak of war is in torpedo-boats. The French have swarms of them. Our policy is to build very fast torpedo-gunboats or destroyers to run down and destroy these torpedo boats; but we have not enough yet for safety. We do not attempt to compete with the French as to numbers. ... Torpedo attack will render the Downs, Spithead and Portsmouth, unless protected, useless for our fleets. The Downs and Spithead cannot, it is thought, be protected. Portland, Southampton Water, Portsmouth and (?) can be, and we are preparing to do this with booms. ..."

Harcourt, still sticking to capital ships, retorted that on their own figures the Admiralty admitted that our present superiority was nine over the French alone and six over the French and Russians combined, and that if we did not lay down a ship for three years we should still have "a good superiority over the French." And writing later to Spencer, he said:

_Harcourt to Spencer._

11, Downing Street, November 20.—I am much obliged for the further papers you have sent me. What is really wanted is that the public should be informed of the true facts as we know them, and not be scared by the lying statements of _The Times_. At this moment the world at large are fully convinced that our fleet instead of being vastly superior to the French and Russians combined is "miserably inferior" to the French alone, vide Sir S. Baker's letter to _The Times_ of to-day.

I send you some papers which I have drawn up from your materials which give a _conspicuous_ of the _actual_ and _future_ condition of the several navies.

As to the Russian navy in the Black Sea—as I pointed out that fleet cannot enter the Mediterranean except on condition of war with Germany, Austria or Italy, and it is at least as reasonable to join to our navy the fleets of those Powers as to add that of the Russians to the French navy. But the principle of the alarmists is to pile up
very conceivable contingency probable or improbable on one side, and to admit no possible contingency on the other. . . .

I enclose (on note paper) a list of Russian ships, and should be glad to have a red mark put against those which are in the Black Sea.

How ridiculous it is to suppose that France and Russia are to drive the English out of the Mediterranean and to take no account of the Italian fleet, which in such an event would instantly join ours and far more than counterbalance the Russians. . . .

The question which puzzled your admirals, viz., why the Russians were building so largely in the Black Sea, seems to me plain enough. They know well enough that in case of a war with Turkey, in which we were the allies of the Turk, we should have free access through the Bosphorus to the Black Sea, and therefore to the vitals of Russia. And the Russian fleet is intended to keep us out of the Black Sea and not to fight us in the Mediterranean. . . .

He exposed (November 27) what he regarded as the knavish tricks of the admirals in ignoring the comparative speed of building in regard to projected ships, insisted that the only just comparison was with France, and that the Russian combination was "a political chimera," and proceeded:

. . . It is quite plain to me that if France and Russia indulge themselves in the amusement of going to war with us in the next four years we ought to give them a tremendous licking, and I don't mean to be scared under those circumstances, nor would any man of common sense who knew the facts. The misfortune of it is that the facts are not known, and the most ridiculous falsehoods on this subject are circulated without contradiction. . . .

"A great part of the scare," he wrote next day, "is due to fixing public attention on the superiority of the French in the Mediterranean, totally ignoring the resources of each nation elsewhere. You could easily put an end to this by making the British force at Malta more powerful than that of the French, which you have abundant means to do, and then this silly outcry would be put an end to. I think this would be a good thing to do, though it might cost a little more money—but not near as much as a scare." He returned again (December 9) to what he described as the deliberate withholding of the true facts from the public by the authorities, while the scaremongers were left a free field for the wildest exaggeration:
December 9.—... I will give a single example out of a thousand, a sentence in the Economist of to-day which, in commenting on George Hamilton's article, says, "His Lordship comes before us armed with irrefutable facts and figures, and he proves that in the event of a great European war breaking out at the present moment we are in no condition to place in the Mediterranean a sufficient number of first-rate line-of-battle ships to enable us to face the combined fleets of France and Russia, nor indeed to decisively overmatch the French fleet alone."

These are the statements everywhere put forward and universally believed, to which no official contradiction is given, though they are demonstrably untrue, and you know and I know that at the present moment we could if we chose put fifteen first-rate line-of-battle ships against ten of the French in the Mediterranean, and that in three months' time we could put two to one.

I cannot think it right that a responsible Government should allow the nation to be deliberately deceived as to its actual situation.

This has become with me a very vital question, and I can no longer consent to be a party to withholding from the public the true facts of the case. . . .

The controversy grew heated and words strong. "As to what you please to call your observations," wrote Spencer. "Though I have no hunters I can always plant cabbages," remarked Harcourt, with a gay glance at the worst that could happen to him. "You say I gave you no information yesterday except as to the seven battleships," said Spencer (December 28). "I was fully prepared to tell you my story, but whenever I attempted to do so, you checked me or stopped me, or you only accepted information in your own favour, and did not let me unfold what I wished as to cruisers or torpedo-boat destroyers." "No sooner do the Admiralty supply me with one document than I am told they are not prepared to abide by it, but are cooking up something else," is the conclusion of a fulmination from the Treasury.

And so the battle went on behind the scenes. Meanwhile it was going on in Parliament also. Lord George Hamilton initiated an attack on December 20, to which Harcourt replied in a long speech reviewing the naval situation in Europe, and analysing the causes of a scare which, he
argued, had no basis in the facts either as to the present or the future. "One of the fallacies by which the public mind has been abused," he said, "is the lumping together of ships which will not be finished for four years and treating them on a par with ships which will be finished in a month," and referring to the position in regard to France, he said:

... That is a statement which I believe, if it had been known to the British public, would have removed a great part of the alarm which has been created, and we should not have had to-night the statement of the right hon. gentleman that, if war were now declared against us, we should have to cut and run from the Mediterranean. How many battleships are the French going to have in the Mediterranean on the hypothesis of the right hon. gentleman that we should have to cut and run from those waters? If they put eight there they will have only two in the Channel against our seven. It is only a question of distribution. But, whatever way you arrange the distribution, you will always be able to put two battleships to one of the French. (Oh!) Well, is that an arithmetical proposition?...

As regards the future we mean to maintain the supremacy of the British navy; we claim to watch and to examine and keep pace with the navies of the world. We hold as strongly as you do—as any man in this House can hold—that the greatness, the might, and the existence of England depends upon her navy and its supremacy. We are bound in the interests of this country to satisfy ourselves of the facts with reference to the supremacy, and not to go to the wild talk and misrepresentation, in my opinion, which has for some weeks very much abused the mind of the British public. I have stated to the House the facts as I have ascertained them. I have spared no pains in informing myself upon that subject. I believe that the facts I have laid before the House are facts which cannot be disputed. At all events, they come from the highest authority from which either the House or the Government could derive them.

Commenting on the debate in his report to the Queen (December 23), Harcourt pointed the familiar moral of these naval scares:

... It is interesting to observe that the scare which has been started in England has communicated itself to France, and that all the French newspapers with M. Clemenceau at their head are denouncing the inefficiency of the French navy quite as loudly as the English press is preaching alarm as to the English force. The result will probably be that both countries will expend large sums of money in terror of one another, and in the end their relative situation will remain the same...
Harcourt’s confident assurances were coldly received, as the following letter indicates:

_Possonby to Harcourt._

_Osborne, December 29._— . . . The Queen regrets to learn from you that there has been much misinterpretation on the subject of the navy, and regrets that the opportunity was not taken in the recent debate to clear these mistakes away. But they seem to have been made worse by the speeches. But the Queen is glad to observe that the Government are carefully considering what measures are necessary for maintaining the British supremacy at sea; she trusts that she will before long be assured by you that some bold measures are immediately forthcoming.

The remark that "they seem to have been made worse by the speeches" was a direct rebuke to Harcourt. In his speech he had quoted "the professional advisers of the Admiralty" as his authority. It was a daring proceeding, for he was still "having it out" with the Admiralty, and he was instantly assailed in and out of Parliament for having misrepresented the "professional advisers," and charged with having received a protest from them in regard to his speech. He pointed out that he had claimed the support of the Naval Lords on the simple point of the relative forces of the various countries "in respect of first-class battleships completed within the financial year," and the text of his speech confirms this; but the impression conveyed no doubt went further. Harcourt made his meaning clear in a personal statement the following day, and his assailants in the Press, unaccustomed to anything in the nature of an apology from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, promptly and joyously assumed the worst, declared that the Sea Lords had "all resigned in a body after the debate in the House," and that Harcourt had had to surrender to them.

II

The Sea Lords had not resigned; but it was true that the tide of public panic was flowing too strong to be resisted. It was Harcourt’s practice to fight to the last gasp with the
departments over the estimates, and then, having done
his best, frankly to accept the situation and to defend them
in the House as the representative of the Government whose
decision had overruled the views of the Treasury. He was
still engaged in his forlorn battle against the spending
departments; but without hope of success. "The real
mischief is the powerlessness of governments," he wrote
to Campbell-Bannerman (January 19, 1894), "until the
country smarting under an intolerable load of taxation
takes the matter out of their hands and insists that a bit
should be put in the mouths of the generals and admirals.
We are actually in the condition of a householder whose
weekly bills are at the mercy of a French chef, over whom
he has no control." "I commend the enclosed article to
your attention," he wrote to Spencer (January 22). "I
have always suspected that the French programme was a
sham, and I have no doubt that the admirals knew it to be
so." "I always protest against insinuations of dishonesty
on the part of the Admiralty," retorted Spencer (January
24), "and I now repeat my protest as to the tone of your
short note."

But a more important dissentient from the Admiralty
proposals than Harcourt was now in the field. The Journal
on January 4 reports "an acute crisis in Downing Street.
Gladstone still persists in his determination to resign,
nominally on the ground of failing faculties, but really on
the navy." Harcourt was in the position at this moment
of fighting on both flanks. While he was hurling his thun-
derbolts at the Admiralty on the ground of what he regarded
as their extravagant claims, he was engaged in an argument
with Gladstone to show that the amended proposals he had
secured were less alarming than they might be, and that
"on the whole, as far as I can ascertain, the actual increase
on navy votes will be £1,500,000 above the average of the
last five years, which is a very different thing from the
£4,000,000 represented by Spencer, who took no account
of the £2,000,000 now supplied out of the Consolidated
Fund." Gladstone was not reassured. He wrote:
Gladstone to Harcourt.

To, Downing Street, December 30, 1893.—I. Does not the amended view of the proposal come to this:

An exceptional expenditure having been proposed by the late Government to make up arrears and lay in a store for the future—and having been a good deal objected to for excess (as well as on financial grounds) by the Liberal Party—it is proposed to adopt a rate equal to the whole of that exceptional expenditure, and to add to it a million and a half?

There ought really to be clear and intelligible figures from the Admiralty as a preliminary to any discussion on this subject.

Lastly, are you quite sure about the average of the last five years' value as the standard?

There followed a characteristic correspondence between the two statesmen in which they bandied precedents and figures bearing on the situation. The letters were interspersed with meetings in which, as the Journal (January 6) records, Harcourt told Gladstone that if he resigned he would ruin the Liberal Party. "W. V. H. said he was as strongly opposed to Spencer's proposals as Gladstone himself, but that unfortunately Spencer, by his weakness, had irrevocably committed himself to his admirals, and as no other Board of Admiralty or First Lord could be got, we had to make the best of a bad job." [H.] But Gladstone was unmoved, and at a Cabinet meeting three days later practically announced his resignation if the Navy Estimates were persisted in and supported by the Cabinet. "He referred," says the Journal, "to the traditions he had held for forty years, his responsibility for combating the militarism of Europe, etc.; the temptation given by a great navy to join European combinations, especially the Triple Alliance, etc." [H.]

After this meeting, and the clear evidence that the Cabinet were against him, the only question was whether it would be wiser for Gladstone to resign at once or delay until the next month or so. Mr. Morley, Mr. Asquith and Lord Rosebery left the Cabinet to consult together, and Mr. Morley has put it on record that "the view undoubtedly was that now is the accepted time for our Chief's
resignation." ¹ He adds that at the House of Commons most of his Cabinet colleagues were for immediate retirement—in his own phrase were "this-weekers" rather than "next-monthers."

There are several touching glimpses in the Journal of the aged statesman in these days when he was engaged in the last phase of his public life. Thus:

. . . Mr. G. seems never to have told her (Mrs. Gladstone) the truth of the probability of his resignation, and last night made Mary Drew ask John Morley to dine at No. 10, saying, "He will explain the present situation to you," which he, J. M., had to do after dinner to Mrs. G. and Mary Drew in one corner of the room, while Mr. G. played backgammon in the other with Armitstead.

Gladstone told W. V. H. last night, almost with tears in his eyes, that he had suffered a great loss at Hawarden by the falling down in the recent gale of the two splendid beech trees in front of the house. [H.]

In the discussions of the "this-weekers" and "next-monthers," Harcourt was strongly for delay, urged Gladstone to reconsider his decision, and sent Lewis Harcourt to Lord Acton, who was about to accompany Gladstone to Biarritz, to prime him with the arguments which Harcourt thought would most effectively appeal to his Chief during his holiday reflections. Those reflections were troubled, as appears from this letter from E. W. Hamilton to Harcourt:

E. W. Hamilton to Harcourt.

Treasury Chambers, January 29.—I have seen Acton to-day, who has just arrived from Biarritz. He fully confirms what Algy West said as to Mr. G.'s great excitability and the fierceness of his mood; and I understand that he won't admit the possibility of any change of mind. But there are considerations which make me think that the door is still ajar.

(1) He is apparently catching at straws, doubts the absolute unanimity of his colleagues against him and so forth.

(2) Precedents are, as you know, always dear to him; and the precedent of 1859 is (I gather) what Mrs. G. would call "soaking."

(3) The family, now being frightened by the risk which his reputation would run if it came to his firing into the flank of his guandam colleagues, are now urging him at all cost to remain.

(4) The difficulties which he sees in telling only half or a quarter of the truth to the Queen are growing in his mind.

In the midst of his perturbations at Biarritz, the action of the House of Lords suggested to Gladstone a way out of his difficulties. The session begun a year before was still dragging on, and in January the Lords struck a deadly blow at the principle of the Employers' Liability Bill by adopting an amendment reserving to the workman individual freedom to contract himself out of the Bill and its benefits. They also mutilated the Parish Councils Bill. Harcourt went to Derby, and delivered a wrathful attack on the House of Lords. We had been too long, he said, a peer-ridden nation, and the time was at hand when the issue as to whether the Commons or the Lords should prevail must be tried, and he had no doubt about the result. He protested against the idea that the House of Lords should be able to force a popular referendum whenever they disagreed with the decision of the House of Commons. And, criticizing Chamberlain's support of the Tory opposition to Liberal measures, he quoted from that statesman's Denbigh speech of 1884, in which he asked, "Are you going to be governed by yourselves or will you submit to an oligarchy which is the mere accident of birth?" and declared that "the chronicles of the House of Lords are one long record of concessions delayed until they have lost their grace, of rights denied until extorted from their fears." Chamberlain retaliated at Birmingham (January 30) with characteristic acidity. Accepting Harcourt's designation of him as "a Radical whose Radical days had passed away," he said:

... Certainly, my Radicalism is not of Sir William Harcourt's stamp. I was a Radical when Sir William Harcourt was coqueting with the Tory Party and was believed, not I think without good reason, to be willing to take office under Mr. Disraeli. I continued to be a Radical when Sir William Harcourt became a moderate Whig and an arm-chair politician, and I remained a Radical when Sir William Harcourt was "stewing in Parnellite juice," but I have no sympathy at all with the new Radicalism, of which Sir William Harcourt is now a conspicuous supporter, though a recent convert.
Harcourt replied in a rollicking speech to the National Liberal Federation at Portsmouth on February 14, in which he belaboured Chamberlain with his own unauthorized programme, and showed how he was now supporting the Lords in defeating it. He renewed his attack on the Lords, and roused the meeting to great enthusiasm. It was in this speech that he proclaimed the policy of “filling up the cup” in the following passage:

... The last fortnight’s work in the House of Lords has marvellously opened the eyes of the people and advanced public opinion. Give them rope enough. Let us have a few more such fortnights; let the handwriting on the wall be so clear that he who runs may read; let it burn into the minds and consciences of the people that it is not upon one question, or upon two questions, or upon three questions, but upon all questions that the House of Lords is the champion of all abuses and the enemy of all reform. Let the objection-lessons be many, let the moral be flagrant, let us send them up bill after bill—all these bills you see on the walls around you. Let them maul, mangle and mutilate, and defeat them, “for it is their nature to”; and, then, when the cup is full, and the time is ripe, the verdict of the people shall be taken on the general issue, and they shall determine once for all whether the whisper of faction is to prevail over the will of the people.

In one respect he disappointed his audience. He did not declare for an immediate appeal to the country. “The meeting waited for the signal to go for the Lords, and this they did not get,” said one commentator in the Press.

What the meeting did not know was that from Biarritz Gladstone had given the signal, and that it had been turned down by his colleagues. In his perplexity he had seized on the mutilation of the Government bills by the Lords as a means of escape. Let there be a dissolution, and an appeal to the country against the House of Lords on their recent aggressions. That would give the Party any prestige which his name supplied for the purposes of an election, and enable him to retire from the field afterwards without the appearance of disagreement with his colleagues. The idea was emphatically rejected, and Gladstone, checked in this direction, returned to carry out his resignation. Meanwhile the news that he was contemplating retirement had
got into the Press, and had been the subject of a diplomatic
denial. "It hardly needed your contradiction," wrote
Harcourt. "Indeed I feel sure that the Liberal Party
would not credit it even on your own authority, so impossible
does it seem to all of us that we should exist without you at
our head." But he knew that the end had come, and that
the confirmation of the Pall Mall Gazette's "outrageous
canard" was only a question of a few days.
CHAPTER XV
ROSEBERY OR HARCOURT


HARCOURT had abundant reason to know how solid the basis was for the "outrageous canard," for throughout the past month, following on Gladstone's announcement to the Cabinet of his refusal to endorse the naval estimates, the inner counsels of the Party had been seething with one question—who was to succeed? That question had been debated for twenty years past, ever since Gladstone's temporary retirement after the defeat of 1874. Throughout that time, and even at that time, Harcourt had been among the obvious competitors for the succession. He had been a great parliamentary figure before most of those who were now his colleagues were in the House. He had seen a long line of possible successors to the leadership of the Party pass away from the field, either by death or disagreement. In the country his popularity was inferior only to that of Gladstone himself, and in the House of Commons there was, again apart from Gladstone, no one on the Liberal side with anything approaching his parliamentary gifts. It was said that he was insincere. That is a charge which few public men escape, and it would be idle to deny that in the long and combative career he had lived in the public eye he had sometimes given apparent ground for the suspicion. His record on Ireland—to take a conspicuous case—was at least as
equivocal as that of Chamberlain, though it was more defensible on the plea which he always advanced that the negotiations of the Conservatives with the Parnellites in 1885 had made coercion as a policy no longer tenable. His conversion to Home Rule was due to practical considerations rather than to the compulsion of fundamental ideas, but in this respect it did not differ from the conversion of many others, including many Conservatives who, brought into contact with the facts of Ireland, changed their view as to the relations of the two countries.

But making the utmost allowance for the criticisms that could be fairly made against him in this and other cases, it remains true that, seen in the large, Harcourt's public career had been singularly disinterested and honest. He had broken as a young man with the political traditions of his family, and had proclaimed at Cambridge nearly fifty years before much the same views that he now held. He had refused the temptation held out to him to become a protégé of the great Whig magnates, and had preferred to earn his own living and secure his own independence before he entered upon a public career. He was over forty before he went into Parliament, and when he accepted office he surrendered one of the most valuable practices at the Bar for a calling which, taking his career as a whole, hardly provided him with the income of a head clerk. And to that calling he had brought powers of the highest order which he had applied with an industry and an enthusiasm, of which even this long record of his activities gives only an inadequate appreciation. His loyalty to his Party was unquestioned, and his loyalty to a certain fundamental philosophy of affairs which represented to him the bedrock ideas of the Liberal faith was equally unquestionable.

Whether from the point of view of opinions, capacity or experience, therefore, the title of Harcourt to succeed Gladstone seemed unchallenged so far as the House of Commons was concerned. It was in the House of Lords that his real rival was to be found. Lord Rosebery was, of course, a much younger man than Harcourt. He had
first came into prominence in connection with Gladstone's Midlothian campaign in 1880, and though his public record was slight compared with that of Harcourt, he was richly endowed with those qualities which touch the popular imagination. He was the Prince Charming of politics, who came into the rather drab arena of affairs trailing a cloud of romantic possibilities in his wake. The good fairies had been surprisingly lavish in bringing their gifts to his cradle. They had supplied him with wealth that placed him far outside the pale of vulgar competition. They had given him a quick, apprehensive mind, a rare quality of eloquence and a delicate wit. He had that elusive quality which we describe vaguely as personality, a certain touch of mystery or magic that singles a man out from the mob and compels attention whether we like or dislike him, trust or distrust him. He was none the less popular with Liberals because he possessed in an unusual degree the tastes and graces which traditionally belonged to the Tories. He disarmed the enemy by the royal authority with which he challenged them on their own ground. He was a connoisseur and a sportsman, a courtier and a man of fashion. He could turn his hand to any task with a facile accomplishment that never failed to give it distinction. He kept the public mind alive with agreeable expectancy. He fascinated it by the variety of his gifts and a certain incalculable waywardness of temperament. Popular opinion had attributed to him the triple ambition of marrying the richest heiress in England, winning the Derby and becoming Prime Minister, and, though the attribution probably did him an injustice, it reflected the public feeling in regard to this favourite of fortune. He had added largely to his prestige in recent years by accepting the chairmanship of the new London County Council, and working at the task with conspicuous industry and enthusiasm. But he had grave disqualifications for the succession to the Liberal leadership. He had never sat in the House of Commons, and the growing hostility between the two Houses had increased the Liberal feeling against a Prime Minister
who was in the Upper Chamber. His Liberalism was more than a little touched with Imperialism, and there was already visible in him an instability of purpose which made his action incalculable. If Harcourt blew hot, Lord Rosebery was apt to blow hot and cold. During the formation of the Government he had been as difficult to entrap as a startled hare, and had apparently only surrendered in the end out of sheer weariness of fleeing from the pursuit.

When the retirement of Gladstone became imminent, it was evident that the question of the succession would arouse great feeling. If the decision had rested with the rank and file of the party in the country or with the majority of the Party in the House of Commons there is little doubt that the overwhelming claims which Harcourt's services and record constituted would have secured him the succession. But the decision rested with Harcourt's colleagues in the Government, and sensible as they were of his title they were equally sensible of the difficulties of his temper. Most of them had smarted under the whip of his formidable tongue and not less formidable pen, and his uncalculating emphasis in controversy took no account of consequences. He bore no malice, at once forgot his quarrels, and gurgled with great laughter as soon as the storm had passed. But other men remembered, and were less ready to forgive than he was to forget. Harcourt was perfectly aware of the feeling against him and of the cause. In the midst of the crisis the Journal records (February 21):

I dined with the Spencers at the Admiralty to-night, and walked away from there with Lord Acton, who said that "remarkable though it would seem to everyone, Gladstone, if asked by the Queen for advice, will not recommend her to send for W. V. H., but probably suggest that Kimberley should advise her further as Leader in the Lords."

Acton said: "Your father is not good at making friends."

I replied: "On the contrary he has a facility for making enemies."

Acton added: "And even apparently a malicious delight in doing so." [H.]

At this time Harcourt was still urging Gladstone to withhold his resignation. There had been a Cabinet dinner
at 10, Downing Street on February 17, at which the "This-weekers" of the pre-Biarritz days expected to hear the definitive announcement of retirement, but still Gladstone gave no sign. The Journal records:

10.45 p.m.—The dreaded dinner is over, and nothing has happened! After the servants had left the room ministers made constant pauses in the general conversation to allow Gladstone to commence any statement he had to make, but he never did so. Herschell sat on one side of Gladstone and Rosebery on the other. W. V. H. was opposite to him between Kimberley and Arnold Morley; no names were put on the places, and no one was instructed where to sit, so everything was more or less haphazard. The table was beautifully decorated with snowdrops. Oysters were served in spite of Gladstone's dislike of them, but this was because he had just had a present of a barrel of them from admirers at Colchester. Mirabile dictu cigarettes were handed round after dinner, but W. V. H. cannot remember whether any one smoked them; he did not, nor did he drink the wine. J. Morley asked W. V. H. what he thought of the affair. W. V. H. replied, "I feel as I did at the Home Office when a high sheriff told me he had three times tried to hang a man and failed, and I had to go down to the H. of C. and say that the man deserved to be hanged, but I had reprieved him." (This was the case of Lee at Babbacombe.)

W. V. H. stayed behind after the dinner, and had a long and friendly talk with Gladstone about his sight. He pressed him to go to see Pagenstecker, saying, "If I had believed the English oculists and not gone to Pagenstecker I should have had a glass eye for three years or more." [H.]

Four days later when Harcourt was protesting against Gladstone's retirement at this moment, Gladstone interrupted, "Not retirement! I have been put out." On the 24th the Journal records:

W. V. H. said in the course of his conversation with Gladstone—"We are like the sailor on Palinurus's ship in the storm." "Yes," replied Mr. G., "and Palinurus has been thrown overboard."

It was not until February 23 that Gladstone made the formal announcement to the Cabinet that he would resign. The question of his successor had taken definite shape before the end came, and Lord Rosebery was clearly emerging as the choice of the Cabinet. The opposition to him was formidable in the Radical wing of the Party, which had no
enthusiasm for him personally and was bitterly resentful of the idea of a Liberal Prime Minister in the House of Lords. Nor were the Irish any more friendly, for Lord Rosebery's record on Home Rule was indeterminate and chilly. But neither Radical opinion nor Irish preferences had much voice in the matter, and the tide was flowing definitely in the direction of a Rosebery leadership. Harcourt himself knew this, and was prepared for it. As early as the beginning of January the Journal records:

Late this evening, W. V. H. said to me, "If Mr. G. goes the Queen will either send for Salisbury or Rosebery." I interrupted him saying, "She will probably send for Rosebery; he will accept her invitation to form a Government, and ask you to serve under him. What will you do?" He replied, "What can I do but say 'Yes.' How can I allow it to be thought and said by our people that I allowed what I considered my personal claims and interest to stand in the way of the continuance of the Liberal Party in power?"

I tried to argue against this view feebly for a time, but knowing that it is the right and only possible one. It will be a splendid sacrifice if it has to be made, and it will be easier for him than it will for me. He has hardly any ambition; I have a double dose for him. [H.]

It was true. But Harcourt, anxious though he was to please his son, was resolute in his decision to take office under Lord Rosebery if it became necessary, rather than risk disaster to the Party. In any case, he said, the Government would not last long, and it might as well go to pieces under Lord Rosebery as under himself. He remarked that he would not have it said to him by the Party that he had prevented or made difficult the formation of a new Government by standing aside on a personal question. Moreover it was better that people should ask why one was not in a certain place than why one was. He made no movement to press his claims, and told Mr. Morley, says Lewis Harcourt, "that his chief interest in the matter was that I should not be disappointed after devoting so much of my life to that object and having abandoned so much else that I might have done for his sake and in his interests." Nor did Lord Rosebery show any more apparent eagerness. The Journal
records conversations with Mr. Reginald Brett and E. W. Hamilton, both of whom had seen Lord Rosebery and had found him willing to serve under Harcourt on certain terms, but "there were other difficulties, which (says the Journal) of course means Morley."

II

Both father and son knew that the key of the situation was in Mr. Morley's keeping, and that he had reacted from Harcourt to Lord Rosebery. Next to Harcourt himself, Mr. Morley was easily the most influential figure on the Liberal side in the House of Commons, and 'if he had led the movement in favour of a Harcourt leadership no other combination would have been able to resist it. His secession to the Rosebery group made the result a foregone conclusion. He himself records ¹ the following conversation with Gladstone:

J. M. If I were in your place, considering the difficulties and embarrassments of personal questions, I should be disposed to decline advice.

Mr. G. No, I could not do that. It would not be consistent with my view of my duty not to advise if invited.

J. M. Then I am bound to say that, though it is not ideal, and has many elements of danger to policies that you and I care for, I should advise Rosebery.

Mr. G. I shall advise Spencer.²

On the face of it, Mr. Morley's support of Lord Rosebery is not easily intelligible. He shared the Liberal dislike of a Prime Minister who sat in the House of Lords. On most questions that had arisen on external policy, Egypt and Uganda for example, he was in sympathy with Harcourt rather than with Lord Rosebery. He was no less hostile than Harcourt himself to the Imperialist tendencies which were expanding in the Liberal Party under the inspiration

² Gladstone's mind wavered between Kimberley and Spencer. He was entirely hostile to a Rosebery leadership. He had been in acute disagreement with some of his tendencies on foreign politics. As a matter of fact he was not consulted by the Queen as to his successor.
of Lord Rosebery. Nor on the question of Ireland, which chiefly bound him to public affairs, did Lord Rosebery's attitude provide a ground of confidence. Harcourt, with whatever original questionings, had committed himself to Home Rule beyond the possibility of turning back, while Lord Rosebery, as events soon showed, had little heart in the business.

...It was not enthusiasm for a Rosebery policy, therefore, which explains Mr. Morley's action. It was definite hostility to Harcourt as head of the Government. This attitude represented an entire reversal of feeling on the subject. Throughout the years of Opposition the two statesmen had been in the closest intercourse. Their friendship had been almost uninterrupted, their correspondence constant and cordial, their agreement on affairs conspicuously free from serious disturbance. Nothing seemed less likely than a breach between them. But co-operation in opposition, where the main interest is attack on a common enemy, is much easier than co-operation in office with all its clash of conflicting motives and policies, and the political friendship that seemed so enduring promptly succumbed to the ordeal. It was probably bound to succumb. Harcourt was rough, and Mr. Morley was sensitive. Harcourt hit hard and thoughtlessly, and forgot all about it; Mr. Morley winced and remembered. He had shared the suspicion of the so-called "Brook Street Conferences" which Harcourt had held on the formation of the Government, he had felt that Harcourt was unhelpful on Home Rule, and he had bitterly resented the letter which Harcourt had sent to Gladstone on the morning of the introduction of the Home Rule Bill. Since the last-named incident Mr. Morley had been noticeably cold, and the familiar and frequent letters between the two had practically ceased. Mr. Morley had taken his line with a clear sense of the weight of Harcourt's claim to the leadership, and in his Recollections ¹ expresses himself very candidly in regard both to those claims and to the reasons for which those claims were passed by.

¹ Recollections, vol. ii. p. 11.
Harcourt has left no record of his view of his colleague, but in the Journal (January 13) there is this passage:

I had a talk late to-night with W. V. H. over the John Morley situation. He said he did not mind the temporary ill-feeling which is engendered from time to time by the strenuous discussions in Cabinet, but what he feels a good deal is the fact that J. M. treasures up all these little incidents long after he (W. V. H.) has forgotten them and that they influence his subsequent views of men and affairs and also of public policy. . . . [H.]

There were many friendly but very frank talks between the two, in one of which Mr. Morley says he mentioned Harcourt’s lack of “prudence and patience.” “Oh, I know,” said Harcourt; “but you must blame nature; tamen usque recurreit,” to which Mr. Morley replied, “I don’t presume to blame either gods or demi-gods. But business is business; and, as some sage has observed, Nature says, take all, but pay.” Harcourt insisted that he did not want to be head of the Government, but was determined that wherever the titular leader was, the reality of authority must be in the House of Commons, but Mr. Morley replied:

My dear Harcourt, forgive me for being frank. But you deceive yourself. You do want to be leader. You are a proud man. You are aristocrat to your finger-tips. People may say stemmata quid faciunt if they like, but your stemma interests you immensely. (What is the use of genealogies?) Quite right too. You have had a Chancellor in your family, and a Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and you’d like to have a Prime Minister in your family, and no earthly blame to you. The thing for us and for the Party has a double aspect, how we can best carry on our fight in the House of Commons between now and the dissolution, and how we can offer the best front when the election comes. From the first point of view you are nothing less than indispensable; from the second, the advantages are with Rosebery.

Whether Harcourt was ambitious is an idle question. No man endowed with Harcourt’s powers, conscious of his achievements, sensible of the commanding place he had established among his fellows, could fail to desire the recog-

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nition which he had so conspicuously earned. If he was ambitious it was certainly in no unworthy sense, and it would be difficult to find a case in which an aspirant for high office took less pains to promote his candidature or invited defeat by a more careless indifference to the small arts by which support is purchased. He hurt the sensibilities of his colleagues, and had no skill in making terms with the Press. So far from flattering it, he habitually derided it, and no public man of his time had fewer friends or more numerous and implacable enemies in the Press than he had. When the crisis came he was almost entirely deserted by the Liberal newspapers, which either dismissed his claims openly, or, as in the case of the Daily News and the Westminster Gazette, appealed to him to perform hari-kari and win for himself a deathless name. It was only when the struggle was over that one at least of the newspapers became conscious of the injustice with which he had been treated. In an article on March 7 the Westminster Gazette said:

... The Liberal Party owe a great debt to Sir William Harcourt, and the rapidity with which, in the Liberal Press, his succession to Mr. Gladstone was discounted is an ugly slur upon political gratitude. Among the leaders of the Liberal Party of 1880 he alone stood by Mr. Gladstone in 1885. All through the year of depression he cheerfully bore the brunt of battle. Insults not a few, social humiliations which gall a proud man, calumny and abuse were all disregarded with an appearance of manly cheerfulness, which was all the more creditable as it could not possibly have been genuine. In recent years, too, no one has fought for the Liberal Party so consistently and with such unflagging zeal as the Chancellor of the Exchequer. It seems and cannot help seeming a desertion on the part of the Radical Press to clamour for another to lead them, were he forty thousand times over the better man. ... A party which affects to despise Imperial England, noble birth, wealth, station, intellect—in short everything which distinguishes the classes from the masses—has rushed into the arms of a leader who combines all these great and secretly adored qualities, to the exclusion of the man who has attached undue importance to the frothy clamour of democracy.

There was strong sympathy with Harcourt's claim on both sides of the House of Commons, of whose traditions and prestige he had been so powerful a defender. This
sentiment was reflected in *The Times* of March 1, in a leader commenting on the support accorded to the candidature of Lord Rosebery in the Liberal Press:

. . . He (Harcourt) has borne the burden and heat of the day in party strife, both in the House of Commons and on the platform, ever since he went out of office in 1886. He is a powerful and ready master of a vigorous rhetoric and a pleasant vein of humour. . . . With all his faults, Sir William Harcourt, when Mr. Gladstone is gone, will be much more than a match, in debating power and in parliamentary knowledge, for any of his ministerial colleagues in the lower House. It would not be surprising if he were to resent a scheme for shunting him into a secondary position after many years of active service, both in office and in opposition. To be told that "a higher place may yet be his," when he is asked to acquiesce in the leadership of a man twenty years his junior, is, he may feel not unreasonably, to add insult to injury. But, apart from this personal question, and the use a considerable section of the Radicals may make of it, there has been an unexpected unanimity among the Gladstonian newspapers of all shades in the approval of Lord Rosebery's selection for the eventual leadership of the Party.

But if Harcourt cannot fairly be accused of any excessive ambition in the matter, there was a devouring ambition on his behalf. Mr. Morley describes the visits he received from an emissary "in many ways cleverer, neater, more astute, diplomatic, and far more resolute than Harcourt himself." It was Lewis Harcourt, whose passion for his father was as remarkable as his suppression of himself. He had given ten years of his life for one chief purpose, to make his father Prime Minister, and this was, he saw, Harcourt's Waterloo. Now or never. He tried to induce Harcourt, if the worst came to the worst, to refuse office under any other Prime Minister, and when he failed in this he turned all his diplomatic art upon Mr. Morley. Two years before, when it had become apparent that the only real alternative to Harcourt was Lord Rosebery, he had received an assurance from Mr. Morley at Malwood that he would support Harcourt as against Lord Rosebery for the leadership, and he now sought the fulfilment of that understanding. The *Journal* records frequent con-
versations in which Mr. Morley gave the reasons for his change of feeling. The general effect of these was that he could not work under Harcourt and "possibly not with him." He admitted that Lord Rosebery excited no enthusiasm in the country, "but he does excite interest and curiosity. He is a peer, with great wealth, an air of mystery, an affectation of literature, and is probably going to win the Derby." He said that "all the Cabinet in the H. of C. with the possible exception of Asquith and Acland (not alluding to himself) were in favour of W. V. H. as P.M., and that probably the four peers would be in favour of Rosebery." This was assumed to give a majority of one for Lord Rosebery. The Journal represents Mr. Morley as modifying his position towards the end; ¹ but the situation had now developed too far to be affected, and when Gladstone's last Cabinet met on March 1 to take farewell of the old leader the

¹ The Journal, under date March 3, says:

Morley reports Rosebery as saying: "You people put me up on a pinnacle and then tell me I am to have no voice in any decisions. I am not to nominate the Leader of the House of Commons, whom you have chosen for me; I am not to select my successor at the Foreign Office; in fact I am to settle nothing and be a mere cypher. If that is the case I had better remain at the F.O. myself and you can make Harcourt Prime Minister."

I asked Morley if he understood that W. V. H.'s conditions were generally accepted by Rosebery, and he replied: "Yes, fully, with the exception of the disputed point about the F.O. communications...."

W. V. H. dined to-night with Kimberley for the pricking of the Sheriffs and drove there in Gladstone's brougham with him. He returned at 11, bringing Gladstone in his, W. V. H.'s brougham....

W. V. H. had sat next to J. Morley at dinner; found him in a great rage with Rosebery, who he considers has tricked him over the Foreign Secretary being in the Lords. He said to W. V. H., "Ah, it is a great pity our combination was broken up." W. V. H. incensed him still more by pointing out that now he (J. M.) had ceased to be useful to R., his advice and opinions were discarded. W. V. H. said, "Faults of brusquerie may be less objectionable than faults of 'intrigue,'" and reminded him of the fable of the horse which allowed a man to mount him in order to pursue a stag, but when they had run down the stag, the man refused to dismount.

J. Morley left Kimberley's swearing he would not join the Government and would send another ultimatum in the morning, etc. The situation is delightful to me, for J. M. is the man who has deprived W. V. H. of the first place and now finds himself discarded and of no importance.... [H.]
succession of Lord Rosebery was pretty well assured. The Radicals, however, were still hostile, and on the same day sent a deputation headed by Labouchere and Samuel Storey to the Chief Whip to oppose a Prime Minister in the House of Lords.

The difficulties of that arrangement were already beginning to loom large. Harcourt had drawn up a memorandum on the subject of the position and authority of the Leader of the House of Commons in the case of the Prime Minister being in the House of Lords. This he had discussed with Mr. Morley and other colleagues from February 24 onwards, with the result that an amended scheme of “conditions” (Appendix IV) was drawn up by him. On March 3 Lord Rosebery announced to his colleagues that the Queen had asked him to form a Government, and that he had undertaken to attempt the task. He saw Harcourt that evening, and invited him to become Leader of the House of Commons. The discussion between them turned upon the conditions referred to and chiefly upon the conduct of foreign affairs. Lord Rosebery was determined to be a real Prime Minister or not a Prime Minister at all, and Harcourt was determined that the authority of the House of Commons should not be diminished in the vital sphere of foreign affairs. The discussion was entirely amicable, but inconclusive, Harcourt asking for time to consult Mr. Morley. He also communicated with Gladstone on the subject of precedents in his experience, and Gladstone replied (March 4) that “the general upshot is that I was made habitually privy in the time of Clarendon and Granville to the ideas as well as the business of the Foreign Ministry, and in consequence the business of that department, if and when introduced to the Cabinet, came before it with a joint support as a general rule.” That afternoon (March 4), without having seen Mr. Morley, Harcourt again met Lord Rosebery. He has left a record of the two interviews in the following memorandum:

11, Downing Street, Whitehall, March 3, 1894.—Lord Rosebery came to see me at 6.30 p.m. to-day, and informed me that he
had the Queen's commission to form a Government on the resignation of Mr. Gladstone. After many civil observations referring to myself and a good deal of depreciation of his own fitness for the post of Prime Minister he proposed to me to take the position of Leader of the House of Commons in the new Government. He said that as regards Mr. Labouchere's view of the situation there was nothing logically to be said against it; that the whole machinery of Government was in the House of Commons; and that it was next door to an absurdity to endeavour to conduct it from the House of Lords.

I did not follow this up but proceeded at once to say that in my opinion it was the duty of all members of the late Government and the Party to co-operate in any position in which they could be most useful, and that I was perfectly prepared to act in that spirit.

A good deal of general conversation took place upon the situation. Lord Rosebery stated that of course a Prime Minister in the House of Lords was mainly dependent upon the support of the Leader of the House of Commons. I indicated that the fact of the Prime Minister being in the House of Lords necessitated a large freedom of action on the part of the Leader of the House of Commons to deal with emergencies as they arose. I had in my hand the memorandum which I had previously drawn up, and read to Mr. Marjoribanks and Mr. John Morley. [The Memorandum of March 2, given as Appendix IV to this volume.]

I did not read it in extenso to Lord Rosebery for I knew he was aware of its contents, and did not desire to have the appearance of formally imposing conditions.

The question of consultation in respect of appointments was also mentioned, and no difficulty raised on that subject. The only real difficulty which arose in the conversation was in regard to the relation of the House of Commons to the conduct of foreign affairs. I stated that, in my opinion, the conjunction of the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary in the House of Lords created a very grave difficulty; that Mr. Gladstone with the entire concurrence of the whole Party had strongly condemned the arrangement that united those offices in the person of Lord Salisbury.

So far as the House of Commons were concerned, it came to the same thing whether those offices were in two persons or one person, both being in the House of Lords; that the issue of peace and war depended upon the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and the First Lord of the Admiralty, and that these three offices, together with the Colonies, would now be in the House of Lords; that the Secretary for Foreign Affairs ought to be in the House of Commons, so that he might speak with all the authority of his office; and that the Leader of the House of Commons should have constant opportunities of communication with him. Lord Rosebery did not directly
dispute any of these propositions, but he stated that he gave up the Foreign Office with great reluctance; that in doing so he felt an obligation to appoint to that place the person he considered best suited for it; that he regarded Lord Kimberley as the fittest man for the place; and that he did not see any person in the House of Commons who was so suitable for it. I said I regarded the matter as of such grave importance that I must reserve my opinion upon it, and could not agree to any arrangement of the sort without further consideration. Our interview then ended.

March 4, Sunday.—This morning early I wrote a note to Lord Rosebery saying I desired to see him to-day to come to some settlement on the disputed point of the House of Commons and foreign affairs. He replied that he would be glad to see me, but that he could not consent to any conditions which would impair the established position of the Prime Minister. I went to Lord Rosebery’s house at 1 o’clock. I told him the question was not one of impairing the position of the Prime Minister, but of strengthening the hands of the Leader of the House of Commons. He replied, “The Leader of the House of Commons is already far the stronger power of the two.” I told him that apart from his condition as a peer I admitted Lord Kimberley to be the fittest person for the purpose, and that I could not designate any special person in the House of Commons to occupy the post. The point therefore to be considered was how assuming Lord Kimberley to go to the Foreign Office the Leader of the House of Commons might be secured in that privity to all that was taking place in foreign affairs, in which it was essential that he should have a voice. I said that I was of opinion that the Foreign Secretary should communicate as fully and freely with the Leader of the House of Commons as he did with the Prime Minister. To this Lord Rosebery agreed, and it was understood that I should communicate with Lord Kimberley for the purpose of giving effect to this object, so that the Leader of the House of Commons should have notice not only when foreign affairs reached a crisis but ab initio when affairs were beginning at all to “creak.”

I told him that I knew John Morley, Campbell-Bannerman, Arnold Morley and Edward Marjoribanks took an equally strong view of the Foreign Office question.

We then passed on to a general discussion relating to changes and appointments, but no final decision was arrived at on these points.¹

With the apparent agreement in regard to the Foreign Office, the serious difficulties in regard to the constitution of the reorganized Cabinet disappeared. Harcourt had taken

¹ Mr. Morley was on this day evidently under the impression that Harcourt had surrendered the point of the controversy on the Foreign Secretaryship.
service under a new chief. If he had entertained, as we may suppose he had, the not ignoble desire to fill the highest office in the State, he could entertain it no more. He was a man of sixty-seven who had enlisted under a new leader who was twenty years his junior, and the path of advance was closed to him finally. Among the rank and file of the Party in the country, who knew nothing of the situation behind the scenes, the announcement came as a surprise, and was received with some resentment. The general feeling was expressed by one of Harcourt's most distinguished colleagues in the House, Horace Davey, who wrote:

... I know your loyalty and devotion to the Party too well to suppose that you would wish your friends to assume any dissatisfaction on your part with recent political arrangements. But you must allow me from the serene atmosphere of my shelf to express my own disappointment that one who has done so much for his Party as you have does not lead it as Prime Minister.

No doubt however all things are for the best in the best of all possible republics.

Sir Charles Dilke, writing in the North American Review (May 1894), on "Lord Rosebery's Administration," said:

... So strong was the outside hostility to the choice of any peer, and the outside feeling in favour of Sir William Harcourt as leader, so general the previous belief that Sir William Harcourt would at least be offered the reversion, should he be thought to desire (contrary, perhaps, to his personal interest) to assume the post, that the sudden selection of Lord Rosebery by the Queen, at the suggestion of Mr. Gladstone after consultation with his Cabinet, came as a surprise to the Liberal Party in the country. Those in the House of Commons who know most of what is passing, had, since November, been aware that the sudden substitution of Lord Rosebery for Mr. Gladstone was in contemplation, but those among them who were opposed to this substitution, and who would have preferred the leadership of Sir William Harcourt, were in this difficulty: that the Liberal constituencies would have resented any movement pointing towards the selection of Sir William Harcourt by the Party, as being ungenerous towards Mr. Gladstone, who was still at its head, and not admittedly about to quit the lead. Sir William Harcourt himself would also have been placed by any such public movement in the

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1 This belief, generally held at the time, was, as we now know, incorrect.
had been a meeting of the Liberal members at the Foreign Office to welcome the new Prime Minister and the new Leader of the House of Commons. The occasion was one of unusual interest. For weeks past public attention had been centred on the battle for the leadership, and the air was filled with rumours of the heart-burnings and soreness that the incident had left behind. The Party in the House of Commons, which had strongly favoured a Harcourt leadership, had accepted the results with some resentment, and there was an undercurrent of anger at the suspicion that the commanding claims of a great House of Commons man had been undermined by a cabal. It was even suggested, quite unjustly as the facts show, that Lord Rosebery owed his position to court influence. Harcourt’s bearing at this time did much to calm party feeling. It was well described by the distinguished American correspondent, G. W. Smalley, who, writing to the New York Tribune, April 1, 1894, said:

... Never was a better opportunity to judge Sir William Harcourt than during these recent weeks. He had undergone a bitter mortification, the ambition of his political life baffled as it seemed within his grasp. But if you had met him in the first days of this chagrin, you would have found him in his most admirable mood, cordial and sunny to all the world, and in his very best form, as society says. Society watched him curiously in these circumstances, and paid him the honourable tribute due to an undisturbed demeanour, to faculties which shone their brightest in this hour of lasting disappointment, and to a cheerful heroism of which only a fine character is capable.

Having taken the subordinate position, he threw himself into the task of making the new Government a success with every appearance of goodwill, and his letters to his new Chief were full of helpfulness and even ardour. Thus, on the Address, in reference to which some opposition was taken in high quarters, he wrote to Lord Rosebery (March 9, midnight):

... I highly approve the position you have taken up, and will stand by you to the last.

It is impossible on such a matter to give way an inch. It is incon-
ceivable that having consented to the speech in 1893 which included Home Rule, and also the Welsh and Scotch Church, an objection should now be taken.

In my opinion it is a stand or fall business.

He entered into friendly correspondence with Mr. Balfour, for whom he always entertained a keen personal liking, in regard to "a suspension of arms until March 31," in order to get parliamentary affairs, driven "into a corner" by the previous long session and the crisis, out of the tangle.

If there was any expectation that he would show that he nursed a grievance it was removed at the Party meeting where his reception was markedly enthusiastic, and where, following Lord Rosebery, he made an inspiring speech that sent the Party across Whitehall to St. Stephen's in good heart and relieved in mind. But the day did not pass without trouble. In his speech at the Foreign Office Lord Rosebery had said that Home Rule would be "pressed to the forefront, and, as far as in me lies, pressed to a definite and successful conclusion." This attitude was endorsed by Harcourt, who also declared for the full redemption of the Newcastle programme. But in the House of Lords that afternoon, Lord Rosebery, after a tribute to Gladstone, made a remark which "raised the waters" in the adjoining Chamber, and echoed for many a long day. Referring to Home Rule, he said:

... The noble Marquess (Salisbury) made one remark on the subject of Home Rule with which I confess myself in entire accord. He said that before Home Rule is conceded by the Imperial Parliament, England, as the predominant member of the partnership of the three kingdoms, will have to be convinced of its justice. That may seem to be a considerable admission to make, because your lordships well know that the majority of members of Parliament, elected from England proper, are hostile to Home Rule.

The faux pas, which was welcomed next morning by the Unionist Press—"with shouts of triumph, created profound indignation among the Irishmen. Mr. Morley did his best in the House of Commons next day to explain away the too sinister meaning that had been put on the speech.
But the mischief was done, and Labouchere, seizing with impish delight on the opportunity offered, moved an amendment to the Address next day in favour of the abolition of the veto of the House of Lords. In a snatch division and with the help of the Welsh and the Irish, he defeated the Government by two votes. It was a humiliating experience, and Lord Rosebery knew that it was the reply to his speech of the previous day. Harcourt knew it also.

Writing to Gladstone in answer to a letter of "comfort and aid in our difficulty" (the Speakership), he said:

... The situation in the House of Commons was yesterday a very bad one. Rosebery's unfortunate sentence about Home Rule had greatly exasperated the Irish, and of course J. Redmond made the worst of it.

Labby manœuvred to get his amendment on just before dinner when many of our best men were paired with the Tories. He intrigued with a lot of the Tories to go out, and our men who remained behind thought they could vote as they pleased and that there was no danger.

The situation was both awkward and ludicrous. It could only be met by negating the whole Address and substituting a new one. This was done, and, writing to the Queen at Florence, Harcourt said that "all parties were glad to escape from a situation which had arisen more from accident than design. For the present at least matters are tranquil, but Sir William is not disposed to prophesy with any confidence as to the future." The Queen was greatly angered by the incident, and sent to the new Prime Minister a letter of unusual asperity, which was reflected in very much milder terms in the following letter from her private secretary to Harcourt:

VILLA FABBRICOTTI, FLORENCE, March 19, 1894.—The Queen is much distressed at the contretemps in the House of Commons when the Government were defeated on a question relating to the House of Lords.

She considers a Second House to be a necessity in a free country, and the presence in Parliament of an independent body of men who have no need of being afraid of the clamour of a noisy set of constituents who represent no party but only a temporary excitement is a most valuable and important body in a state.
Harcourt replied (March 22) that he regretted as much as
the Queen could do that the Government had been beaten
on any question; but added significantly, "There are some
questions, however, on which the Liberal Party will 'gang
its ain gait' in spite of all Governments and all Whips,
and the House of Lords is one of them." By this time the
contretemps had been lived down, and the new Government
was well under way, but the stumble on the threshold
was ominous, and the speech that largely caused it had
planted the seeds of distrust and disintegration in the
alliance that alone kept the Ministry in power.