CHAPTER XVI

THE DEATH DUTIES BUDGET

Preparation of the Budget—A Memorandum to Lord Rosebery—Another Difference with Lord Rosebery—Friendly Reception of the Budget—A Revolt of Beer—The Chatsworth Estate—A Protest from the Queen—Skilful Management in Committee—Congratulations from all Quarters—"Filling Up the Cup"—The Coburg Annuity—Mr. Gladstone on Local Option—A Holiday in Italy.

HARCOURT touched the zenith of his career in the Session of 1894. The highest prize within his reach had just passed away from him finally, but he made the first year of his leadership of the House of Commons memorable by an achievement which gave his reputation a more enduring significance than the tenure of the Premiership alone would have done. Prime Ministers are often only vague shadows in the field of history, and I have seen a generally well-informed company unable to supply the name of the Prime Minister who was in office at the time of the battle of Waterloo, although that Prime Minister held the position continuously longer than any Prime Minister in history except Sir Robert Walpole. Harcourt would not have been a vague shadow in any office; but his place in the political annals of the country as the author of the Budget of 1894 would not have been substantially affected had he been Prime Minister as well. The Budget of 1894 is a landmark in history—perhaps the weightiest contribution to the problem of the public finance of the country made during the nineteenth century. It established new principles in taxation, and it established them on so solid a basis that they have never since been
departed from. Harcourt himself probably did not realize the magnitude of the work he was doing. He opened up new territory for the exploitation of embarrassed Chancellors of the Exchequer, and that territory has proved a richer field than he could himself have contemplated.

The achievement was the natural goal to which he had been moving throughout his public life. His capacious and masterful mind roved over many fields of thought—international law, foreign affairs, social conditions, constitutional practice. Nothing that concerned the corporate life or the political mechanism of society was indifferent to him, and there was no subject to which he failed to contribute light as well as, not seldom, heat. But of all the subjects which engaged his mind that of national finance was, perhaps, the most constant and engrossing. He belonged to the old tradition of statesmanship which regarded a rigid public economy as the first essential of good government. He believed that an extravagant and wasteful habit of expenditure corrupted the public service, and had subtle reactions on policy, especially where the demands of the war departments were concerned. But it was not the spending of the national resources that furnished his chief interest in the subject. He had long been conscious of the anomalies of taxation, especially in regard to the land. A member of a landed family himself, he had early broken with the views of his class in regard to the special privileges with which a legislature, then chiefly controlled by the landed interest, had invested real estate, and the political disagreement with his brother at Nuncham had turned mainly upon this theme.

It had been his motive in going to the Treasury to carry out a far-reaching reform in this field, but it was not until 1894 that he found the circumstances favourable for the adventure. Confronted with a deficit of nearly £5,000,000, caused chiefly by warlike expenditure, he was armed with the argument of necessity for his new departure. Throughout the stirring events of the winter he had been actively engaged in preparing his plans. In this work his principal
assistants were Mr. Alfred Milner (Lord Milner), Sir R. Welby (afterwards Lord Welby), and his son, Lewis Harcourt. His first intention was not merely to reform the death duties, but to inaugurate a graduated income-tax. The latter idea was imposed on him by his son, who worked out a graduated scale of taxation which was approved by Harcourt. It was hotly opposed by Mr. Milner and finally abandoned by Harcourt not on merits, but because it was thought that a super income-tax and death duties in the same year would be too much for the country, would overload the Budget, and endanger the main principle on the establishment of which he had set his mind. But, compelled to yield on this point, he proposed to effect something in the nature of graduation by raising the income-tax a penny from 7d. to 8d., and relieving incomes below the £500 limit of deductions which made the burden of the higher tax less than that of the lower.

The backbone of the scheme, however, was the extension to every class of property alike of the existing probate duty, under the new name of the estate duty. Hitherto, only free or unsettled personalty had been liable to probate duty, land and settled personalty being liable to succession duty only. The necessary corollary of the extension of the probate duty was the taxation of land on its true capital value. Hitherto land had only been taxed on the capitalized value of an annuity equal to the net rental of the land for the life of the heir. Thus, the elderly heir paid a great deal less than the heir who was youthful, but, however tender the years of the heir might be, duty was never chargeable on the full capital value. This privilege Harcourt proposed to abolish. Land, like personalty, was to pay on its true capital value. It was to be valued in future by professional valuers, in the same way that jewels, pictures and leaseholds had hitherto been valued for probate duty. "The real test," said Harcourt, "is what experienced persons estimate would be the fair market value at the time and in the circumstances."

That Harcourt was forging a more formidable instrument
than he knew is apparent from a letter to Lord Rosebery. (March 23), in which, outlining the new scheme of death duties, he said, "This, some years hence, will yield a large sum (between £4,000,000 and £5,000,000), but for the present year not more than £1,000,000." Within less than thirty years from the introduction of the duties, they were yielding the enormous revenue of £48,000,000. Nor is it likely that he foresaw the full measure of the effect of the reform upon the landed system of the country. Certainly his opponents did not foresee it or the opposition to his Budget, powerful as it was, would have been still more relentless. That opposition began very near at home. Within the Cabinet there was general agreement with the Budget proposals, but there was one exception to the approval. The Journal records:

April 4.—... Just as we were leaving the House at 6.30 a yellow box arrived from Rosebery containing an elaborate memo. by him directed against the Budget generally, and the graduated Death Duties in particular. W. V. H. much amused at the high Tory line taken by R., and said, "I wonder what the Daily Chronicle would think if they could see this!"

Dined at the Savoy, and when I got home found W. V. H. had written an admirable memo. in reply to R.'s on the Budget, in which he asks that he shall have the unanimous support of the Cabinet in his proposals if he is to go on, and proposes that the two Memos. shall be read at the Cabinet on Friday and discussed. [H.]

I am not at liberty to publish the memorandum from Lord Rosebery to which reference is made, and must confine myself to the memorandum which Harcourt wrote in reply to it:

Harcourt to Lord Rosebery.

II, Downing Street, Whitehall, S.W., April 4, 1894.—I am not sorry that our views should be frankly interchanged upon the financial principles which should govern the policy of the Liberal Party, both in their political and their fiscal aspects. This is the more necessary inasmuch as far as I understand the matter our opinions on this subject are fundamentally opposed. I will deal first with the political question, as that is the one to which you naturally attach primary importance. I will make some observations upon that head following the order of your own remarks.
(1) The proposals in question have for their first object to place all property of whatever kind upon an equal footing in respect of liability to taxation. I reserve for the moment the question of graduation. You say that this will "array property against us as our active and alarmed adversary, and that it will alienate the last relics of our propertied followers."

You are not, as I am, old enough to remember the great battle fought by Mr. Gladstone in 1853 on the succession duties. That contest secured for him the lasting hatred of the landed proprietors, and the enthusiastic support of the Liberal Party. The fears which your memorandum express are a faint echo of the panic and terrorism of that time. The Tories openly and the Whig magnates covertly feared and hated his policy. He had however the advantage of the courageous and strenuous support of Aberdeen and Granville. I have no doubt that we shall have a "formidable enemy" in those who find themselves deprived of monopolies which they ought never to have possessed, and the privileges which enrich them at the expense of their poorer fellows. That this class may be alienated from the Liberal Party I am not disposed to dispute.

If it be so, the Liberal Party will share the fate of another Party which was founded 1,894 years ago, of which it was written that it was "hard for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom." I think it is highly probable that there are "many young men who will go away sorrowful because they have great possessions."

(2) You say that the only compensation which we shall receive is in the friendship of the men under £500 per annum. You ask two questions—First, whether they are numerous enough to help, secondly, whether they are likely to be grateful.

As to the first question the answer is easy,—they form ninety-nine hundredths of the population and certainly nine-tenths of the constituencies. As to the second question, gratitude is a very uncertain quality—The only method I know of securing it is to deserve it.

(3) You say "that the masses do not appear to support the Liberal Party as much as we have a right to expect." If that is true, so much the worse for the Liberal Party. It is probably more the fault of the Party and of its leaders than of the masses.

It does not appear to me that we are likely to secure "their enthusiasm or active support" by appearing as the defenders of fiscal privileges and exemptions of the wealthy which are universally condemned.

(4) You desire to avert the "cleavages of classes"—The hope on your part is natural, but you are too late. "The horizontal division of parties" was certain to come as a consequence of household suffrage. The thin edge of the wedge was inserted, and the cleavage is expanding more and more every day. I do not wonder at your casting a longing lingering look on the "variety and rich-
ness and intellectual forces" which have passed away, but these are not the appanage of democracy.

(5) Your observations upon the American attempt at a property tax are well founded, but everybody admits the objections to a property tax which is levied annually on the possessors do not apply to a death duty which occurs only once in a generation on the transmission of estates into other hands.

(6) I agree in your objection to settlements, but I believe that we have taken such security in our Bill that there will be a fine rather than a premium upon settlements.

(7) The fear as to the taxation of capital had some foundation fifty or sixty years ago when capital in this country was in deficiency. At the present time it is superabundant, and not finding sufficiency of employment at home runs to waste in Argentine and elsewhere. You say our proposals may break up large properties in this country. It may be so, but large properties have been far more broken up by Lord Cairns's Act, which has permitted the spendthrift or gambling tenant for life—the Ailesburys, the Hardwicke, the Adrian Hopes, etc. etc., to dissipate the Savernakes, the Deepdenes and the Wimpoles. Large properties will be kept together by prudent possessors and prudent successors—the Fitzwilliams, the Bedfords, the Portmans, the Devonshires, the Northumberlands. *They* will be broken up when they fall into the hands of Lonsdales and Clifdens. It is the first and not the second class of large properties which are popular, charitable and worth preserving.

Your argument seems to involve that it is necessary to maintain an unequal incidence of taxation in order to avert the breaking up of large properties irrespective of the character of their possessors. This is a very fine old Tory doctrine—it is one which the Liberal Party are not likely to accept.

(8) As to art collections, they have come largely into the market lately. The Hamiltons, the Spencers, the Marlboroughs, the Lansdownes, the Ashburnhams, the Radnors, etc. have hurried to turn their treasures into cash without remorse, and regardless of their destination. I am not aware that the bulk of these things have gone abroad.

On the contrary they have become more available to the British public than before.

I am sorry to say that a large portion of them have passed into the hands of public institutions where they will never pay death duties at all.

(9) It is not correct to say that we are doing all this to get a million.

Our first object is to accomplish an act of financial justice to which the Liberal Party are deeply pledged.

The produce is not a million—that is only a six months' yield of the tax of four millions which will be in the end available, either for
the reduction of other taxes or, what is more probable, to satisfy further Jingo panics.

I must make one remark upon your alarm with respect to election funds, and its bearing on the next dissolution.

I cannot entertain a doubt that what is necessary will be provided by rich men who are already peers or those who desire to become peers.

For me personally this particular point of view has little interest. I have paid as much in purse and in person for the Party as I intend to do. The fate of the present Government and the issue of the next election are temporary incidents which I view with philosophic indifference. I care nothing for election funds, their sources, their disposal or their results. I have done with all this part of the business. What I care for as long as I have any personal responsibility for the public finance is to establish principles of fiscal equality which are worthy of the Liberal Party, and which if defeated to-day will have a resurrection hereafter.

I am sorry that my views of the political bearings of my financial proposals should be so completely in antagonism to yours. Like you I admit I may be wrong, but like you I desire to place them on record, and I should be glad that your memorandum and mine should be laid before the Cabinet on Friday. It seems hardly fair to me in our respective positions that your elaborate protest against the Budget should be buried in our respective bosoms. I think that our colleagues ought to be made aware of our divergent opinions and form their judgment upon them. I ought not to be left in doubt whether in this arduous contest I am to have the cordial support of the Government and its head.

I need only say a word on the subject of graduation. I believe the principle of graduation to be a sound one, and I am sure it is one on which the Liberal Party will insist, but I agree that a new principle of this description should be introduced in moderation, and I am quite disposed to meet your views on the subject of the mitigation of the scale as far as is consistent with the exigencies of the Revenue, and this I hope may be to a great degree accomplished.

As to aggregation I do not see what argument can be advanced against it. If graduation is accepted at all it must be upon the total sum of the value of the whole property whatever may be its description.

I observe in a recent article in the Journal of the Statistical Society after a statement of the principle of valuation for death duties adopted in England and Belgium the following observation:

"Such are the systems adopted in England and Belgium in determining the value of real estate subject to succession duty, viz., the substitution of a fictitious value obtained by multiplying the income by a given quantity in the place of actual realizable value. In all other countries the duty is levied upon the actual realizable value of the property."
When you say that the exemptions in the Budget apply only to the men under £500 a year you omit to observe that the change in the death duties will affect no one who leaves under £25,000 in personality.

Lord Rosebery accepted the modification in the graduation scale as meeting his main doubt, and thought it unnecessary to discuss the memoranda in the Cabinet. "I thought that coon would come down, but I did not expect him to do it so quickly and so completely," is the sardonic comment of Lewis Harcourt in the Journal (April 5). But though the memoranda were not discussed in the Cabinet, Harcourt brought them before two of his colleagues. In sending them to Mr. Morley, he said:

11, Downing Street, April 11.—As it will probably fall to you one of these days to write "a short account of a late short Administration," I think it will instruct and amuse you to see the enclosed correspondence. You will find it good Sunday reading, and I hope you will consider my scriptural quotations particularly apposite. You will not be surprised to learn that I am a little disappointed that my offer to submit the two memoranda to the Cabinet was not accepted.

"As soon as the 'short administration' has become 'late,' so far from writing its history, I shall do my best to drive it out of my memory, as I always do with nightmares," replied Mr. Morley (April 8). "R.'s disquisition would have been thought extreme in its Toryism by Lord Eldon," wrote Harcourt to Spencer, in sending him the two memoranda. "There is nothing to do with rubbish of this sort except to treat it with the contempt it deserves." Spencer sought to throw oil on the troubled waters, and to preach peace. Writing in reply, he said:

Spencer to Harcourt.

April 22.—... I do not pretend to be able to enter upon the arena myself, but I do not think that I would take the view put forward in R.'s papers. Still as he held them he was right to put them before you, and although it gave you trouble he paid you the compliment to bow to your judgment and views, by not desiring the agreement to be laid before the Cabinet.
* On the other hand you showed your wish to be moderate by modifying your graduation.

Pray do not look upon R. as your enemy. You two should have confidence in each other to work properly together. I do not think you have any solid ground for what you said in regard to him this morning to me.

There was a further subject of difference between the Prime Minister and the Chancellor. Lord Rosebery took exception to the overlapping of the death duties in the case of a person who died before he had paid all his instalments. The liability of the new successor to pay the outstanding instalments seemed inconsistent with the idea that property paid this tax only once in a generation. On this Harcourt replied:

*Harcourt to Lord Rosebery.*

11, Downing Street, April 9.—I don't think you have quite appreciated the difference between the two classes of death duties.

1. The probate duty, where the tax is levied on the *corpus* of the property.

2. The succession duty, where the tax has reference to the interest of the successor.

In the case of the Probate Duty which is now applicable only to personalty, the whole duty is levied at once on each devolution. The proposal now is to subject realty to this duty which it has never paid before.

If there is to be equality the whole duty must be levied on each devolution as in the case of personalty, but the indulgence is granted to realty of paying the duty by instalments. But if the beneficiary dies before the duty is discharged his estate must be liable for it just as if he had paid it at once.

No other principle would maintain the equality of treatment of real and personal property. In the case of succession duty, which has regard to the interest taken by the successor, the instalments will cease to be payable on his death, but this is a wholly different case founded upon different principles.

Events were to make an ironic comment on this phase of the Budget when, ten years later, the Nuneham estates changed hands by death twice within six months. Harcourt's differences over the Budget proposals were not confined to the Prime Minister. He was engaged, except for a few days' "breather" at Shoreham in company with Coleridge (the Lord Chief Justice), and James, in almost
daily consultations with the officials over the details of the scheme. These meetings were apt to generate a good deal of warmth. Thus the Journal records (April 9):

. . . A severe fight all the afternoon in W. V. H.'s room at the H. of C. between Herschell, Milner, Jenkyns, Melville and Karslake over the Death Duties Bill. I suggested that the place was like a bear-pit, and that I should like to poke buns through the door on the end of an umbrella. . . .

The jest proved serviceable, and when a few days later the temperature of the room rose again Sir Francis Mowatt sent to Lady Harcourt a note asking her to "send a bun on a stick." A messenger promptly arrived with an invitation to the combatants to go to lunch at 11, Downing Street, and under the gentle persuasion of this artful "bun" serenity was restored. Harcourt's battles usually ended over the luncheon table.

The introduction of the Budget, the novel character of which had been the subject of much anticipatory discussion in the Press, was awaited with unusual public interest, and when Harcourt rose to outline it on April 16 he addressed an audience unprecedented even on "Budget nights." He spoke for two hours and forty minutes, adopting his graver style, known as his "church manner"—a fact which led to a little comedy behind his back, a clever caricature of him by Frank Lockwood representing him in a white surplice, apparently reading the lessons of the day, being passed from hand to hand and carrying with it a procession of smiles.

II

The details of the Budget will be found in Appendix V, but the broad proposals were set forth in the following note from Harcourt to the Queen:

Harcourt to Queen Victoria.

April 11, 1894.—. . . (1) To meet £2,000,000 (of the deficit) by using the new Sinking Fund to pay off the debt contracted by the late Government under the Naval Defence Act, and which is charged on the revenue of the present year.

(2) The equalization of the death duties by making the Probate
Duty applicable to real estate and settled property, which is not at present subject to that duty. This is estimated to yield about one million this year and ultimately four millions. It will be on a graduated scale at higher rates on the larger properties.

(3) An additional penny on the Income-tax, the produce of which will be diminished by an allowance to incomes under £500 a year, and also an allowance to owners of real estate who are now charged on their gross rental.

(4) A duty of 6d. extra on a gallon of spirits and 6d. extra on a barrel of beer. The great profits on these trades will justify this increase, and the cost will not practically be raised to the consumer. The Government are of opinion that the above is a fair distribution amongst different classes of the heavy additional burden it is found necessary to impose. Care has been taken that its incidence shall be lightened on those who are least able to bear it.

Considering the momentous character of the scheme, the Budget was received with extraordinary friendliness, the only serious note of hostility coming, *more suro*, from the *Morning Post*, which declared that the most important change in our fiscal system since the days of Walpole was "introduced with the levity of a schoolboy whose knowledge of finance is limited to some Socialist manual." The Liberal Press welcomed the Budget as a triumph of social equity, and the Conservative Press generally did not deny the justice of the proposals. For once, Harcourt enjoyed the felicity generally denied to so combative a statesman of being almost universally popular, and he was warned to reflect on the biblical injunction to beware "when all men speak well of you." From his colleagues in the Cabinet he received cordial congratulations on his historic Budget, the Prime Minister finding his gloomy forebodings completely dispelled. "How moderate I have been," Harcourt wrote to him, "is testified by the fact that I have just had a visit of congratulation from Natty (Rothschild) who does not seem to mind the prospect of Walter paying a quarter of a million. . . . If he is content, I don't know who there is left to grumble—except it be the Guinesses and Basses." Campbell-Bannerman's congratulations took a practical shape. "In anticipation of a raised duty on spirits (he wrote), I have been importing some Styrian cherry brandy
with which I have a long-standing acquaintance. I am sending you half-a-dozen bottles, and I hope you will find it good."

But the public welcome given to the Budget did not mean that the battle had been won. It only meant that the general sense of the justice of the measure had for the moment silenced the hostile forces. In and out of the House, those forces began to mobilize after the first shout of acclamation had passed away, and during the next three months Harcourt was at work ceaselessly with tongue and pen in meeting the attacks directed against his proposals from many powerful quarters. His gifts as a parliamentarian were never more conspicuous than in his management of the House in this memorable conflict. Whatever his irascibility in private, in public debate his good temper was unfailing, and it is a remarkable proof of his adroitness that throughout the passage of the Budget—indeed throughout the whole business of the Session—he never once employed the closure. His most formidable assailant in the House of Commons was his predecessor at the Treasury, Goschen, and the most industrious, Mr. Henry Chaplin. The dangers of the situation were great, for the majority on which Harcourt had to rely was exiguous, and it had been rendered still more doubtful by the defection of the Parnellites, who numbered nine, and who had thrown in their lot with the Opposition on the new beer and spirits duties. Those duties were the vulnerable heel of the Finance Bill, for the trade at once organized a great crusade against the attempt "to rob the poor man of his beer," and behind this spear-head of popular feeling the landed interest mobilized their attack. Harcourt insisted that the extra 6d. on the gallon of spirits and the extra 6d. on the barrel of beer were justified by the great profits of the trade, and that the cost would not fall on the consumer. But this argument only inflamed the trade, and as the second reading of the Bill advanced it became evident that victory hung in the balance. It was even suggested in the Press that Harcourt had deliberately overweighted his Budget, and was riding for the fall of the Government.
The opposition of the Parnellites had brought down the normal majority of the Government to eighteen, and with the votes of certain Liberal brewers and others (Courtney among them) in doubt the position was seriously imperilled. Harcourt met the menace with great address. Replying (May 10) to Mr. Chaplin and Mr. Balfour, who had declared that the great country houses were threatened, he said:

... Sir, I observe, in all these debates, though you put forward Savernake, Chatsworth and Holland House, there is one class of landowners who have been prudently kept in the background—namely, the great owners of land values. It is upon them as they know perfectly well, that the chief burden of this taxation will fall, and therefore they have put forward the case of every other class first—the yeoman-farmer, the licensed victualler, or the ruined brewer. There is an idea in private circles, I believe, that there are dukes who expect that they may lose millions of money over this system, and, if so, I suppose it is because there will be millions to meet the demand. That brings me to the question of graduation....

Mr. Balfour had admitted that the course of the Opposition in moving the rejection of the Finance Bill was unprecedented, and, Harcourt drove the point home, insisting that this was not an attack on the Budget only, but a general attack on the Government. The temptation to take advantage of the Irish vote had been too great. The Government were challenged on the fundamental principles of the Budget. They were ready to take the opinion of the House first, and after that the opinion of the country. At this the Opposition shouted, "When? When?" but Harcourt merely advised them not to be in a hurry. The Opposition would be bound by the vote they were about to give, not in any circumstances to add to the taxation of beer and spirits. "And what are you going to do?" he inquired of Goschen, as he leant on the box. "Are you going to add taxation to tea, to sugar, or corn? Or are you going to put it all on the income-tax?" He made a good debating point by quoting a declaration by Chamberlain in the past that graduated death-duties were the only fair principle of taxation. This he put side by side with Goschen's declaration against the principle. "Which of these two
... We place graduated taxation before the country as a fundamental principle of Liberal finance. It will survive the factious combination of to-night. If you want to go to the people on such an issue, we are ready to meet you. The masses are grateful for the boon extended to them under the Budget; the millionaire may be mulcted, the small man will gain. Every man owning £1,000 or less gains by it—his payment will be reduced. Half a million will profit in this fashion. So with the small owners of realty—all of them will obtain small or great relief under the death duties, and a still greater boon under the income-tax. ... 

He summed up his case under four heads:

Given the necessity for raising large sums for national defence by increased taxation, how is the money to be got? We affirm and you deny that the powerful and wealthy liquor interests should make a further contribution. Secondly, we affirm and you deny that for the purposes of the death duties realty and personality should be treated alike. (Mr. Balfour,—No, I did not deny it.) Then why do you want to throw out the Budget? We affirm and you deny (Opposition laughter)—I do not know which of you is going to deny—that taking a moderate system of graduation immense wealth should pay at a higher rate than smaller fortunes. That is a clear issue. We affirm and you deny—it remains to be seen how long you will venture to deny—that if great expenditure requires a high rate of income-tax, the burden should fall more lightly on the humbler incomes, (Mr. Balfour,—I asserted it) and until the late First Lord of the Treasury and the late Chancellor of the Exchequer can make up their minds on the subject of finance you are not entitled to throw out the Budget. These are the clear issues which divide our principles from those of the Tory Party. (Mr. Balfour,—No, they do not.) If I may use a vulgar expression, I would venture to say that you are beginning to see that it is not safe for you to face the music. If you should defeat the Budget, you will not defeat the principles on which it is founded, those principles being founded on just and equal taxation, adjusted to the capacity of the various classes to bear the burden. On those proposals we challenge the vote of the House of Commons to-night, and when the time comes we shall ask the judgment of the country.

Following this speech, after midnight, the division was taken, and by the narrow margin of fourteen votes, 308 to 294, the second reading was carried, and the way was clear
for the struggle in Committee. But by this time the storm was raging outside, and Harcourt had to meet the invective and the tears of friends as well as foes—sometimes of those whose hospitality he had enjoyed, and who were filled with panic at the menace that now hung over the country houses. He tempered his replies to these alarms with assurances that the menace was not so dreadful as it seemed. Thus to Lady Leigh, he wrote:

Harcourt to Lady Leigh.

11, Downing Street, S.W., April 26.—I think your alarm is unfounded at the probable effect of the death duties on your landed estates. The total additional sum which all the landed estates of the United Kingdom will be asked to contribute towards the defence of the nation is about £450,000 per annum. I do not believe that such an amount, which will be mainly borne by the richest amongst them, will be a “death blow to country houses and estates.” A great proportion of it will, I am glad to know, fall upon ground rents and values in large towns, a class of property which has hitherto escaped its fair share of taxation. When estates have already “heavy charges upon them owing to accidental circumstances or the extravagance of some predecessor” the tax will fall only on the free margin which remained after the deduction of their charges. No one will pay except in proportion to their means. I cannot think that the owners of large landed estates will gain anything in the estimation of their country by claiming special exemption on the ground of their social position, from taxes which fall on the rest of their fellow citizens. And I confess I am not sorry that the House of Lords will not be exposed to the temptation of using their legislative authority to defeat the principles of equal taxation in their own personal interests. Nothing could be more fatal to the legislative influence of their order. I am old enough to recollect the same “threats of pain and ruin” on the occasion of the repeal of the Corn Laws and the Succession Duty, but in the end it was proved that the privileged classes have been a good deal more frightened than hurt by the extinction of unjust monopolies. The truth is that the prudent and well conducted owners of great estates will survive and do credit to themselves and good to their neighbours as heretofore. But the order of the Ailesburys and their like will disappear and be replaced by the Iveaghss and others who will be able to do justice to those dependent on the owners of land, and discharge their duties which the former proprietors have been incapable of fulfilling. There is no class of society which is exempt from the law that “the sins of the fathers are visited on the children to the third and fourth generations.” But though they will by
the law of nature suffer a disappearance of the unfittest, the best types will survive, and the good old name of Leigh will flourish in a prime old age.

A critic of a more serious character entered the field against him in the person of the Duke of Devonshire, who, following the second reading debate, wrote to Harcourt:

Devonshire to Harcourt.

14, Great George Street, Westminster, S.W., May 11, 1894.—I am sorry that you were interrupted by Chaplin last night, because it is clear that you were about to say something about the future position of my estates under your proposals, which you did not complete. You said "when he tells me that taxation of this character is going to destroy the magnificent fortune of Chatsworth, that is an argument which carries little weight with me." But the interruption prevented you explaining why it carried little weight with you. It is difficult to understand what you mean by the magnificent fortune of Chatsworth. The Chatsworth estate is not a large one, and has never within many thousands covered the cost of keeping up the house and grounds of Chatsworth. It is true that there are very large estates in Derbyshire and other parts of the country, but besides the many mortgages which will of course be deducted from the value of the estates, they are encumbered with the maintenance of other large houses besides Chatsworth, such as Hardwick and Lismore. The expense of maintaining these places, which is I think incurred not solely for my own private gratification, added to the subscriptions, pensions, etc., which residence as well as possession involve, is such that the surplus income from these estates has never been large, and is now a very small one. It is difficult to form any estimate of the capital value which under your proposals will be placed on these estates, but I suppose that in forming that estimate no allowance will be made in respect of residential expenditure or expenditure in the nature of subscriptions, pensions, etc. A heavy duty will therefore be charged on a capital value which, except for the purpose of maintaining the place, will produce no revenue at all. So far as I can judge the amount of estate duty and legacy duty payable by my successor will amount to a sum which cannot be less than 5 or 6 and may be up to 9 or 10 years' available income, after keeping up the places as they have been kept up hitherto. This amount can only be paid, either by putting a complete stop to the residential expenditure for a certain number of years, or by raising on it a mortgage the interest on which will so reduce the available income as to make it permanently impossible to keep up the places as they have been kept up. It is quite possible that all this has been foreseen, and I am not contending that it is a necessity either for me or for my successor to have so
many places. All I wish to point out is that there is no available surplus out of which this increased taxation can be met consistently with the maintenance of these places, and that it must inevitably lead either to their sale, or whereas in the case of Chatsworth sale would be impossible, to the closing of them, which will, I imagine, be some loss not only to the possessor but to the public generally.

Harcourt’s reply has not been preserved, but it is evident that in it he made some allusion to Malwood, for, writing on May 21, Devonshire said:

Devonshire to Harcourt.

... I daresay that your successor will have to pay more on Malwood, but Malwood has a selling or letting value that Chatsworth has not. I think that if your present proposals are fairly administered by the department the house and grounds at Chatsworth ought to be valued for estate duty at O. What is the selling value of Chatsworth? and who would bid for it? But even if this view should be taken you are going to put an enormous tax on the capital value of the estates, the income of which does little more than keep up Chatsworth and the other places.

If you want them to be shut up or sold to men who have other sources of income, this is all right, but it will be the inevitable consequence of your proposals.

Devonshire pursued the controversy in public, and, speaking at Southampton, said that the larger part of the expenditure of the rich took the form of payment of wages, and that the reduction of expenditure would mean the reduction of wages and the loss not merely of a portion, but of the whole means of subsistence of many of the poor. Harcourt replied to this speech in the House on June 22 in the discussion of an amendment which would, if accepted, have made a substantial difference to the Harcourt inheritance. The amendment was to the effect that where, by reason of a second death, the estate duty should become payable twice within four years, the second payment should only be one-half of the first. Harcourt replied that the amendment would be unfair unless the Exchequer was also to benefit in the case of an unusually long tenure. On the point raised by the Duke of Devonshire at Southampton, which was also raised in this debate, he said he would never assent to the proposition that a particular class of the community should
be exempt from taxation in order that they might be generous and munificent. While he was glad that people were generous and kept great houses and opened them to their neighbours, he was not willing that that munificence and that generosity should be founded upon an exemption from taxation to which other people were liable.

Meanwhile he was engaged in a controversy with The Times which had challenged his proposition "that no man has any natural right to control the succession to his property after his death, and that the power to make wills or settlements in succession is the creation of positive laws, which prescribe the limits and conditions of such power." He discussed with his usual erudition the foundations of private property, the right of the State, the nature of land taxation in the feudal period, and the principle of graduated taxation, and concluded (May 1):

... You claim exemption for Blenheim, Chatsworth, Wentworth, Castle-Howard, Burleigh, Hatfield, Longleat. You ask, "How are the contents of these palaces to be valued? By what rule, if any, are books, pictures, and other valuable but perishable commodities to be appraised?" That seems a somewhat astonishing question. Is it possible that you are not aware that personality of this description is, and always has been, valued and appraised—though often very inadequately—for probate duty on the death of each successor on its principal value? You seek to distinguish between property yielding income and property which yields little or no income. The present law as regards personality knows no such distinction. Diamonds yield no income, but they pay probate duty. The application of such a distinction to the case of realty alone is the most signal injustice of the existing system. There is an enormous mass of property yielding an insignificant present income, but of great saleable value, such as building land, ground values, reversions, &c., which pay practically nothing in the shape either of income-tax or of death duty.

You demand exemption for "the lordly mansions which constitute one of the ornaments of our land," whilst the leasehold of a moderate house pays upon its capital value. If that is the sense in which you read the doctrines of Adam Smith, that men should "contribute in proportion to their interests in the estate," I must respectfully ask leave to differ from such a conclusion.

From even more exalted quarters, Harcourt's scheme
evoked some protest. During the debates in Committee the Queen wrote to him as follows:

Queen Victoria to Harcourt.

Balmoral Castle, June 5, 1894.—The Queen thanks Sir William Harcourt for his kind congratulations for her birthday. That was the only warm as well as fine day we have had since we came here. We had it very cold and wet. It has improved lately and has become warmer now.

The Queen is much concerned about the provisions made in the Budget regarding the death duties which, in her opinion, cannot fail to cripple all landowners. Many properties are now only kept afloat at considerable loss to the proprietors who, if the Budget becomes law, may be driven to still further curtail their expenditure. This must inevitably affect the poorer classes, especially the agricultural community, numbers of whom will be thrown out of work altogether. Then again country seats will be unoccupied and charities throughout the country be denuded of support. Where again will be the inducement to owners of property to effect improvements, when by so doing they know they are only encumbering their successors—possibly their widows, who, the Queen fears, are also placed in a worse position than before by the proposed death duties. This leads the Queen to remark that she has always deplored the action of the probate laws which subject widows and nearest of kin, at the time of deep sorrow, to an immediate minute examination and valuation by some strangers of their private possessions which she thinks is painful and cruel. Most earnestly does the Queen urge and hope that Sir William Harcourt may be able to modify these proposals, which she owns she thinks dangerous.

Harcourt, though he was careful never to forget those little domestic inquiries which won the heart of Victoria, did not hesitate to use plain speech to her when plain speech was required, and he took the opportunity four days later of speaking his mind on the subject of the Queen's alarms:

Harcourt to Queen Victoria.

11, Downing Street, Whitehall, S.W., June 9, 1894.—Sir W. Harcourt presents his humble duty to Your Majesty, and begs leave to report that in the last few days solid progress has been made with the clauses of the Budget Bill in Committee.

Sir William desires to assure the Queen that the outcry which has been made by the landed interest on the subject of extraordinary pressure upon them in the Budget is grossly exaggerated if not entirely unfounded. Lord Salisbury's statement that it will absorb
four years' income is entirely contrary to the fact. In the case of a man with £100,000 the additional taxation will be 1 per cent, and in that of a man with a million 4 per cent, and in the case of the last it might amount to 2 years' income payable in eight years. The truth is that the landowners have been so long accustomed to exemption from their fair share of the taxation borne by the other classes of the community that they resent as a great injustice that they should be treated on an equal footing.

It is no doubt a great misfortune that owing to the immense expenditure upon armaments it should be necessary to raise an additional sum of 4 millions by taxation, but that can only be done by imposing the burthen equally upon all classes with a regard to the ability of the several parties to bear it.

Sir William believes that the great support which the Budget has received in the House of Commons, and still more outside, far beyond the Party majority which the Government can command—is due to a conviction that it is an honest attempt to distribute the burthen fairly and justly amongst all classes of the community.

Of the sum to be raised not one fourth part will be asked of the landed interest; the rest will fall on the personal property; and yet it is those who will contribute least who complain most.

It is true the land is now in a distressed condition, but it will only pay in proportion to what it received. Other industries are also depressed, but they do not make that a pretext for refusing to pay their share in the public burthens necessary for the defence of the country.

It is a sense of the justice of our demand that gave the Government a majority of over 100 in the division on the question of graduation.

It is quite impossible to raise large sums of money without inconveniencing some one, but no class—and least of all those who are the loudest in their demands for augmented expenditure—ought to refuse to bear their part in the necessary sacrifice.

Sir William is extremely anxious to remove any particular hardships which may arise in the case of the land, and has already opened communications privately with the Opposition to see if it is possible, consistently with the necessities of the public service, to meet their views.

Meanwhile the Bill was being fought through Committee with steady purpose. There was a good deal of obstruction, but Harcourt was resolute in his refusal to apply the gag on a money measure, and his conciliatory attitude disarmed the opposition of much of its bitterness. With the Leader of the Opposition he was, as always, on the most cordial terms, and among the pleasant souvenirs of the struggle is
a little note thrown across the table of the House by Mr. Balfour on April 23: "My dear Harcourt, You ought to go to dinner. I will manage——. Yours A. J. B." Wherever it was possible to make a concession, Harcourt made it; but he would not yield to any of the multitude of amendments which struck at the principles of the Budget. On an amendment brought forward by Sir R. Webster, he maintained (May 29) that the State had the first claim on all estates passing by death, and that legatees could not be robbed of that which they had never owned. On this contention Mr. Balfour submitted that this doctrine was not justified either by the law of nature or by the feudal system. Harcourt accepted an amendment brought forward by Mr. Butcher that if the only life interest in a settled property arising on the death of a deceased owner were that of a husband or wife the further estate duty should not be payable, and one from Mr. Balfour providing that the principal value of any property should be estimated to be the price which, in the opinion of the commissioners, such property would fetch in the open market at the time of the owner's death. He also agreed to bring in an amendment under which any death duties charged in the colonies would be deducted from the charge made in this country, provided that reciprocal treatment was given by the colony in question. Further concessions were made in the case of small properties. When the Bill was through Committee Harcourt wrote to the Queen, no doubt with a sly pleasure at the nature of his communication:

Harcourt to Queen Victoria.

. . . The concessions made to the landowners in the course of the Bill greatly modified the hostility of the Opposition. They will still have very favourable treatment as compared with the owners of other kinds of property. It is from them that the main opposition to the Budget proceeded. It is remarkable that the smallest majorities for the Government were off the increase of the beer and spirit duties—a tax which in fact was approved by the great majority of both Parties, but it was hoped that by a combination with the Parnellites and the Liberal brewers the Government might be displaced. This however did not come about.
On the Report stage, which occupied six sittings, some drafting amendments were inserted by the Government, but the Bill was very little changed when it came up for its third reading on July 17. In reply to Mr. Balfour's criticisms on "revolutionary" and "oppressive" finance, Harcourt said that even a man owning property worth £1,000,000 would only have to pay an additional £1,020 by way of insurance from the age of forty onwards against the death duties. And such a man might easily, he remarked, throw away a sum like that in an afternoon on a "moderate two-year-old." The remark called forth a good deal of amused comment, for it was a very obvious thrust at the Prime Minister, who had just won the Derby with Ladas. When the Bill, having passed through all its stages, went to the House of Lords, there were strong protests against its provisions, but the peers did not venture, as they ventured fifteen years later, to set up a claim to control the finance of the country, and the Bill duly became law.

The passage of the measure brought Harcourt more compliments than had ever fallen to his lot before. The Times confessed that "Sir William Harcourt's management of the Finance Bill, simply as management, must be admitted by his opponents to deserve the praises bestowed upon it by his friends." His friends rejoiced in the triumph. They regarded it, not merely as the greatest legislative achievement of the Parliament, but as a handsome set-off against the injustice to which they felt Harcourt had been subjected in the matter of the Premiership. He received through Mr. (now Lord) Channing a request from the Liberal members to attend a dinner to celebrate the passing of the Bill, and, in accepting the invitation (July 5), he said:

... I shall accept with pride and pleasure this hospitable token of their goodwill and approval of the efforts however imperfect which I have made to deserve their confidence and contribute to our common cause.

The steadfast and cordial support which I have had from every section of the Party throughout this difficult business could alone have secured its success, and I shall be glad of the opportunity to
express to them all my sense of gratitude for the indulgence they have extended to me.

There was a strong disposition in some quarters to give the celebration a definite anti-Rosebery character, and to exclude all members of the Government except Harcourt's supporters in the leadership controversy; but Harcourt declined to be a party to a pronounced anti-Rosebery demonstration. The dinner, which took place at the Hotel Metropole on August 1, was presided over by Jacob Bright, and attended by 163 Liberal members. There were notable absenteees from the Liberal front bench, but in the breezy speech which Harcourt delivered there was no hint of discontents. Whatever was going on behind the scenes, he always kept his powder in public for the enemy.

Harcourt not only liked congratulations himself, but enjoyed bestowing them on others, and as the controversy was reaching its end he paid a handsome tribute to the Civil Service for the help he had received in preparing the Budget. Presiding at the annual dinner of the Civil Service, at which Lord Welby, who had now retired from the Treasury to the House of Lords, was the guest, he mingled chaff and praise of the men who had assisted him during the past months. "Vivat Regina and no money returned," he declared to be the motto of Her Majesty's servants, and referring to the Civil Service, he said:

... We creatures of accident, politically, in departments, who are here to-day and gone to-morrow are evanescent items in that administration, but the Civil Service, like the river, goes on for ever. Of that Civil Service I will say what I know—that I believe it is without example in any other nation in the world. ... I must veil what I have to say in the decency of a learned language. When I say that, I mean a certain secrecy, because I do not want it known how much people who appear before the world as the men who do a thing are not the persons who do it; and if I should describe the life of the Civil Service of England I should describe it in the well-known lines of Virgil—Sic vos non vobis melius factis aperes. We get a great deal of credit that does not belong to us. ... 

In speaking of Welby's translation to the House of Lords, Harcourt took the opportunity of denying a rumour which
was current at the time that he intended to retire to the House of Lords himself after the passage of the Finance Bill. "I hope," he said, "long to preserve in private life the intimacy and friendship of Lord Welby, but he has gone to a place to which I can never go ("Yes"). No, no; I am telling you what is the truth. There is a gulf fixed. I cannot go to him and he cannot come to me." It was a decision that caused him no distress. He was, before everything else, a House of Commons man, and he had no intention to exchange the smell of powder for the vanity of titles.

IV

Although the Session was unusually brief and was mainly occupied with the Budget, there was an exceptional amount of business to get through. The last words of Gladstone in the House of Commons had been a declaration, apropos of the rejection of the Home Rule Bill by the House of Lords, that the conflict between the two Houses must be brought to an issue. It was obvious that, in the present state of parties and the present mood of the country, the Lords' issue could not be effectively raised on the subject of Ireland alone. The _mot d'ordre_ was the "filling up of the cup." The hostility of the House of Lords to the spirit of reform on this side of St. George's Channel as well as on the other was to be challenged by a series of measures which, if not accepted by the Upper Chamber, would give the Government a strong case for appealing to the country against the unrestricted veto of the peers. Apart from this consideration, which, in the circumstances of the reconstructed Ministry, carried less weight with Harcourt than with some others, it was necessary to do something to redeem the pledge of the Newcastle programme. It was necessary also, if the small majority at the command of the Government was to be held together, to give satisfaction to the various elements of which it was made up. Bills had to be introduced as evidence of the good faith of the Government, even if there was small chance of carrying them into effect. The Irishmen, especially after the _faux pas_ of Lord Rosebery on
the opening day of the Session, had to be reassured, the Scotch were demanding the extension to their country of the local government reform already conceded to England, the Welshmen had to be satisfied on the subject of Welsh disestablishment, and the long-standing grievance of the poor boroughs in regard to the rating inequalities of the metropolis could not be ignored.

With these, and the many other reforms brought forward, Harcourt was not concerned except in so far as his leadership of the House involved his supervision of all its business; but his preoccupation with the Budget and with the grave discussions on foreign affairs, which will be referred to later, were interrupted by the multitudinous details of the general work of the Session, both inside and outside the House. Some of his tasks were uncongenial enough. He had, for example, to defend the continuance of the grant of £10,000 a year to the Duke of Edinburgh, who had become Duke of Coburg, against the attack of the Radicals. There was widespread feeling on the subject, which Harcourt shared. It was felt that the Duke should have surrendered the whole sum he received from the taxpayers of this country, £25,000 a year, when he succeeded to a foreign throne; but, while the Government revoked the grant of £15,000, they left the second grant of £10,000 to the decision of the Duke, who decided to retain it, whereupon Mr. A. C. Morton and Labouchere gave notice of a motion that as the recipient of the annuity had become the sovereign of a foreign State the money should no longer be paid. “We shall want all the help we can get from the Opposition on Friday evening,” wrote Harcourt to James, “as you are aware it is just one of those questions on which we can very little control our own Party. I have spoken to Balfour on the subject, and I hope you will see that your contingent (the Liberal Unionists) will come to our aid.”

Writing to the Queen on the matter, Harcourt said:

Harcourt to Queen Victoria.

II, Downing Street, April 21, 1894.—Sir William Harcourt presents his humble duty to Your Majesty, and begs leave to report
that Mr. Labouchere's motion relating to the Duke of Coburg's annuity was defeated to-night by 298 votes against 67. Mr. Balfour and Sir William used every exertion to secure as large a majority as possible, and Sir William feels sure that the Queen will regard the result as highly satisfactory.

Sir William begs leave to congratulate Your Majesty on the happy events of the marriage at Coburg, a place so full of tender recollections to the Queen, and in addition on the betrothal of the Princess Alix [to the Tsarevitch], whose singular charm and fascination Sir William had the pleasure of knowing at Balmoral.

Queen Victoria to Harcourt.

VILLA FABBRIOTI, FLORENCE, April 24, 1894.—The Queen thanks Sir William Harcourt very much for his letters, and especially for his congratulations on the two very interesting events of the 19th and 20th.

The wedding was a very bright one, and her dear grandchildren are very happy.

The betrothal of her beloved granddaughter Princess Alix of Hesse is a very romantic as well as auspicious event, and very unexpected. For five years the young people were, it now seems, attached to each other in silence—and the obstacles seemed insurmountable. However their attachment was so great, so deep that the effort has been made to lessen the difficulties and obstacles respecting religion. She has a strong character, and may be of great use. And the Cesarewitch is quite charming, simple and unaffected; brought up by an Englishman his feelings are very English, which he always speaks. His likeness to the Duke of York is quite remarkable.

In view of the small and doubtful majority at the command of the Government, the heavy programme was carried through with remarkable success, and at the end of the Session Harcourt was able to write to the Queen (August 16):

... Considering the fact that the present Session has been one of the shortest on record and the special difficulties attending it, the outcome may be regarded as creditable to Parliament. There will have been passed into law 33 Government Bills and 20 Bills introduced by private members. Of these nine-tenths may be regarded as non-contentious, but useful measures tending to the public convenience. When less than a month ago Sir William propounded a list of Bills which might be passed before the end of August the announcement was received with incredulity and ridicule. But it will be found that well within the period named not only those measures but 10 additional Bills have been successfully carried through, and in this respect the power of the House of Commons...
to transact the necessary business of the country has been conspicuously displayed.

Not all the Government measures reached the Statute Book, the Evicted Tenants Bill being rejected by the House of Lords, and the Welsh Disestablishment Bill not getting beyond the first reading stage.

In spite of the remarkable achievements of the Session, the internal condition of the Government was growing steadily worse. Disagreements on foreign policy were completing the disintegration of a structure which had been doomed by what was now recognized, by friends and foes alike, as the blunder over the leadership question. From the moment of the "predominant partner" speech, with its humiliating sequel in the House of Commons, Lord Rosebery's stock had declined, while the prestige of Harcourt had been greatly enhanced by the Budget and his masterful handling of the House of Commons as leader. His popularity with the rank and file in the House and with the Party in the country had never been so high, but his affection for the Government sank steadily lower. Personal feeling, no doubt, had something to do with this; but his controversies with the Foreign Office had still more. Nor was he in sympathy with the idea of a House of Lords campaign conducted in the present circumstances and under the leadership of Lord Rosebery. The policy of "filling up the cup" had not produced any such collision as would rouse the indignation of the country. It was true that Bills had been rejected, but they were chiefly Irish bills, and Harcourt was convinced that the House of Lords could not be dispossessed on the ground of Ireland. In this he was in agreement with Mr. Morley, with whom, under the influence of a common hostility to the tendencies of the Foreign Office, his relations were resuming something of their former intimacy. "The plain truth is that we can do nothing with the House of Lords unless they really resist the will of the British constituencies—and this they are not now doing," wrote Mr.
Morley to Harcourt (September 21). "I entirely concur with you in the opinion that under the present circumstances and with the Government as at present constituted it is simply ridiculous to talk of tackling the House of Lords," replied Harcourt. He himself was doubtful whether there was any future for the Administration, but in so far as he had a card to play it seemed to be Local Option, and he was indignant when in the autumn discussions of the subject Gladstone intervened with a eulogy of the Gothenburg system. Writing to Mr. Morley, he said:

Harcourt to Mr. Morley.

MALWOOD, September 24.— . . . Mr. G. has managed to make what seems to me a fatal mess of the temperance question. Does anybody believe that the real temperance people are going to accept a State traffic in drink à la Gothenburg?

The astounding part of it is that when I was authorized ten years ago to declare for Local Option pure and simple in the Government of 1880, I remember at the close of my speech supporting the motion for which we all voted Mr. G. pulled me by the coat tails and shouted out, "Say you are speaking for the Government." At that time of course Chamberlain's declarations made several years before in favour of the Gothenburg system were perfectly well known. Unfortunately the G.O.M's memory on these subjects entirely fails him, and at heart he has always abhorred temperance.

I don't mean to budge one inch from my position on the matter, and shall stand or fall by local option pure and simple, and make a declaration to that effect whenever I find it necessary to speak. . . .

"I don't wonder that you should feel some disgust at Mr. G.'s temperance manifesto," replied Mr. Morley (September 27). "That he should kick over local option, after being head of a Cabinet which ratified your Bill, is really rather strong—almost as bad as Chamberlain's reproaches about the mess made by a Cabinet of which he was a member." Harcourt's general attitude to the Government at the time is revealed in his correspondence with Spencer.

Harcourt to Spencer.

MALWOOD, September 21, 1894.— . . . I don't know why you should suppose I shall depart from my fixed resolution not to make any public speech. Why should I? You and your friends have informed me sufficiently frankly you do not regard me as fit to lead.
Why then should I pretend to take the initiative only in order that you may repudiate me. As you know I am not a supporter of the present Government. I have a great personal regard for all of you, and contemplate your proceedings with an impartial curiosity and a benevolent neutrality. I quite agree that your position is a difficult one, and I wish you well out of it. But I see that your leader is announced for a good many speeches in which he will no doubt develop his policy with his accustomed clearness—and then you will know what to think and do. It will be quite time enough when your plans are declared for me to consider how far I can support them. Meanwhile I am well content to involve myself in my own obscurity.

Spencer to Harcourt.

North Creake, Fakenham, 26 September.— . . . What you say on politics is sad, and I hope your mood will change. You embarked on the ship, and you are too important to be anything but an active leader of the crew. How can you stand by when important operations have to be considered. If something like cordiality cannot be established between you and Rosebery and others, it is a gloomy prospect which we have before us. These are but my reflections not intended to draw you further.

Harcourt to Spencer.

Malwood, September 28.— . . . I agree with you that the prospects of the Government are gloomy enough, but that is not my affair. You have made your own beds, and so you ought not to complain if you find them hard to lie upon. It is unreasonable that you should complain that I accept with patience the part which you have assigned to me, and that I do not desire to assume a lead for which I am judged unfit. It has always been my habit not to force myself where I am not wanted. If I have anything worth saying in political affairs it will be to those who trust me and not to those who have no regard for my opinion. As you say I joined the ship, but I was rated before the mast, and it is not for me to mount the bridge.

In this not very genial frame of mind, Harcourt set out on a visit to Italy with Lewis Harcourt, with whom he had had something approaching a disagreement on the subject of the latter's career. Lewis Harcourt had been anxious that his father should leave politics after the Budget, but failing in this he had refused to consider appointment to the Mint or to accept nomination for Leicester. While his father remained in politics he would remain by his side. Harcourt was keenly disappointed at what he regarded as a
serious sacrifice of his son's prospects to his own convenience; but he yielded as usual, and the maintenance of their relationship was celebrated by the Italian tour. They visited Como, the Villa d'Este and Venice, and Harcourt's letters to his wife were full of pleasure at the renewal of old experiences. But he could not quite escape the reminders of less pleasing things. "One of the first persons we encountered in the hotel staying here under the same roof," he wrote to Lady Harcourt from Venice, "was Labby himself, Labby, after all our precautions to keep out of his way at Cadenabbia. So I suppose all the papers will ring with cancans of the 'Venetian conspiracy,' and it will be said that I joined him to escape the Cabinet."
CHAPTER XVII

WAR IN THE CABINET.

The Anglo-Belgian Agreement—Harcourt protests at failure to keep him informed—Protests from Paris and Berlin—Republi
cation of Article III—A distracted chargé d'affaires in Paris—
Egypt—Distrust of the German Emperor—Importance of good understanding with Russia—The Armenian massacres—
A "Little Englander"—The Nicaraguan indemnity—Dangerous situation with France on the Nile—Harcourt makes conditions on foreign policy—Emergence of the South African question.

Throughout the long struggle over the Budget, Harcourt was engaged in an entirely different conflict with his colleagues, of which the public knew little, but which threatened more than once to result in an explosion that would have brought the Government down. However much the relations of Harcourt and Lord Rosebery were disturbed by incompatibility of temper, violent and impulsive on the one side, fickle and incalculable on the other, their disagreements had deeper roots than mere personal irritation. They represented, in external affairs at all events, two hostile points of view. Ever since the Crimean days Harcourt had been unaltering in his attachment to the policy of peace as the chief interest of the country. He opposed intervention in continental affairs, except when that intervention was directed towards the attainment of a common European policy, thought that the country already had more colonial responsibilities than was good for it, resisted provocative expenditure on armaments, which he rightly regarded as one of the roots of international distrust, had long ago nailed his colours to the mast of the Blue Water School,¹ and hated Jingoism and

¹ Speaking in the debate on March 20 on the loss of the battleship Victoria, which had been rammed by the Royal Sovereign, he stated
its "prancing pro-Consuls" in all their manifestations. The introduction of the spirit of Imperialism into the Liberal Party had aroused his most acute resentment, and he had shared to the full the disquiet which Gladstone felt at the earlier indication of Lord Rosebery’s attitude at the Foreign Office. Lord Rosebery’s contact with public affairs had little reference to domestic concerns; but he had a deep and highly instructed interest in foreign affairs, with definite tendencies of policy that departed sharply from the traditional views of the Liberal Party. He had been one of the founders of the Imperial League, which a few years hence was to blossom into the Liberal Imperial League, and the attractions of his glittering personality had given an impulse in the Party to a train of thought which filled the old-fashioned Liberal of the Cobden and Gladstone tradition with concern.

Imperialism was becoming fashionable, and it was becoming fashionable at a critical time. The new hostile formation on the Continent was taking shape—the Triple Alliance on one side, France and Russia on the other—and feeling in France was still embittered by what were his general view of the function and significance of the Navy:

"I will state one of the great reasons why, in my opinion, the supremacy of the British Navy is a great element in the preservation of peace for this country. The great fear and danger for this country are that we should find ourselves in a position in which, from a want of sense of security and strength, we should involve ourselves in the complications of Europe and the great military powers. If this country felt that it was not independent, that it was not strong, that it could not stand alone, it might be forced into European combinations or complications from which it would be most desirable to stand aside. I have always regarded the great model, the great example for all civilized countries to be the policy of the United States established by George Washington a hundred years ago. That was a policy of peace, a policy of abstention from complications in other countries. What was the security of that policy? It was the Atlantic that rolled between America and Europe. If you have a superior Navy you may have as great a guarantee of your own neutrality as the Atlantic affords to the United States. I desire that the Navy should be strong in order that we may be neutral, and not be called on to combine on matters in which we have no interest at all, simply for want of strength to support our own independence."
supposed to be the pro-German leanings of British policy, begun under the Salisbury Government and continued under the Rosebery régime. The situation was rendered the more delicate by the unredeemed pledge of British withdrawal from Egypt, and by the competition between the Powers for desirable places in the sun in Central Africa. Harcourt had no continental predilections. He had been strongly anti-Napoleon, but not anti-French, during the reign of Louis Napoleon, but since then his attitude to all the Powers had been singularly free from partiality or preference. He was neither pro-German nor pro-French, and he was entirely opposed to exclusive friendships which implied potential antagonisms. It was because he suspected that foreign policy under Lord Rosebery was assuming a certain anti-French bias that, after the leadership crisis, he sought, first, to have the Foreign Secretaryship in the House of Commons, and when that was found to be impracticable laid down rigorous conditions designed to secure that he, as Leader of the House of Commons, would be kept in close touch with all the movements of the Foreign Office.

It was an arrangement which was easily liable to breach, whether intentional or unintentional, especially in the susceptible atmosphere of the time, and events speedily provided the occasion. It arose from developments in Central Africa. The future of the control of the sources of the Nile was still the danger point of international affairs, and it was its bearing upon that problem that gave the question of Uganda significance. The mission of Sir Gerald Portal to that country had resulted in conclusions which led the Government to decide to establish a British Protectorate there, and it fell to Harcourt (April 12) to announce the fact to the House of Commons. He had yielded to the weight of opinion on the subject and to the arguments for the need of a settled control of the country in the interests both of the natives and of the white faction; but he had yielded without enthusiasm, and was in no mood for further developments in the same field. But other developments were in progress.
At the end of March Harcourt received from the Foreign Secretary the following letter:

Kimberley to Harcourt.

35, LOWNDES SQUARE, March 28, 1894.—I think you ought to know that we are engaged in secret negotiations with the King of the Belgians with a view to transfer to him under a long lease our "sphere of influence" on the Upper Nile. The object is to prevent the French, who are about to send an expedition across Africa to that region, from establishing themselves there, and to settle with the Belgians, who are there already, the questions arising out of our claims to a sphere of influence in that quarter.

The arrangement, if we can carry it through, appears to me to present many advantages. We shall have a friendly neighbour; we shall not be under pressure to extend our operations in that district; we shall prevent the French from interfering. The presence of the French there would be a serious danger to Egypt, and might easily involve us in complications with them. I can at any time give you verbally any further explanations you may desire.

Harcourt was at the moment immersed in the final preparations for his Budget, and it may be overlooked the gravity of the communication. It was not until three weeks later, on receiving the terms of the transfer of rights, that he wrote:

Harcourt to Kimberley.

11, DOWNING STREET, April 22.—... The matter for me at least has assumed a most serious aspect, and I must bring it before the Cabinet on Tuesday, and on their decision will depend whether I continue in my present position in the House of Commons.

You know that when I undertook the lead of the House of Commons I stipulated for and received a distinct assurance that I was to be kept in full and constant knowledge of all important transactions in the Foreign Office from their initiation, so that nothing of importance was to be done without my privity.

I regard this Belgian Agreement as a distinct breach of that promise. When you hinted to me that something of the kind was going on I indicated my doubts as to the policy.

I fully expected, and permit me to say I had the right to expect, that I should have been fully informed before it went on to completion. As you know I have never been allowed to see the document before it was signed. If I had I should have strongly protested against it, and required that it should be brought before the Cabinet, and I myself am informed of it as a concluded affair in a circulation box ten days after the signature of the Agreement.
You professed to inform the Cabinet at its last meeting of what was going on in the Foreign Office, and were absolutely silent on this Agreement, which was then signed. The mutilation of the Postal Report (which I accidentally discussed), and this second Agreement kept back from me and from the Cabinet till it is too late to discuss it have left on my mind the most painful impression.

It is a course of proceeding which in my opinion is not consistent with the assurance given to me, and must discharge me from all responsibility for the affairs of the Foreign Office and their defence in the House of Commons.

I must request that this treaty shall be published at once, and that I shall be at liberty to take such steps as I think fit with regard to it.

The House of Commons has a right to expect that I shall answer to them as to the foreign policy of the Government. The only answer that I can now return is that the Foreign Office policy of the Government is transacted by the First Lord of the Treasury and the Foreign Secretary in the House of Lords, and that they take particular care that I shall know nothing of these foreign affairs.

Kimberley pointed out that, after his earlier communication, he had assumed that Harcourt, if he desired further explanations, would have asked for them, but Harcourt insisted that by the terms of the arrangement, the Agreement should have come to the Leader of the House of Commons as a matter of course before any decisive steps were taken. His resentment was strengthened by the conviction that the Agreement was a grave mistake. "I find that J. Morley and Asquith entirely share my views on this subject," he wrote to Kimberley. "In our opinion it (the Treaty) creates a most dangerous situation with regard to France, and under circumstances which, when they become known, will be most discreditable to the English Government as well as to that of Belgium." The Journal records:

April 23.—There has been a Sunday of "crisis" between W. V. H. and Kimberley. The latter (with R.) has concluded a secret treaty with the King of the Belgians, granting to the King a lease of the territories in Central Africa on the Upper Nile (Wadelai, etc.). This fact was not communicated to W. V. H. at the Cabinet, although the treaty was signed 10 days ago. W. V. H. says he will not consent to the secrecy of the treaty, and will not defend it in the H. of C. He demanded a Cabinet, which met at 12 to-day. W. V. H. explained the whole situation to the Cabinet, which took them considerably by surprise, and they almost unanimously sided with
him. It seems it will be impossible to recall the treaty, but Percy Anderson is to go to Brussels to-night to see if the King of the Belgians can be induced to give it up. J. Morley was angry and much alarmed at the action of the F.O., and asked, "What will France think and do on this?" [H.]

The storm was intensified a few days later by the announcement that Major Owen had planted the British flag at Wadelai, and established a chain of forts as far as the Albert Nyanza. Harcourt protested against an unwarrantable extension of the Uganda programme, which had no authority from the Cabinet and was entirely irreconcilable even with the Belgian secret treaty, which assumed that the Belgians were in occupation of Wadelai. He was "astounded" the next day (May 8) to discover that ever since the previous roth of August instructions to our representative at Uganda had been in force directing him to send emissaries into the district of the Nile basin who would be authorized "to negotiate any treaties that may be necessary for its protection," and that "forms of treaty were enclosed for the purpose." He demanded to know who was consulted before these instructions were sent and why they were endorsed "not to be printed," and received from Kimberley a letter from Lord Rosebery saying that he was responsible for the instructions, and that they could not have left the Foreign Office without his approval. Thereupon Harcourt sent to Kimberley (May 14) a strongly worded protest, from which I quote one paragraph:

Harcourt to Kimberley.

... (4) In Rosebery's letter of the 12th inst. he takes a new ground. He says, "I sent the instructions on my responsibility as Foreign Minister without consultation so far as I know with any of my colleagues." That is to say without the knowledge at the time or subsequently either of the Prime Minister or of the Cabinet. It appears by Sanderson's Memorandum of the 11th inst. that the order "not to print" effectually withheld the knowledge of the transaction before and after from the Cabinet, though we were all in London and could have been consulted. In my opinion if these instructions had been made known to Mr. Gladstone he would have dissented from them, and if they had been referred to the Cabinet they would then, as they have done now, have disapproved them.
The claim therefore is that the Foreign Secretary may set aside the judgment of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, and give without their knowledge instructions of the gravest consequence which are contrary to their opinion.

I believe such a pretension to be absolutely inconsistent with the traditions of English administration, and it was finally condemned in the well-known case of Lord Palmerston in 1851.

The issue touched the fundamentals of government, and on that issue Harcourt and Lord Rosebery were poles asunder. Foreign policy, as Harcourt understood, ultimately governed every other aspect of policy, and its withdrawal from the control of the Cabinet struck a deadly blow at the whole principle of representative government. Diplomacy, in the existing condition of the world, must necessarily be secret within certain limits and up to a certain stage; but Harcourt drew a sharp line between secrecy from the general public and secrecy from the Cabinet, which was the constitutional guardian of the public interest, and of which the Foreign Minister, like the Chancellor of the Exchequer in finance, or the First Lord of the Admiralty in naval matters, was the executive officer. No minister fought for his own hand in the Cabinet with more passion and even violence than Harcourt did, or threatened resignation with a more fluent vocabulary; but when he was overruled he accepted the constitutional situation, and made himself the official voice of a judgment which was not his own. Even at this time he was piloting through the House of Commons naval estimates which he had resisted with furious vehemence in his discussions with the Admiralty during the winter, and there was no hint in his public attitude that he had ever disagreed with them. This view of Cabinet control seemed to him to apply with especial authority to a department upon whose conduct depended the issues of peace and war, the spirit of international relationship, and, ultimately, the whole character of internal as well as external policy. The contrary view represented an attack on the Arks of the Covenant, and that that view was in some measure held by Lord Rosebery was evidenced both by his words and his actions. He believed that the administration
of foreign affairs by the Cabinet had been the cause of past disasters, and though he had become Prime Minister, foreign affairs still continued to form his only real attachment to public life. He knew that in some quarters his elevation to the Premiership in preference to Harcourt had been advocated as a means of removing him from the Foreign Office. Mr. Morley himself was supposed to have been influenced by this among other considerations. But Lord Rosebery, with his complete divorce from the House of Commons in which he had never sat, and with his slender and uncertain hold upon domestic politics, was naturally anxious to preserve some of his authority in the sphere which really engaged his mind and for which he had an undeniable flair.

Meanwhile the Anglo-Belgian Agreement had been signed at Brussels by the King of the Belgians. Harcourt continued his protests, and his case was strengthened by the fact that Belgian public opinion was not behind the King in the matter, and that the Belgian people repudiated an arrangement which threatened their peace with their neighbours. "I am not surprised," wrote Harcourt to Kimberley (June 6), "that the Belgians are alarmed at the united hostility of France and Germany. I pointed this out as a certainty from the first, as the inevitable consequence of the Treaty. It provoked and will necessarily result in a general African row, and will require a recasting of the whole situation. It gives both Germany and France just the opportunity they wanted of repudiating the existing arrangements." It had been assumed that Germany would not object to the Agreement, but she, like France, promptly brought pressure to bear on Belgium, and the King of the Belgians, finding himself between two fires, was naturally anxious to know what support he could look for from England. Writing to the Foreign Secretary, who had sent him the proposed reply, Harcourt said:

Harcourt to Kimberley.

House of Commons, June 12, 1894.—The despatch of Plunkett of the 10th inst. conveys the direct question by the King of the
Belgians (which I have always foreseen would be the result of the transaction), viz., "Will England go to war with France, to maintain the Anglo-Belgian Convention?" Whenever this question comes as to issue I have no hesitation in meeting it with an emphatic "No."

It is quite idle to treat the question as an invasion of "British territory."

A sphere of influence is not territory. It is a mere agreement between contracting parties not to interfere with one another within certain limits. It binds nobody but the parties to such agreement; and France is no party to the agreement.

The draft reply seems by implication to suggest that it is possible when we receive "more explicit information" that we shall give the King of the Belgians an answer in the sense which he desires, viz., that if he will stick to us and the Anglo-Belgian treaty we shall be prepared to fight it out for him with France.

This is a position to which we are resolutely opposed, and we think it unfair that the King of the Belgians should be left under a false impression on this matter.

There can now be no manner of doubt that Germany and France will jointly or severally demand the abandonment of the Treaty. M. Hanotaux has declared this in the French Chamber; the German Emperor has told the same thing to our Ambassador at Berlin. To lead the King of the Belgians to suppose that we are going to fight to enable him to resist Germany and France is to deceive him, because we all know we shall do nothing of the kind. John Morley, Asquith and I are all agreed—and so I believe would be the rest of the Cabinet—that we should avoid these ambiguum voces and simply reply to this despatch "that we have offered to France a friendly discussion of all questions at issue between us and them, and that therefore we cannot entertain the question of such a conflict as that suggested by the King of the Belgians."

That the King will have to retire sooner or later from the position into which we have thrust him—or he has thrust us—I think cannot be doubted. The sooner he gets out of it the better it will be for him, for assuredly if he remains the French will kick him out.

A very great deal depends on the tone of this despatch. We are very decidedly of opinion that it ought to give an absolute go-by to the question suggested, and simply to state that we are endeavouring to arrange all the questions à l'aimable with France.

The attempt to settle this matter with France à deux will not succeed, because Germany has declared that the Anglo-Belgian Treaty—even as modified—is injurious to her interests, so that no settlement of the question can be arrived at without the intervention of Germany (and probably of the Sultan); so that, as the German Emperor says, unless the Treaty is abandoned, there must be a conference, and at that conference, which must involve a new partition of Africa, we shall be in a minority of one.
In the meantime Germany had informed the King of the Belgians that if he did not withdraw from the Agreement, Germany would cease to consider the Congo State as neutral and take whatever other steps she might think proper. The authors of the Treaty, now rather in a panic, hastily advised the King of the Belgians to ask for the withdrawal of Article III of the Convention, which would have met the German objection, communicating the fact to Harcourt after the despatch of the instructions to the Minister in Brussels. Harcourt forthwith wrote:

_Harcourt to Kimberley._

II, Downing Street, July 16.—I must most seriously protest against things of such capital importance as the telegram to Plunkett, which you have just sent me, being despatched without consultation with the Cabinet and personally with myself as Leader of the House of Commons. Of course I agree with the cancelling of one-half of this agreement, but the tearing up of it in small pieces instead of dealing with it as a whole is in my opinion an impolitic course which only exposes us to fresh humiliation. The demand of the French, fortified by our retreat before Germany, for the cancelling of the rest of the agreement will be instant and irresistible. It will only make our position in Europe more disastrous than it would have been if a more direct course had been taken. Do you really believe that after Hanotaux’s speech he will allow you to refuse to France what you have been compelled to yield to Germany?

The answer to the question came with the presentation of the French note. "It is clear that this serious business is coming to an immediate issue," wrote Harcourt to Kimberley (August 9), continuing:

... The whole origin of the mess in which we find ourselves lies in the policy of concealment adopted from the first. There were four parties who ought to have been consulted:—

1. The Cabinet.
2. The French Government.
3. The German Government.
4. The Porte.

If No. 1 had been consulted the difficulty would never have arisen. I think that with the exception of Rosebery and yourself we were unanimously of opinion that the previous consent of Germany and France was an indispensable condition of such a transaction, and that the Agreement without their consent would inevitably be repudiated.
That has already taken place in respect of Germany, and will, inevitably and with equal reason, be followed up by France. The tone of the French note is very moderate, and its argument seems to me unanswerable. It relies:

(1) On the proposition that the Congo State could not alter its status as a neutral power without the assent of all the guaranteeing Governments. To this there can be no reply. It is the ground taken by Germany to which we have already succumbed.

(2) The satirical commentary on the "life estate" of the King of the Belgians as "une sorte de détention à titre personnel des pays et des peuples qui lui sont réunis en location. Qu'arriverait-il en cas de décès du locataire?" is unanswerable.

(3) The statement that by "le droit international Africain" no State can pretend to any right of sovereignty or property in territory over which it has not established a real and effective occupation in the absence of rights conceded by express convention between the parties interested. This proposition cannot be disputed—least of all by Rosebery who relied on it in his speech of 1891 as demonstrating the invalidity of our "sphere of influence" as against France, who was not a consenting or conventional party to it. The right, therefore, to lease a territory in which Great Britain had no real or effective occupation cannot be maintained—at least as against France.

(4) The claim that France, in virtue of its right of preemption, had a special claim to be considered in any modification of the status of the Congo is not unreasonable.

Nothing has occurred to alter the opinion which you know I have held from the first moment that I became acquainted with this Agreement that in the absence of the consent of France and Germany it cannot be sustained in argument or in fact.

"We had a decisive Cabinet to-day on Congo," wrote Harcourt to Lewis Harcourt two days later. "The French had demanded a final answer from the Belgians as to abandonment of the Treaty. The King of the B.'s asked, or rather prayed our leave to accept, which we have sent—so there is an end of that business. It all came on suddenly on Saturday. You may imagine there were some people not pleased." The Agreement was practically annulled by the later Franco-Belgian agreement on the northern limits of the Congo Free State, by which the King of the Belgians got a footing on the left bank of the White Nile opposite Lado.

But though the Belgian match had been taken away from
the Central African powder magazine, the magazine remained, and throughout the autumn the discussions with France on the question of the British "sphere" on the Upper Nile continued, and there were evidences that Germany was disposed to make common cause with France on colonial questions. There is an amusing description of the diplomatic play in Paris in a letter from Harcourt on his return from a holiday in Switzerland:

_Harcourt to Kimberley._

MALWOOD, September 12, 1894.—I have returned from Switzerland rather sooner than I expected.

As I passed through Paris I saw Phipps at the Embassy, and heard something of his proceedings. I confess that the diplomatic situation did not impress me. I have no doubt that Phipps has all the domestic virtues possible, but vis-à-vis of the wily Hanotaux he is like a mouse affording cruel sport to the cat. He seemed to me to be groping his way in the dark without instruction.

I do not quite understand the situation or the _raison d'être_ of Dufferin. Here we are assuming to be attaining a general settlement of a dozen questions with France all of more or less considerable importance. The country goes to enormous expense in maintaining what is called a diplomatic service, which is presumed to possess supreme experience and intelligence. But at the most critical moment our ambassador to Paris is out of the field. I had supposed that negotiations had been in abeyance in his absence, but I learned to my surprise that the whole question is now in active discussion with the French Cabinet, which is in full session, and that Phipps is conducting it. He showed me his despatch to you of Sept. 5th, and he seemed to hug himself with the belief that all was for the best in the best possible of chanceries. But confidence is a plant of slow growth in an aged bosom like mine. It was obvious to me that Hanotaux was laughing in his sleeve at Great Britain and its chargé d'affaires.

I had for some time observed that whenever allusion was made to a recognition of the English "sphere of influence" the French Minister quietly put the question aside. He is sagaciously pursuing the same game. When Phipps invited him to accept our "sphere of influence" he asked the pertinent question, "Which is your sphere?" He said that under the Geneva Agreement of 1890 it had a southern, an eastern and a western boundary, but, said the sagacious Hanotaux, "What is its northern limit?" This is a question I have myself often asked in Cabinet without obtaining any definite reply.

Phipps seems to have told him (though as he admitted without
instructions) that it was the line drawn in the Anglo-Belgian lease. Probably Percy Anderson would draw it at Alexandria.

Hanotaux then seems to have put forward his real position. He said (and it seems to me with unanswerable force), "You made your arrangements with Germany in 1890. You never asked our consent or even communicated to us. (This was Rosebery's argument in 1890.) We know nothing of your arrangements with Germany. We do not recognize them. For us all the territory not reduced into possession by occupation is terra media open to us as to all the world. If you want any special recognition of your rights by us you must give us consideration for it. You have offered us nothing—or at least nothing that is adequate. What will you give for our admission of your 'sphere'?"

To which the innocent Phipps replied, "Oh, we are about to occupy the Bahr el Ghazal ourselves very soon from Uganda."

At which, ce cher Phipps says Hanotaux smiled. And well he might! I confess I had some difficulty in keeping my countenance. Phipps evidently had bright visions of the Life Guards pounding in the Bahr el Ghazal. I advised him not to assume that was an operation which was likely to be immediately effected.

Phipps's mind is evidently filled with the notion that we can buy and should buy the recognition of our sphere by some cession of territory to France. But what territory? He spoke of some islands (of which I have never heard) but to which it appears the Admiralty attach great importance. He then suggested the Gambia as an offering to France. I know very little about the Gambia. I dare say it is worth very little, but it is in eyes of the British Jingo an English possession—it is a bird in hand, and presumably preferable to a "sphere" in the bush. . . .

I have little doubt that Hanotaux only hung out these false lights to beguile the simple Phipps. I am very confident that France will never on any conditions that we could offer consent to shut herself out from access to the Upper Nile. As Phipps showed me on the map she is nearer to the Nile at or about Lado than we are at Uganda, and in greater force.

The absurd part of the whole thing is that no one at this moment has the smallest intention of occupying any of this territory. We shall not. France has no present intention. Belgium is not there and does not mean to go there. The whole thing is mere bluff and blague, and altogether unworthy of the serious diplomacy of great States. The Uganda boom has very much blown over, and it will probably eventuate in becoming a squalid derelict like Cyprus—Dizzy's place d'armes—from which we are withdrawing our last company of infantry—and the nominal nucleus of the civilization of Asia Minor, whilst the Cypriotes complain that they are worse off than when we went there.

But in the meantime I foresee that unless we take care we are
about to make a serious diplomatic fiasco. The final result of the negotiation will probably be that we shall have advanced a claim to a "sphere of influence," which France will formally repudiate, and the last end of the Anglo-Belgian Convention of May will be worse than the first, and we shall appear ridiculous in the eyes of Europe. For this reason (and not from any intrinsic importance of the question) I hope that matters may be taken in hand in a more serious and business-like manner. We have been snubbed enough, and we cannot afford to endure more rebuffs.

II

It was not only the attitude of France which was giving concern to the Foreign Office during these months. Our relations with her were still, as they continued to be for some years, the main source of disquiet, and Harcourt was sensible that the chief root of the disturbance lay in our failure to carry out the policy of withdrawal from Egypt. He resisted any step which made the fulfilment of that understanding more difficult or which seemed to imply that annexation was the ultimate policy, and when Cromer proposed that the cost of the Army of Occupation in Egypt should be removed from the Egyptian Government and charged upon the British Exchequer, he wrote to Kimberley (October 31) an indignant remonstrance against what he regarded as "the boldest move in the direction of annexation which has yet been attempted. It is one, in my opinion (he continued), that it would be impossible to defend upon any principle we have hitherto avowed in regard to our occupation of Egypt, and therefore if a telegraphic reply is required I have no difficulty in saying that it should be in the briefest possible shape of an emphatic 'No.'" He entirely distrusted Cromer's appeals to "violent courses" which would commit us deeper in Egypt. "I do not know whether the Khedive inspires the hostile press in Cairo," he wrote to Kimberley. "I am quite sure that Cromer inspires the hostile press in London." He was the more concerned to minimize the grounds of difficulty with France in Africa because he was becoming sensible of other clouds on the foreign horizon. Writing to Kimberley, he said:
II, Downing Street, November 16.—... It is clear to me that for some reason or other we have to count on the negative if not positive hostility of Germany.

This is an element which must be carefully borne in mind in our dealings with France on African questions. We may be sure that if Germany has the opportunity of tripping us up, it will be done.

It seems plain enough that the Triple Alliance is used up, and that fresh combinations are in view, and the disappearance of Caprivi and the supposed recrudescence of Bismarck is a suspicious symptom.

It is very fortunate that Russia is not (for the present at least) a disturbing factor. But we must walk very warily. We have never been so destitute of friends or so "mal vus" by the Powers.

The less we attempt any move which requires their friendly co-operation the better—for we assuredly shall not get it.

He was disturbed by new protests in Central and Eastern Europe. "There were three men who were the principal props of tranquillity in Europe," he wrote to Kimberley, "the late Czar, Caprivi and Kalnoky. Two of them are gone, and the last seems shaky. I confess I look upon the state of things in Germany and our relations to it with much anxiety." His anxiety was increased by the record of a conversation which the German Emperor had had with Colonel Swaine. Writing to Kimberley (November 20), he said:

Harcourt to Kimberley.

... The fact that such a personage should engage in a conversation of this gravity with an individual in the position of Col. Swaine is truly alarming. The levity with which questions of such difficulty and danger are flung about shows the instability of European affairs. The statement [by the Kaiser] that "Russia could have seized Constantinople at any time in these last five or six years if she had been desirous to do so" is truly astonishing; and that she did not do so "because she does not any more long for Constantinople." ... I have always been of opinion that it is the Russians who have most to fear from the opening of the Dardanelles to the fleets of Europe, and that they have much more to lose by our admission to the Black Sea than they have to gain by access to the Mediterranean. I often discussed this matter with Schuvaloff and he was of that opinion, and I know that this proposal, which it was intended to put forward at the Treaty of Berlin, was withdrawn on that ground. A British fleet in the Black Sea would open Russia to our attack and make her far more vulnerable than she now is. But the declaration of indifference on the part of Germany on this question and her disposition to leave Austria in the lurch goes far
beyond Bismarck's celebrated speech about the "Pomeranian peasant," and is a most serious element in the European situation.

"I agree with you," replied Kimberley (November 21), "that H.M.'s [the German Emperor's] impulsive character is a very disturbing influence in affairs. . . . His words must be taken *cum grano* always, as he does not weigh them; but weighed or not, the words of the master of many legions are not to be lightly regarded." The delicacy of the discussions with Germany at this time is indicated by a passage from a letter of Kimberley's to Harcourt (December 7), in which he said:

. . . As to my conversation with Hatzfeldt [the German Ambassador] and our relations with Germany there is really nothing of any importance which you do not know, except perhaps an observation which I made to Hatzfeldt when he said that Germany would not "permit" us to annex the Portuguese East African colonies, if Portugal ceased to hold them.

I said, "You must recollect that England is a great Sea Power and could in such a matter 'speak the strongest' word"; to which Hatzfeldt replied, "Yes, but we could make our power felt elsewhere." To which I rejoined that I quite agreed and all the more reason that we should not disagree, especially as we both desired now to maintain the *status quo*. . . .

"I have very little doubt that the German Emperor is annoyed at our *rapprochement* to Russia," wrote Harcourt to Kimberley, "and is mooting the question of the Dardanelles in hopes of breeding bad blood in that quarter." Harcourt himself had always, since the Crimean episode, been opposed to the traditional hostility of this country to Russia, and had sympathized with her claim to be the protector of the Christian communities on her southern borders. "The key to the enigma," he wrote to Kimberley, "is a good understanding with Russia, a thing we have never yet tried, but which is now happily within our reach. No doubt Germany and France will do their best to thwart it, but if we stick firmly to it the Eastern question will be a much less dangerous one than it has been heretofore." And, writing to the Prince of Wales to congratulate him on his return from "your melancholy journey to Russia"
(whither he and the Princess had been to attend the obsequies of the Tsar), he said:

Harcourt to the Prince of Wales.

MALWOOD, LYNDHURST, December 6, 1894.— . . . Those who are best acquainted with the difficulties and dangers which environ the international relations of Europe must highly appreciate the great service which Your Royal Highness has been able to render to your country by the establishment, not only in fact but (what is not less important) in public opinion and sentiments, of the most intimate and friendly relations with Russia. This is an experiment which has never yet been fairly tried in foreign affairs, and it is my humble opinion that there is none which is more likely to minister to the cause of peace and goodwill.

But while he was anxious to promote a new feeling in Anglo-Russian relations, he was no more disposed to create difficulties with Germany than he was disposed to create them in the case of France. "There is nothing so impolitic as to irritate great Powers on small subjects," he wrote to Kimberley, in referring to the emergence of the Samoan question. "If we could give Germany Heligoland, which was British soil, why not Samoa, which only belongs to R. L. Stevenson?" And two days later he wrote:

Harcourt to Kimberley.

MALWOOD, December 8.— . . . Surely this Samoa grain of sand ought not to be allowed to put the European machine out of gear. I think Salisbury was very wise in making his Anglo-German arrangement in 1890.

We cannot be surprised if great Powers are irritated at our advancing a claim to the exclusive possession of the Pacific Ocean and its islands, to supremacy in the Mediterranean, to the proprietorship of Africa and the dominion of Asia.

Surely a little give and take in these matters would be wise. We have already got the lion's share; why should we insist upon taking the tiger's also? Not to say the jackal's.

The claim of New Zealand to annex Samoa is really too absurd. These colonial gentlemen expect us to quarrel on their behalf with the great military Powers of Europe, and to add millions to our expenditure, to which they refuse to contribute a single farthing, and leave the whole burden to fall on the English taxpayer.

The troubled waters of European diplomacy were disturbed at this time by an event of much more gravity than the
Samoan question. The Turkish massacre of Armenians at Erzerum had shocked the public opinion of Europe, and the sense of horror was deepened by the fact that the principal instruments of the massacre had been decorated by the Sultan. The memory of the Bulgarian atrocities was still fresh in the public mind, and feeling in England, indignant at this fresh evidence of the incurable misgovernment of the Turk, demanded drastic redress. Harcourt, constant to his idea of concerted European action in dealing with the Ottoman Empire, was anxious that the matter should be taken in hand by the signatories to the Berlin Treaty; but the Sultan embarked on his familiar expedient of playing off the rivalries and jealousies of the Powers, and Currie, the British Ambassador at Constantinople, did not show much firmness in dealing with him. Writing to Kimberley (December 2), Harcourt said:

_Harcourt to Kimberley._

MALWOOD, December 2, 1894.—... From first to last he (Currie) has been like wax in the fingers of Said Pasha, and has absolutely disregarded the instructions given him from home.

He first of all proposes the Chermside mission and then withdraws it—the first serious blunder. He then accepts the Turkish Commission without taking any precautions to ascertain its constitution or instructions. When the notification comes forth in a shape which we all agree was a direct slap in the face to us he proposes consular intervention at Erzerum; the Cabinet meet and determine more vigorous action shall be taken; he receives definite instructions to deliver a protest on behalf of the English Government, which he has not delivered, and to consult the French and Russian Ministers at Constantinople, which he has not done.

Having failed to carry out the instructions of the Cabinet he then receives from Said Pasha a proposal which, taking the circumstances into consideration, is, I think, the most offensive that one Government ever made to another, viz., to ignore the British Government in the transaction altogether; to treat their remonstrances with contempt, and to pass over all the statements which our Consul has made and to say in short, “we will have nothing to say to you, you are prejudiced and untrustworthy; we will hand the affair over to the United States, who are people who deserve to be treated with some respect.”

I reckon myself as a man of peace in foreign affairs. In fact I am one of those mean-spirited “Little Englanders who have
ceased to exist," but there is a point of humiliation at which even my gorge rises, and we have swallowed our full peck of dirt in this business, and it is time we should have some regard to our own dignity and self-respect and not allow our nose to be tweaked by the Grand Turk, unless we mean to allow ourselves to be the laughing-stock of Constantinople and of Europe.

It is quite obvious what the object of the Sultan is, viz., to give the go-by to the European guarantee at Berlin for the fair treatment of the Armenians. That was what P. Currie was instructed by the Cabinet to put forward.

That is what the Porte is determined to evade, and to shunt the matter to the other side of the Atlantic to be dealt with by the U.S., who have no interest or obligations in the matter. But the most astounding part of the whole performance is that P. Currie should, in the direct teeth of his instructions, have practically accepted this impudent proposal without any reference home. He wrote to the United States Minister, and asked him "whom he would propose to name." . . .

"Currie has been too ready to make things easy for the Porte, tho' I don't think he deserves all the hard things you say of him," said Kimberley in reply, adding that "an appeal to the signatories of the Treaty of Berlin would almost certainly fail, and failure would be not only a rebuff, but would be to give a triumph to the Sultan." Fortunately the United States declined to act, and Harcourt, at enormous length and with characteristic passion, argued afresh for "a direct appeal to the signatories of the Treaty of Berlin to take common action in this matter." "You have given me a good scolding," replied Kimberley (December 5), "on which I can only say that I kiss the rod." Meanwhile another torrent was on its way from Malwood, couched in this energetic sort of language: "Really the conduct of our foreign affairs is deplorable, and we tumble into one scrape after another. . . . The reports of our Consul on the spot are horrible and heartrending, and the whole thing is being as much mismanaged as it is possible to conceive." In the end a commission set up "to inquire into the criminal conduct of Armenian brigands" found that there had been no revolt that would explain or justify the massacres, and Great Britain, supported, though not vigorously, by France and Russia, demanded a programme of reform in the
Armenian vilayets. This was met by counter-proposals, whereupon a definite demand was made on May 11, 1895. There for the moment we will leave a subject which was to become later intimately interwoven with the question of the Liberal leadership.

It is important, in considering his various disagreements with the Foreign Office, which contributed so largely to the disaster towards which the Government were moving, to remember the sources of Harcourt's disquiet. Foreign policy was the master key of government. It involved peace or war, expenditure on armaments, the measure of taxation, and, consequentially, the character of internal policy. Throughout his career Harcourt's powerful mind had followed the movements of the world with extraordinary acumen and understanding, and nearly fifty years' study at close quarters of European diplomacy had confirmed him in definite conclusions as to the best policy for his own country and for the world. He was, in the best sense of the word, that foolishly derided person "a Little Englander," and he rejoiced in the description. His conception of the function of his country in the affairs of Europe was that of the peacemaker, the smoother of irritations, the friendly policeman of a rather disorderly mob. A passionate lover of his own country, he was, like Gladstone and Cobden, an international man, who believed that peace and goodwill among the nations was the universal blessing and that militarism was the universal enemy. His attitude to the continental Powers was that of benevolent impartiality, and he was hostile to friendships which implied antagonisms. Holding these views, he was disquieted by the tendencies on both sides of the Channel which seemed to foreshadow a sinister departure from the Liberal policy that would either leave us the general subject of the hostility or involve us in the tangled web of European alliances. Our enormous holdings in the world were beginning to inspire a common envy, and the claims we were setting up to the spoils of Africa seemed to him provocative and indefensible. His concern was aggravated by the new Imperialism which was permeating the
Liberal Party. If it was not the flamboyant Jingoism of Disraeli, it was akin to it, and he suspected that its fruits would not be very different. It was these considerations which led to his increasing absorption in the problems of foreign affairs. The tide was flowing against the Gladstonian tradition to which he clung, and he was sensible that his powers of resistance were weakened by the fact that the crucial positions were all in the House of Lords. The Prime Minister was there, the Foreign Secretary was there, the First Lord of the Admiralty was there. Neither Kimberley nor Spencer, it was true, could be suspected of Jingo sympathies, but they were out of touch with the more Liberal spirit of the House of Commons, and were more easily subject to influences which Harcourt profoundly distrusted.

These facts explain the intensity with which he argued a case which he knew was going against him. Europe was drifting into strange and perilous waters, and we were drifting with it. He was incessant in his warnings, and his warnings were always appeals to the fundamental doctrines of Liberal policy. Thus, when Kimberley had sent him information of new assurances to the Shah of Persia, he wrote to him:

Harcourt to Kimberley.

11, Downing Street, January 11, 1895.—... These secret agreements are very dangerous and mischievous. They are promises made like pie-crusts for the purpose of being broken; they are in themselves impolitic, and when the time comes for putting them in force are found to be impracticable. If this "assurance" means anything, it means a territorial guarantee of Persia against Russia—a guarantee which we all know very well would never be seriously put into operation.

And when a quarrel arose with Nicaragua in reference to the treatment of certain British subjects he objected to the use of force. An indemnity of £15,500 was demanded from the Nicaraguan Government for the expulsion of a British vice-consul. Arbitration was asked for by Nicaragua, but refused. "I confess," he wrote to Kimberley, "I have an invincible repugnance to using force in a case of small
indemnities like the present, especially when we are dealing with a feeble State and arbitration is offered." He desired the opinion of the Cabinet taken on the subject, and in a further letter said:

_Harcourt to Kimberley._

MALWOOD, April 17, 1895.—... I cannot conceive that after writing a high-faluting letter of the most gushing description to the Tsar, exhorting him to propound a scheme of universal arbitration, and having commenced a sort of negotiation with the United States with the same object, we are going to stultify ourselves by coming down on Nicaragua with force of arms to settle a paltry amount of pecuniary compensation. If there ever was a subject on which arbitration was proper it would be on a money question of this sort, the amende having been made on everything else. . . .

"Rosebery thinks it impossible to collect the Cabinet together at this moment for the purpose of considering the Nicaraguan proposal, and we are both strongly of opinion that it is not a case for arbitration," replied Kimberley (April 17) to Harcourt's suggestion. Thereupon Harcourt wrote:

_Harcourt to Kimberley._

MALWOOD, April 18, 1895.—... After the assurance you had given me that the Cabinet should be consulted before forcible measures were resorted to in Nicaragua I can only regard your letter of the 17th received to-day (to employ your favourite phrase) as a highly "unfriendly proceeding."

The refusal of Lord Rosebery to reserve a question of this importance for the Cabinet on the request of the Foreign Secretary and the remonstrance of the Leader of the House of Commons is, according to my experience, without precedent.

Unfortunately it is entirely in accordance with the course which, from the origin of this Government, and notably in the case of the Anglo-Belgian Convention, has been pursued towards myself and the members of the Cabinet in the House of Commons.

It is in direct breach of the understanding on which I consented to be responsible for the Government in the House of Commons. I must directly traverse your statement that this Cabinet ever authorized the proceedings you and Lord Rosebery have adopted. In my opinion the exact opposite is the fact. It was distinctly understood that all hostile action was to be postponed till the answer from Nicaragua was received and considered, and of this you personally assured me yourself some weeks ago.

As a fact that Government has now made the amende in respect
of the principal grievance, and the only question now in issue is the amount of damages to be recovered. Whether this is a matter to be settled *vi et armis* is a thing which the Cabinet have never had an opportunity of considering, and which they ought to have determined. Every day's experience more and more convinces me that there is no desire to place the working of the Government as between its representatives in the House of Lords and the House of Commons on a fair and friendly footing, but that there is a fixed intention to forestall decisions and to commit the Government to courses which the Cabinet have had no opportunity to consider.

This is conduct against which I have found it necessary constantly to protest, and which is becoming every day more intolerable.

It only remains for me to consider what is the best method of dealing with a situation which I cannot accept, viz., that of being held responsible for proceedings in which neither I nor my colleagues are allowed any voice.

In spite of this protest, three British warships were sent to Nicaragua, Corinto was seized, and the Nicaraguan Government complied with the demands of the British Government on April 28.

III

The incident, which coincided unfortunately with negotiations which were going on with the United States in regard to Nicaragua, left the relations between Harcourt and the Foreign Office increasingly strained, and the breach was widened by another event which occurred about the same time. It sprang from the continuance of the tension in the relations of Great Britain and France. Harcourt's protests against what he regarded as the mistaken attitude of the Foreign Office in dealing with France were repeated, and extended over the whole field of the relationship of the two countries. Thus he objected to the proposed movement of troops in connection with the uneasiness at Rangoon on the subject of French "aggression." The trouble arose in regard to the question of the boundaries of Siam and Burmah, on which a "Buffer State Commission" was sitting. The French were suspected of an intention of jumping a claim on the disputed territory, and the movement of troops to Kyang-Cheng on the present borders of Burmah and Tongking was proposed as a precautionary measure to
anticipate French action. Kimberley told Harcourt (March 21) that Kyang-Cheng might have to be given up to form a part of the "buffer state," but meantime it was British territory, and it was necessary to have a small force there to prevent complications arising. Writing to Harcourt on March 22, he said:

*Kimberley to Harcourt.*

. . . The French have been informed that it is British territory in the most explicit terms. They were never at any time from the very commencement of Rosebery's negotiations with them left in ignorance of this. Nevertheless the French Commissioner, M. Pavie, who is making inquiry as to the possibility of a buffer State being established, informed our Commissioner that if he could have reached Mong Sing, the capital, before him he should have welcomed him as a "guest"; a French flag was given to the native Chief by a French agent with an intimation to him that he was under the French and attempts have been made to form a French party in the State, to second these pretensions. . . .

Harcourt objected to the movement of a force which might create difficulties with France, especially as Fowler, the Secretary for India, had told him that it was contrary to the wishes of the Indian Government for whose benefit it was supposed to be undertaken. "All this idea," he said, "of France invading India, *via* Siam, is the most foolish of all the bugbears that the panic-mongers have invented."

The incident coincided with the recrudescence of the more serious problem of the Upper Nile Valley, which continued to be productive of perplexities and irritations. The Anglo-Belgian Convention which had been so battered by Harcourt in the previous autumn still pursued a sort of doubtful existence, and Harcourt continued his protests against allowing the Belgians "to involve us in the question between them and France as to the pre-emption of the Congo." "They are playing the game they have played throughout," he wrote to Kimberley, "viz., to shove us in front as their backers in a quarrel with France. Nothing could be more mischievous or impolitic than to allow this." He had found it necessary to yield on the question of Uganda, but he persisted in his resistance to the Mombasa railway,
and when Kimberley wrote to him suggesting an inquiry by experts into the practicability and cost of the scheme, he replied:

_Harcourt to Kimberley._

11, Downing Street, April 3, 1895.—... When George II asked Sir Robert Walpole what it would cost to enclose Hyde Park, Sir Robert told him that it would cost three Crowns. I can inform you at once without the aid of experts what your railway will cost.

It will be three Cabinet Ministers including the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I must therefore protest against the Foreign Office consulting experts on that subject—which is of course provisionally to commit the Government—until we have time to get out of your way.

I am not at all disposed to be shoved down an inclined plane on this matter.

"We are doing nothing which indicates a forward policy in Uganda or the Upper Nile, and nothing will be done without your previous knowledge," replied Kimberley (April 13), and he insisted that inquiry would not commit the Government to any position contrary to Harcourt's views. Harcourt was not mollified, and he wrote:

_Harcourt to Kimberley._

Malwood, April 15.—... I am much surprised at your letter. It was thoroughly understood between you and Rosebery and myself at the Cabinet that nothing was to be done about the experts until you and I had talked the matter over, and I made an appointment with you for the express purpose of coming to an arrangement on the subject and found you were gone out of town. Whereupon you proceed just as if the whole matter was settled.

However, before you come to your railway, I hope I shall have got clear of the whole concern, and then you can do as you please.

His complaints that he was not supplied with papers and not kept informed of the intentions of the Foreign Office continued. "The more I ask for them [the official papers], the more I don't get them," he wrote to Kimberley, "and when they come they are so behindhand that I might just as well wait till they are delivered to me as a blue book." The troubles came to a head on March 28 when Sir Edward Grey, the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, made a speech in the House of Commons on the whole question of
the Nile Valley. He maintained that in consequence of the agreements of 1890 with Germany and France, the British and Egyptian Governments could claim that the whole of the Nile waterway lay within their sphere of influence. He referred to the suggestion that a French expedition was on the way to the Upper Nile Valley, and discredited it on the significant ground that France knew that such an advance would be regarded by Great Britain as "an unfriendly act." He reported that the Niger Company had informed the Government that two French expeditions had entered the British sphere in that part of Africa, and turning to the general question said that no provocation had been given by us either in Africa or Siam, and that he relied on the justice and good feeling of the French Government and of the French people to reconcile conflicting interests. Harcourt was not in the House when the speech was made. He wrote to Kimberley:

Harcourt to Kimberley.

March 29, 1895.—I have read (for I did not hear) with infinite surprise and regret E. Grey's declaration on the subject of the Nile Valley last night. These declarations appear to me (as they do to J. Morley) not consistent with the conclusions arrived at by the Cabinet in more than one discussion on the subject. The menacing tone towards France will inevitably lead to a counter-declaration on her part against our sphere of influence, and lead to the raising of the Egyptian question in its most acute form. This is the thing which I have always deprecated, and which I understood you had agreed to avoid when Dufferin was instructed not to press the point of the recognition of the "sphere of influence." You will remember that the Cabinet struck out of one of the despatches words to the effect that the English Government would regard the advance of the French on the Nile as a "very grave matter."

Rothschild came to me this morning to ask what was the meaning of this "bellicose attack on France."

Of course Grey's speech puts an end to all hopes of a general friendly settlement with Hanotaux. What makes it more astonishing to me is that I had struck out of Grey's proposed answer to a question on the Niger all the words which seemed of an unfriendly character to France, and after this was agreed to this deliberate tirade is delivered in a far more offensive form.

I write this note to prepare you for a discussion of this matter at the Cabinet to-morrow.
Indeed, it is for this purpose that I asked Rosebery at the request of my colleagues to summon the Cabinet.

The incident, which created widespread concern, led to an embittered controversy between Harcourt and the Foreign Office. He demanded to know whether Sir Edward Grey had been authorized to use the terms of the statement that he made, particularly the phrase of "unfriendly action" as applied to France, and Kimberley replied:

*Kimberley to Harcourt.*

35, LOWNDES SQUARE, S.W., *March 31, 1895.*—I thought I had stated explicitly in the Cabinet that I only gave Grey some general instructions. I did not tell him to use any particular phrase, neither "the phrase of unfriendly action," nor any other.

I see by the newspapers that Grey is supposed to have read from a written paper, but he assures me he had no written paper, only a few rough notes.

Grey would no doubt have paid attention to any suggestions from you during the discussion.

As to "an attack on the French Government being meditated and even its terms arranged at the Foreign Office," all I can say is that no such attack was meditated, and its terms therefore could not be arranged, nor do I consider that any such attack was made.

*Harcourt to Kimberley.*

11, DOWNING STREET, *April 1, 1895.*—There is one very easy and simple method of avoiding the unfortunate difficulties which have arisen.

I have therefore to request that I may see all answers on important questions of foreign policy before they are given in the House of Commons. I will also in future undertake to make, on behalf of the Cabinet, all important statements in debate on foreign affairs.

It is in this manner alone that the position of the Leader of the House of Commons can be reconciled with that of a Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in the House of Lords.

To this demand Kimberley, acting as the medium of intercourse between Harcourt and Lord Rosebery, who had ceased to meet except at the Cabinet, agreed, and Harcourt drew up a memorandum recording the terms of the understanding. Lord Rosebery proposed the omission from the terms of a clause which Harcourt regarded as vital, and the latter wrote to Kimberley:
Harcourt to Kimberley.

II, Downing Street, April 5, 1895.—... If therefore my Memorandum is not accepted I must request that a Cabinet may be called without delay in order that I may be able to determine whether I shall continue to occupy the position now held in the face of a formal repudiation of the condition on which I accepted it.

I understand that the position you take up is that it is for you and Rosebery alone to judge whether a question of foreign affairs is of such importance as that the Cabinet or the Leader of the House of Commons should be consulted upon it, and that, if you conclude that question in the negative, an announcement is to be made to the House of Commons without the knowledge or assent either of the Cabinet or of the Leader of the House, and that the Anglo-Belgian Treaty and the question of the Nile Valley are proper examples of the kind of questions which are to be so treated.

It virtually amounts to this, that the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary in the House of Lords are to determine, if they think fit, any questions of foreign policy, and irrevocably commit the Government without allowing any voice in the matter to their colleagues in the House of Commons, and that the Leader of that House is to accept and defend that policy without previous assent or consultation with him. That is a position which I cannot under any circumstances accept, and it cannot be too soon ascertained whether it is one in which the Cabinet are prepared to concur.

An accommodation was patched up, but the temper of the relations was now little short of that of open war, and it was not softened by the apparent discovery that the rumoured French expedition to the Nile was baseless. Writing a second letter to Kimberley (April 5), Harcourt said:

Harcourt to Kimberley.

... The whole affair is one of those bugbears constantly cooked up in the Foreign Office, like the scare got up as to the Belgian occupation of Wadelai, which led to the Anglo-Belgian Convention and was founded upon a panic which was a pure invention. Why we should shake our fist in the face of France upon the hypothesis that she is about to march upon the Nile (for which there is no more foundation than that she is about to march upon the Volga) I cannot conceive.

I am glad to see that Hanotaux has treated the question (as he always does) with a dignity and moderation which we might do well to imitate, and has replied with a quiet rebuke to our "unfriendly" demonstration.

His argument was for peace and detachment from quarrels in all connections, and when on the conclusion of the Chino-

Vol. II.
'Japanese War the Foreign Office expressed objection to "the cession of the Liaotung Peninsula" to Japan, he wrote to Kimberley, "Is there no pie in the world out of which we can manage to keep our fingers?" If Russia chose to act that was her affair. "But I am quite as much against entering upon active operations in concert with Russia in this matter as I am against going into partnership with the Triple Alliance. The true strength of our position is one of absolute neutrality."

It is impossible to touch on all the foreign and colonial issues that during this disturbed time occupied Harcourt's mind and agitated his pen; but one subject must be glanced at because it was the first rumble of a great storm that was soon to break over the country and complete, among other things, the rupture of the Liberal Party. Sir H. Loch had ceased to be High Commissioner in South Africa, and Sir Hercules Robinson was appointed to succeed him. Harcourt entered an energetic protest, and claimed to have a voice in the appointment. Ripon, the Colonial Minister, admitted the grounds of Harcourt's objection, but said that he had made it a sine qua non of the appointment that Robinson should cease his connection with De Beers and the Standard Bank. On other grounds he was the best man for a very troubled situation. Harcourt only found his objections strengthened by the defence.

Harcourt to Ripon.

11, Downing Street, S.W., March 5, 1895.—... It is quite true that Sir H. R. has special and particular knowledge of and relations to South African affairs, but it is the very nature of that experience which constitutes his special disqualification.

The fact of his surrender or transfer of his pecuniary interests does not in the least alter the state of the case.

If the Chairman of the L. & N.W. Railway gave up his seat at the Board and sold his shares, no one would think he was on that account fitted to be made the next day the Chairman of a Committee to sit upon the Company's Bills.

The relations of the Cape Colony and the English Government towards the Transvaal and Kruger are of a most critical character. No one can doubt for a moment what will be the policy of Sir H. R. on these questions.
He will naturally be regarded not as an impartial administrator, but as the nominee of Rhodes to carry out his political ideas and his financial interests. I can conceive nothing worse, and the effect on commercial opinion in this country is very bad.

The selection of a man of seventy-one for such a situation strikes at the root of the whole system which we are endeavouring to establish in the face of much odium to establish in the Civil Service.

The reason why I insisted so strongly on the Leader of the House of Commons being consulted on all important appointments—and this is a specially important and exceptional appointment—is because I know by experience that the fortunes of a Government in the House of Commons depend on its appointments perhaps more than anything else. When the Prime Minister is in the House of Commons of course his sanction is obtained beforehand, but the situation of a Leader of the House of Commons who finds himself called upon to defend appointments of which he knows nothing and does not approve is one which is impossible.

However, the appointment had been made, and could not be revoked, and, as so frequently happened, Harcourt was left to rage against a fait accompli.

There will be two points of view on this story of incessant conflict; but they are not necessarily irreconcilable. It is clear, on the one hand, that Harcourt was a difficult colleague; but it is not less clear, on the other, that he was engaged in defending in singularly trying circumstances what he believed to be the fundamental doctrines of constitutional government, and that his suspicion that a new and perilous disavowal of the Liberal tradition in foreign policy was taking effect was not without foundation. For forty years he had been one of the closest observers of world movements, and he was sensible that formidable developments were taking shape on the European stage. New personal forces were in the field, new and far-reaching motives were in operation and the re-grouping of the great Powers was assuming a definition and gravity that shed a sinister light over the future. Acutely sensitive to the changes in the barometer of world politics, he was confirmed in his lifelong view of the true function of this country in external affairs. He did not wish England to be caught in the web of continental obligations, but to preserve freedom of action and an attitude of enlightened and vigilant
detachment. The pursuit of this policy, the aim of which was to keep the goodwill and confidence of the continental Powers, involved a certain disinterestedness in regard to extra-European affairs and a liberality of conduct which would disarm suspicion. Whether the danger that he foresaw and which in the end brought about the destruction of the European system could have been averted is only a matter for speculation; but in the light of events it cannot be denied that Harcourt's struggle for the maintenance of the old Liberal doctrine was fraught with momentous issues.
CHAPTER XVIII
A TOTTERING GOVERNMENT


FROM what has gone before it will be apparent that the vessel of the Government did not enter upon the Session of 1895 in a very seaworthy condition. The captain had failed to fulfil the high expectations entertained of his attractive, but indeterminate character; the chief lieutenant was hardly on speaking terms with him; the crew were torn with dissensions; there was profound disagreement as to the line of policy that should be put before the country, and though the Budget had been a dazzling success it did not serve to cover the general sense of failure and disintegration. It was obvious that whenever the election came the Liberal ship would founder, and the imminence of disaster threw its shadow over the spirit of the Government and the Party. Harcourt himself had no illusions on the point, and hardly concealed his satisfaction that the end of an intolerable situation was near. "After all," he wrote to Spencer, "it does not much signify, for there is no prospect of our surviving to lay the Navy estimates on the table." He had in the previous autumn begun his customary campaign against the Admiralty. There is no need to go into it in detail, for it repeated, though in a much more moderate spirit, the controversies of previous years. There were the usual demands for increased expenditure for ships and guns, the usual protests from the Treasury,
the usual fervid discussions about the comparative navies, the relative rate of building, and so on. Harcourt was more genial, however, for he had not this time a huge deficit to face. His Budget promised to produce a surplus adequate to meet the new demands of the departments, and in these circumstances he fought his battle with less than his usual passion. Moreover he had so many quarrels going on with the Foreign Office at the time that even his appetite for disputation was sated. If he had a protest to make to Spencer he invested it with the raillery of a man who could look on with amused interest at an affair in which he was no longer deeply concerned. Thus, complaining of the absence of the heads of departments from London and contrasting the fact with the practice in former Governments, he said:

Harcourt to Spencer.

December 10, 1894.—... Now it seems quite enough for each to say it is not convenient for him to come to town as he has married a wife or bought a yoke of oxen or wants to go on the stump—all excellent things in their way, but which ought not to stand in the light of more important business. In the late Government as you know they had a standing committee of the Cabinet sitting en permanence on naval affairs. ... I regard what is going on (the speeches in the country) partly with astonishment, partly with amusement, wholly with resignation.

The theologians used to occupy themselves with what they called the harmony of the gospels, but I doubt if even the "doctor dubitantium" of Hawarden would succeed in reconciling the deliverances of the several ministerial evangelists from their different pulpits.

The ungodly say that the Government don't declare what they mean, because they don't know what they mean, but after all are the ungodly so very wrong? For my part I would give a good deal to know what the Government do mean. ...

"We began this Government with a profusion of weekly Cabinets: it has ended in quarterly meetings," he wrote to his son in his characteristic vein of extravagance. But his own days, apart from his incessant controversies, were filled to the brim with the business of the coming Session. "I have had a long and tiring day," he wrote to Loulou (January 4), "with S. Howard on New Forest; then the
A FRENCH PANIC

Customs, on their estimates; then Spencer cum Campbell-Bannerman on Navy; then E. Hamilton on Estimates; then Jenkyns on Local Veto; then Mowatt on things in general; then Austen Leigh on Suez Canal—so what a day I have been having! It is now nine o'clock, and I have not rested a moment except for luncheon, when I had Spencer, C. Bannerman, Murray and E. Hamilton. I will write you more to-morrow, but the result of the whole I regard as satisfactory." He had induced Spencer to cut down the increase in his demands by a quarter of a million to £1,400,000, and Campbell-Bannerman had earned his esteem by asking for no supplementary estimates for the army, and no increase in the estimates. He still believed the naval demands excessive, and good-humouredly chaffed Spencer over a naval panic which had sprung up in France:

Harcourt to Spencer.

11, Downing Street, January 20.—I am delighted with the French Naval Commission Report you have sent me. But you and your admirals will be very jealous of it as I think it equals, if it does not transcend, even your Board in the absurdities of panic-mongering.

The French have no navy, and the British are omnipotent. But it also sets forth the preparations of England for an irresistible invasion of France by a land force of which all the details are given, and the proof of it is the number of pigeons taken from Southampton to be flown from Cherbourg!!

Really Richards must look to his laurels. The French are likely to beat him into fits on his own battlefield of panic.

There had been much discussion during the winter as to the precedence to be given to measures in the programme of the Session. Lord Rosebery had raised the House of Lords question in a speech at Bradford declaring himself to be a Second Chamber man, but in favour of restricting the powers of the Second Chamber. In the Cabinet there was a good deal of conflict as to the best method of dealing with the question, and the Journal records that Harcourt himself favoured a single-Chamber policy. But both he and Mr. Morley were convinced that, as a question of strategy, it
was not an opportune moment to commit the fortunes of the Party to a challenge to the House of Lords, and Harcourt drew up a memorandum dealing with the difficulties of the problem. He himself was determined to raise the banner of local option, and Mr. Morley’s main interest at the time was the assertion of the claims of Home Rule as the main commitment of the Party, while the clamour of the Welsh contingent made the introduction of a Disestablishment Bill for Wales essential. In these circumstances the House of Lords issue subsided into the background, and it became apparent from a speech of Lord Rosebery to the National Liberal Federation at Cardiff in January that he had abandoned the idea of an early dissolution on the House of Lords, that he was converted to the policy of “filling up the cup,” and that he was contemplating Home Rule all round instead of an Irish measure. He very handsomely acknowledged that the honours of the last Session belonged to Harcourt. The latter subsequently (January 23) made a reappearance on the platform at Derby. His journey thither was made the occasion of a significant display of public enthusiasm which recalled the days of Gladstone’s triumphant railway journeys. There were great demonstrations at Bedford and Leicester where he was presented with addresses, and his arrival in Derby was awaited by a vast procession which, with 500 torch-bearers, accompanied him through the densely crowded streets of the town. The whole incident was much commented on, and was widely interpreted as the comment of the rank and file of the Liberals in the country, not merely on the Budget, but on the episode of the leadership. As usual with him in his public speeches, Harcourt gave no hint of ministerial disagreements, but devoted himself to a defence of the Government’s legislation, a strong plea for local option as the wisest expression of temperance policy, a reassertion of Home Rule as a chief commitment of Liberal policy, and an attack on the pretensions of the House of Lords. Referring to the Budget, he made a reply to Mr. Balfour which deserves quotation:
Mr. Balfour, of whom I will say that he is not generally an unfair man (hear, hear), has recently personally made against me a charge of which, I think, I have reason to complain. It is a charge which is unjust and which is untrue. I will give it in his own words. He said, "The Chancellor of the Exchequer's most earnest desire is, at all events, not to see the English with an all-powerful fleet, and not to see the English strong in all parts of the world," etc. That statement is untrue. (Cheers.) I have proved it to be so by deeds a good deal more convincing than the empty words of Mr. Balfour. I can contrast my contribution to the British Navy and the strength of England with that of Mr. Balfour. I found the money which was required in a manner which the Parliament of the country has sanctioned—has approved. (Hear, hear.) I have done something better than the noisy braggarts (cheers and laughter) who, while clamouring for immense expenditure, have factiously opposed every possible means of defraying it. (Hear, hear.) What I had to do was to distribute the burden so that it might be most fairly borne by those most capable to bear it. (Loud cheers.) Nor did I feel at liberty to imitate the example of my predecessors, who, with abundant surpluses, spent the money merrily and left their successors to liquidate their unpaid bills (laughter) and the immense arrears of work for which they had made no provision; and yet there was no one of those taxes, on the beer, on the spirits, on the death duties, that they did not, with factious opposition, endeavour to defeat. They invited the aid, and got it, of the extreme Irish Party. These are the patriotic supporters of the Ministry. (Laughter.) These are the devoted friends of the British Navy. For very shame I should advise Mr. Balfour and his ducal allies to hold their tongues on this subject, and to give the nation an opportunity of forgetting the way in which, in hopes of damaging a Government, they laboured to deprive the Navy of the resources which we sought to give it. (Hear, hear.) I do not remember a chapter in the history of the nation that I think more discreditable than that in which Mr. Balfour and his friends took so prominent a part. (Cheers.) There are a great many people in this country who think they know a great deal about finance; but there are some people who are unwilling to accept the self-evident principle that increased expenditure means increased taxation. If the expenditure had to be met, I should like to ask these gentlemen how they considered it could better have been met than we met it. That is what the Unionists have not ventured to say. They attack every tax. Why, every tax is attackable, and every tax is detestable. I know that, but if the burden has to be borne somebody has to bear it. And all that they have to contribute to the powerful fleet and the might of England that Mr. Balfour says I detest is the querulous protest that, at all events, whatever else happens, their highnesses and mightinesses are to contribute nothing to that burden.
The visit to Derby coincided with many personal distresses. Writing to Lord Rosebery a week before, Harcourt said, "I wish to express to you my deep sympathies in the domestic calamity which has fallen upon you and your sister (whose lovable character I have always admired). I know that in turn you will be sorry to hear that yesterday the blow has fallen on us of being told that our dear Bobby is attacked with the same fell disease (typhoid fever) which is a terrible anxiety. These are the things which make life seem an intolerable burden." "Your blessed telegram was a great joy," he wrote to his wife from Derby, where he had received good news of "Bobby's" condition. "We received it just on our return here from the procession. . . . The procession was a splendid success. The torch-bearers I should think 500 yards long or more, and the whole of Derby in the streets. Tommy [Roe] says the feeling about Bobby has had a great deal to do with it." The loss of his wife's uncle, Thomas Motley, the death of Randolph Churchill, and the illness and death of his old friend, Henry Ponsonby, the Queen's private secretary, all combined to make the time a painful one. Referring in a letter to the Queen to the death of Churchill, Harcourt said (January 24), "The death of Randolph Churchill comes at last as a relief from a protracted agony. His was a singular and erratic career, marked by misguided genius which only needed judgment to have made it brilliant and successful. One cannot but deplore the untimely extinction of so much unfulfilled promise." Harcourt himself was attacked by influenza, and had to communicate with the Queen at the opening of Parliament through his son. Fortunately his anxieties about Robert were, after much alarm, relieved, and he was able to tell his wife that he had received "a most delightful letter from Bob," now convalescing at Brighton, which he acknowledged in a letter in which he said:

Harcourt to his son Robert.

Treasury Chambers, March 2, 1895.— . . . I went to see A. Balfour yesterday and found him in much worse case than you have

1 The death of the son of Lord and Lady Leconfield.
ever been. Very limp and weak. He is going to Brighton to-day, so you may go and pay your respects to your "leader." He may lead you, but he does not lead the House of Commons. I asked him why he was so clumsy and did not turn us out at once. He replied mockly, "Because we can't." So you see the starch is all out of him.

We are going on very nicely, thank you, and are "very nice young men for a small majority."

I find myself often very tired at night in the House of Commons, so I beg you will assure "Nurse Walker" that I shall require her attendance in my room at the House of Commons in order to administer to me Bengers, port wine, Château Yquem, etc., every hour, and to work a "draw sheet" on the front bench.

II

Meanwhile the Session had opened, and it became evident that the life of the Government hung by a thread. The small majority was in daily peril of being converted into a minority by accident or by any slight defection from within the ranks of the Party. The Parnellites, under John Redmond, were frankly hostile, and the Opposition did not hesitate to associate itself with them to bring the Government down. Harcourt's letters to the Queen indicate the menace under which the Ministry lived. Thus, writing on February 13, he said:

Harcourt to Queen Victoria.

... On Monday Mr. J. Redmond, the leader of the Parnellites, brought forward a motion demanding a dissolution on the subject of Home Rule. This was supported by the leaders and the great body of the Unionist Opposition. The following the lead of Mr. Redmond was very distasteful to many of the Tories, who were with difficulty induced to vote for the amendment, and a few such as Sir Stafford Northcote declined to take part in it. The result was that the motion was defeated by a majority of 20, which was 8 more than the Government majority in the former division. Now that the 9 Parnellite members are in permanent alliance with the Tory Opposition, as the Nationalists were in 1885 the Government cannot count at most on a majority of more than 15. Sir William was too unwell to be present and was paired on this division.

On Monday Mr. Naoroji brought on the budget of Indian grievances, and Mr. Fowler made an admirable speech in defence of the English rule in India. Mr. Fowler is certainly the boldest and most successful Indian Minister of whom Sir William has any recollection.
The firm tone he has adopted has had the best possible effect—and it is a great and too rare advantage to have the principal Secretary of State in the House of Commons. Sir William regrets to say that he was again obliged on Tuesday to absent himself from the debate, only being able to attend to answer questions.

But in spite of hostile combinations and critical passages, the debate on the Address ended brilliantly for the Government, and the incident is described by Harcourt in his nightly letter to the Queen. Chamberlain had introduced an amendment condemning the waste of parliamentary time in “filling up the cup,” and Mr. Asquith, who followed him in a remarkable speech, quoted with great effect a denunciation by Chamberlain of the House of Lords whose cup was “nearly full.” Harcourt, who had the master’s delight in brilliant craftsmanship, wrote to the Queen (February 16):

_Harcourt to Queen Victoria._

... On that day he [Chamberlain] made the Motion in a speech somewhat less effective than his usual efforts on great occasions. Mr. Asquith greatly distinguished himself in his reply, and has established his position as one of the very first debaters and speakers in the House of Commons. Sir William can hardly recall a more signal parliamentary success. It was felt that he had greatly the advantage over Mr. Chamberlain, and the debate languished to such a degree that it was hardly possible to keep a House during the evening. It will be difficult to revive any interest in it on Monday, when the discussion will be closed and the Address voted.

“You should not do your work so completely and leave nothing for anyone else to do,” he wrote delightedly to Mr. Asquith, and to his son he said:

11, Downing Street, February 16... Asquith’s speech last night was a splendid success. He knocked Joe into a cocked hat. Even the Tories admit that the latter was nowhere.

I found Margot in J. Morley’s room, and told her I had half a mind to kiss her, and A. offered to retire for the purpose.

I don’t think I ever heard a speech which created so great an effect in the House. So far we have out-debated as well as out-voted them. It was quite a case of David and Goliath. Austen looked much dejected.

All going on well here.

Harcourt loved to praise his “nice young men” in his letters to the Queen, but he could not praise himself or he
might have written with enthusiasm of his speech in closing the debate on the Address, which was one of his most effective parliamentary efforts. His own part in the debate on the Address had been considerable, and covered many topics. Of Churchill he said, "There was something original in his character; there was an independence in his ideas; there was a brightness and force in his language which attracted to him those by whom he was most strongly opposed." Speaking on Goschen's amendment, he attacked (February 8) the doctrine of high prices, which was the avowed object of Mr. Chaplin, and said:

... In my opinion the cheapness of commodities has been an infinite blessing to the great mass of the people of this country. It has been an immense addition to their wages, and the attempt to raise upon the people of this country the price of their bread, the price of their clothes, and the price of all the comforts of life by tampering with the currency, is, in my opinion, one of the deepest errors into which a politician can possibly fall.

In the gay speech (February 18) in which, on the Chamberlain amendment, he reviewed the tactics of the Opposition in starting the Government off on the journey of the Session with three votes of confidence, he said the first amendment, which he described as the "Hampshire-cum-West Ham Amendment," condemned the Government because they did not occupy the time of Parliament with agricultural and industrial distress; the second, which he would call the "Unionist-cum-Parnellite Amendment" (Mr. Redmond's on Home Rule) told them they were to concentrate on Home Rule until the dissolution; the third (Mr. Chamberlain's) appeared to mean that the Government were to think of nothing else but the position of the House of Lords:

... I do not know (he said) whether some controversy was going on as to by whom it (the Chamberlain amendment) was to be brought forward, but in the end the third vote of want of confidence is produced by one of the chief champions of disestablishment. Why cannot you fight under your own colours? What has become of the old true blue flag? There seems to be no true blue left, but there is a kind of mixture; I do not know what. There is perhaps the faded yellow of Birmingham, a little touch of green from
'Waterford, and a little spot of red from West Ham, and that is what the blue flag has come to. . . .

The rt. hon. gentlemen was good enough to tell us that we have forgotten how to govern and not learnt how to resign. . . . What is the charge you have brought against our administrative capacity? Is it against the conduct of foreign affairs? The rt. hon. gentleman said the other night he considered that out of the arena of party questions. Is it the government of Ireland he charges us with? When has Ireland been more peaceful or in a condition of which England had less reason to be ashamed than at the present moment? As to domestic policy, are you prepared to affirm that the Home Office has been less well conducted under my rt. hon. friend than it was in former times? As to local government in this country, you yourselves claim to have a share in the measure (Parish Councils Act) that was brought forward with such ability by my rt. hon. friend, the Secretary of State for India. As to education, I know you do not approve of everything we have done. Yes; but you cannot say we have forgotten how to govern. As to finance, I must not speak, but if you choose to challenge us upon that issue either here or in the country, we are ready to meet you. Well, so much for the statement that we have forgotten how to govern. Then you say we have not learnt how to resign. No, Sir, because the House of Commons has not taught us.

The House very nearly supplied the lesson that evening, for the Address was only carried by a majority of eight. It will be seen that, in spite of the disturbances behind the scenes, Harcourt kept up a brave front in the open, and left it to be assumed that the Cabinet was the abode of an idyllic peace, undisturbed even by foreign alarms. I find among his papers at this time a note of a "conversation with Lord Rosebery" (February 20, 6 p.m.):

Sir William Harcourt: All I can say is that if there is anything that I can do to make your position easier or more satisfactory to yourself, I am willing and anxious to do it, for your sake, for my sake, and for the sake of the Party. I don't see how it is possible for me to say more than that.

Lord Rosebery: No, I do not see how you could say more.1

1 The Journal records in great detail the crisis of February 19, 20, 21. On the 19th, at a hastily summoned Cabinet, "Rosebery said he had called them together on an unpleasant matter, and proceeded to read a memo of four quarto pages containing his formal resignation on the ground that he was not sufficiently supported or defended by his colleagues." "W. V. H. spoke first, and protested that it was
With the waters of the Address successfully navigated, the Government set themselves to what Mr. Balfour had called "ploughing the sands of the seashore." They began with a remarkable victory, routing the attack of James on the subject of the imposition of import duties on cotton manufactures and yarns into India. The debate was made memorable by the famous speech of Fowler, by the unwonted exchange of compliments between Harcourt and Goschen, and by the unaccustomed Government luxury of a big majority—304 to 109. Writing to Lord Rosebery next day, Harcourt said:

_Harcourt to Lord Rosebery._

11, Downing Street, February 22.—... Since the days of Sennacherib there has been nothing seen to equal the collapse of the Opposition last night. Goschen informed me before dinner of his intention to support us, and that G. Hamilton "would speak for the Party." Nothing could be more foolish than the speech of the latter pledging Salisbury _personally_ against the Cotton Duties.

The whole thing was evidently ridden to the order of Salisbury and Balfour. The result is most advantageous to the Government, and equally destructive to the Opposition. Their own friends curse their tactics—_vide_ The Times article this morning.

Fowler's speech was beyond all praise, strong, clear and rhetorically most successful. It will greatly aggrandize his hold on the House and the country. ...

impossible for Rosebery to do anything of the kind... He pointed out what a wretched position R. would be in if he took such a course, that his colleagues would strenuously deny the imputation of disloyalty, which would recoil only on himself; that it would mean the break-up of the Government, as he (W. V. H.) would certainly decline to carry on the Government, and that if R. thought that he had not been sufficiently defended by his colleagues in the House of Commons they would endeavour to say something which would be more satisfactory to him." For two days the situation remained acute, and the Journal records long discussions as to what course Harcourt should follow in the event of Lord Rosebery's persisting in resignation. There was a long interview between Lord Rosebery and Harcourt, in which the former dealt with his grievances against his colleagues. "W. V. H. allowed him to run on for some time, and described it as being like playing a big salmon: you had to let him have plenty of line when he made his rushes and then reel up slowly afterwards." The next day (Feb. 21) there was a further meeting of the Cabinet, when Lord Rosebery said that, having received satisfactory assurances from all his colleagues, he did not propose to carry out his previous intention.
Harcourt recommended "the whole of this (Fowler's) speech" to the Queen's attention. "Never has the Indian Government and the principle of the relation of the English to the Indian Administration been so well defended. The occasion displayed the immense advantage of the Secretary of State being in the House of Commons where he can speak with commanding authority. The effect of Mr. Fowler's statement was immediate and universal. The moral weight absolutely paralysed and discomfited the Opposition, which began to dissolve." Forgetful of the caution from the Queen in other days about giving the other side, Harcourt let himself go unrestrainedly on this victory in his letter to the Queen. "It will be some time," he concluded, "before an Opposition again uses the Government of India as a party weapon to overthrow a Government." "Your speech," he wrote to Fowler, "will live as a model of parliamentary force and judgment. . . . You are in your own person an example of the incomparable advantage of the head of a great department commanding the situation in the House of Commons. Where should we have been if the case had been left in the hands of an Under-Secretary? . . . I have always received such kind and constant support from you that I could not resist writing this note."

A few days later Harcourt was rejoicing in another victory —this time over his old foes of the bimetallist persuasion. The German Parliament had pressed on their Government to summon a conference on the subject, and the occasion was seized by the bimetallists to propose a resolution calling on the Government to take part in the conference. Harcourt did not oppose the resolution, but made a very distinct declaration that under no circumstances would the English Government consent to any change in the basis of their established currency. "The object of the bimetallists," he told the Queen (February 27) in reporting the debate, "is to change the single gold standard of currency in this country for a double standard of gold and silver. The gold standard was established in 1816, and has been firmly maintained by all English statesmen ever since. But a school
has arisen which believes that it is possible to raise silver to its former price, which was double the value it now bears, by an international agreement. This party think that by this means they could create a superfluity of money and thus raise prices, especially of corn, for the benefit of the agricultural interest." All the great financiers, such as Peel and Gladstone, were profoundly opposed to the change, and Harcourt shared their view. Writing to Farrer, he said:

_Harcourt to Lord Farrer._

11, Downing Street, March 1.—You Lords who live at home at ease know very little of the danger of the House of Commons seas which we have to navigate. . . .

If a division had been impending I could not have ventured to make so outspoken and peremptory a declaration as I did of the determination of the Government to have nothing to do with the accursed thing.

As it was my denunciation of any attempt to depart from the single gold standard stood uncontradicted by any responsible member of the Opposition, for I do not include Chaplin in this category. The effect of my categorical declaration has been exactly what I intended at Berlin and Paris as you may see from the newspaper telegrams. . . .

I have no doubt that the bimetallists here in consequence of my speech have urged their friends abroad not to press for a conference during my reign, but to wait for my successor "Hotspur," who, however, when the time comes will not "toe the line," so for the present you will not have to go to Berlin.

You may depend upon it the German Emperor will have no taste for repeating the fiasco of Brussels. . . .

Harcourt's speech on this occasion was as final in its effect as Fowler's on the Indian cotton duties had been, and effectively checked an invitation from Berlin to a conference. "Sir William's speech," said the Vossische Zeitung of Berlin, "was a masterpiece," and German opinion agreed that he had dispelled the mist which enveloped the currency question.¹

¹ Later in the year, following on a memorial to the Treasury from the Bimetallic League, there was a further correspondence between Harcourt and his old antagonist Hucks-Gibbs. (See Appendix III.)

VOL. II.
While these and many other controversies were proceeding in the House, a domestic storm was brewing on the subject of the Speakership. Speaker Peel had been elected as a Liberal in 1884, and had, according to custom, been re-elected without opposition in succeeding years. The condition of his health now made his retirement necessary, and the question of replacing him was made more difficult by the uncertain position of the Government. If, as seemed clear, the Government was near the end of its term, it was felt to be unwise to elect another Liberal Speaker who might not be acceptable to the new House of Commons. There was one Liberal who would probably have been acceptable to all parties. This was Campbell-Bannerman. But the Government was not strong enough in the House of Commons to suffer the loss from its front bench of one of its most popular and able members. Harcourt himself felt that the heavy burden of leadership would be intolerable if Campbell-Bannerman was withdrawn, and "C.B.," although he would have liked the position and told Harcourt that he "rather fancied himself for it," did not press his claim.

Harcourt, who held strongly the view that the Speakership should be divested of party colour, was anxious for the adoption of Courtney, a Liberal Unionist, who had been Chairman of Committee, and whose qualities of mind, character, experience and temper marked him out conspicuously for the post above all competitors other than Campbell-Bannerman. He pressed this view upon the Prime Minister, who appears to have made overtures in this sense which were declined by Courtney on the ground that he would not have the support of his Unionist colleagues, especially of Chamberlain. Harcourt, however, continued to press Courtney's claims, but in the meantime a Radical movement headed by Labouchere was on foot to secure the adoption of a Liberal candidate,¹ and feeling reverted

¹ Among the names discussed were those of Mr. Asquith and Sir E. Grey. Referring to the former, Labouchere in a letter to Mr.
to Campbell-Bannerman, who was more or less acceptable to the Opposition, and who was still inclined to the post. "My ambitions," he wrote to Harcourt (March 9), "do not permanently lie, nor do my powers, in a fighting direction; and despite my robustious aspect I do not think I can long go on with active politics. So my doctor told me the other day. What more fitting therefore than the calmer life?" But Harcourt, while admitting his fitness, said he could not be spared, and Campbell-Bannerman yielded, though he thought it no proper attitude for the Party to go to the enemy and say, "Please Mr. Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain be so kind as to lend us a man; we are so poor in men and so poor in votes that we cannot furnish or dare not spare a candidate." Throughout this business Harcourt and Lord Rosebery were in constant communication and in entire agreement on the subject of Campbell-Bannerman, and in the view that Courtney should have the position. But Courtney finally declined. He "came here with his answer 'No' this morning," wrote Harcourt to Mr. Morley (March 15). "He was evidently very much chagrined at the treatment he had had from his friends. He said he was told the Tories as a body would oppose him now and hereafter." Lord Rosebery thereupon favoured the selection of a Party candidate, but Harcourt, fearing that this meant Campbell-Bannerman and determined not to lose him from the Treasury bench, still opposed a Party choice to which he was in any case opposed on principle. Writing on the subject to the Queen (March 19), Harcourt said:

Harcourt to Queen Victoria.

... A great desire had been expressed on both sides of the House that Mr. Campbell-Bannerman, who is universally popular, should be nominated, but the Cabinet felt that there were great objections in principle to taking a principal member of their own body and placing him in the Chair—thus making the Speakership a purely Party appointment, a practice which has had such an evil result in the United States; and in the second place they regarded the recon-

Lewis Harcourt said, "Margot would occasionally steal his wig and replace him in the Chair, which would be a refreshing change."
struction of the Government which would have been the necessary consequence of the removal of Mr. Campbell-Bannerman as so serious a blow that it would probably be fatal to the Administration. The candidatures of both Mr. Courtney and Mr. Campbell-Bannerman are therefore now out of the field. It has been thought best to reserve for a few days the decision as to the future nomination.

The Opposition then put forward Sir Matthew White-Ridley as their candidate, and the Liberals, now resolved to have a candidate of their own, concentrated on William Court Gully, Q.C., "who knows nothing and whom nobody knows," wrote Harcourt to Lord Rosebery. "If there is to be a Party fight over this, let us make it as little party as may be," Harcourt wrote to Mr. Balfour, who, thanking him for his "friendly note," said (April 5), "I have no doubt that our people will run Mr. Ridley, but I do not anticipate any unpleasantness. I must get somebody to point out Gully to me in the House! I am told he is better looking than our man."

Harcourt's concern about the impartiality of the Chair led him to write to Mr. Balfour urging that, in spite of bad precedents, "when the fight is over, both sides ought to shake hands over the Speaker. If we should be beaten, I shall certainly congratulate your man. I only mention this in order that you may consider the matter without in any way desiring to bind you." Unfortunately the election did not pass off in the spirit that Harcourt desired. Mr. Balfour intervened with a charge against the Government of partisanship in the matter, and brought down upon himself a crushing rejoinder from Harcourt. In swinging sentence after swinging sentence, says a contemporary record of the debate, he rubbed in the true charge and marked the true culprit. "It was my first, as it had been my last, object to secure in that Chair the man who of all others, who——" But the roar of cheers which burst from the Liberal ranks, and the pent-up cheers of a bitter resentment, drowned the close of his sentence. "Had it not been for the compact," he went on, "which has worked

1 *Daily Chronicle*, April 11.
in such a singular way both inside and outside the House—had it not been for the veto of the right hon. gentleman "--and he turned towards Mr. Chamberlain---" there would have been no contest." During all this time, Mr. Chamberlain had become paler and paler, and Mr. Courtney—yellow-waistcoated as ever—had beamed a larger and larger smile. And now the two presented a striking contrast of colour and mood---Mr. Chamberlain the very picture of acid distemper, and Mr. Courtney radiant with an honourable pride at the tribute of the House. In the end Gully was elected by 285 votes to 274, and writing to Sir A. Bigge, the Queen's private secretary, Harcourt said (April 10):

... We beat your Northumbrian to-day, though Jack Wharton claimed the place as the monopoly of the county. I am almost sorry for it for Mat. is a first-rate fellow. But the Unionists (I believe you are one of that pestilent lot) would not let us have Courtney who was really the fittest men—so a Party fight, which I laboured to avert, became inevitable. I believe Gully is really a good man.

IV

While the controversy was in progress, the programme of the Session was being pressed forward, and the early successes of the Government were continued. The question of Cyprus was raised on the supplementary estimates, and Dilke made a strong demand for withdrawal. Harcourt had always regarded the acquisition of Cyprus as the acquisition of a white elephant. It had, he admitted, cost the British taxpayer £500,000, and had yielded no tangible results. But since we had undertaken the responsibility of this "squalid possession" the charges must be met, and he protested against raising the whole Eastern question on a vote for Cyprus. We could not retire from our obligations and he would be sorry to hand over the Cypriots or any other population to Turkey. The introduction of the Welsh Church Bill was carried by an unexpected majority of 44, due to the attitude of Chamberlain and the Liberal Unionists, and writing to the Queen on the subject, Harcourt (April 2) said:
Harcourt to Queen Victoria.

... The debate was on the whole a dull one, the most striking speech being that of Mr. Birrell, who married the widow of Mr. Lionel Tennyson (who was one of the Bruce family). Mr. Birrell, who is well known as a brilliant man of letters, speaks in a very original style, and though his opinions are somewhat eccentric, he expresses them in a manner which is attractive. ...

An Irish Land Bill was introduced by Mr. Morley, followed by the Local Option Bill on April 8. Harcourt is said to have insisted on this measure against the desire of the Party managers. Ever since his days at the Home Office he had held the view that local control of the traffic was the true solution of the licensing question, and the conflict of opinion in the previous autumn had only strengthened his determination to proceed with the policy. The Bill followed very closely the model of the Bill of 1893. But the Bill of 1893 had, as he explained, been correctly called a Local Veto Bill, whereas the new measure was really a Local Option Bill, as it offered other options beside those of total prohibition. The areas, as in the earlier Bill, were in boroughs the wards, and in rural districts the parishes or the wards of parishes. A prohibitory resolution if carried by a majority of two-thirds of the electors voting would come into force at the general annual licensing meeting next occurring after the expiration of three years after the passing of the Act. While this resolution was in force, no licenses of any kind could be granted within the area. After a resolution had been taken the question could not be reopened one way or another for three years. If a prohibitory resolution was in force at the end of the three years it could be maintained by a simple majority. (The Bill of 1893 had required a three-fourths majority.) The new proposal in the Bill was that a requisition might be presented, not for prohibition, but for a reduction in the number of licenses. A resolution of this kind only required a simple majority to enable it to be put into force. Rules were laid down for the action of the licensing justices under these conditions. A resolution for Sunday closing only
required a bare majority, and could be put into force at once. As before, eating-houses, hotels and other places of refreshment were excluded from the Bill.

The attitude of the Opposition to the Bill was determined beforehand. They had not forgotten that it was Harcourt's opposition which had destroyed the licensing clauses of the Local Government Bill of the last Government because they had contemplated compensation to the licensees who were deprived of their licenses. It was read a first time without a division, however, as it had not been printed.

After the triumphant Budget of the previous year, Harcourt had little to do on the financial side in 1895 but to record the success of his expedients. The new Death Duties had realized the £1,000,000 they were calculated to produce, and in spite of an increase of estimated expenditure amounting to £2,000,000, most of which was due to the increased demands of the Navy, there was only a trifling anticipated deficit which Harcourt met by continuing the additional 6d. a barrel on beer imposed in the previous year. He introduced his new Budget on May 2 with general approval, and with an entire absence of the excitement that had accompanied the Budget of the previous year. Harcourt had won his laurels as a financier.

So far the Session had been surprisingly successful. The small majority had held together with unexpected solidarity, and Harcourt's management of the House had admittedly been at once intrepid and skilful. He went to Malwood for Easter in high humour. Writing to thank T. E. Ellis, the Chief Whip, he said:

... No Captain had so good a first-lieutenant and officer of the watch. But for you I could never have got the vessel through such cramped waters. As it is we have finished up with a blaze of triumph, and our insolent foes go chopfallen to eat their addled Easter eggs. So perish the ungodly! I hope you will have a good holiday and fine weather.

It used to be said of an Englishman that after breakfast he exclaimed, "What a fine day. Let us go and kill something." I suppose a Welshman says, "What a fine day: let us go and disestablish something"
Relations within the Government, apart from the disagreements and "tiffs" on foreign policy, seemed markedly improved, and Lord Rosebery and Harcourt were in frequent and friendly communication. They were both present and spoke at a gathering at the National Liberal Club on May 9, at which Harcourt, referring to the repeated assurances of the Tories that they were doomed, remarked:

... The circumstance reminds me of one of the most comical incidents in the curiosities of literature, when Dean Swift and his friends determined to prove that an unfortunate man named Partridge was dead. ... The unhappy man remonstrated, but those able literary correspondents described to their own satisfaction all the symptoms of his fatal illness and the circumstances of his decease. And really Her Majesty's ministers have been for a long time in the position of Mr. Partridge. ...

Harcourt's prestige in the financial world, due to the Budget and to his maintenance of the orthodox tradition in currency, won him recognition in the City, where he was entertained at a banquet given by the Lord Mayor and attended by representatives of all parties. In his speech, he said, referring to the difficulties of a Chancellor of the Exchequer, "Of all things in the world the easiest to invent, according to my observation, is fresh expenditure. It has this advantage—you will find everybody or nearly everybody ready to vote for it. (Laughter.) Of all things the most difficult to invent is a new tax; and it has this disadvantage—that you will find every one ready to vote against it." (Laughter.) He declared his aim to be "to maintain and extend the policy of the great teachers at whose feet I have sat—the policy which was inaugurated by Peel and consummated by Gladstone."

There were many "breezes" and "scenes" as the Session advanced, one of the most entertaining arising out of the proposal of the Government to erect a statue to Cromwell. More than 200 years had passed since Oliver's desecrated body was hung in chains at Tyburn, and since then no Government had ventured to give him a place of honour among the immortal dead. Harcourt was in favour of belated justice to the Protector, and writing to
Lord Rosebery and Mr. Shaw Lefevre, the Commissioner of Works, on the subject, he insisted that the tribute should not be half-hearted:

II, Downing Street, April 6.—I am entirely against putting Cromwell anywhere but in his proper place, as Ruler of England, between Charles I and Charles II in Westminster Hall.

You might just as well expunge Napoleon from his position between Louis XVI and Louis XVIII. To place him outside amongst a ruck of Prime Ministers is not to treat the Protector with proper respect.

As to locating him in the damp ditch which has been dug round the façade of Westminster Hall in the place marked A. in the plan, it would be an indignity from which I think the Royalists in the first days of the Restoration would have shrunk.

I don't much fancy him as a beggar on horseback riding in the direction which such persons generally take; but if he is to have an equestrian statue I think he should be put side by side with his predecessor at Charing Cross.

I am clearly in favour of his being put in his proper place—inside Westminster Hall—and nowhere else.

When the debate on the subject came on in the House of Commons on June 14, however, there was fierce opposition to the proposed statue, and though in the end the scheme was carried by a majority of 15 votes, the statue was not consigned to the place which Harcourt deemed to belong to it, but to the “damp ditch” outside Westminster Hall where it stands to-day as it were in sombre reverie or mute protest against the indignity of its outcast state.

But in spite of the steadiness with which the tiny majority at the command of the Government met the daily attacks of the Opposition it was evident that the end was near. Mr. Balfour ridiculed the programme of “filling up the cup” as a huge joke, but expressed the hope that it would not be a tedious joke. The anticipation that the Government was doomed, if not by external attack then by internal dissension, led to the suggestion that both Harcourt and Lord Rosebery should withdraw, and that the Government should be reconstructed in a Radical sense. An alternative aim, for which Labouchere was ceaselessly working, was the retirement of Lord Rosebery and the substitution of Harcourt. Meantime the two protagonists seemed amiable
enough in their personal relations. Lord Rosebery pleased Harcourt by making him a trustee of the British Museum, and Harcourt no doubt astonished Lord Rosebery by shedding his "skinflint" habits and appealing to him to support the purchase for the Museum of the great collection of drawings of old masters and engravings made by Malcolm of Poltalloch—said to be the finest private collection of the sort in Europe. "The Exchequer is flourishing at present, and I am not indisposed to find the money for it," he wrote to Lord Rosebery. Connoisseurship was not one of Harcourt's foibles or virtues, but he had a sound taste and a real interest in securing the treasures of art for the public, as the conspicuous part he played in the formation of the Tate Gallery had already witnessed.

The end came suddenly and unexpectedly. Writing to his sister on June 16 about the glories of Malwood—"the sight of the roses is such as I never beheld:" it is worth travelling hundreds of miles to behold"—he added that "since I succeeded in getting the whole time of the House I think the Government will jog on for a bit." Three days later Gladstone dealt the Government a blow by withdrawing his pair, as an indication that he had "an open mind upon the Welsh Disestablishment Bill." "This affair of Mr. Gladstone's pair, respecting which I never heard a word till I read it in The Times this morning, is so serious that I must ask to see you about it to-morrow morning," wrote Harcourt to Lord Rosebery. But something more serious occurred two days after. It was a day of sensations in the House. It opened with the announcement of the resignation of the Duke of Cambridge from the position of Commander-in-Chief—a triumph for the astute diplomacy of Campbell-Bannerman—and it ended with the defeat of the Government on Campbell-Bannerman's own salary as War Minister. The attack was cleverly engineered by the Opposition on the question of the supply of cordite, in reference to which Campbell-Bannerman refused, properly
enough, to give information. "I will not give the figures to the world," he said stoutly; "the public service is not benefited by recriminations of one party against another." Outside in the pleasant June evening Harcourt was sitting on the Terrace. "Thank heaven," he said, "there is one night on which we need not fear a crisis." A few minutes afterwards the division bell rang, and when the members trooped back into the House from the division lobby a curious little comedy of errors was witnessed. First the figures were handed to Ellis, the Liberal Whip, and there was a cheer from the Liberals. Ellis looked at the figures, and passed them to Akers Douglas, the Tory Whip, and there were thunders from the Opposition. But having glanced at the figures Douglas handed the paper back to Ellis who gave it a final scrutiny and returned it again to Douglas, who now recovered his arithmetical powers and announced the defeat of the Government by seven votes. "It is a chance blow, but in my opinion a fatal one," wrote Harcourt to Lord Rosebery that night, sending the news by messenger to Epsom. The next day the Prime Minister tendered his resignation to the Queen, and Harcourt in his speech (June 24) in the House of Commons announcing the end of the Government, took his farewell of the leadership of the House:

... Well, sir (he said), that is all that it is necessary or proper that I should say upon the present occasion. Before I sit down I hope I may be permitted to say a word to the House. In quitting office I relinquish also a position which I have always regarded as one of greater responsibility and higher obligation even than any office under the Crown. It has always been my desire, unequal as I have felt myself to the task, to maintain the ancient dignity of this great House, of this famous Assembly. In that arduous

1 W. V. H. had a very friendly reception from a crowd at Palace Yard on his way down. I took Bobby under the Gallery. C. Bannerman had a great reception when he came in as did Arthur Balfour and a more moderate one for Chamberlain. When W. V. H. came in the whole of our party rose and cheered for several minutes, waving their hats. There was a long pause and then W. V. H. made his statement of our resignation, ending with a few very pathetic sentences of farewell to the House as its Leader, in which he almost broke down. [H.]
duty, under circumstances of no ordinary difficulty, I have had great and necessary assistance. I desire to tender to the gentlemen with whom I have the honour to act my grateful thanks for the constant, the unfailing support which I have received from them in the task which has been devolved upon me. I desire also to acknowledge the courtesy which I have invariably received from my political opponents, and, sir, if it be not too presumptuous to adopt the words of one of my most illustrious predecessors, I would ask leave to say that for every man who has taken part in the noble conflicts of parliamentary life, the chiefest ambition of all ambitions, whether in the majority or in the minority, must be to stand well with the House of Commons.

"Whatever we may think of the policy of the Government which he leads in this House, we all recognize the right hon. gentleman as one of the ornaments of this Assembly, and as one who has ever had the dignity of this Assembly in view," was the tribute which Mr. Balfour paid to Harcourt at the close. The last official act of Harcourt was to ask Lord Rosebery for a K.C.B. to Mr. Alfred Milner. "It would be to me a painful disappointment," he said, "if upon leaving office I were unable to testify my sense of the great obligations under which the Government, and more especially I personally, lie to Alfred Milner for his signal financial services to this administration." Harcourt handed the Treasury over to Hicks-Beach with a warm offer to "place at your disposal all the information I can give," and with the assurance that "things are very serene in this department."

The verdict of the Press on the Government that had fallen was a verdict for Harcourt, and it was admitted that whatever the failures of the Ministry, his leadership had been a memorable success. The Spectator, not usually friendly to him, expressed the general feeling of all parties in a remarkable eulogy, in the course of which it said (June 29):

... Sir William Harcourt's sun does not sink without a little glory. He succeeded the most famous orator of the age. He inherited his legacy of wellnigh impossible tasks; and in at least one of these labours of Hercules he gained an amount of success that will not soon be forgotten. He passed a great democratic budget,
and he passed it by the help of that English moderation which it was the cùe of many of his colleagues and perhaps of the greater number of his followers to depreciate and despise. . . . He began with a great disappointment and a great difficulty. Lord Rosebery, a man vastly his inferior in sagacity and force, was put over his head by the cry of a Party which had discerned Lord Rosebery's sensitive "feelers" for new ideas and new currents of popular sympathy, without discerning his weakness and his shiftiness. He had a chief over him whose manœuvres he could not control and whose indecision he could not respect. This no doubt must have tried Sir William Harcourt almost beyond endurance, and that he managed to endure it at all is greatly to the credit of his strong will. . . . Without Sir William Harcourt, the Government of 1894–95 would have made itself ridiculous, and even the Government of 1892–94 would have hardly held together, for at his age Mr. Gladstone could not have led the House of Commons without so able a lieutenant. . . .

In the hour of his defeat, Harcourt stood higher in the esteem, and even the affection, of friends and foes alike in the House than at any period of his career, and Hicks-Beech expressed the common sentiment of all parties when he wrote (June 26), "I sincerely hope your words the other day did not mean a final ending to your leadership of the House of Commons. I really mean it when I say that having seen not a few leaders during the last thirty years I think you are the best." It was the tribute that Harcourt would have most desired, for, before everything else, he was a House of Commons man.
CHAPTER XIX

CATASTROPHE OF 1895

Election issues—The Jingo spirit in the country—Harcourt's battle on local option—Defeat at Derby—Seat found in Monmouthshire—Tory opposition to Mr. Gully—Final breach with Lord Rosebery—Leadership of the Party—Surplus for Hicks-Beach.

With the fall of the Rosebery Government, Harcourt's official life ended. Nearly ten years of parliamentary service were still before him, but they were years of opposition, and his farewell to the leadership of the House, which Hicks-Beach had hoped was premature, proved to be final. The Salisbury Government in coming into office at once dissolved Parliament, and appealed to the country. There was little doubt in any mind as to the result of the appeal, and what doubt there may have been was dismissed by the dissensions in the Liberal Party and the confused strategy adopted. Lord Rosebery proposed to fight the battle on the issue of the House of Lords,¹ and in a speech to the Eighty Club asked, "For what purpose do you demand a majority? You say you cannot present a dozen questions in line. Is there one question that embraces and involves them all?

¹ The Journal (June 27) says: The Cabinet met for the last time at 11, sat for nearly 1½ hours, and had a most peaceful time. They took mutual farewells, and discussed their dissolution policy. Rosebery asked W. V. H. to state his views first. W. V. H. said he supposed that they would all say that they stuck to the old programme, but that each man would have liberty for his individual italics. J. Morley said he would fight on Home Rule—and on that alone. Rosebery made a mild protest against the pushing of the Newcastle Programme, with which he declared he had never been associated. W. V. H. suggested that to meet his views the word Newcastle might be put in brackets.

366
I say there is. I say that question is the question of the domination of the House of Lords. . . . If you deal with that successfully it facilitates the dealing with all the others; but, if you deal with one of the other questions first, it in no respect facilitates dealing with the others.”

It is pretty generally agreed to-day that Lord Rosebery’s view of the strategy of the occasion was sound. That it would have won the General Election cannot be supposed. Events had gone too definitely against the late Government for that. There was a tidal wave of Jingoism rising throughout the country. Speculation had seized the public mind to an unprecedented degree, and the Stock Exchange had become the centre of the national life. The riches of the Rand and the discoveries of gold in Western Australia and Canada had created a feverish excitement in the public mind that penetrated every part of the country, and the names of Rhodes, Barney Barnato and Whitaker Wright, the magicians who were going to make every one rich without labour, were on all tongues. The great brewing interest, feeling itself menaced by the recurrent demands for reform, exploited the mood of the public and, while extracting hundreds of millions from the pockets of the investor, enormously enhanced its political power by mobilizing a vast body of new shareholders to its defence. To this orgy of gambling the genius of Mr. Rudyard Kipling gave the appropriate glamour of something that passed for patriotism, and his banjo music, strangely interlarded with appeals to the “Lord Our God Most High,” led the nation valorously to battle against any “breeds without the law” who stood in its path of profitable exploitation.

It was not a promising moment for an attack on the House of Lords, and it was made less promising by the Bills of the late Government. The Welsh Bill and the Local Option Bill had given the two most powerful forces in the country a common motive of hostility to the Liberal Party, and the new feeling of sympathy with Ireland, chilled by the unhappy Parnell episode, had diminished with the retirement of the great man who had inspired it
by the intensity of his own passion. Nevertheless, the challenge to the House of Lords, while it would not have given the Liberals the victory, would have furnished a comprehensive issue for the struggle, and one which, in defeat, would have kept the ranks together. But neither Harcourt nor Mr. Morley shared Lord Rosebery's view of the situation. They were satisfied that, in the circumstances, the attack on the Lords would be "a damp squib," and that the best course was to fight on their programme of reform. Mr. Morley made it quite clear in a speech delivered at Manchester on his way to the North to meet his constituents that he proposed to stake everything on the Home Rule issue, which he said the Liberals by the pledges they had given in 1892 were bound to keep in the forefront of their programme, and next day (July 5) Harcourt declared with equal emphasis that he regarded the liquor question as the most pressing and vital subject of reform. He defended the record of the late Government, and charged the Conservatives with clamouring for more expenditure on armaments and resisting the taxation which would provide for their demands:

... The Government that preceded us (he said) boasted of their great naval administration. There never was a Government, we were told, which had placed the navy of England on so magnificent a footing; but when we came into office, although they had spent enormous sums of money, and although they had borrowed sums which they left us to pay (laughter), they immediately began to state that the navy of England was in a deplorable condition and that it was absolutely indispensable for the safety of the country that a large additional sum should be expended. Well, we were called on to make good their shortcomings and at the same time to pay their debts. I had to face a deficit of nearly five millions which was the legacy of their administration. The only thing we had to do was to find the money. (A voice: Put your hand in your pocket.) No, we did not put our hand into the pocket of that gentleman who has just made the exclamation. (Laughter.) The only thing to do was to meet this taxation by adjusting the burden according to the means of the people who were called upon to pay it, and to apportion the pressure according to the means of enduring it. (Cheers.) Now the conduct of the Unionist Party in this matter has not been, and will not be, forgotten. They were the
lodest in the demand for increased expenditure, but there was no kind of taxation which they did not oppose. Take the death duties, they would not have that. The income tax; they did not want that. The excise duties; they voted against that. And the spirit duties they also resisted. They attacked them all. They entered into every kind of factious combination against a Budget which was to find the money which they demanded should be expended. . . .

He quoted from a "religious" newspaper which, referring to the Budget, had declared, "We so thoroughly distrust the present (Liberal) Government that if they introduced a Bill confirming the Ten Commandments we should have no scruple in voting against it," and then turning to the issues of the contest put local option in the forefront of his programme:

. . . It has been insinuated (he said) that I stood alone in this matter. That statement is false. The Liberal Government stood firmly by the Bill that I had the honour to introduce and I had then, and have now, their undivided support. I have been jeered at as if I was insincere in the prosecution of this measure. I care little, I should be very unfit for political life if I cared at all for such sneers. . . . I believe from the bottom of my heart that of all social reforms it is the most necessary, the most urgent and the most beneficial, and if I suspected that the Liberal Party or the Liberal Government intended to play false to the cause of temperance, I should indeed believe that the Liberal faith had been betrayed.

He pointed out that this was not an exclusively party question, that he had the assurance of support from men of all political faiths, and, referring to Salisbury’s resistance to all schemes of temperance reform, said that here was a fair issue: Was the drink trade a great evil that required legislation, or was it not an evil? "I desire no fairer issue on which to take the opinion of the English people." This strong challenge to their interests brought the trade into the field with every weapon at their command, and their hostility was increased by a procession organized by the temperance people on the second day of the campaign. In this procession the pubican and his customers were guyed with appropriate costumes and very red noses. The other side proceeded to take off the gloves. Everywhere there were placards, "Who took the duty off the Irishman’s whisky
and put it on the Englishman’s beer?” Lord Burton sent round a letter to all the publicans urging them to do their best to oust Harcourt. Moreover the Labour organizations, which had hitherto advised their members to vote for the Liberal candidates, gave no such advice on this occasion, telling their members that they should vote as they pleased. When the result of the poll was declared it was found that Harcourt and his Liberal colleagues were defeated, the figures being:

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benrose</td>
<td>. . . .</td>
<td>7,907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drage</td>
<td>. . . .</td>
<td>7,076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harcourt</td>
<td>. . . .</td>
<td>6,785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roe</td>
<td>. . . .</td>
<td>6,475</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“It is not on account of this defeat that we shall abandon any of the principles for which we have contended,” said Harcourt in addressing the electors after the result had been declared. “We appeal to moral forces, which in the long run are always victorious. No great reform has ever been achieved without waiting a long time, and after many defeats; but to men who thoroughly believe in them and are prepared to make sacrifices for them in the end victory is assured.” The news of the defeat created an immense impression in the country. “It is a horrid catastrophe for us all,” wrote Mr. Morley (July 15). “Newcastle is almost certain to follow suit, and my life in the House of Commons will be snapped. But I’ll die game. My repulse will matter little, but yours cuts me to the heart.” Among the letters of condolence which reached him was one from Lord Rosebery, and the following from Gladstone:

Gladstone to Harcourt.

HAWARDEN CASTLE, July 15, 1895.—Our Sunday’s calm was broken yesterday by a thunderclap in the announcement of the result at Derby, and to-day I have read your speech. It is a cruel blow, struck by most ignoble hands; but you have met it like a man, and your best or most critical friend could not wish the speech to be other than it is.

We shall, I dare say, in so interesting a case, hear more of the interior workings of that engineering by which you have been displaced. The worst of the matter is the difficulty in these days of
Sir William Verner Harcourt, aged 68

from a watercolour drawing by Cecil Cutler now at Munich
finding an alternative seat. But you have encountered this over-
throw by going ahead of the average combatants like an old Homeric
warrior, and you have thereby laid the temperance party under
such obligations that if there be anywhere a temperance man with
a safe candidature, safely transferable, he ought to waive it for
you.

I do not feel sure that local option may not in the future be
better propelled by independent action than by a Liberal Gover-
ment.

Should the Tories obtain a majority really heavy, how Chamberlain
will shake in his shoes! . . .

Harcourt to Gladstone.

The Grosvenor Hotel, Victoria Station, S.W., July 16, 1895.
—I must thank you most sincerely for your kind letter. The poll
at Derby was not altogether a surprise to me as I found on my
arrival that the public feeling there had a good deal changed.

Drink had no doubt something to do with it, but the main cause
was bad trade. The bulk of the constituency is found in the great
railway works, and the men had been for two years on an allowance
of 4 days a week. The moment Parliament was dissolved the Mid-
land Railway Company and the large ironworks put all the men on
six days a week. Nothing could stand against this, especially when
fortified by beer.

The conduct of the clergy and the Church was very disgraceful.
They were active and ostensible promoters of all the worst arts
employed to debauch the constituency. There is no greater argu-
ment against establishments and endowments than the sight of the
immoralities which men will commit in order to retain them . . .

I believe I have a safe seat reserved for me in West Monmouth-
shire.

"What can I say?" wrote Harcourt to Mr. Morley when
Newcastle followed the lead of Derby. "You know what
I feel. We have had a taste of the democracy. It is not
pleasant. But we must fight on." He himself had decided
to "fight on," and when a rumour gained widespread
currency that he proposed to retire from public life he sent
a message to the Daily News denying any such intention.
"I shall persevere," he said, "as long as I am able, in the
service of the Liberal cause and the maintenance of the
principles to which I am attached." A vacancy was at once
made for him by C. M. Warmington, Q.C., the member for
West Monmouth, and Harcourt proceeded thither, as it
was said, to "wipe out the triumph of the beer barrel at Derby." He renewed his declarations on Ireland and his attacks on the House of Lords, but he still kept local option in the forefront of his crusade. He was not ashamed to confess, he told his audience at Ebbw Vale, that he had changed his views on the subject of drink. And why had he changed them? At the Home Office he had the unhappy view of all the misery and crime of the country, and he came to this conviction—that of all the sources of crime there was none more fertile and none more certain than was found in excessive drinking. It destroyed the home, it led to every species of evil, and ultimately he had no hesitation in saying, as one who had for many years had the terrible responsibility of determining whether men should be sent to dreadful death on the gallows, that of ten men who found their way to the gallows eight owed it to excessive drink. That experience had converted him to the view that the public must be vested with the control of an industry which so profoundly touched the public life. He claimed that it was the function of Liberalism to attack great evils regardless of immediate success or failure, instancing slavery and protection, and declared that he would rather fall in a good cause than triumph in a bad one.

When the result of the poll was declared on July 23, Harcourt was found at the head by a majority of 5,287. But the General Election as a whole had given an unexpectedly great victory to the Unionists, the composition of the new Parliament being:

Conservatives ........................................ 340
Liberal Unionists .................................. 71
Liberals ................................................ 177
Parnellites ............................................ 12
Anti-Parnellites ..................................... 70

The Conservatives and Unionists had gained ninety-eight seats, and the Liberal majority of forty-three in the last Parliament was turned into a Unionist majority of 152. The change in voting was not anything like proportionate to this turnover. The poll had not been a heavy one, and
the actual volume of votes shifted to make the sweeping change was not a quarter of a million. The Roseberyite Liberal Press regarded Harcourt’s share in the election with some resentment. The general argument was that he had been too independent and had invited a rebuff, which must hit not only himself but the Liberal Party, by his preoccupation with the unpopular subject of local option. There may have been some justice in this view, but the broad truth is that the mood of the country at the time was hostile to Liberalism. The gold fever was in its blood, and the arrogant nationalism of Mr. Kipling and the glamour of Rhodes’s imperialism were leading it to strange adventures. At Hâwarden the completeness of the overthrow left Gladstone in dismay. Writing from there to Harcourt (July 28), Mr. Morley said:

... I came here last night. The famous old couple are as wonderful as ever. He is very keen, and in excellent health. I have not had time for much talk with him, but the crash of the Party has been more unexpected by him than by you or me. His amazement finds vent in some of the epithets that we know so well —“monstrous,” “astounding,” etc., etc.

One incident in the election had given offence to Harcourt’s sense of the decorum of parliamentary usage. The Conservatives, smarting under the election of Gully to the Speakership, not only opposed his re-election at Carlisle, but induced Mr. Balfour to write letters supporting the opposition. Harcourt thereupon wrote to Gully:

_Harcourt to Gully._

_DERBY, July 11.—_I have read with equal surprise and regret Mr. Balfour’s letter of July 9th.

As one who entertains profound regard for the established and honourable traditions of the House of Commons I cannot but deplore that the Leader of that House should have thought it right to take a principal part in an electioneering attack on the seat of the Speaker. Such a proceeding is contrary to the whole spirit and practice which has hitherto prevailed in our party contests, and cannot but have a most injurious effect upon our parliamentary life. It is without precedent in the past, and I sincerely trust may find no imitators in the future.

It is well known that the Speaker from the nature of the office
he has lately filled cannot take an active part in the political contest, and this consideration is one which should restrain every one, and most of all the Leader of the House of Commons, from taking an unfair advantage of his situation.

The pretence upon which this is done is stated by Mr. Balfour in a manner which is neither accurate nor candid. He accuses the late Government of having endeavoured to force on the House of Commons a political partisan. No one knows better than Mr. Balfour that this was not the case. The late Government put forward in the first instance Mr. Courtney, a member of great experience who was not a political supporter, and that proposal was rejected by Mr. Balfour and his friends.

I am glad to think that this most unfair and unprecedented proceeding will, as always happens, recoil upon its authors, and secure for you the sympathy and support of right-minded persons.

Gully was duly elected, and when the new Parliament met his reappointment as Speaker was unchallenged, an act of grace due in part no doubt to the sense that the opposition to him at Carlisle had been a discreditable incident.

II

In writing to H. H. Fowler when the full measure of the disaster was apparent, Harcourt said, "It is very disgusting to have left these fellows such a splendid surplus as they will have. . . . But whatever their surplus they will spend more. We shipwrecked mariners must collect together and establish a sort of Robinson Crusoe life on our desert island." But the troubles of the shipwrecked mariners were not yet fully told. As not infrequently happens after defeat, civil dissension was added to the distresses of the unhappy Liberal remnant. It began with an ultimatum from Dalmeny. Harcourt, after going to the Treasury, had given up his house in town, and was in some difficulty therefore to know where ex-Ministers in the House of Commons should meet to receive the Queen’s Speech and consider the course of action to be taken upon it. He wrote to Spencer asking if he could put a room at Spencer House at their disposal for the purpose—Campbell-Bannerman, who had hitherto obliged them, being in Marienberg. Spencer promptly agreed (August 7), adding in a
postscript, "I shall let Rosebery know what you propose as to the meeting next week of the House of Commons Front Bench." Harcourt replied that he had heard from Mr. Balfour that the Queen's Speech would have "nothing in it," but that they must meet for form's sake, and that he thought Spencer House would be the best place as he understood Lord Rosebery's house in Berkeley Square was not monté. A few days later Harcourt received from Lord Rosebery a copy of a letter he had sent to Spencer intimating that with the fall of the late Government his political connection with Harcourt, which was wholly official, had terminated, and that in no circumstances could he renew it. On receiving this communication, Harcourt, whose previous letter from Lord Rosebery had been one expressing regret at his defeat at Derby, wrote:

Harcourt to Lord Rosebery.

August 14, 1895.—I have received to-day with equal surprise and pain your letter of the 12th inst., which has been forwarded from Malwood.

It seems to me that for the present at least the wisest course is that I should attempt no reply to it till I obtain some further light as to the causes which have led to your writing it.

But, as you assume that I should "agree with you as to the necessity of the step," I have simply to say that I can in no way assent to it.

My view, as you know, has been from the first that no personal considerations should stand in the way of common action for the good of the Party, and this duty seems to me if possible more imperative at the present moment in the face of the disasters which have befallen it.

What followed is best stated in the following memorandum by Spencer, dated August 16:

The letters from Lord Rosebery of the 12th and 13th August were not answered by letter. On the 13th I sent him a telegram to the effect that the House of Commons ex-colleagues would meet on Wednesday at Mr. Bryce's and not at Spencer House—without any Lords.

I saw him on Wednesday morning.

What occurred was that Sir William Harcourt met me on 13th August at Spencer House at 11.30, not having yet received Lord Rosebery's letter.
I gave him the original to read, and we then settled about the separate meeting of ex-colleagues.

He judged that Lord R.'s letter meant that either he or Lord R. were to retire from the Liberal Party, and said that the (Harcourt) had no intention of retirement.

Lord R. admitted that such an interpretation would naturally be placed on the letter.

It was subsequently settled that the tone of Lord R.'s letter of August 13 should be adopted and that only ex-Cabinet colleagues should be told of the ultimatum for the present.

Sir William H. at first said that he would take no notice of Lord R.'s communication. He called it to me a damned piece of impertinence—the only bitter words used by him in the three or four interviews I had with him.

Subsequently he wrote a short note to Lord R. expressing the surprise and pain with which he had received the letter.

Kimberley (informed by letter by me), Ripon, Tweedmouth, Asquith, Fowler were told what had occurred by me, and Bryce was told by Rosebery.

R. and H. did not meet, but I negotiated generally the sort of line to be taken in the Address debate.

Harcourt assumed the air of absolute ignorance that any serious difference had existed between him and R.

Personal differences he deprecated as far as they interfered with political action. In old days, as in case of Canning and Castlereagh, these ended in a duel. The letter would have had this effect, and he might have been shot in the buttocks!!

Meanwhile Harcourt was left to do the extremely dull work of the Front Bench in the House. "Asquith went off to Scotland for good yesterday," he says in a letter to his wife. "Campbell-Bannerman will not return from Marienbad. Bryce only is left, and he is off this week to the Cape. Acland is ill, and Fowler shows up rarely." The wreck of the Party seemed complete, and the decision of Lord Rosebery left it apparently without any hope of immediate reconstruction. Ripon, who had throughout been hostile to Harcourt's leadership, in a letter to Kimberley (August 17), said:

Ripon to Kimberley.

... I went up to London on Wednesday, Spencer having telegraphed to me to say that he thought I had better do so, and on

---

1 Life of the First Marquess of Ripon, by Lucien Wolf, p. 238 seq.
arrival received the startling news of Rosebery's "irrevocable decision not to meet Harcourt in council any more." You heard from Spencer what has passed; I need not therefore repeat it, and I have little fresh to add. . . . I saw Rosebery himself and had half-an-hour's talk with him—he seemed quite determined, and said that he would not consent to be bound by anything that Harcourt might say or do.

Harcourt professed to take the matter very easily and to treat it as an ebullition of bad temper. He was as mild and civil as possible in manner and language, and I thought anxious to be conciliatory towards his other colleagues. No doubt he sees that Rosebery's step is a very good thing for him (H.), and that if he persists in the intention he has now announced and brings things thereby to a deadlock, it will not redound to his advantage with the Party. You and I know the provocations R. has had, but the Party are little acquainted with them, and will look on him as the cause of a fatal quarrel. . . . If Rosebery persists the Party will become leaderless, and must somehow or other choose between R. and H. or select a new leader. If he gives way he will lose dignity and greatly weaken his influence with those who know what has passed. It is a most unpleasant prospect. . . .

There were anxious attempts in many quarters to patch up a modus vivendi, and for a brief moment it seemed possible that Mr. Asquith, whose prestige had greatly increased during the late Parliament, would succeed to the leadership of the Party. In the end, however, the resumption of the 1894–5 arrangement was agreed on, by which Kimberley and Harcourt became, as it were, joint leaders of the two Houses, with Lord Rosebery's leadership of the Party officially preserved. This arrangement, as far as Kimberley and Harcourt were concerned, worked smoothly until 1898, Lord Rosebery continuing to speak in the country until his formal resignation of the leadership in December 1896.

The question of the leadership furnished the Press with a piquant controversy during the autumn, but for those concerned it was in abeyance. Harcourt himself, relieved of the cares of office, revelled in the delights of Malwood, the only interruptions of his home life being a visit to Holland with his wife, who had, when her father was American Minister at the Hague, spent much of her childhood there. Although politically an international man and a good
European, Harcourt had plenty of insular prejudices and little passion for foreigners, and neither Holland nor the Dutch made a favourable impression on him. Writing to his sister "Em," he said (October 20):

... I was glad to see Holland for once—though the country is inconceivably ugly and there is very little fine architecture even in the great towns. There are of course fine galleries of Dutch pictures, Rembrandts, Frans Hals, Ruysdaels, etc., but very few Rubens or Cuypers. I confess the Dutch pictures don't give me much pleasure. The subjects—persons and landscapes—all ugly though finely painted, and I remain faithful to the Italian art and sky. The Dutch are a dead-alive people with little spirit or enterprise. I attended a sitting of the Dutch H. of C. which seemed duller than even our own.

With leisure at his command he embarked on discussions with Gladstone on subjects as various as Butler's Analogy, bimetallism and agricultural rating.

In one of these, written in reply to a note announcing the recovery of Mrs. Gladstone from an illness which had alarmed her friends, he describes at some length the bright prospects of the year's revenue, and continues:

**Harcourt to Gladstone.**

MALWOOD, October 27, 1895.—... Bimetallism I hope is "blowing over," and your letter to G. Peel was of immense service. The agrarian party in Germany and the Free Silver party in the U.S. are much weaker than they were.

Beach is sound enough himself on these subjects. But he will be much coerced by colleagues, and Goschen admitted to me himself that he had declined the Exchequer foreseeing the difficulties he would have to face in regard to economic heresies amongst his colleagues. They will find it hard enough to do anything for their agricultural supporters, who indeed deserve great sympathy. But what can they do? The Land Tax is certainly most unequal and unjust in its incidence, falling most heavily on the corn lands of the East and Midlands which are the most depressed and most lightly on the North and West which have suffered least.

It is true it was nearly as bad sixty years ago, but I do not see the same elements of recuperation now. The Government will have plenty of money, but the demands on them will be far more than they can satisfy. Already I see The Times is getting up a Russian scare about China. But, though Salisbury talks big, I think generally he is pretty discreet in action.
Your note on Pitt and the Analogy interests me much. I remember well more than fifty-five years ago reading Wilberforce's Life at Nuheham, and the observations of Pitt on the Analogy, which I read about the same time, have dwelt in my memory ever since. I did not apply to it at the time the searching criticism which you have brought to bear upon it. I only possess the one volume edition "revised and condensed from the original" by the Bishop in 1868. But he gives the same account of the conversation, so that at that date the son had not altered his opinion of its accuracy. . . . I think Pitt must have said something of the sort, as it was not an observation likely to have been invented altogether. And it must be considered that when Pitt recommended the Analogy to Wilberforce the object of his conversation was to cool rather than exalt Wilberforce's religious feelings. I do not doubt, as suggested by the Bishop, that Pitt's inspiration on these subjects came from Pretyman, which was mighty dry light according to my recollection of his writings, which my father used to read to us. Butler's Sermons used to be in my time at Trin. Coll., Cambridge, a great textbook in ethics and metaphysics with which we had to be well acquainted.

Is it not of him that Queen Caroline asked Blackburne (the ex-buccaneer who became Archbishop of York and whose swarthy portrait is in the dining-room at Bishopthorpe) "Whether Butler was dead," to which the Archbishop replied: "No, madam, but he is buried," a retort which led to his successive preferments.

I shall look with the deepest interest to your miracle of resuscitation, which I feel sure will be more effectual even than that of Queen Caroline. How many people under thirty years of age know that there was a Bishop Butler, and still fewer have enjoyed the resources of his profound intellect amidst all the froth and bustle of modern life. It seems to me the worst feature is the way in which the great monuments of the past are buried in piles of recent rubbish, and you will render a great service in rescuing from oblivion a masterpiece of ancient intellectual art. I think it were to be desired that there were more excavations of the past and fewer exhibitions of the present. I shall eagerly avail myself of your permission to retain the autograph proof page you have sent as a precious memorial of your latest labour.

Your letter and the spirit which it breathes of unfailing cheerfulness and unrelaxing activity is very refreshing and gives great encouragement to us who feel the weight of advancing years. It teaches us all to follow haud passibus aquis in the example you have set, which will be always memorable. . . .

Were you aware that the virtuous Wilberforce was an habitual opium-eater. This subject is delicately glanced at by the Bishop in reference to his illness in 1788, but my father, who was an intimate friend of Wilberforce, told me he used to keep opium pills in his pocket, which he used to swallow as he walked up and down talking.
His relations with Mr. Morley were now fully restored to their old intimacy, and he incessantly urged him to return to Parliament. When at last Mr. Morley consented to stand for Montrose he wrote (November 26):

_Harcourt to Mr. Morley._

... I am much rejoiced as are all our Party that you have (as I know much against the grain) resolved to throw your hat once more into the ring. We must never say die, and I feel sure you would not have been able to satisfy yourself that you had been right in retiring from the field. Whether a man is right in once entering on so thankless a pursuit may be well doubted, but when one has once set one's hand to that plough one cannot turn back—even if it be "ploughing the sands."

"It was your doing mainly that I have consented once more to go under the yoke," replied Mr. Morley. "I never look on myself as much of a Parliament man; but if you and others think otherwise, here I am." To Mr. Morley Harcourt wrote (November 14): "What an excellent speech of Asquith's at Bristol. It is just what I should have wished to say, only said better." And to Mr. Asquith himself he wrote, with something of his ancient fervour for references to speeches and official documents, on the subject of agricultural rates. With his successor at the Treasury, Hicks-Beach, he discussed at great length the question of the Indian Army Pensions Fund, and, referring to the duty of standing firmly by both the sinking funds, old and new, said (November 18):

_Harcourt to Hicks-Beach._

... You may be sure I had to meet very strong temptations in my later years to tamper with both. With your fine surplus happily you will not be so highly tried. Of all articles of prestige that of being the only nation which is really paying off its debt is in my opinion one of the greatest, and as Balfour says is "worth many battleships." It is a comfortable and reassuring reflection that we could to-morrow from the sinking fund interest borrow 200 millions (the amount of the French indemnity), in case of a great emergency without any additional taxation. This is our real war chest.

"The surplus you have provided," replied Hicks-Beach (November 19), "bids fair to be really alarming, and
all mouths are opening wide. There will, as you say, be plenty of squeaking next spring." Harcourt was much occupied at this time, as the letter to Gladstone quoted above shows, with the Government's prospective policy of relieving the rates on agricultural land out of the Exchequer. Writing to H. H. Fowler on the subject, he said:

Harcourt to H. H. Fowler.

MALWOOD, December 2.—... The most serious thing is, however, A. Milner's paper, which he tells me you have seen.... The pith of it is to show that land is more heavily taxed for imperial purposes than any other property whether houses, funds, etc. This of course enormously strengthens their case for relief as to rates. This conclusion depends of course on the greatly diminished value of the land on which the imperial taxation is raised. He certainly takes a very low figure when he puts the capital value at eighteen years' purchase—which may be true of the distressed districts, but I should think was too low for the country generally. But it is very little use to aver against Milner on these points.

The whole calculation really turns on the land tax, which hitherto has been treated not as a tax at all but a rent charge (see what Mill says on this). If the land tax were out of the question, the whole point of greater taxation of land would be out of the discussion. You may remember that in the course of the Budget debates I condemned the land tax and intimated an intention of dealing with it. If any method could be found of making the land a present of the land tax I should quite approve. But it is not easy.

Chaplin's claim to bring in the reduced land tax as a present charge on land seems to me absurd.

As to the rating question, I confess I do not see my way at all. Where is the money to come from? If they could deal with agricultural land alone the thing might be manageable, but the towns would never stand this.

To the agriculturists the relief would be infinitesimal, not 1s. an acre, for which they would not thank you.


I have told Lefevre I do not think we ought to take up the attitude of non-possimus as regards agricultural relief. On the whole I am quite willing to surrender to them the land tax—the worst of it is that the relief would be geographically so irregular. You and I must really make up our minds as to what line to take before the Session. . . .

With these and other discussions the autumn passed.
The world was at peace, and politics were in the doldrums. The new Government was in power with every prospect of retaining it for several years, and no cloud appeared upon the horizon. But the calm was deceptive, and before the Christmas season was well over a storm which Harcourt had long seen brewing, and the peril of which had led to his strong opposition to the appointment of Hercules Robinson as High Commissioner of South Africa, broke upon a wholly unexpectant world. For the rest of his active life Harcourt was to be submerged in the thing he most loathed, a wave of Jingoism.
CHAPTER XX

"DR. JIM"


The Christmas season of 1895 passed without a hint that the tranquillity that pervaded the world's affairs was threatened, when suddenly the curtain rose on a drama whose many phases were to engage the mind of the country for some years, and were to culminate in a desolating war. Henceforth the name of "Dr. Jim" was on every tongue, and the strange word "Uitlanders" on every newspaper placard. If the news of the Jameson Raid was a shock to the British public, it would not be true to say that it was a disagreeable shock. The beginnings of a war are rarely unpleasant to the populace, and the prospect of a conflict with the Boers had a peculiar attraction for a people to whom the word "Majuba" still recalled what was popularly regarded as a national humiliation. The Jingo element of the public had never appreciated the magnanimity and wisdom of the action of the Gladstone Government after the reverse of Majuba Hill, had treasured a grudge against the Boers, and had nursed the hope that in due time Colley's defeat would be avenged. With the discovery of the unprecedented riches of the Transvaal the old sore, which would doubtless have been forgotten in another generation, became
inflamed. The development of the Rand had fallen largely into the hands of British adventurers, and the public, at home, seized with a gold fever that recalled the legends of the South Sea Bubble, looked with cold hostility upon the people in possession, and were indisposed to accept interference with the industry in any amiable spirit. The grievances of the Transvaal had been simmering for some time before the outbreak of the Outlanders in 1895. Swaziland had, it is true, been placed under the control of the Boers in 1894, but in 1895 Great Britain annexed Amatongaland between Zululand and the Portuguese territory of Lourenço Marques, thus cutting off the Boers from possible direct access to the sea at Kosi Bay. There followed disputes over the rival railway routes, that from the Cape to Johannesburg via the Orange Free State, and that from Delagoa Bay, which was the shorter of the two. In the contest for the traffic between these lines the Boers had closed the drifts over the Vaal to imported goods, and had raised a storm to which Kruger found it necessary to bow. Meantime, the claim of the Outlanders of the Rand to political rights in the Transvaal had assumed a formidable character, and it became known that the National Union contemplated armed revolt against the Kruger regime. The armed police of the Chartered Company was concentrated at Pitsani on the Bechuanaland frontier of the Transvaal, and Dr. Jameson, who was in command of it, crossed into the Transvaal territory on December 29, 1895, in response, it was alleged, to an appeal from the Outlanders in Johannesburg to come to their rescue. Four days later the adventure ended in the surrender of Jameson and his raiders to the Boers at Doornkop.

As soon as the news of the Raid reached England, Chamberlain, who had taken office in the new Government as Colonial Minister, sent peremptory orders to Hercules Robinson to command the raiders to withdraw, and communicated the fact to Kruger. Jameson ignored the command, but his surrender provided another way out of the difficulty of the Colonial Office. At this moment, the
incident was complicated by the dispatch by the German Kaiser to Kruger of a telegram congratulating him on having dealt with the attack "without calling in the help of friendly Powers." It was the impulsive act of an undisciplined mind, smarting under a momentary grievance against the Government of Great Britain, but it left its mark on events. It may be said to have been the beginning of the breach between the two peoples which, almost alone among the great peoples of Europe, had never been engaged in war with each other. The answer of the Government took the form of the dispatch of two regiments to South Africa and the mobilization of a flying column.

In the meantime, feeling in England was generally on the side of the raiders, and, as usual in such cases, the Boer became transfigured into something a little lower than the beasts. A grotesque legend of the perils of the Outlanders in Johannesburg became current, and the Poet Laureate added the suitable touch of comedy to the occasion by publishing some jingling lines in The Times, beginning, "There are girls in the gold-reef city," probably the only lines he ever wrote that are still remembered. "There is a monstrous poem in favour of Jameson in The Times to-day signed by the Poet Laureate," wrote Harcourt to his son. "He ought to be cashiered." Harcourt loathed JingoiSm more than any other form of national egotism, and this peculiarly brazen piece of buccaneering filled him with wrath. In a letter to Bryce, who had just returned from South Africa, he said:

Harcourt to Bryce.

MALWOOD, January 22.—... I know (though I am not at liberty to give my authority) that the S. African directors have advised that they knew of the intention to organize an armed rising at Johannesburg, and that Jameson was at Mafeking with their knowledge and authority to take part in the rising when it occurred. This will no doubt be proved up to the hilt at Pretoria. This being so of course Kruger will say—and be quite justified in saying, "If you condone and justify Rhodes and Jameson and leave the S. African Co. in a position to do again what they have now done, the convention of 1884 is at an end. Am I to be bound to rely on

VOL. II.
you for protection against internal foes when you or those for whom you are responsible are yourselves the principal foes I have to dread. How can you ask me to confer political power on me if in fact avow that the object for which they desire it is mainly to overthrow my Government. If Jameson and Rhodes are English heroes I must seek support and defence against them elsewhere if I cannot rely on my own right arm."

I greatly hope that you will not commit yourself or us on this subject until we have an opportunity of discussing it together. To my mind it is the insolent and lawless aggressiveness of men of the Jameson and Rhodes type that has made the whole world our enemies, who naturally abhor the "brag and grab" policy which we pursue in every part of the globe. . . .

Bryce wrote correcting Harcourt's impression that he was disposed to palliate Jameson's offence, but gave his view of the Outlanders' complaints, expressing doubt whether the Chartered Company was "in it," and suggesting only that the matter should not be prejudiced. Harcourt however remained convinced that the Chartered Company was privy to the Raid, and that the Outlanders as a body were against the rising, which emanated from the "gold bugs." In the meantime, Jameson and his fellow-ring-leaders were dispatched to England by the Boers for trial, Jameson himself being subsequently sentenced to death at Pretoria in his absence. At this stage it was popularly assumed that Jameson had acted independently, and so far as Chamberlain's attitude towards the Raid was concerned Harcourt was wholly complimentary. In a speech in the House (February 11), in which he denounced "this outrageous and disastrous event of the invasion of the Transvaal," he expressed his approval of the Colonial Secretary's "statesman-like courage," and associated himself with Chamberlain's efforts to induce Kruger to make Johannesburg a self-governing municipality. He accompanied his approval with some good-natured chaff of Chamberlain's proposed "Home Rule within Home Rule." "Of course we do not complain of that," he said, "except in so far as people sometimes complain of plagiarism. We recognize our own thunder. There is the separate taxation, there is the veto, there is the tribute, the famous Westminster question—
there you have it all." While commending the Government he insisted that they must probe "the relation of the Chartered Company to these transactions" and revise the charter, and he concluded with a weighty warning to the nation:

. . . The Government have done their part in the matter, and have done it well. Yes, but the nation has to do its part in this matter, and it will be seen by our conduct whether we do in our hearts, *ex animo*, condemn what we profess to disavow; whether we really regret that this attempt has been made, or whether what we really deplore is that it should have failed. On the answer to that question depends the possibility of your restoring peace to the distracted races in South Africa, and on that will depend the estimation which is formed of you in the world. If the world supposes that all these are hollow pretences, and that what the English people really approve is what has been done, then you cannot complain if a severe judgment is passed upon you by the civilized world.

When a few days later Labouchere raised the question again in the form of a demand that the projected inquiry should include the financial and political activities of the Chartered Company, Harcourt again insisted that the first and material question was not what Jameson did, but by whose authority he did it. Referring to the famous letter of agonized appeal on behalf of the girls and others in the gold-reef city, to which the Raid was supposed to be a chivalrous response, Harcourt said:

. . . There was an invitation sent to Dr. Jameson to advance, signed by a certain number of persons at Johannesburg. That letter was dated, apparently, from the copy of it found on the battlefield, on December 20, ten days before Dr. Jameson advanced. Did the authorities of the South Africa Company know of that letter? Apparently that letter was in the possession of Dr. Jameson for ten days before he started. What is the truth? Did the authorities of the Company, with the force collecting at Mafeking, know or not know that that letter had been addressed to him? That letter was published in *The Times* newspaper on January 1. That letter was postdated so as to make it appear that it was written on the 28th December, the day before the advance began, and the names by which it was signed were erased from the copy which was published. These facts make it most material to ask—Did Dr. Jameson show the letter to anyone connected with the South Africa
Company, and if so, what were the instructions he received upon it? . . .

While he was convinced that Rhodes and the Chartered Company were the real criminals, Harcourt now and always disbelieved that Chamberlain was involved in the Raid itself. "I have heard all the stories about the complicity of Joe in the Jameson Raid, but do not believe them," he wrote to Arnold Morley. Chamberlain, on his part, had pledged himself to the innocence of Rhodes and his colleagues, but if he was sincere in the pledge he was soon to suffer disillusion. On April 27 Jameson and other ringleaders were sentenced at Pretoria, and immediately after Kruger published to the world the cipher telegrams that preceded the Raid, and which showed that Rhodes and Beit together with Rutherford Harris, the secretary of the Chartered Company in Cape Town, had been the organizers of the Raid and had also stirred up a factitious rebel movement in Johannesburg to give the colour of chivalry to the enterprise. The revelation intensified feeling in the country. On the one side was all the wealth and fashion of the day, inspired by the double motive of Imperialism and gain; on the other was the remnant of the Liberal Party which, in the tide of speculation and Jingoism which was sweeping over the country, remained attached to the traditions of Cobden, Bright and Gladstone. The board of the Chartered Company contained the cream of the aristocracy, the Duke of Abercorn, the Duke of Fife, and so on, and the fashionable world, under the glamour of Rhodes, had plunged breast-high in "Chartereds," which had soared to £9 a share. It was the severest ordeal with which Harcourt had yet been faced in public life. He had fought embattled landlordism on the Budget and had won, but then he had the House of Commons behind him. Now every social interest was mobilized against him, the House of Commons was against him, and the temper of the public, which hated Kruger and loved "Dr. Jim," was against him. "The whole affair," he wrote to his wife (May 6), "is most injurious to the reputation of the country at home and
abroad, and it is impossible, if the Chartered Company is to continue to exist, that it shall be left in the hands of such men. It is not an agreeable task, but it must be done in the interest of public honour and morality. The language of The Times and the stock-jobbing Press is most disgraceful. . . . I dine with H.R.H. at Marlborough House to-night, when I suppose we shall be in the midst of the enemy.” . . .

II

There has rarely been such a scene as that which the House of Commons presented next day (May 8) when Harcourt rose to launch his indictment on the cipher telegrams. The fashionable world does not often honour the lower House with its attention, and the City ignores it; but on this occasion the most brilliant women in society stood en queue to take their place in the ladies’ gallery, and crowds of Stock Exchange men stood humbly below waiting for a chance to get into the crowded galleries. Two great issues were at stake, the honour of the nation and the price of Charteredds, and there could be little doubt which issue was of most moment to the brilliant throng inside and outside the House. Harcourt opened by recalling Chamberlain’s assurance that the Chartered Company and Rhodes were not implicated, and then passed to the new light thrown on events by the cipher telegrams, whose authenticity was unchallenged. He proceeded:

. . . It will appear that this laudable and constitutional agitation was in fact an unlawful conspiracy, conducted and wirepulled and financed from the offices of the Chartered Company in Capetown, and under the auspices of the Prime Minister of the Cape Colony—and that its promoters were aided in that by all the resources of the De Beers Company and the Gold Fields Company of Pretoria—a conspiracy which had for its object the overthrow by an armed insurrection of the Government of a friendly State. There is something, I think, expressibly revolting to any high-minded man in the low morality and vulgar slang of these communications [the telegrams]. It is a squalid and a sordid picture of stock-jobbing imperialism; you cannot say of it as the Roman Emperor said, non olet; there is a noisome odour of the Stock Exchange about it. The very lingo is the language of the company promoter, and you
might think you were reading the prospectus of a set of croupiers, (Laughter and Opposition cheers). You read about a "flotation". That is the word for an armed insurrection; a "flotation" of the "new company"; the "shareholders' meeting"; the "weak partners"—that is the men who are not ready to enter on this illegal enterprise, or at least are faint-hearted about it. You have the "foreign shareholders." They are the directors of the Chartered Company. . . . And then the De Beers Company is brought upon the scene. Sir, there has been a great deal of, I think, unjust abuse heaped upon these poor-spirited Outlanders and their treachery in not supporting the Raid. The real charge against them is that they could not and would not be stimulated by bribery, and every other method, to enter upon an insurrection against the Government, which a great majority of them had no desire to overthrow. Really, sir, they are treated like the needy knife-grinders of Canning, as "wretches whom no sense of wrong could rouse to vengeance," and then they are denounced in the English Press and elsewhere as "sordid, unfeeling, reprobate, degraded, spiritless outcasts," because they did not come up to the point of what was expected of them by the directors of the Chartered Company.

In a weighty passage he discussed the history of chartered companies, which had been described as "a valuable instrument for the cheap extension of Empire." "The fact is that these private adventurers in dominion have been very like what was used in ancient warfare—privateers. Privateering has been abolished by the consent of nations, because it has been found generally to degenerate into piracy." And so he came to his demand for the removal of the authors of the Raid:

... If you continue the control of the Chartered Company under the control of the men who have done these things how can you expect to make a reasonable and friendly settlement with the Government of the Transvaal and with President Kruger? If this is the treatment that he has received from those who exercise the powers of that State which calls itself his suzerain, how can you complain if he should look for support elsewhere? If he is to be attacked by his suzerain, and the people who attack him are to be continued in their authority, how can you expect to make a reasonable settlement? What chance have you of restoring peace in the Cape Colony between the two races when you continue there the very men who have caused this animosity between them?

If the English Government are about to condone a transaction of this kind, to treat it as if it were a matter of small importance, what a lesson in public morals you will read to your colonies.
you are going to say that these are the sort of men, and that this is the sort of spirit which is treated with indifference by the House of Commons and the Government—if they are to say: "Well, after all, if we are too hard on them we shall lose money; we may suffer by it; and therefore let us condone and compound it"—if we are to tell our colonies, if we are to tell the world that the spirit by which we are actuated is only this: "Put money in thy purse," and then call it expansion of empire and the progress of civilization (cheers), what effect is such a doctrine going to have on our Empire itself? No, sir, I do not know whether the injury which these men have done to South Africa can be repaired; but there is a great deal more than South Africa that is at stake to-day. It is the character of the British Empire throughout the world—the character of Parliament as evidenced in the spirit in which it deals with these matters, the character of the British Government which has given this authority and which has the power to revoke it or to compound the offence... 

What we have got to do, in my opinion, is to make it quite plain by the manner in which we deal with these transactions that we do not desire to extend Empire or gain wealth per fas et nefas—by fraud, falsehood and by crime; but that when we find that the authority we have given has been abused, and the trust violated, we will repudiate those acts whatever it may cost us... 

It was a powerful indictment, all the more impressive by its moderation of tone, but it was the speech that followed that pleased the great and distinguished company. It was quick to detect a new note in Chamberlain's reply, quick to see that after the earlier austerity towards the Raid he was coming down on "the right side," that he was embarking on that path of Imperialism which the bizarre genius of Disraeli had blazed for him. Under all the careful phrases, there was nothing but a defence of the conspirators and threats to the Transvaal Government. Inquiry there should be, but the removal of Rhodes there should not be; he was necessary to South Africa, necessary in view of the dangerous situation in Matabeleland, necessary because he had the confidence of the white community. But he would not consider the possibility of war. To go to war to press internal reform would be "as immoral as it was unwise":

... A war in South Africa would be one of the most serious wars that could possibly be waged. It would be in the nature of a civil war. It would be a long war, a bitter war, and a costly war, and
as I have pointed out already, it would leave behind the embers of a strife which I believe generations would hardly be long enough to extinguish.

He had not travelled far on the road yet, but his face was set in the direction that pleased his audience. He had taken his stand by Rhodes, and the rest would follow. The people who had engineered the Raid were left in power, and they could be trusted not to let the pistol go off at half-cock again.

While the debate was in progress, the chief person involved was in far-away Matabeleland engaged in the campaign against the Matabele tribe. He received a cable of the debate, and, enclosing it to Harcourt, wrote to him as follows:

Rhodes to Harcourt.

Gwelo, Matabeleland, May 13, 1896. — The enclosed explains my letter. It has come just as we start to try and make a junction with Bulawayo. We are 250 men and the Bulawayo column is 500. There are about 6,000 natives between us and Bulawayo, and we may make a mess of it.

I would be sorry to think that you thought I was "capable but not honest." I have tried to unite S. Africa, and no sordid motive has influenced me.

You might say why do I write, certainly not to mitigate your censure, but in case we come to grief I wish you to know that I feel that, whatever you have said you have said from a sense of public duty, and that I hope you will understand in the future that I understand the reasons of your censure, though bitter, and I am still pleased to think that you had an affection for me. But remove from your mind the idea of a sordid motive.

This letter is only written because I do not know what will happen during the next week.

C. J. Rhodes.

May 14. — We start in an hour. I am minded to tear this up, but the outlook is gloomy, and I would not like you to misunderstand me. If I get through, well, tear this up; if I do not, I think when you are sitting in that smoking-room at Rothschild's, you will be pleased to think that I understood your reasons, but I could not go out from here to an uncertainty without saying, blame me as you like but do not do the cruel thing of attributing my conduct to sordid motives. Good-bye.

You make one mistake—the Dutch in Africa are not all with Kruger, and my action was not English v. Dutch. But we would
not have the German element, and the Pretorian Government must go.

"The Rhodes debate came on last night," Harcourt wrote to his wife (May 8). "My speech, I think, came off all right, and was thought strong and moderate. Of course there was no real defence, and I believe that Chamberlain has made a fatal mistake in keeping Rhodes on, which he will have to acknowledge and pay for later. . . . I have two heavy speeches before me, one on education on Tuesday, and Tredegar on Wednesday, and am longing for a little rest, but I keep up pretty well."

In spite of the new tendency revealed in Chamberlain’s attitude, Harcourt, whose personal regard for his old friend remained constant throughout all changes, continued in the closest intercourse with him on the subject, bringing all his influence to bear on him to adopt moderate courses. Thus when Kruger insisted on the elimination of Rhodes, he wrote:

Harcourt to Chamberlain.

MALWOOD, LYNDHURST, June 21, 1896.—The demand by Kruger as to Rhodes has brought about the situation which (as you know) I have all along anticipated, and which I wish you had forestalled. It is impossible that K. could tolerate Rhodes in nominal, and in fact in substantial, command on his flank, especially when Frank Rhodes had joined his brother in publicly refusing parole not to repeat the attack on the Transvaal.

As long as Rhodes remains as Managing Director there can be no peace in S. Africa. He is in his own person the red flag—perhaps I should say the black flag.

I shall probably have to ask you the enclosed question on Monday, of which "I beg to give you private notice."

Why cannot one always be in the midst of such a scene of beauty and paradise of flowers as that in which I am now writing.

Yours sincerely,

W. V. HARDCOURT.

Enclosure. To ask the Secretary of State for the Colonies—
(1) Whether he has communicated to the South African Company his opinion on the subject of the maintenance of Mr. Rhodes in the position of the managing director of the Company in S. Africa.

(2) When he proposes to institute the inquiry into the circumstances attending the armed attack on the Transvaal and the connection of the Company with that transaction.
Chamberlain wrote (June 22) complimenting Harcourt on his moderation, and when Rhodes was duly eliminated Harcourt sent (June 27) his hearty congratulations to the Colonial Secretary on his wisdom, adding, "I tak't for granted that the announcement in The Times that a tribunal is to be appointed by the Chancellor and, the Speaker to investigate the business is a canard. Anything more objectionable or unconstitutional from every point of view it is impossible to imagine." He pressed Chamberlain for a House of Commons Committee, and lamented that the inquiry was delayed until the conclusion of the Jameson trial in London. "I wish with all my heart," he said plaintively (July 5), "that Africa did not exist and that there was nothing else in the world except Malwood." One of the conditions on which Harcourt insisted was that Chamberlain himself should preside over the inquiry, "in order that the responsible Ministers should take the lead in the Inquiry, and also that the resources of the Colonial Office should be at the disposal of the Committee." At first Chamberlain accepted this view, but when he decided not to preside on the ground that an "impartial chairman" was necessary, Harcourt strongly protested. Writing on July 18, he said:

Harcourt to Chamberlain.

32, St. George's Place, July 18, 1896.—... I had certainly understood when you wrote to me on July 4, "I am glad to say that the Cabinet have accepted your suggestion as to the proposed inquiry," that you included the condition which you admit I had insisted on as essential as to the chairmanship of the Committee, as your letter made no reservation on that point.

You must not assume that we have finally determined on the course which we ought to take in the altered circumstances of the case. We are not now in the position of accepting or refusing anything, but shall of course be prepared to consider and discuss the proposals of the Government when they are announced.

You must forgive me for saying that I am at a loss to understand why you should not regard yourself as an "impartial chairman," or why you should pay any attention to unfounded "insinuations" such as fall to the lot of all responsible Ministers in their time.
The trial of Jameson and his fellow prisoners came on on July 20, before the Lord Chief Justice (Russell), Hawkins and Pollock, and a verdict of guilty to the charges under the Foreign Enlistment Act being returned, Jameson was sentenced to fifteen months' imprisonment, and the other five prisoners to varying terms. The way was now clear for the Inquiry. Chamberlain did not want a State prosecution of Rhodes, but, though he had himself proposed a judicial inquiry, he accepted Harcourt's demand for a House of Commons Committee, and on July 30 the body was set up. It consisted of the Attorney-General (Webster), Mr. Bigham, Blake, Mr. Sydney Buxton, Campbell-Bannerman, Chamberlain, Hicks-Beach, Mr. Cripps, Hart-Dyke, John Ellis, Harcourt, W. L. Jackson, Labouchere, Wharton and George Wyndham. It did not meet until the next year, but in the preparation for its work Harcourt took an active part. Jackson had been chosen as the prospective chairman, and Harcourt negotiated the preliminaries with him during the autumn. Writing to Fowler, he said:

_Harcourt to Fowler._

... The Committee will be a ticklish one to handle, but I think Jackson is a judgematical man. I have had several letters from him asking for advice as to evidence and witnesses to be called. Chamberlain is in a very difficult position; not because I believe there is the smallest foundation in the ridiculous stories of his privity and complicity, but because he perceives that the Rhodes regime must come so irretrievably damaged out of the Inquiry, and he does not know what to put in its place.

III

Meanwhile another cloud had assumed grave dimensions. Since the Civil War, there had been no serious breach with the United States, but at the moment when the Jameson Raid occurred an old issue suddenly imperilled our relations with that country. Ever since 1880 there had been a dispute between Great Britain and Venezuela as to the boundary between that State and British Guiana, in the colonization of which an adventurous ancestor of Harcourt's
had taken a hand nearly three hundred years before. The
Venezuelans claimed a large part of the territory west of the
Essequibo river which was controlled by this country, and in 1887 President Blanco demanded arbitration. The
British Government was prepared to accept arbitration on
a portion of the territory claimed, but not on the whole, and
diplomatic relations were broken off. It was not a great
matter in itself, but its reactions, as the American would
say, became serious, when in December 1895, in a
message to Congress, President Cleveland, who was perhaps
influenced by the approaching presidential election, declared
that Great Britain was taking possession "of the territory of
one of our neighbouring republics," invoked the Monroe
Doctrine, and announced his intention to appoint a Com-
mmission of Americans to adjust the boundary equitably
between the disputants. It was a rough and drastic pro-
ceeding. Naturally the Commission set up in so provocative
a spirit was ignored by the British Government, and there
was imminent danger of war. The gravity of the position
was aggravated by the fact that the United States was
chafing under restraint. The Clayton-Bulwer Treaty of
1850 had tied its hands in the building of a ship canal in
Central America, and American opinion was irritated by a
long diplomatic dispute which continued until 1901, when
Great Britain waived the restriction imposed by the
Clayton-Bulwer Treaty and concluded the Hay-Paunce-
fote Agreement, which gave the United States a free
hand.

The situation was one that aroused all the pacifist energies
of Harcourt. No phase of his international sentiment was
more acute than that which came into play in regard to
Anglo-American relations. He never went to America,
but his friendliness toward that country and its people was
always warm and understanding, and the great episode of
the "Historicus" letters had given him an appreciation of
the problems of the two countries which no other living
statesman on either side of the Atlantic possessed. Like
Chamberlain, he had married an American wife, and he was
acquainted when writing to Chamberlain to talk of "we semi-Americans." His conception of the functions of an Opposition never interfered with his conception of the larger responsibilities of public life, and, according to his manner, he entered at once into the most cordial co-operation with the Government to avert war. His own view of the immediate dispute was expressed in a letter to James, in which, discussing the history of the boundary question, he dismissed the question of "occupation" as immaterial, said the Dutch line as it existed in 1814 was the true limit which the Agreement of 1850 established, and that any occupation by us, subsequently, of territory to which we were not entitled as successors to the Dutch was a wrongful occupation, and could give us no title. The prospect of a war with America on such a disputable subject was intolerable to him, and he brought all his weapons of persuasion and appeal to induce the Government to consent to arbitration. Writing to Lewis Harcourt, he said:

Harcourt to his son Lewis.

Reform Club, January 10, 1896.—When I got to town it occurred to me to write to Joe to propose to pay him a private visit after dinner, and he asked me to come to Prince's Gardens at 11 p.m., which I did and had a 2 hour talk with him. He was friendly and frank. I pressed the American question very strongly. He professed not to believe in war, to know it would be very unpopular, but was not friendly to arbitration, which I told him was the only thing possible. He pretended there were other ways, but was not at all clear what. He talked a good deal about Transvaal—did not fear Germany. . . .

Joe looked ill and worn, and I confess I did not leave him with any satisfactory conclusion as to the U.S. subject. I shall try my hand now on Hartington. . . .

Disquieted by the attitude of Chamberlain, who deprecated a speech from the Leader of the Opposition in favour of arbitration, he proceeded to Chatsworth, where he was met by Mr. Balfour, who had delivered a pacific speech at Manchester in which he had reaffirmed an historic acceptance of the Monroe doctrine, and declared that "a war with the United States carried with it something of the unnatural
honor of a civil war." Writing to Mr. Morley of his visit to Chatsworth, Harcourt said:

Harcourt to Mr. Morley.

MALWOOD, LYNDHURST, January 18, 1896.—... I returned yesterday from a visit to Chatsworth where I preached "conciliation of America." I think with good effect to the host [Devonshire] and to A. Balfour. The former and as I gather the majority of the Cabinet are strongly for accommodation. Balfour rather non-committal, but admitting that he knew little of the subject. I thought the Manchester speech on the whole good.

I tried to impress on both (1) the great danger of the situation; (2) that no other proposal but arbitration could or would have any good result.

I pointed out a plan by which I thought we could get at arbitration without discredit.

The man whose obstinacy I most fear is Joe.

I find that Carnegie had written to the Duke, and said that we were "playing with fire" over the Nicaraguan affair. Do you remember our remonstance against that coup de main, which all but brought us a similar crisis... .

Fortunately private negotiations between the Government and Olney, the United States Foreign Minister, had now been established, and Harcourt was urgent that we must not be stiff about the limitations of arbitration. We must not exclude territory now settled. "I do not believe," he wrote to Fowler (January 23), who had made an excellent speech on the question of arbitration, "that the U.S. will agree to this. If we are to go to arbitration there is no use fighting small points. I am for arbitration pur et simple sans phrase." He was conscious of the feeling in America, and of the dangers there. "Cabot Lodge," he wrote to his son, "seems to have overshot the mark in the ultra-Monroe resolution in the Senate." But the fact that there were war-mongers there as well as here only made him the more emphatic in his insistence on arbitration without restriction, and on the avoidance of imperilling the situation by haggling over small points. This view he carried further than his own colleagues on the Opposition bench. Thus he was prepared to recognize the United States Com-
mission on Venezuela. Writing to him (January 25), Mr Morley said:

Mr. Morley to Harcourt.

95, Elm Park Gardens, January 25.—As I feared when I last wrote to you, things are not looking so rosy in the U.S., and Smalley [the Washington Correspondent of The Times] this morning evidently sees lions in the path.

It is thought here that the American syndicate who get concessions for gold from Venezuela in territory long in our occupation, have intervened, and are bullying the U.S. Government.

I agree with you about the Westlake proposal. Neither bare occupancy by us, nor non-occupancy by Venezuela, can give us more than our rights or title by succession. What our successor title is—that is the question.

On the question of our Government sending information as the U.S. Commission request, Fowler and Asquith dined here two nights ago. F. said we ought to comply: A. said No, and so do I. What do you say? . . .

Harcourt to Mr. Morley.

Malwood, January 26.—I am so anxious about the U.S. business that I should not stand out on any point that would tend to settle it. We made a fatal mistake in refusing the arbitration [with Venezuela], and it is our business to repair it. No punctilio ought to be allowed to stand in the way of peace. If we are going to publish our case what is the use of saying to the U.S., "We publish it, but not to you." I vote with Fowler.

My view is this: We have no diplomatic relations with Venezuela nor in their present temper are they likely to renew them. The U.S. inform themselves of the facts through their Commission, and will publish them. We set out our view of the facts. They will conflict. We agree to refer them to arbitration. The U.S. should be confidentially apprised beforehand of our willingness to do this.

I have very little doubt that there are plenty of malign influences at work in U.S. to promote war. That is all the more reason why we should not halt or stumble on the road to peace. . . .

In this case it can hardly be doubted to-day that Harcourt took the sounder view of the matter, and in the end the Government adopted that view. Harcourt and Lord Rosebery were no longer in communication, and their opinions on this critical question were exchanged through third parties. Thus, Mr. Asquith, writing on the eve of the
meeting of Parliament to Harcourt after a visit to Lord Rosebery at Mentmore, said:

Mr. Asquith to Harcourt.

I. Paper Buildings, Temple, February 10.—... In the meantime he [Lord Rosebery] and others think that it is very important to avoid saying anything that can stiffen the backs of the American jingoists—as e.g. anything that would seem to admit that a case had actually arisen in Venezuela affecting the interests of the U.S. and so coming within the Monroe doctrine; or anything that would exclude the question of the character and extent of the actual occupation on both sides from the proposed arbitration.

I mention this in case there may be one or two sentences in what you are proposing to say that might be modified accordingly.

Next day, replying on the Address, Harcourt made a bold and unequivocal appeal for arbitration:

... We have no desire whatever (he said) to assert any claim to territory to which we are not clearly entitled. The question is, what is that territory? That that is a doubtful question who can deny? The diplomacy of fifty years, the correspondence, the agreements, the conflicting claims, the multitudinous lines at various times drawn and withdrawn by both sides, the different maps—all that demonstrates that this is a most doubtful question, on which I observe that people who are most ignorant are pronouncing with the greatest confidence. ... Diplomacy has had this matter in hand for half a century, and a mighty bad hand it has made of it. ... But if it should appear on inquiry that the differences of opinion are not capable of solution in this way, why, then, what objection can there be to referring that difference to the arbitration of a third Power?

Harcourt's speech created an excellent impression among the peace section in the United States, where a large element of the Press, influenced no doubt by the election fever and the need of conciliating the Irish-American vote, was carrying on a violent crusade against English "aggression." But the progress of negotiations hung fire, and on the eve of the Easter recess Harcourt wrote to Mr. Balfour, Devonshire and Chamberlain, that in view of the alarmist statements of Smalley in The Times, he could no longer maintain silence in the House unless he could be reassured on the subject. Mr. Balfour urged him not to raise questions in the House
which he would be unable to answer, but assured him that negotiations were still in progress. Harcourt was not satisfied, and writing to Mr. Balfour explained at length his view of the seriousness of the situation. He concluded:

Harcourt to Mr. Balfour.

32, St. George’s Road, April 24, 1896.—... The time seems to me to have come when I should not be justified in keeping silence any longer, and I think the public mind ought to be reassured by a statement on the part of the Government as to the actual situation in order to satisfy them that measures are being taken to secure at once an arbitration on the Venezuela boundary, which is a thing I am convinced is the only course which can result in a peaceful settlement and which is desired by the great majority of people both inside and outside the House of Commons. I have therefore put upon the paper a question to which I hope you will be able to give a satisfactory reply on Monday.

To this question, Mr. Balfour gave the reply that negotiations were still in progress; but the matter lingered on during the summer without decisive action, Harcourt still pressing Ministers privately for the acceptance of the Olney proposals. By August there was an approximation to agreement and on the day of the prorogation of Parliament (August 14) the following arranged answer was made to Harcourt by Mr. Balfour:

The latest proposals of Mr. Olney are still under consideration by the Government and are regarded by them as opening a way to an equitable settlement. The Government have every expectation that the pending negotiations will lead to an early and satisfactory result.

Writing to Mr. Morley (August 16), Harcourt said:

Harcourt to Mr. Morley.

... I got what I conceived perfectly satisfactory assurances from Pauncefote on Venezuela. He considered himself instructed to accept the Olney proviso as to settled districts, which he considered would conclude the matter.

At the rising of the African Committee Joe said to me avec intention, "I am going to America on the 26th and shall see Olney. I shall be peaceable." I hope that may be true, but je m’en doute. He has been throughout the Spanish fly in the pot of ointment. I learned from Pauncefote that he was much annoyed that he (P.)
had seen me before he had interviewed him (C.). So like his petty jealousy—a vice which is the bane of public as well as private life.

The question and answer in the House of Commons brought Harcourt a letter from Henry White, who had been on a special embassy to England, and who was then at Newport, Rhode Island. He said that Olney had heard nothing to indicate a nearer approach to an understanding; but he (White) thought that the incident in the House meant that Harcourt had received from Mr. Balfour more private and definite explanations than had been thought wise to make public. Harcourt replied:

Harcourt to Hon. Henry White.

WIESBADEN, September 6, 1896.—I made it quite clear to the Government that unless I received satisfactory assurances that the "settled districts" question would be immediately settled substantially on the footing of Olney's despatch of June 12th (i.e. by acceptance of the proviso that the settled districts and their equities should be left to the decision of the arbitrators) I should bring on a discussion in the House of Commons. I waited to see Pauncefoote, who arrived shortly before the prorogation, and I had several conferences with Balfour and Pauncefoote. The latter is extremely reasonable and anxious for a settlement on the basis you and I

1 It is to this interview, I assume, that the following memorandum of the late Lord Harcourt refers:

In the spring and summer of 1896 W. V. H. was greatly concerned at the dangers which he foresaw between Great Britain and the United States over the Venezuelan question. He constantly pressed for a definite agreement to submit the dispute to arbitration.

He was then living at his sister-in-law's house, 32, St. George's Road, Eccleston Square, and one day Sir J. Pauncefoote, the British Minister to U.S.A., arrived there to see him, saying, "I have come to see you, Sir William, about Venezuela." W. V. H. interrupted him saying, "Do you think that is wise? My attitude on the subject is well known, and if you come to me it may embarrass you in your communications with the Prime Minister (Lord Salisbury).

Pauncefoote replied, "Sir William, I come to you with Lord Salisbury's knowledge and at his suggestion in order that you shall suggest the terms in which the decision shall be announced to refer the Venezuelan difficulty to arbitration."

W. V. H. said to his son, who was present, "Sit down and write this," and proceeded to dictate a form of words which, after some slight corrections, was taken away by Pauncefoote to Lord Salisbury at the Foreign Office.
desire. And I finally received assurances which to me were quite satisfactory, and Pauncefoite informed me that he had received instructions which he had no doubt would lead at once to a final and conclusive arrangement. I hope by this time he has returned to Washington, and that everything is en train as we should desire. On receiving their assurances Balfour and I agreed upon the question and answer as reported, which was thought to be more discreet than the chances of debate, when it is always more difficult for a Government to yield to an Opposition. I have no doubt that there will be a desire to get some concession which may make it easier for Salisbury to withdraw from the position he had taken up. And I hope you will use your influence with Olney to smooth the way to climbing down—now that the substance is conceded. I am sure that Pauncefoite is as convinced as I am of the reasonableness of Olney's proposal and will do all he can to put it through.

Chamberlain is by this time in the U.S., and he told me he should see Olney but that he should be "very peaceable." I hope he may be as good as his word. I shall be very glad if you will let me know what passes between Olney, Pauncefoite and Chamberlain, and if the thing still sticks I will give it another shove.

White sent Harcourt favourable accounts of Chamberlain's attitude in America, and by October all tension was removed. Writing to Chamberlain on his return, Harcourt said, in the course of a letter mainly dealing with the approaching Raid inquiry:

_Harcourt to Chamberlain._

MALWOOD, LYNDHURST, November 17, 1896.—I am glad to hear from those who have seen you that you have returned from the U.S. in a high state of preservation. We semi-Americans have much reason to rejoice over the defeat of Bryan, and your "sound money" democrat wife and my republican wife may embrace one another like Mercy and Truth. It is not however satisfactory to think that such a programme should have collected so many votes.

I congratulate you on the satisfactory conclusion of the Venezuela business, and am not disposed to criticize too narrowly (which from a party point of view would not be difficult) the difference between Salisbury in November 1895 and 1896. As you know I have been too anxious for a settlement to carp at the methods by which it has been reached. I know from my American informants how much you personally contributed to the satisfactory solution. I expect the fifty years will really give the old Schomberg line, which I have always thought was the natural settlement, as I expect there will be little found westward of that line.

I was very glad to see that you trampled on that absurd scare about the ruin of our trade by German competition. I had last
August obtained a good deal of information from Giffen which I had intended to use, but your statement *ex cathedra* is conclusive. The catchpenny bosh "made in Germany" is all bosh, as I learned this autumn from our Consul at Frankfort.

At last our sagacious friends, H. Chaplin and H. Vincent, seem likely to attain the great panacea of dear food, but I do not find that the consumers are delighted with an increase of 50 per cent. on the quartern loaf.

When in the Queen's Speech in the following January the Government were not only able to announce the settlement of the Venezuelan difficulty, but the conclusion of a general treaty of arbitration with the United States, Harcourt congratulated the Government on the conclusion of a difference fraught with danger to the English-speaking peoples. He said that the Opposition had done nothing to hinder the Government in finding a peaceful solution—a claim which Mr. Balfour handsomely acknowledged—and paid a deserved tribute to Pauncefote for his labours in the cause of peace. "Good words from such a quarter," wrote Pauncefote from Washington (February 16, 1897), "make a lasting impression on the public mind, and can never be forgotten by me."

Before turning to the issue which led up to the resignation of Lord Rosebery, it may be well to glance briefly at the general activities of the Session and Harcourt's part in them. The principal measures of the Government were the Gorst Education Bill and Mr. Chaplin's Agricultural Rating Bill. Both measures were regarded by the Liberals as bribes to the factional interests of the Conservatives, the main purpose of the one being the further relief of the voluntary schools and the "unification" of education, which aimed at the subversion of the school-board system, and the purpose of the other being the relief of the agricultural interest at the expense of the urban tax-payer. Harcourt in a speech at Bournemouth (March 11) said that if it was now intended to upset the education settlement of 1870 the Liberal Party would fight to the death. Since
in 1870 the Government contribution to the voluntary schools had risen from thirty-eight to seventy-four per cent., and if further assistance was to be given to them the principle of representation in the management must be introduced. At Trefedgar on May 13 he developed his theme, and denounced the ecclesiastical motive behind the scheme. For twenty-five years, he said, the schools of the country had been free from the odium theologicum. All these theological hatreds came soon enough. Why anticipate them by a day? The opposition he led to the measure in the House was so formidable that by the middle of June the Bill was on the rocks, and Harcourt was writing daily to his wife of the brave doings in the House where they were harpooning the "stranded whale." "The Lord hath delivered them into our hands," he said (June 16), "I have never known a Government so soon and so completely discredited. The chariot wheel will drag heavily, and the horse and his rider will be cast into the sea." "We are doing splendidly," was the report two days later. "No one who does not see it can form an idea of the prostration of the Unionists. The anger and disgust of the Party with the Government is growing so strong that I greatly fear that they may even yet be drawn into an autumn Session, or a protracted sitting to pass the Bill." But the fear was groundless. The Bill had few friends even among the faction it was intended to placate, and it was jettisoned. The first attempt to disestablish the school boards and to undo the work of 1870 had failed ignominiously.

But while the Education Bill was, in Harcourt's phrase, "buried in the bog of Hansard," the Agricultural Rating Bill, popularly called the Rent Relief Bill, survived. The purpose of the Bill was to relieve the rates on agricultural land to the extent of £1,500,000 out of the Exchequer. Land was to be assessed on half its rateable value, while houses and buildings would continue to be rated on the whole of their rateable value. Harcourt denounced the scheme as having "its origin in the same spirit as inspired
the Corn Laws." It pretended to be a relief for the tenant, but its real purpose was to provide a dole for the lan\downe:. In an address at Newport on May 15 he asked, "Why does not the land of the ground-landlords contribute? When this cry of injustice to land is set up I sometimes think how foolish these landlords are in raising questions which, when they come to be solved, will have a solution which will not be agreeable or advantageous to themselves." The Bill was fought with great intensity in Committee, and Harcourt assailed it not only in Parliament, but in the Press. On the report stage (June 24) he declared that the Bill used public money as a gift to the owners of land under the pre-text that it was for the relief of the tenants, and on the third reading he produced with crushing effect a circular addressed by a Welsh landowner to his tenants stating that the Bill would amount to the same thing as the landlord’s reduction of eight per cent. of the rent. "I am happy," he said, referring to the now defunct Education Bill, "that it should receive Christian burial"—but this Bill had no euthanasia. "It will have a wider circulation in the demand notes of the rate-collectors." No measure passed in our time created such deep resentment in the public mind as this daring raid on the public purse in the interests of a class, and the anger was deepened by the action of Mr. Chaplin and Mr. Balfour, who, unable to meet the overwhelming tide of criticism, forced it through the House with the closure. "There is something indecent," said the Saturday Review, "in the frantic hurry with which a party votes public money in relief of the pockets of its own supporters."

A domestic storm arose in the Liberal household during the Session in regard to the relations of the National Liberal Federation and the Liberal Central Office, that is, the Whips’ office. Since the establishment of the "Caucus" by Chamberlain there had always been a certain suspicion on the part of some of the Liberal leaders in Parliament of the democratic body outside. It had been one of Hartington’s chief grievances against Chamberlain that he had organized
an outside power with which to dominate the parliamentary situation. In the matter of policy there were two kings in the field. The Federation propounded programmes in the country, and the Liberal leaders had either to accept them or seem to fall foul of their organized supporters. With the disruption of the Party after the introduction of Home Rule, especially the unhappy experience of the Newcastle programme and the incident of the leadership, the relations of the Whips’ office and the Federation became strained. Hitherto they had worked under one roof, but the Federation now proposed to work in a separate building, and through a separate staff. At a meeting at Huddersfield in March the Federation had passed a resolution in support of Lord Rosebery, who, however, defended the union of the two bodies under a single secretary. When later in the year, after Lord Rosebery had resigned the leadership of the Party, a request was made to Harcourt by the Federation to address the annual meeting, Harcourt, who feared that the Federation might commit the Front Bench to another Newcastle programme, was indisposed to accept. Writing to Mr. Morley with reference to the request of Mr. (Sir) R. A. Hudson, the Secretary of the Federation, he said:

_Harcourt to Mr. Morley._

November 16.— . . . He is unable to state what is the programme to which the Federation is about to pledge itself, nor can he state in what relation the Federation and the Front Bench are to regard one another.

This is a point which you will remember we have more than once discussed in connection with the Maden correspondence in the spring and the demand for the separation of the Whips’ office and the Federation.

The Federation claim to be independent of Parliament, and we profess to be independent of them.

The situation has always seemed to me absurd, that we should leave the Federation to formulate a creed and then go down (as at Newcastle) to swear to all its articles. Either the Front Bench are to influence their policy which they disavow, or we are to conform to all that they do.

In the present juncture it seems to me not at all expedient that we should ventilate on our responsibility an “authorized
programme." But if we go to bless them we shall necessarily appear to endorse what they may think fit to proclaim.

Mr. Morley, after consulting Mr. Asquith, wrote urging Harcourt to accept on the ground that they could not let the Federation die, and that if the leading men dropped away, "the hot-heads and the geese" would run away with it and discredit the Party with the public. He was against repeating "the performance of Mr. G. at Newcastle," but it was perfectly possible for Harcourt "to take up the position that their resolutions, programmes, etc., were interesting and important indications of the aims and objects that such a representative body thought desirable, but of course their order, and the proper moment for pushing them into the line of parliamentary or legislative action, depended on circumstances and they could not look to you now either to make this choice or to promise direct adhesion to every item." Harcourt replied:

Harcourt to Mr. Morley.

MALWOOD, November 20, 1896.—As you have converted Asquith I suppose I shall have to go multum relucante.

Meanwhile it is such delicious weather for autumn planting that I think of nothing else.

Balfour seems to have made a moderately sensible speech at Sheffield and to have discovered that exports are paid for by imports, and that it is a good thing for your customers to be well off—which is really satisfactory in a bimetallist. I am collecting some materials to explode the "made in Germany" scare which is of all nonsenses the most nonsensical.

His "autumn planting" was mixed with other activities besides the collection of trade statistics. He was at the same time carrying on a voluminous correspondence with Mr. Morley on the subject of Irish taxation. The report of the Childers Commission on Irish Financial Relations had revealed a gross excess of taxation in the case of Ireland, showed that identical rates of taxation did not mean equality of burden, and that the actual tax revenue of Ireland was one-eleventh of that of Great Britain, whereas it ought to be one-twentieth, and insisted that for the purpose of taxation Great Britain and Ireland should be treated as separate
entities. Harcourt, who fully endorsed the report and insisted that the subject ought to be dealt with on its merits apart from Home Rule, furnished Mr. Morley, who was conducting the controversy in public, with ammunition from his abundant historical and statistical resources. His general conclusion was “that there is and always has been a continuing right to revision of the terms according to the circumstances of Ireland,” “that the pledge of the Union has been consistently violated and that financially all the benefit has gone to the richer and the disadvantage to the poorer country,” and “that at present they (the Irish) are overtaxed to the amount of £2,000,000.” In showing that equality of taxation did not necessarily involve equality of burden, he said:

Harcourt to Mr. Morley.

December 19, 1896.—. . . The only plausible ground which can be taken is the excess expenditure in Ireland. But though the taxation was expressed in the Treaty of Union as governed by taxable capacity and provision made for “exceptions and abatements” there was nothing said about proportion of expenditure. The case is something like this. A man who lives at the rate of £5,000 per ann. invites a friend to come to live with him as a companion and makes him free of his house, but the friend says, “I have only £300 per ann. which I can pay you for my keep.” Presently the first gentleman increases his expenditure to £10,000 per ann. He says to his friend, “You get the benefit of my more costly expenditure. When I drink champagne you drink it too. I give you electric light, more carriages, more servants, more everything, you ought to pay me £600 per ann.” The poor man replies, “I cannot afford more than £300. I am not richer than I was before. The increase of expenditure is your doing not mine. I have had nothing to say to the management.”

The question was much debated in the country at the beginning of 1897, but it did not come before Parliament until the following year.

The controversies of public life never embittered Harcourt’s private friendships, and though the Session had been sternly fought it was marked by many friendly incidents in the relations of Harcourt and his opponents. He was
peculiarly sensible of the loyalty and respect with which Hicks-Beach had preserved the principles of the great Budget of 1894 in his own financial arrangements, and in a speech at Holloway (July 7) he prefaced an attack on the proceedings of Mr. Balfour with the following compliment:

... We respect Mr. Balfour's ability, and we appreciate and reciprocate his courtesy, and it will be an ill day for the House of Commons when those engaged in the honourable contests of parliamentary conflict are incapable of mutual regard and that delight

"In the stern joy that warriors feel
In foemen worthy of their steel."

His merciless handling of Mr. Chaplin during the passage of the Agricultural Rating Act did not interrupt his jovial relations with his rival heavy-weight with whom, as the Journal shows, he kept up a comparison of magnitudes. Mr. Chaplin about this time succeeded in bringing down his weight from eighteen stones to sixteen—and Harcourt, who had always prided himself on being a stone lighter than his rival, went into training, gave up milk, sugar, bread and other fattening foods, and brought his own weight down substantially. Finally the two agreed to a "compromise" by which they were each to remain as near sixteen and a half stones as possible, and ignore the caricaturists, who, as Mr. Chaplin complained, always made him appear the fatter no matter what weight he took off.

His oldest surviving friendship, that with James, remained unbroken, and writing to him at the end of the year James said:

... It has not been an eventful year to me, but it has to you. Your leadership of Opposition has done more for your reputation than any other period of your life. I shall say somewhere that you fought your battles of 1896 just as Napoleon conducted the campaign of 1814—outnumbered and unassisted—the most brilliant display of generalship. I shall not work out the simile—lest Longwood and Malwood should get mixed—but before that retreat is sought you will have a long 100 days...

"There is nothing in the world like old friends and old wine, and you are my choicest bin," replied Harcourt. "You are very kind in all you say about last Session and my part
in it, but it was the bitter bad bowling that enabled one to score.

Another friendship, no less cherished, had ended with death during the year. Writing to his son (June 16) he said:

... I had a letter from Everett Millais yesterday asking me to go to see his poor father [J. E. Millais] who had expressed a wish to see me. I went at 6 p.m. Lady M. saw me first and was deeply moved. She begged me not to seem too shocked or depressed at the sight of him. I found the poor dear fellow (once so strong and gay) propped up in his chair with white beard and moustache, quite unable to utter. He kissed my hands over and over again, and wrote on a slate that "I was the friend he loved best, and he followed in the paper my gallant fighting." He also wrote sending his love to you. I spoke to him cheerfully about old times which pleased him, though he cried a good deal. It was terribly painful, but I am glad I went, and shall go again.

With Gladstone he continued in occasional correspondence, and no events in the domestic life of the Queen failed to evoke from him a letter of congratulation or condolence. Replying to his congratulations on the achievements of the longest reign in history, the Queen wrote:

Queen Victoria to Harcourt.

Balmoral, October 2.—... Alas! within the last nine years and a half the Queen has had great sorrows. She has lost three dearly beloved sons-in-law and a dear grandson, all in the prime of life—besides very many kind devoted friends who were with her in '87. It is, however, a source of great pleasure to the Queen to have her beloved granddaughter the Empress of Russia—more lovely than ever, and as simple and unaffected as she was before, as well as her charming husband, who is equally nice. He is most amiable, and of a singularly open and straightforward character. ...
CHAPTER XXI

LORD ROSEBERY'S RESIGNATION

The Armenian infamy—Advance on the Nile—British responsibilities under the Cyprus Convention—Harcourt at Ebbw Vale—Gladstone intervenes—Lord Rosebery's letter of resignation—Harcourt declines to be drawn into leadership discussions—De jure leader a question for the future.

MEANWHILE the volcano that raged within the Liberal Party had burst once more into violent eruption. On October 8 the country was startled by the publication of a letter addressed by Lord Rosebery to T. E. Ellis, the Chief Whip of the Liberals, announcing that "the leadership of the Party, so far as I am concerned, is vacant and that I resume my liberty of action." The letter followed upon the speech of Gladstone at Liverpool on the Armenian massacres, and was directly related to that incident. It is probable that Armenia and the Gladstone speech were the occasion rather than the cause of the resignation. Gladstone's moral authority in the country was still unrivalled, and the rank and file of the Party accepted any utterance from him with a reverence that was conceded to no other public man. But he had now ceased to play an active part in affairs. He was in his eighty-seventh year, his parliamentary career was done, and the speech at Liverpool proved in fact to be the last occasion on which his voice was heard in public. So far as the active leaders of the Party were concerned, there was no such disagreement between them and Lord Rosebery on the subject of Armenia as justified the resignation. The question was one of extreme difficulty and perplexity, and, profound as was the sense of horror awakened by the
massacres, it is impossible to discover in any quarter a clear line of attack on the Government policy which created a sharp and decisive cleavage within the Liberal ranks.

The Armenian situation had, it is true, grown desperately worse. The Sultan, encouraged as usual by the dissensions and jealousies among the Great Powers, had given unprecedented license to the forces of terrorism. The massacres in the province of Sasun in the late summer of 1894 were followed by vain protests from the Powers, and on the last day of September 1895 an Armenian demonstration in Constantinople was made the excuse of further massacres, the hideous record culminating in the November massacre in the province of Van, described by Lord Salisbury himself as comparable only to the slaughter under Tamerlane and Ghenghiz Khan. Public opinion was deeply moved by this succession of infamies, and it was urged that the British Government was bound to take all steps, even at the risk of war, to protect the Christian population of Asia Minor. Salisbury, however, denied that Great Britain was pledged to war. All that was provided by the Berlin Treaty was that the Powers agreed that if the Sultan promulgated certain reforms they should watch over their execution. Nor did the Cyprus Convention involve the physical interference of Great Britain for the protection of the Christians of Asia Minor. Harcourt, in the debate on the Address, attributed the immunity of the Sultan to the fatal interference with the Treaty of San Stefano, and to the traditional hostility to Russia, but he was no more disposed than the Government to plunge into war, and was privately alarmed at the attitude of Bryce, who was in favour of independent action, with the permission of Russia and France.

The question of dealing with Turkey in regard to the atrocities became complicated at this time by the decision of the Government to advance up the Nile Valley to Dongola to check the growing power of the Mahdi. Harcourt resisted this new phase of the eternal problem of Egypt. He reminded the House that a convention had been drawn
up by the former Salisbury Government which would have arranged for the evacuation of Egypt six years before. "The policy of H.M.'s Government means," he said, "that we are entering on a long and uncertain future. We are lifting up our anchor on a perilous shore, not knowing where we are going to drift." And speaking at the National Liberal Club on May 5, he said:

. . . I am a little suspicious of these ideal wars. The ideals come from our idealist Colonial Secretary. His ideal is the conquest of the Sudan. Are they going to conquer the Sudan? Not at all. "We are going as far as we can, limited by the resistance we shall meet." What a policy for a great country! Why that is the spirit of Bob Acres or of Sir Andrew Aguecheek. You remember what Sir Andrew Aguecheek said when the duel was about to come off? He said, "Plague on't; an I thought he had been valiant, and so cunning in fence, I'd have seen him hanged ere I'd have challenged him. Let him let the matter slip, and I'll give him my horse, gray Capilet."

With this new enterprise to engage public attention, the question of Armenia subsided, but it blazed up again as the result of a terrible massacre in Constantinople under the eyes of the European ambassadors, and of a new outbreak of outrage in Anatolia. The public indignation at the continuance of the iniquities and at the helplessness of the Government in their presence was strongly expressed by Mr. Asquith, who proposed to suspend diplomatic relations with Turkey; but Lord Rosebery's speeches and letters failed to satisfy the demands of the Party, and one of his most powerful supporters in the Press, the Daily Chronicle, turned on him as the "veiled prophet." "I suppose you see the Daily Chronicle," wrote Harcourt to Lewis Harcourt. "Their rage with Rosebery is amusing. Asquith's proposal to suspend diplomatic relations is idle. It would leave the other Powers in sole command of Constantinople which is what the English people most abhor. It is not Europe that is impotent: it is only England, because we have set all Europe against us by our Jingoism and 'Big Englandism,' and all the Powers continue with satisfaction to snub us. This is the text on which I shall
preach when I speak.” “It is no use shouting with the mob against the Sultan,” he wrote later (September 17). “In a few months the same mob will be shouting for him and against Russia.” He kept silence in public until October 5, when he addressed his constituents at Ebbw Vale. He recalled the past history of the Turkish question, and traced the misfortunes to our jealousy of Russia:

... Let us by all means strengthen the Government. But are we ready to strengthen them in the only policy that can really avail, and that is to come to an understanding with Russia on the Eastern question? And when I say the Eastern question, I mean the whole Eastern question—to come to an understanding with Russia as a friend, and not as an enemy, as an Asiatic neighbour, and not as an Asiatic foe? The first step in that direction would be to obliterate the Cyprus Convention, which is nothing else but a standing menace, a declaration of hostility and exclusion against Russia in the interest of Turkey. A formal denunciation of that instrument would be a signal repudiation before the world of our complicity in and our toleration of the crimes of Turkey. . . .

Referring to Salisbury’s declaration in the previous November that the Concert of Europe was complete and effectual, and the evidences since of its breakdown in the presence of the Armenian horrors, he dealt with the causes that underlay the hostility with which this country was regarded by foreign Powers:

... We desire the extension of our Empire, and we are much too apt to treat the same desire in other great States as if it were in fact an injury to ourselves; and thus all over the world one Jingo defies another, and the patriotic cock crows its challenge to its fellows. . . . That is the history of these unnatural, these unnecessary international suspicions, jealousies and dislikes.

Formal alliances were apt to break down under pressure, he explained, but what we needed was what used to be called an entente cordiale, a readiness for accommodation and amiability:

... We go (he said) through a succession of international scares, suspicions and dislikes. I have lived through a great many of them. They were all very senseless, very baseless and very mischievous. They have left the scars of international distrust and international hatred behind them. In the ’sixties France had great successes;
we alarmed ourselves at once that she was meditating an invasion of England; in the 'seventies Germany was in the ascendant; then none of us could sleep at night for fear of the Battle of Dürkheim. As long as I can remember we nursed the belief that the whole object of Russia was to possess herself of Hindustan. But if we approach the Great Powers in that spirit it is not likely that we shall make much of the Concert of Europe.

If we want to strengthen the hands of the Government let us give them an assurance that in cultivating the friendship of other Powers they will have the cordial and steadfast support of national sentiment. The first and practical measure for this purpose will be, in the first place, to divest ourselves of the protectorate of Turkey, in which we have been the leading actors in Europe; secondly, to disclaim hostility to Russia, which we have hitherto made the keystone of our Eastern policy. The old policy has brought us no honour. It has landed us to-day in a great shame. It would be a new policy, but it is one which would deliver England from a reproach which has so long attached to her of being, for selfish, and, I believe, for mistaken ends, the prop, the mainstay, and the sponsor of a Power which is the scandal of Europe and the scourge of Asia.

In all this there was no disposition to force the hand of the Government. Harcourt, like Lord Rosebery himself, was not prepared to urge action which might land Europe in war. But on September 24 Gladstone intervened with the address at Liverpool on the infamy of the Turk. He urged independent action on the part of England, and denied that it would involve a European war. Under the Anglo-Turkish Convention of 1878 we undoubtedly had the right to threaten Turkey with coercion in the absence of decent government in Asia Minor. We could withdraw our countenance by recalling our Ambassador, and he insisted that we should make our protest, even if we had to recede before the possible threat of European war.

The speech had a sensational sequel. On October 8 Lord Rosebery wrote the letter to the Chief Whip of the Party announcing his resignation of the leadership on the ground that he found himself "in apparent difference with a considerable mass of the Liberal Party on the Eastern question, and in some conflict with Mr. Gladstone himself." The next day he spoke at Edinburgh, and, while denouncing the atrocities which had for two years been committed in
Asia Minor "while the Powers look on and fly little diplomatic kites," he declared absolutely against single-handed intervention. "A European war," he said, "would be a scene of universal carnage and ruin, preceded or accompanied by the extermination of the Armenians." But that his resignation had a wider meaning than disagreement on the Turkish question—which did not apply to the Cabinet—he took pains to make clear. Speaking on the personal difficulties of his position, he said:

... Well, a man in that position [that of a peer Prime Minister] has no chance of succeeding in the leadership of the Liberal Party unless he receive very exceptional support, very exceptional loyalty, and very exceptional co-operation from the Party inside and outside Parliament to make up for his own inherent deficiencies. Perhaps I had no right to expect any such exceptional measure to be dealt out to me, but, at any rate, I cannot say that I received it—rather was my being a peer, which was to some extent the reason, as I have explained, of my impotence, urged as a reason for further hampering my efforts.

And he proceeded to instance as proofs of his grievances that his Government was defeated two days after the meeting of Parliament, and the failure to adopt the policy of concentration at the General Election as he had wished. Gladstone had unconsciously been the last straw to an accumulating burden of complaint. It was singular that Lord Rosebery should have selected the defeat on the Address as one of the grounds of dissatisfaction, inasmuch as at the time of that defeat he had himself taken the general view that it was a retaliation on him by the disaffected elements, which had been irritated by his "predominant partner" speech on the previous day.

II

The resignation created unparalleled ferment. It was wholly unexpected and in the moment chosen not very intelligible. Harcourt himself assumed an attitude of detachment from the rumpus. Writing to the Lord Chief Justice (Russell), he said (October 13):

VOL. II.
You find us here in the midst of a very unintelligible perturbation owing to Rosebery's resignation, the cause and object of which I am wholly at a loss to understand. I hate all rows and most of all personal rows and keep myself snug in my garden, which is a much more enjoyable occupation than politics. I always think what a wise man Reynolds was who—

"When they talked of their Raphaels, Correggios and stuff
He shifted his trumpet and only took snuff."

I should like a pinch out of your box.

In a letter to Mr. Morley dealing with Irish finance he said:

_Harcourt to Mr. Morley._

MALWOOD, October 26, 1896.—I have been sitting in the safe retreat of Malwood contemplating with equanimity what is called a "crisis." For my part I really do not see what is changed except that "there is a Liberal the less."

Of course the reasons given by Rosebery for bolting are not the true ones. It was neither Mr. G. nor our humble selves his colleagues. I believe he funked the future which he saw before him—that he felt called upon to say something on politics in general and give a lead, and that he did not know what to say and so took up his hat and departed.

What I think we have to complain of is that he has deliberately led the public to believe that we—and I especially—refused to consult with him when as he knows and we know the refusal came from him and was persisted in against our remonstrances. That being so we had to do without him—and we did pretty well. This will have to be known one day, and I am waiting for the proper moment to let it be known. When the public see his letter to Spencer of last August they will be a little surprised.

In the meanwhile I have thought it best to sit still and to disregard all the _cancans_ of the Press—barring forged letters.¹

One advantage of the situation is that I feel altogether absolved from speechification. I have happily discharged my double barrel to my constituents, which is all that is obligatory. I suspect Rosebery must have been surprised—perhaps disgusted—that he could find nothing in what I said on Armenia from which he could dissent.

You will see that the old grievance about "concentration" is revived. What does this gospel mean? Is it intended that we are to declare that everything except the House of Lords is thrown over. If that is the intention it is one in which I think none of us have ever concurred. .

¹ Harcourt had just been made the victim of some forged letters in the Press.
In the course of a reply to this letter, Mr. Morley remarked (October 29):

. . . I went to Paris a week ago. On my first morning I walked into a bookshop, and lo, who should be there but Rosebery himself!! We sauntered away together, and gossiped about everything but his own proceedings—books, history, some of the péripéties of Home Rule in '86. He knows how I feel about it—and nothing was to be gained for either of us by spoiling the first morning of holiday. So we went to the Conciergerie, and saw the dungeon of Marie Antoinette and the Girondins. I fancy he left Paris for home on Monday. Of the political future not a word. . . .

I envy you for having shot your bolt. I have now to go to my constituents and to Glasgow. It will not be an easy task for me. It would be easy enough, if one could permit oneself to follow Rosebery's shocking example and hold up colleagues to the public censure. If his letter of last August were known, it would put a very different complexion on things. . . .

Meanwhile the rupture and its consequences filled the Press and the public places with agitated discussion. The Radical view of the position was expressed by the Star, which said: "Lord Rosebery has resigned, and Sir William Harcourt reigns in his stead. We say reigns, for he has ruled during the whole duration of Lord Rosebery's titular sovereignty. Lord Rosebery's decision only regularizes the situation." There was an immediate movement among the Liberals in the House of Commons who had been hurt at Lord Rosebery's choice as leader to demonstrate in favour of Harcourt, and Labouchere, as usual, took the lead. Harcourt dissented. "As to your reply to Labby," he wrote to his son, "I think that it is somewhat too snobby. If you want to manage people you must pretend to believe in them whether you do or not." But he would have no absurdity like a House of Commons resolution. From the rank and file he received abundant assurance of goodwill, not the least gratifying being a letter from the veteran Labour leader, George Howell, who, speaking of the "miserable intriguing in the House and out of it to keep you out of the leadership when Mr. Gladstone resigned," said (October 8):
George Howell to Harcourt.

... Perhaps you know all about it, perhaps you do not. But we were canvassed in the House pretty closely as to a successor before Mr. Gladstone's resignation became a fact; before its contemplation, so far as I am aware. I was canvassed and this is what happened. I said, rather bluntly and uncivilly you will probably say, "What the devil do you mean? "Is Mr. Gladstone dead, or dying?" "No, but we must be prepared for emergencies." "Well," I said, "in that event we cannot go to the House of Lords for a leader; he must be in the Commons." "But it is Mr. Gladstone's wish." I replied, "When Mr. Gladstone fails to lead we must choose our leader, not have him thrust upon us." What made me uncivil and brusque was that this kind of thing was going on around me. ...

Perhaps the cheers at the Foreign Office reassured you somewhat. They were intended to do so. I may never see the inside of the House again, and therefore the leadership may not be of so much consequence to me personally. But I have known you, Sir William, longer than most men, ever since you rendered such distinguished services to the cause of America in her Civil War, in which I was a humble worker on the side of the North, and I remember also your help in the cause of Labour, when helpers were few, from about 1872 and especially in 1873. ...

It seemed on the face of things that the resignation had left the path clear to Harcourt. Lord Rosebery had reverted to the position which he had so often assumed—in Mr. Morley's phrase, "a dark horse in a loose box"—and there was no other obvious competitor to Harcourt, whose achievements in the past two Sessions had raised his parliamentary prestige to a level little below that which Gladstone had enjoyed. But the rupture in the Party, so far from being healed by the resignation, seemed widened and embittered, and men were now definitely catalogued as being on "Harcourt's side" or "Rosebery's side," as the case might be. Mr. Morley went to Glasgow on November 6, and mingled praises of Lord Rosebery—"that eminent man, of so many brilliant gifts and talents"—with criticism of his action. But he would not enter on the question of succession. It was enough for the present to say that Sir William Harcourt led them in the House of Commons in a way that extorted universal admiration.
And speaking at Blyth a little later, Sir Edward Grey said that the Liberal leadership would have to remain vacant for the present, as there was no one who could be chosen leader so unanimously that he could command the position. In the Liberal Press the general current of opinion was still in favour of Lord Rosebery. He had resigned, but his friends had determined that no one should succeed him and that the place should remain open for the time when the dark horse should emerge once more from the loose box.

It was no longer a personal issue. The fissure in the Liberal ranks on the subject of Imperialism was steadily widening, and Harcourt and Lord Rosebery represented the opposed schools of thought. There was a rather hare-brained proposal that Gladstone should be induced to return to Parliament temporarily to tide over the trouble, and in some quarters Mr. Asquith was discussed as an alternative. He was supposed to have leanings, like Sir Edward Grey, to the Rosebery camp, but Harcourt did not share the attitude towards him which some of his supporters held. Writing to Mr. Morley, he said:

Harcourt to Mr. Morley.

MALWOOD, November 4.—Many thanks for your friendly letter. Every effort has been made by the mischief-makers to cause ill blood between me and Asquith, but I have steadily refused to listen to them. I have had every reason to rely on his good faith and good will, and never allow myself to be influenced by gossip. No one has more reason than I have to value and be grateful for the constant support I received from all my colleagues last Session, and I hope they had no reason to complain of want of "explicit" confidence on my side.

The controversy between the factions went on in the Press for some months, but Harcourt remained silent. He realized that it was an idle discussion that events alone would settle. There was in fact no precedent for the election of a leader of the Party as a whole, as distinguished from the leader of the Party in the House of Commons. Lord Rosebery himself had never been elected leader by
the Party, and he held that nominal position simply in virtue of the fact that he had been Prime Minister, a position which he had reached without the Liberal Party; either in the House of Commons or in the country, being consulted in the remotest way. In these circumstances the "resignation" had little practical importance other than as a declaration that in the future the Party must make a choice between Lord Rosebery and Harcourt. It could have one or the other, but it could not have both. Which it would choose was a question that could only arise in a concrete shape when a Liberal victory made the formation of a new Government necessary. In the meantime Harcourt was leader of the Party in the House of Commons, and therefore the de facto leader of the Party generally. The leadership de jure was a matter for the future, and Harcourt, immersed in the question of Irish finance and the procedure of the approaching Commission on the Jameson Raid, remained indifferent to a discussion as irrelevant as it was angry. "The idiots in the Press," he wrote to Mr. Morley (October 30), "seem to think every one is ready to cut one another's throat in order to become 'Leader of the Liberal Party.' For my part, if I did not think it currious to bolt in the presence of difficulties, I should take up my hat and say good-bye."
CHAPTER XXII
THE RAID INQUIRY

Harcourt’s examination of Rhodes—Colonial Office ignorant—
Harcourt assured that Chamberlain was in no way privy to the
Raid—Reasons for failing to pursue the inquiry—Condem-
nation of Cecil Rhodes—Defends Chamberlain in the House—
Distrust of Chamberlain’s African policy—Chamberlain’s praise
of Rhodes—Government Education Bill—A recantation by
Lord Salisbury—Impotence of the Concert of Europe—The
Cretan Revolt—“Splendid Isolation”—The Diamond Jubilee
—Stiff Words with Chamberlain—Arnold-Forster’s Army
reforms.

It will not be necessary to tell again the story of the
South African Committee. It is a matter of history
and all that concerns us here is Harcourt’s part in
it and the controversies springing from it in which he was
involved. That he went into it determined to probe the
squalid story of the Raid to the bottom and to disclose
the truth whatever it was and whomsoever it implicated
is beyond doubt. Writing to Mr. Morley on November 18,
1896, he said, “I don’t believe the stories of Joe’s com-
plicity. If they were true he would not have been so prompt
in his measures. He might easily have given Jameson
forty-eight hours’ lead with the hope he might succeed, as
Rhodes did. Anyhow I will take care that the whole story
comes out—without fear or favour.” That was the frame
of mind in which he approached the task. But the course
of the inquiry, the license allowed to witnesses to refuse
information, and the general sense of undisclosed facts
which remained at the end created a widespread belief
that the Commission had shrunk from bringing the ultimate
truth to light, and that Harcourt himself had been overawed
by the danger of pressing too far for disclosures which would have imperilled national interests.¹

The Committee met in Westminster Hall for the first time on February 16, and continued its sittings until the issue of its report in the following July. Throughout the examination of witnesses, Harcourt played the part of examiner-in-chief, and his method during the prolonged inquiry may be indicated by a contemporary description (Yorkshire Daily Post, February 17, 1897) of his duel with Rhodes himself:

... The task done, Sir William Harcourt, who had come fortified with a small cart-load of Blue Books and documents, which he had ostentatiously arrayed on the table before him, took the witness at once in hand. His tones were mild and courteous, and his manner almost deferential; but it was soon made clear that a deadly purpose lurked behind his elaborate politeness. He took the witness at once to the financing of the Raid, putting some pointed questions with reference to the payments made from the Chartered Company's funds in the weeks immediately preceding Dr. Jameson's adventure. Mr. Rhodes showed a manifest reluctance to give the information sought. He fenced with the questions, professed ignorance of the subject owing to his absence from Cape Town, and gave generally evasive answers to all questions on points of detail. Meanwhile his demeanour plainly showed that he was becoming extremely irritated at the line of cross-examination. His face, already flushed, became redder than ever, his brow contracted, and he shifted rest-

¹ The judgment of contemporary opinion on the subject is indicated by the account of the inquiry given in the Annual Register, which says: The general feeling was that the proceedings had been conducted with singular laxity or want of skill. Those interested in keeping secret the true history of the Raid were entirely successful, and it was generally by the merest chance that any fact of importance was elicited from the witnesses. The representatives of the Opposition, Sir William Harcourt, Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman and Mr. Buxton, were, after Mr. Rhodes had been unaccountably permitted to quit England, willing to allow the breakdown of the proceedings; and what was even more surprising in so strict a parliamentarian as Sir William Harcourt, a witness was allowed to treat the Committee with defiance, and to pass unchecked. To a very great extent the inquiry had been obviously factitious, but in whose interest concealment was considered necessary remained undivulged. It was surmised that reasons of State had been found which outweighed party considerations, and that the leaders of the Opposition had been privately convinced that the alleged grounds were sufficient for the course adopted.
lessly in his chair, turning now to the one side and then to the other, and again throwing himself back with an air half-impatient, half-contemptuous. Sir William Harcourt, however, appeared to take no notice of these ebullitions. In his most dulcet tones he continued his merciless analysis of the events which occurred in connection with the preparations for the Raid. His next point related to the smuggling of arms into the Transvaal through the agency of the De Beers Company. His desire was to know who authorized the carrying out of these transactions, and he was so insistent that after some little ineffectual skirmishing the witness flatly declined to answer.

Not at all disturbed by Mr. Rhodes's attitude, the Opposition leader passed on to another and apparently equally distasteful branch of the cross-examination—that relating to the posting of troops on the Transvaal border. In his statement Mr. Rhodes spoke of his acting within his rights by doing this.

"Your rights?" asked Sir William. "What do you mean by your rights?" The witness was for a time conveniently deaf. The question was pressed, and after turning impatiently about in his chair, he blurted out—

"I know I have probably done wrong. Let us suppose another case. I find that a number of people are going to Crete, and tremendous support is given to the movement. I daresay that is exactly the same thing. I daresay it is wrong."

Having delivered himself of this tu quoque, Mr. Rhodes flung himself back in defiant fashion in his chair, as if inviting Sir William Harcourt to break a further lance with him on the point. The Opposition leader, however, was much too old a bird to be caught in this fashion, and he branched off to another matter. If Mr. Rhodes was acting within his rights why did he not inform the High Commissioner of his plans?

"You want an answer?" was the sharp reply. "Well, I think you had better get it from the High Commissioner."

The examination next turned on the immediate circumstances under which the Raid was conducted and the degree of responsibility which attached to Dr. Jameson for it. Again there were some sharp passages between the examiner and the witness. On one occasion Mr. Rhodes took exception to the description of the Johannesburg movement as a "manufactured revolution." "Well, we'll call it a subsidized revolution," observed Sir William imperturbably. In this way the duel was kept up, with occasional brief interludes of commonplace, until the end of the sitting was approaching. Then the Opposition leader sprang another mine upon his victim. In a certain telegram from Colonel Rhodes, dated December 21, the statement was made that "Chairman would not leave (for Johannesburg) unless invited." Sir William Harcourt wished to know whether "the Chairman" here referred to was not the High
Commissioner. Mr. Rhodes could not say, and did not know; and, finally, when further pressed, asked for time to consider his answer, giving as a reason that, absurd as it might seem, he had not read the book containing the correspondence which was quoted.

On the complicity of Rhodes and the officials of the Chartered Company there had been no shadow of doubt, but the evidence revealed the character of the conspiracy in elaborate detail. It originated, on Rhodes's own admission, from the determination of the "capitalists or those representing the mines" to upset the Kruger regime which had imposed charges on the mines that rendered the poorer reefs non-payable. Frank Rhodes, the brother of Cecil, was sent to Johannesburg to organize the agitation in the Transvaal, and Jameson was deputed to mobilize his men at Pitsani on the frontier to await the signal of the rising within. Abundant supplies of money were furnished through the Chartered Company and the De Beers Company, and arms were smuggled into Johannesburg during the summer and autumn. The date for the simultaneous action (December 28) had been fixed in a series of telegrams from Harris on behalf of Rhodes, but at the last moment a hitch occurred owing to the apparent indisposition of the general body of the Outlanders in Johannesburg to take an enthusiastic interest in the adventure, and Jameson himself sprang the mine of the 29th, the famous "women and children" telegram being post-dated for publication in London in order to give an air of chivalric glamour to the Raid. Rhodes disclaimed responsibility for the Raid on the ground that his telegram to Jameson on the 27th was intended to postpone the adventure. This disavowal gave rise to the following exchange between Harcourt and Rhodes. Harcourt quoted the telegram to Jameson on the 24th, "Company will be floated next Saturday 12 o'clock at night. They are very anxious you must not start before 8 o'clock and secure telegraph office silence. We suspect Transvaal is getting aware slightly."

Sir William Harcourt: That was an order, was it not, from you to Dr. Jameson to start on Saturday at 8 o'clock at night?—No. I
do not want to shirk any responsibility, but I do not think you will find any sense like that.

"Company is to be floated next Saturday." That is, you said, "Insurrection will take place on Saturday?"—Yes, but in subsequent telegrams to this you will see there was a change.

I want to get at this particular date. You informed Dr. Jameson that the Company would be floated—that is to say, the insurrection would take place—on Saturday at 12 o'clock at night.

Mr. Chamberlain: I understood Mr. Rhodes to say that he did not send that telegram.

Mr. Rhodes: Yes, it was sent by Harris. He will be able to give you the reason for it. I knew generally that he was sending telegrams, but I did not see them all.

Sir William Harcourt: You sent an order to Dr. Jameson to start at 8 o'clock?—I do not think you will find that. I think it was a prohibition.

Surely when you say to a man, "You must not start before 8 o'clock," you mean to say that he is to start afterwards?—Quite so. Dr. Jameson was very anxious to start, and if you take the whole tone of the telegrams of the last week, you will find they were really sent with the object of preventing him. You must read four or five other telegrams with the one you have read.

The words 'secure telegraph office silence' were an order to cut the telegraph wire?—No.

What does this mean—that Dr. Jameson was to secure the silence of the telegraph office?—I do not know what it means. It seems absurd, does it not?

It is not absurd, because it was the thing that was done. The reason you were not able to communicate on December 29 with Dr. Jameson was that the silence of the telegraph office had been secured?

So far as the directors of the Chartered Company were concerned, Rhodes generally denied that they knew of the projected action.

The main interest of the Inquiry turned upon the question of the complicity of the Government. It was clear that the High Commissioner was not in the secret, and that every precaution was taken to keep him in ignorance. When he inquired the meaning of the presence of Jameson's force at Pitsani, Rhodes told him it was for the protection of the railway, and with that he seems to have been satisfied. But two other officials, Sir Graham Bower and Newton, were in the confidence of the conspirators. There remained
the final question of the relation of Chamberlain and the Colonial Office to the affair. The failure of the Committee to insist on the production by Mr. Hawkesley, the Chartered Company's solicitor in London, of the copy of certain telegrams which were said to have been shown to Chamberlain created a bad impression on the public mind. But there were definite suggestions that Chamberlain was personally involved. One was contained in the message of Miss Flora Shaw of The Times to Rhodes in which she had said, "Chamberlain is sound in case of interference of foreign Powers, but have special reason to believe wishes you to do it immediately." But in examination she declared that "she never at any time gave the Colonial Office information about the plan," and "never at any time received any information from the Colonial Office about the plan." The more serious suggestion implicating Chamberlain was in the evidence of Dr. Rutherfoord Harris, the secretary of the Chartered Company, who described an interview with the Colonial Secretary in the autumn of 1895, in which "a guarded allusion" to "eventualities" in South Africa was made by Harris, whereupon Chamberlain "demurred to the turn the conversation had taken."

Upon this Chamberlain, who was a member of the Committee, seized the opportunity to go into the witness-box. He admitted that in the interview the possibility of a rising in Johannesburg, "a bloodless revolution," was mentioned by Harris. Then came the strangest incident in the singular conversation. "I remember," said Chamberlain, "a remark made by Dr. Harris in these words, 'I can tell you something in confidence.' . . . I stopped him at once, and said, 'I do not want to hear any confidential information. I am here in an official capacity, and I do not want any information of which I cannot make any official use.' " It was plain that he had reason to anticipate a revolution within the Transvaal and that he preferred not to know anything about it, but he denied emphatically "that he had the slightest suspicion of anything of the nature of a hostile armed invasion of the Transvaal."
In the light of these revelations Harcourt’s repeatedly expressed conviction that Chamberlain was free from complicity in the affair underwent a change.¹ He still believed that he was not privy to the Raid itself, but he could no longer doubt that he had knowledge of the general movement to bring about some disturbance in the Transvaal, and he was satisfied that his intentions were not to be trusted. His feeling found expression in Parliament at the time on the proposal in the Budget to allocate £200,000 for the garrison in South Africa. He declared (April 28) that the Government were adopting a policy in South Africa which was bound to lead to war. In every utterance of Chamberlain during the last few months he had been endeavouring “to exasperate sentiment in South Africa and to produce what, thank God, he had hitherto failed in producing—a racial war.” He had been defeated by the good sense and the good feeling of the people of Cape Colony. This outburst led to a bitter exchange of words between Chamberlain and Harcourt, Mr. Balfour intervening to assuage the anger. Writing to Mr. Morley a few days later, Harcourt said:

_Harcourt to Mr. Morley._

7, RICHMOND TERRACE, WHITEHALL, May 5, 1897.—There are two points on the Transvaal.

1. Whilst we are making this 6/8 lawyer’s letter list of dilapidation of the Convention, we all the time are the flagrant offenders; the principal mover in the conspiracy to overthrow the South African Government is still at large pursuing the same objects under Chamberlain’s patronage, and this capital offence against the Transvaal remains unpurg’d and unredressed.

¹ The following note by the late Lord Harcourt will indicate Harcourt’s final and private view on the subject:

I was present at all the meetings of the Jameson Raid Committee of the H. of C. as my father’s secretary _ad hoc._

I knew everything that passed at their private meetings and consultations at which I was not present.

I can confidently affirm that no private or secret documents or telegrams were shown or statements made to him (W. V. H.) which influenced his judgment, conduct or conclusions.

He was early convinced and finally satisfied that Chamberlain was not privy to and had no previous knowledge of the Raid, and had never encouraged or approved it. He always believed, though this could not be subjected to proof, that Chamberlain was aware
2. I think you might well express satisfaction at the arrival of Alfred Milner [who had been appointed High Commissioner], and a hope that he will deal as judiciously with J. C.'s peremptory and warlike menaces as Sir H. Robinson did in January '96. Pray look at the despatches in the Blue Book, C.7933, p. 50 (No. 140) and p. 55 (No. 153)—and Robinson's refusal to communicate Chamberlain's message, p. 60 (No. 168)!

I don't suppose that a Secretary of State ever received such a snub from a subordinate, but no doubt Robinson's prudence and courage in refusing to be the mouthpiece of J. C.'s messages saved the situation. The passage I spoke of to-day as to the absence of any right to interfere with the internal legislation of the Transvaal except by "friendly counsels" is at p. 89, par. 32, of the same Blue Book. . . .

II

Meanwhile the Inquiry was nearing its close, and Harcourt was engaged, "in such leisure as the delights of the weather and the garden have permitted," in drawing up a sketch report which he sent (June 12) to Chamberlain with the remark that "it sets out the main points of what I regard as taken altogether to be the most demoralizing public transaction in the sixty years' reign." He was evidently still disposed to make things easy for Chamberlain, whether on personal grounds or on public grounds or simply in the hope of still checking his drift to extreme courses is not apparent. "I have endeavoured to put the matter as regards yourself and the telegrams in a shape which I hope you will find satisfactory." Three days later, acknowledging Chamberlain's acceptance of his "sketch report" as a basis of discussion, he said that "all that seems to me essential is a reasoned and uncompromising condemnation of Rhodes." He would have no mercy for Sir Graham Bower, who knew "by secret information of his own" all that was going on in Johannesburg and with-

of, and by implication a participant in, the preparations for a rising in Johannesburg, and he never ceased to hold this belief to the end.

He also thought that this privity rendered Chamberlain liable to something in the nature of "severe pressure" by Miss Flora Shaw, Rhodes, Rutherford Harris, Dr. Jameson and others to conceal or prevent the production of possibly illuminating documents or information.
held it from the High Commissioner; but his main demand was that Rhodes should have the merited stigma of Parliament. "He has not only brought race hatred and distrust into Colonial politics, but lasting discredit abroad on English faith. He is the incarnation of la perfide Albion. This is the governing thought in my mind." Returning to London from Malwood, he wrote:

Harcourt to Chamberlain.

7, Richmond Terrace, Whitehall, June 18, 1897.—I gave my sketch report with your letter to H. Beach this afternoon in the H. of C.

I found on my arrival in London Flora Shaw’s decoded telegrams, which appear to me very serious. . . .

But as regards the arch-liar [Rhodes] they have a most grave effect. On December 30 Harris telegraphs that "Jameson moved on women and children letter"—a lie. He says, "We are confident of success." This is when Jameson was on the march. On same day, 30th, when he knew of the Raid, Rhodes in\ propr\ persona\ teleg\ raphs, "Inform Chamberlain I shall get through all right if he supports me. . . . I will win, and S. Africa will belong to England." ¹

Conceive the effect these last words will have.

(1) On Kruger and the Boers.
(2) On the Outlanders who did not desire British flag.
(3) On Dutch in Cape Colony and in Free State.
(4) On the public opinion of Europe and especially in Germany to whom we have always professed a desire to maintain the status quo.

The mendacity of the man in his pretence that what he really intended was only free trade and a plebiscite is sickening. This telegram was sent the day after all his protestations to C. Leonard. The telegram of the 31st December is still more impudent from the man who professed he did not desire the Raid.

¹ On this point there is a significant passage in Harcourt's examination of Beit. It is as follows:

Sir William Harcourt: Mr. Rhodes in his evidence said, "What I am afraid of is that when the change comes they will change from a Dutch Republic to an English Republic."—Witness: Yes.

You did not wish to have an English Republic there?—We wanted the Dutch flag and a change in the personnel and to get the Outlanders their rights.

Then you do not agree with Mr. Rhodes when his telegram says, "I would not, of course, risk everything as I am doing, except for the British flag?—Mr. Rhodes was looking to the future. . . . I talked the matter over with Mr. Rhodes, and it was fully understood that the new Government would have to be under the Dutch flag.
I feel by the light of these telegrams that the adjectives in my sketch report are far too feeble to damn the rascality of the man.

These telegrams will light up the flame in S. Africa, and make the public here still more anxious to see what they have not seen.

The report of the Committee was issued on July 15. It charged Rhodes with "grave breaches of duty to those to whom he owed allegiance. He deceived the High Commissioner representing the Imperial Government, he concealed his views from his colleagues in the Colonial Ministry and from the Board of the British South Africa Company, and led his subordinates to believe that his plans were approved by his superiors." It acquitted Lord Rosmead, the High Commissioner, of all complicity, but severely reprimanded Sir Graham Bower. As to Chamberlain it said that neither he nor the officials at the Colonial Office "received any information which made them, or should have made them or any of them, aware of the plot during its development." It put on record an absolute and unqualified condemnation of the Raid and of the plans which made it possible and an expression of the evils to which it had given rise.

The Jameson Raid is no longer an event that awakens violent passions, and it is probable that no candid mind reading the evidence to-day would deny that the report fell far short of the occasion in severity, and that the references to the Colonial Secretary are singularly unsatisfactory. It was suggested that Harcourt had been "nobbled" by Chamberlain or by the Court; but if that was so, Campbell-Bannerman, John Ellis and Mr. Sydney (Lord) Buxton were "nobbled" also, for they signed the report with the rest and defended it in the House. The much more reasonable explanation of the action of all of them is supplied in a letter which Harcourt wrote to J. Ellis later:

Harcourt to J. Ellis.

Malwood, October 22, 1897.—I have read with much satisfaction your able exposition and defence of our much abused [South African] Committee. Like yourself I have a perfectly easy conscience in the
matter. I think we accomplished all that was possible in getting a unanimous and uncompromising condemnation of Rhodes.

If we had attempted anything more we should certainly have failed and given Rhodes a parliamentary triumph. It has been very difficult to drum into the stupid heads of some people that the telegrams could not have been obtained without the sacrifice of the report.

Of course the Rhodesites and the personal enemies of Chamberlain were most anxious to drag us into this false scent. I must thank you very cordially for the manner in which you referred to my share in the business.

The mischief that has arisen has been mainly due to the wanton declaration of Chamberlain that he found nothing dishonourable in the conduct of Rhodes.

When I come to speak on the subject I shall characterize this conduct of Chamberlain in the manner I think it deserves.

When on July 26 Mr. Philip Stanhope (Lord Weardale) made a motion in the House of Commons complaining of the inconclusive character of the report and demanding that Mr. Hawkesley should be summoned to the bar of the House and required to deliver the telegrams, Harcourt gave a statement of his views on the procedure and report of the Committee. He pointed out that the production of the telegrams from South Africa would have meant the delay of the report, the immediate publication of which he held to be essential, and contended that the telegrams could not inculpate Chamberlain. First of all, the statements of the Colonial Secretary were on record, and, secondly, Rhodes had denied that he had stated to any one, directly or indirectly, that Chamberlain knew anything regarding the matter. He countered Miss Flora Shaw's telegram that the Colonial Office desired the Raid to come on at once with the evidence of that lady denying that she had had any information justifying the apparent meaning of that telegram. For himself, no production of telegrams would convince him of Chamberlain's complicity in the Raid:

... If you got these telegrams to-morrow (he said), and if they contained all that the most malignant mind could suggest—if I found that Dr. Harris had telegraphed to Mr. Rhodes saying, "I went yesterday to Mr. Chamberlain, I told him all about it, and he approved of it altogether"; and if the Colonial Secretary and the...
Earl of Selborne said that nothing of the kind took place—I, who have seen the witnesses, would believe the Colonial Secretary and Lord Selborne. (Cheers.) But if any further confirmation were wanted (which I do not want) I should find it in the conduct of the Colonial Secretary when the Raid took place. Is it possible that any man who had been a party and an accomplice in these transactions could have acted on the spur of the moment as the Colonial Secretary acted? There is no jury in the country that would believe it possible. . . .

One explanation, current at the time and long afterwards, of Harcourt's failure to insist on the production of what were known as the Hawkesley letters, was that he had been privately informed that the Queen had given her personal word, in an autograph letter to the German Emperor, that none of her Ministers was in any way whatever implicated in Jameson's lawless proceeding. On the revival of the legend in 1914 the late Lord Harcourt, then Colonial Secretary, wrote to Sir G. Fiddes:

. . . I have no hesitation in saying he (Harcourt) never received any communication of the supposed letter from Queen Victoria to the German Emperor, which I do not believe ever existed. If it had done, the fact that Queen Victoria had been permitted by her Ministers to lie to the German Emperor would not have prevented my father from bringing out the facts at the Inquiry whatever might have been the result. The reason why Mr. Chamberlain's complicity in the Raid was not further pursued was that my father became satisfied that Mr. Chamberlain was not a party to it, though my father (and I) have always been satisfied of Mr. Chamberlain's complicity with the preparations for a revolution in Johannesburg which was to result in the taking over of the Transvaal by the British Government, and I believe that the precipitate action of Rhodes and Dr. Jim upset Mr. Chamberlain's plans, and, happily for him, diverted attention from the matters in which he was engaged to others in which he had no part.

There we may leave the whole obscure episode of the Inquiry. It had achieved Harcourt's main object, the emphatic condemnation of Rhodes and of the Raid before the world. He had no desire to see the Government, and least of all the Colonial Secretary, implicated in the adventure, for that would have rendered the condemnation of Rhodes futile, would have besmirched the honour of the country
at its source, and would have made the future still more dark. There was reason to hope that events in South Africa, after the fiasco of the Raid, might take a peaceful turn, but if that was to be achieved the good faith and good intentions of the Government must be accepted as above suspicion. It was this consideration which was the key to Harcourt's procedure throughout. It cannot, I think, be denied, in spite of his assurances on the subject, that he had reason, in common with his colleagues in the Commission, to believe that the undisclosed telegrams would have put a darker face on the matter. The explanation he offered for the failure to insist on the production of these telegrams leaves the mind unconvinced. It was, no doubt, important to secure the production of the report and the condemnation of Rhodes speedily; but it is not clear that a strong insistence on the production of the telegrams forthwith would not have been successful. That there was no such strong insistence gave colour to the obstinate impression which prevailed at the time and still lingers that it was known that a complete revelation of the documents would incriminate the Colonial Office, and the fact that they have never since been published goes far to justify the suspicion. The common assumption is that the Rhodes party, having this evidence in their possession, used it to exercise influence over Chamberlain and the Government.

It may be that Harcourt suspected this, or, in view of his close personal relations with Chamberlain, that he had a hint of the fact given to him. This would illuminate the motives of his action. So far from wishing to involve Chamberlain and the Government with Rhodes, his whole object was to dissociate them, not merely in order to avoid what would have been a discreditable exposure of British policy to the world, but to make it possible for the Boer Government to believe in the good faith of the British Government in the matter and so create an atmosphere conducive to peace rather than war. If there was an understanding of any sort we may assume that it was on the basis that, if there was to be no excessive pressure for the
publication of the telegrams, Chamberlain was to throw over Rhodes publicly and completely. A final breach between Rhodes and Chamberlain would, in Harcourt's view, have canalized events in the direction of peace, and he was more concerned to achieve this than he was to discredit the Government and Chamberlain by proving that they were accessories before the fact. So, though knowing that Chamberlain was aware of the revolutionary movement in Johannesburg, he laid emphasis in public upon the fact that he was not privy to the corollary of that movement, the piratical enterprise of Dr. Jameson.

But if, as I assume, his object was to divorce the Government and especially Chamberlain from Rhodes, he was to suffer disappointment. Courtney and others had urged that as a practical consequence of the report Rhodes should be stripped of his privy councillorship. Not only was the suggestion ignored; but Chamberlain, speaking after Harcourt in the debate on July 26, "definitely announced that the Government would do nothing and said, "We are told that we should take from him (Rhodes) the privy councillorship. I take it that the privy councillorship was conferred upon Mr. Rhodes for invaluable services which nothing can dim, and I do not see why it should be taken away because he has since made a great mistake." By this speech Chamberlain effectually torpedoed the report of which he was a signatory. There was a widespread view that the testimonial to Rhodes was wrung from him by the threat that, if Rhodes was humiliated, the suppressed telegrams would be disclosed, and it was said at the time with a good deal of authority that a member connected with the Rhodes group had come to the House armed with copies of the telegrams and prepared to read them if Chamberlain's attitude had not proved satisfactory. Whatever the true explanation of the incident may be, the effect of the speech was fatal to the cause of peace and reduced the Raid Inquiry to derision. Rhodes, exempt from punishment and publicly flattered by the Colonial Secretary, was left the nominal culprit but the real victor in the affair.
His apple-cart, to recall his own image, had been upset by the impetuosity of Dr. Jim; but it was in a fair way of being set up again under the most distinguished auspices.

III

While South Africa held the centre of the stage, the public mind was disturbed by other issues hardly less menacing. They also related to external affairs. In the domestic field the Session was singularly barren, only one subject of importance being raised, that of increased subsidies to the voluntary schools. Defeated on their Education Bill of the previous year, the Government, under the pressure of the Church party, brought in a measure, nicknamed the Bishops' Bill, for the relief of the denominational schools. Alluding in his speech on the Address (January 19) to the threats launched against the Government by the Church party in this connection, Harcourt said, "There has been nothing like it since the days of Thomas à Becket, and I tremble when I think that the First Lord of the Treasury may yet be seen doing painful penance at the shrine of Canterbury." He laid down the principle which later formed the basis of the Opposition case throughout the various stages of the Bill—the principle of those who "care about education a great deal and about denominationalism very little, that education should be made as good as possible in all schools," that there should be no prejudice to the interests of the board schools, and that the settlement of 1870 should be preserved in its integrity. It is unnecessary to follow in any detail the course of the struggle in Parliament over this measure, or indeed any of the comparatively unimportant home affairs of the Session.

But something must be said of the European crisis that arose in the early part of the year and overshadowed temporarily even the subject of the Jameson Raid. The seat of the trouble was that familiar scene of unrest, the Eastern Mediterranean. The failure to deal adequately with the massacres of the Armenians had left the Sultan once more comfortably entrenched behind the jealousies of the Christian
Powers, and at liberty to misgovern his people with apparently little danger of serious challenge. Salisbury, one of the signatories of the Treaty of Berlin which had re-established the Turk, had long since modified his views of the Eastern question, and in the debate on the Address in January made the remarkable admission that from the Crimean War onwards this country had "staked its money on the wrong horse," that we ought to have accepted the proposals of the Emperor Nicholas instead of drifting into the Crimean War, that we could not act effectively in the Near East without Russia. We had forfeited our expectation of her co-operation and the united action of the Powers must be secured. The suggestion that both parties were involved in the policy now so bluntly repudiated was a little audacious in view of the history of the last twenty years, which had witnessed the anti-Turkish crusade of Gladstone and pro-Turkish sympathies of Disraeli. It was peculiarly absurd so far as it applied to the present leader of the Liberal Party—for Harcourt was that in all but name—who, having sown his wild oats in the Crimean War, had been the most constant and instructed advocate of a more enlightened attitude towards Russia for forty years.

A few days after Salisbury made his historic recantation the Turkish volcano was in eruption once more, this time in Crete, which misgovernment had brought to a state of anarchy that roused popular passion in Greece. The Cretans rose under a young leader named Venizelos, and proclaimed union with Greece on February 8, Prince George of Greece being sent to the island with a small force. On February 15 another Greek force under Colonel Vassos landed to the west of Canea, which had been the scene of a massacre by the Turks. There was fighting between the insurgents and the Turks, and the admirals of the five European Powers whose warships were in Cretan waters ordered a bombardment of the insurgent quarters. The news evoked a passionate outburst of feeling in this country, and on February 22, on a motion for adjournment being moved by Labouchere, the whole Opposition front bench,
Harcourt leading the way, leapt to their feet in its support. In the debate that followed Harcourt said, "What is your position? The Greeks have joined the Crețans and you have joined the Turks." "That is not correct," interposed Mr. Balfour. "Then what is?" he demanded.

There followed weeks and months of anxious diplomacy, in which Salisbury sought through the Concert of Europe to arrive at a common policy in regard to the Turk. But the Concert of Europe was in no healthy condition, and the Powers were as usual anxious to exploit the situation for their individual ends. Germany, which had now openly assumed the rôle of the friend of the Turk, urged a blockade of the Piræus, and the coercion of the Greeks; but Salisbury maintained that prior to any action there should be a decision as to the future of Crete, insisting that the island could not continue subject to the administration of Turkey, but must be converted into a privileged province of the Ottoman Empire. The German Emperor said he would withdraw his flag from the Mediterranean rather than sanction such weakness, and, being told that this would break up the Concert of Europe, declared that the Concert did not deserve to exist if it allowed its decisions to be overruled by Greece. Meanwhile Russia advocated that Crete should not be annexed to Greece but should have autonomy, and Salisbury agreed to autonomous administration under the Turkish suzerainty. He wanted the withdrawal of all troops, but Germany opposed the idea so far as the Turkish forces were concerned. The controversy over the blockade question also continued, Germany still demanding the blockade of Greece and Salisbury limiting the blockade to Crete.

During this struggle of competing policies, the Opposition under the leadership of Harcourt and Kimberley were supporting Salisbury with reservations, Harcourt's own view throughout being that the Cretan demand for union with Greece should be conceded. Writing to Kimberley on February 21, Harcourt said:
Harcourt to Kimberley.

. . . There are two separate policies now before "the Concert."

(1) That which Salisbury appears to have propounded in a Circular Note, viz., that the Powers shall settle the future of Crete before taking any action in regard to Greece.

(2) That put forward by Germany (certainly supported by Russia and probably by Austria), viz., that Greece shall be compelled to retire first and the future of Crete deliberated on afterwards.

Salisbury’s position is clearly the sound one, and I think he should be supported in it.

If he has the courage to stand by it, come what may, he will be all right. If not and he surrenders, he will be destroyed. When the Greeks have been coerced the Trojans will fall out amongst themselves.

I had a long talk with one of the Government to-day, and pressed this strongly upon him. The Cabinet are building their hopes on the support of France for Salisbury’s policy. This however is a bruised reed, and there is no use contemplating anything but the contingency that Russia, Germany, Austria and France will make a joint summons to Greece to retire and on her refusal to coerce her.

My friend said, "What are we to do then?" I said without hesitation, "Stand to your guns; refuse to act with them." It is impossible to undergo a greater humiliation than for Salisbury, having declared his policy, to allow himself to be driven out of it. If we retire from the Concert on the coercion of Greece what harm can come to us? We want nothing: they can do us no injury. . . . If we are to part from them [the Powers] sooner or later we had better have the severance at once on the coercion of Greece.

He was so much disposed at this time to support Salisbury that he declined to receive a deputation hostile to the Premier’s attitude.

Harcourt to P. W. Clayden.

MALWOOD, January 30, 1897.—. . . Lord Salisbury’s recent utterances and actions appear to me a notable and satisfactory advance in the direction of a reversal of the Beaconsfield policy of 1876. Lord Salisbury has expressed his regret that the proposals of the Emperor Nicholas in 1844 and 1851 were rejected. Those proposals distinctly pointed to arrangements that should be made between Russia and England in view of the ultimate dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. This is one of the most important declarations coming from a British Prime Minister indicating a fundamental change in the pro-Turkish policy of the last forty years. Lord Salisbury appears at present to be occupied in inducing the Great Powers to agree on measures of coercion to compel reforms in the
Ottoman dominions. It is certain that if he were to put forward the immediate dissolution of the Turkish Empire all his efforts in this direction would fail, and the Armenian and other subjects of the Porte would lose all chance of any protection.

In his speeches in the country he observed a critical attitude, adopting the case of the Greeks with great fervour. His new confidence in Salisbury began to waver under the evidence that he was yielding too much to the Powers in order to preserve the semblance of the Concert. He was outraged by the idea of coercing the Cretans when we knew their cause to be just, and rather than employ force against Greece until the freedom of the Cretans was established he would have withdrawn from co-operative action. His complaint against Salisbury was, not that his policy was wrong, but that he was weak in the pursuit of it. In a speech at Norwich, March 17—described by the Daily Chronicle as probably the greatest of his career—he dealt with the Concert of Europe, and referring to the Armenian massacres, said:

. . . I do Lord Salisbury the justice to believe that he did what he could to avert this undying shame which has come to Europe and Great Britain. If the Concert had forbidden those crimes Armenia would have been saved. If the Concert had blockaded Turkey as they are now blockading Crete, those horrors at which, as Lord Salisbury said, the world turns pale might have been stopped. . . . Lord Salisbury has said that he was powerless because the rest of the Powers would not act. . . . What a spectacle! The Prime Minister of England sitting in the midst of the Concert of Europe like the cat in the adage "letting I dare not wait upon I would." . . . There was a moment in the Concert of Europe when Lord Salisbury stood out originally last summer on the blockade of Crete, when he stood out and prevailed, and if he had stood out now he would have prevailed. Concerts of the Powers of Europe are numerous in the records of Europe. They may be good things, or they may be bad things—that depends on the principles on which they are founded and the objects at which they aim. At the commencement of this century, after the great French wars, there was a combination which was called by the title of the Holy Alliance. The principles of the Holy Alliance were these—to maintain peace in Europe by the maintenance of despotism there. That was the basis of the Holy Alliance. The then Conservative Government of the Duke of Wellington and Lord Castlereagh declined to enter it or to have
anything to do with it. That is exactly the principle which is put forward in the front of this Concert. They talked of the Holy Alliance and the peace of Europe, but the real object was to guarantee despotism. . . . These are the Powers who, in the name of, the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, have betrayed Armenia, and are about to blockade Crete. (Cheers.) The whole thing is a pretence. . . . No one believes it, no one desires it. They are not thinking of the integrity of the Ottoman Empire at all; they are only thinking of what each one can get out of it.

In my opinion every breach of that integrity is so much gain for mankind. . . .

Well, if they had ever been as ready, as I said before, to blockade Turkey as they have been to blockade Crete, they might have done something for the good of mankind (hear, hear); but when it becomes a question of coercing the Turks, why then they say, "God forbid! We shall all go to war with one another."

But, while they were pottering and doing nothing, and discussing, the six ambassadors together at Constantinople and representatives at Crete, there came in another Power (hear, hear)—not a great Power, but a small Power, a brave Power (cheers), a free Power—which dared something for the emancipation of its oppressed compatriots, and Greece has accomplished the object she had in view (cheers), and has rescued the people there from the heel of the Turk, and has dispensed, we hope for ever, with his integrity. And now it is Greece that is to be coerced, and the British fleet, that fleet of which we are all so justly proud, is to be an instrument in the coercion of Greece. . . .

He returned to the denunciation of the Concert of Europe in a speech in the House on the adjournment (April 12). "All they (the Powers) have been doing in Crete," he said, "has been backing the wrong horse, and bombarding the wrong people. . . . I see you have sent mountain batteries to Crete. What are you going to do with those mountain batteries? Are you going into the mountains to fire autonomy out of these cannons into the Christians of Crete."

The next day, speaking at the Eighty Club, he discussed a subject which always occupied much of his thought—the basis of our relations with other nations. He desired that this country should be the friend of all States, but the instrument of none. He had always deplored and condemned that quarrelsome spirit, that insolent assertion of Jingoism—squabbling at one time with France about this, suspecting Russia about that, denouncing Germany about the other
—a tone and an attitude which had at times led to what had been foolishly boasted of as "splendid isolation":

... I desire no splendid isolation for England (he said) any more than should desire splendid isolation for any friend of mine. But I am equally opposed to all engagements which bind England to dangerous obligations with great military and despotic powers, whose interests are not ours, whose objects are not ours, whose sympathies, whose convictions are not ours. That is why no British minister has ever dared to propose to join the Triple Alliance or the Dual Alliance. It has kept a free hand, as England ought always to keep a free hand, for a free people. But now it seems we are to become, or have become, committed to a Federation. It is called by Lord Salisbury a Federated Legislature, which has the right to overrule the privileges and the powers of every independent State and to coerce it to its will. ... This Federation of nations is, we are told, the Arcopagus of the world. ...

He illustrated the advantage of a friendly but independent policy by showing how Canning was able seventy years before to defeat the objects of the Holy Alliance and to help free the Greeks and the South American republics. Replying a few days later to a letter from Edward Russell (afterwards Lord Russell of Liverpool), he said:

... I have always been a Canningite. You and Gladstone have a Liverpool title in his name and fame.

I have often heard Mr. G. speak of his remembrance of him at the house of his father there who was Canning's great political friend.

I was born in the same year as that of his death (2 months after that fatal blow to the true policy of England). But I have worshipped at his shrine ever since my boyhood, and have deplored the decadence which has overtaken our latter day statesmanship. ...

Meanwhile the storm in the Near East came to a head with the declaration of war by Turkey against Greece, the sympathies of Germany being shown by the presence of German officers with the Turkish army. In this country, on the other hand, there was widespread enthusiasm for the Greeks. The conflict was brief and disastrous for Greece, and through the intervention of the Powers an armistice was signed in May. Peace was not concluded until December, and the Cretan question was not settled until the following year (after the withdrawal of Germany and Austria from the Concert
of Europe). In the November of that year the last Turkish troops left Crete, and the island State, with Prince George of Greece as High Commissioner for the Powers, had finally escaped from the blight of Ottoman misrule.

In spite of the admission that in our Eastern policy in the past we had put our money "on the wrong horse," the traditional suspicion of Russia still lingered on, especially in relation to India. This suspicion played its part in the Chitral incident which Harcourt resisted as a menace to our frontier policy in India. That policy was based on a friendly Afghanistan and the buffer of free mountain tribes between. Writing to Lewis Harcourt, he said:

_Harcourt to his son, L. V. Harcourt._

_MALWOOD, September 14._—... The whole Lawrence policy we have always maintained was against annexation. The policy is well explained in the last chapter of A. Lyall's book which is well worth reading. The barrier against Russia was to be a friendly Afghanistan, and a fringe of independent tribes also was to be relied upon to be hostile to any Power which threatened to invade them, whether it were England or Russia. When Kimberley talks of Russia stirring up the tribes against us, we have always held that in case of an advance of Russia we should stir up the tribes against her, and that they would be hostile to any Power that interfered with them. The great mistake seems to have been pursuing neither one policy nor the other both North and South of Peshawar. To have subdued and annexed the tribes in all their valleys and occupied them in force we would require an immense force with a population bitterly hostile.

... If Chitral is to be occupied in force it will require with the communications 100,000 men—which India is quite unable to afford. The thing is still worse south of Peshawar, as the valleys are more numerous and the tribes equally hostile.

The real danger to India is in the burthen of taxation which breeds general discontent. ...

He was opposed to a forward policy which aimed at subduing the mountain tribes, and in writing to Mr. Morley drew attention to Mr. Curzon's (Earl Curzon) statement, "I do not deny, however, that the steady infringement of a powerful and organized Government upon less civilized communities causes from time to time these explosions." "The steady infringement of a powerful Government," said Harcourt,
"is the latest euphemism for the Forward Policy. No wonder the less civilized communities find it difficult to reconcile it with their independence." In this matter, subsequent experience has been emphatically on the side of Harcourt, and the most enlightened official opinion in India is confirmed in support of the Lawrence doctrine.

IV

The celebration of the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria—which made the summer of 1897 memorable—gave Harcourt, who enjoyed the ceremonies of State and the social functions of life with peculiar zest, abundant and agreeable occupation. He had a genuine affection for the Queen, and, though in his official relations with her he had never failed in candour or in what he conceived to be his duty to Parliament, he had much of the instinct of the courtier and did not forget those little flatteries and attentions which meant so much to his Sovereign. His own life had run almost parallel with hers, and in his speech (June 21) on the Address to her from Parliament, he recalled "as if it were to-day the booming of the guns which announced the accession of the Queen." He surveyed the achievements of the reign, and after describing the improvement that had taken place in the condition of the people, said:

... I can recall the fears of the brave and the follies of the wise, who dreaded lest the extension of popular power might endanger the constitution of the country. Yet it must be acknowledged that in these sixty years the Queen has given the final sanction to measure after measure of democratic reform. And each extension of popular right has only strengthened the Monarchy, and increased the confidence of the people. (Cheers.) Queen Victoria has never feared her people. (Loud cheers.) ... In this memorable growth of our race and of our Empire there has proved, for two generations of men, one figure who has presented to the world the British name with a noble simplicity of greatness, which has not been known before, and which will live for ever in the records of this nation. It has been asked what has been the office which the Queen has performed? That office has been the supreme tie which bound together various classes and divers races in these vast dominions, which has held them in one united whole by a sovereign partaking the spirit of the
people, which has gathered them in growing affection round her throne.

It is not for me to attempt to portray a character known and admired and loved by all. Those who have served her themselves in any capacity will ever cherish the memory of her gracious kindness, of her upright judgment, of her ripe experience and her constitutional fidelity. Her public as her private life has been a lesson to all in every station. The first in virtue, as the first in place, she has added dignity to a mighty throne, and deserved the passionate loyalty of a free people. She will leave to those who come after her larger dominions and a happier people; but what is more, she will bequeath to future times the imperishable inheritance of a sovereign example.

The revels and functions in connection with the celebration continued for several weeks during the summer, the social engagements culminating in the famous Devonshire House Ball, at which most of the people conspicuous in the social and public life of the time appeared in fancy costume. Lord Rosebery, for example, was there as Horace Walpole, Mr. Asquith as a Roundhead, Mr. Balfour as a Dutchman of the Seventeenth Century, and the ex-Speaker Peel as a Doge of Venice. Harcourt represented his own ancestor, Lord Chancellor Harcourt. An important feature of the Diamond Jubilee celebrations was the presence of the Premiers from the Overseas Dominions, and at a luncheon given to them by the Eighty Club Harcourt delivered a panegyric on the ideas of free institutions and self-governing communities which during the reign had established Greater Britain on so enduring a basis. When, later in the year, the Queen presented Harcourt with a portrait of herself as she appeared at the Jubilee, he wrote, in thanking her, "Sir William has placed it next to the picture by Landseer of the Queen on horseback in the year of her accession to the Throne. He thinks himself happy to have been a witness of the whole course of Your Majesty's fortunate and glorious reign, and of the growth of your Empire and the prosperity and happiness of your people."

In the autumn Harcourt paid his annual visit to Wiesbaden, when he received a satisfactory report on his defective eye. He returned to fulfil engagements in Scotland, where he
Sir William Vernon Harcourt
as Lord Chancellor Harcourt (tempe Queen - Anne)
with Lady Desborough and Mr. A. J. Balfour
at the Devonshire House Jubilee Ball 1897
spoke at Dundee (November 25) and Kirkcaldy. "I thought your speeches admirable in all ways," wrote Mr. Morley, "and the second of them about the best that you ever made in your life. It ought to put some backbone into our rickety Party." "Your North Briton," replied Harcourt, "is a very hearty fellow and like some of your best friends squeezes your hand so hard that it hurts." His public activities were not limited to the platform, and a controversy in the Press between him and Chamberlain attracted much public attention by the energy with which they exchanged strong epithets. Mr. Morley, who had enjoyed the "very well-earned trouncing" Harcourt had given Chamberlain, expressed regret that he had not kept it for his Dundee speech. "But you have plenty more, I daresay," he said. "And if you don't already know it, let me tell you that there is nothing that our worthy Scots enjoy more keenly than good banter. As you have found out by bitter experience, I am of the heavy school, but I know that when occasionally I treat them to a flicker of a smile, they like it much better than anything else." Harcourt, in explaining why he did not delay, said:

\[Harcourt to Mr. Morley.\]

**Malwood, November 11, 1897.**—... I confess that Joe's insistence in dealing with us as "criminals" did rile me on Sunday afternoon. I thought it necessary to tackle him at once, as his Glasgow Jubilee seems to have turned his head, and to show him that we did not intend to stand his impudence. I thought it better not to delay the onslaught, as these things require to be served up like toast hot and hot. It seemed to me that Balfour made a mistake in taking a six months' old speech of mine as his text at Norwich. I daresay a ram or two will be provided for me before Dundee, and I shall gather inspiration from the humorous good humour of Campbell-Bannerman... .

His relations with his opponents, however, were generally cordial, and for Hicks-Beach, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, he had a high appreciation, which was increased by Beach's soundness on Harcourt's *bête noire*, bimetalism. Writing to James (October 23), he said:
Harcourt to James.

... Though I believe you are—as you were when you had the Lancashire taint on you—a confounded bimetallist, I congratulate you that the good sense and firmness of the Chancellor of the Exchequer has saved you all from the follies of Balfour, Chap'in & Co. I hope now that we have finally done with this rubbish, but it was touch and go when I saved the situation in 1893 by putting Alfred Rothschild and Rivers Wilson on the Brussels Conference, which had been packed by Goschen under the influence of A. Balfour and Houldsworth. I have been plying Beach all the autumn with warnings and remonstrances, for I knew what a difficult game he had to play. But he is very sound and plucky, and, as I care more for good finance than for anything else, I am very glad the keys of the Exchequer are in such good hands. He is going to have another rattling surplus this year, which is always a more embarrassing possession than a deficit. But, however, I doubt not your "lot" will find means to spend it.

There was one new member of the Government, however, who incurred the wrath of Harcourt. He had come into parliamentary life as a colleague of Cardwell, and had remained a firm believer in the Army reforms which Cardwell had introduced. The new scheme of Army inflation not only offended his anti-militarist ideas, but also his convictions on Army administration, and he roundly denounced "the fallacies of those coxcombical amateurs—Messrs. A. Forster & Co." "I believe," he wrote to Mr. Morley, "they will find their Army inflation a very bad business before they have done. To have been handed over to such a tormentor as the conceited prig, Arnold-Forster, is punishment enough for all their crimes."
CHAPTER XXIII

HARCOURT AND CHAMBERLAIN

Salisbury’s foreign policy—Madagascar—The partition of China—
Chamberlain’s anti-Russian speech—Death of Gladstone—
The South African storm clouds—A letter to Chamberlain.

"The condition of things in Europe, Asia, Africa
and America is such as to make me bless my
stars that it is the other fellows and not we
who have the responsibility of dealing with them," wrote
Harcourt to Mr. Morley on January 6, 1898. "What a
mess we should have made of it! I believe Salisbury to
be by nature and conviction a man of peace, and I at least
will be no party to vex him on that account." Harcourt’s
concern was not exaggerated. Clouds were blowing up
from every quarter of the political sky, and it seemed a
question, not so much whether disaster would come, but
from what direction it would come. We had achieved
"splendid isolation," but we had achieved it on the basis
not of general goodwill, but of almost universal ill-will.
The latest phase of the recurrent disturbance in the Near
East had passed its crisis, but it remained a serious danger-
point, and in revealing Germany as the protector of the
Turk it had given the practical coup de grâce to the phantom
of the Concert of Europe. A French expedition was ad-
vancing from the basin of Lake Chad in the direction of
the Nile and would presently come in collision with the
British troops advancing south against the Mahdi. In the
Far East the dissolution of China, reeling from the effects of
the war with Japan, seemed imminent, and the European
Powers were engaged in a scramble for the estate. The
new forward policy in India, of which the Chitral expedition
was the expression, opened out the prospect of perilous developments. Most disquieting of all, the shadow had not lifted from South Africa. The inquiry into the origin of the Raid, so far from dispersing the trouble, had embittered it, for it had left the chief author of the invasion, unrepentant and publicly flattered by Chamberlain, free to pursue the policy which, so far from disavowing, he had frankly, almost truculently defended.

In the midst of this riot of discordant motives, Harcourt never lost his confidence in the honesty and peaceful purpose of Salisbury. In a survey of the world situation which he made at Bury on February 22, he pointed his finger at what he regarded as the chief menace to peace. While Lord Salisbury, he said, was engaged in the arduous business of delicate and dangerous negotiations with the great European Powers, he had on his hands the not less delicate work of keeping in check his own Jingo colleague, the Secretary of State for the Colonies. In this momentous hour, the foes of the Prime Minister were not his political opponents, but members of his own household. While Lord Salisbury was doing his best to secure "peace with honour," his own Colonial Secretary was talking and behaving in ways which, if not disowned and condemned, would in a measurable period lead to war. In regard to the spirit of foreign policy, Harcourt was in fuller sympathy with Salisbury than with some of his Liberal colleagues. "The universal hostility to England abroad is natural and inevitable," he had written to Mr. Morley on January 6. "How should it be otherwise when we go swaggering about declaring our supremacy in every quarter of the globe. We appropriate Hong-Kong, Burmah, Uganda, Rhodesia, Cyprus, Egypt, etc., etc., and then consider it a national outrage against ourselves if any other nation ventures to take anything anywhere. What can be more preposterous?" A few weeks later in the House of Lords, Salisbury publicly denounced this Jingo attitude in almost equally strong language. He saw the danger of a reaction to the doctrines of thirty or forty years before "when
it was thought to be our duty to fight everybody and take everything," and warned the country that this "dangerous doctrine" not only incited other nations, but threatened "to overtax our strength." Harcourt in his speech at Bury endorsed these "solemn and weighty words." They were words which were addressed, not to his opponents, but "to the rash and reckless men who sat behind him and around him and, above all, by his side." "I need not name these," he said. "I hope they will listen to his voice."

But while he had the fullest confidence in Salisbury's reasonable and pacific intentions, he was critical of his methods. He believed that he was wanting in foresight, and that he took up positions in the early stages of controversy which he was unable to maintain. Speaking on this subject later in the year (May 7) at a dinner of the Eighty Club and the Cambridge University Liberal Club, at Cambridge, he said:

... He [Salisbury] seems to me, for a man of great ability, to be extraordinarily deficient in foresight. When he begins, he never measures forces he has got ultimately to deal with; he puts himself into positions which he cannot maintain; and he makes proposals which he is not prepared or not in a position to support. Now, I do not complain of him for not pushing things to extremities. I am the last man who desires the extremity of war. But if he were wise and far-seeing he would never place himself in positions in which it is a necessity he should yield. That is the failure of Lord Salisbury's foreign policy. It is all very well to come in like a lion; but if you have to go out like a lamb it is better not to come in like a lion. You will ultimately get more credit in your capacity as a lamb (loud laughter) if you have not begun the operation by roaring and lashing your tail. (Laughter.)

He had seen this defect in Salisbury's handling of the Cretan problem, and in the debate on the Address (February 8), when he ranged over the whole field of world commotion, he illustrated it by reference to the case of Madagascar, where the Government had allowed British rights to lapse with the domination of France in that sphere. The recognition of Madagascar as a sphere of French influence had been part of the consideration made by Salisbury to that
Power at the time of the Anglo-German agreement for the exchange of Heligoland and Zanzibar. On the results of that bargain Harcourt said:

... With Madagascar we had treaty rights of the most explicit character. We had treaty rights under two heads, one which gave us consular jurisdiction, and the other which gave us very favourable commercial tariffs. Now France in February, 1896, undertook the military occupation of Madagascar, and Lord Salisbury very properly reserved all British rights in the face of that occupation. ... On the 10th of April, 1896, the annexation of Madagascar was announced, and the French minister thereupon declared the treaty rights were abrogated. Upon that, on the 10th of August, 1896, Lord Salisbury wrote, I think, as strong and peremptory a dispatch as was ever penned by a British minister, and he charged the French Government with having broken their pledges, with the abrogation of the treaty, with a violation of international law, and declared that the effect of what had been done would be to destroy the British trade with the Island. To that dispatch no reply was made. ... The whole matter was allowed to slumber for nine months, and then Lord Salisbury asked for a reply to the dispatch of 1896. The French minister merely replied that he was rather surprised at the request after such a lapse of time, and that he had nothing to say about it, for the treaties were abolished, the English tariff was gone, and the French tariff applied.

The gravity of the outlook abroad was reflected in the ominous increase of armaments at home. Writing to Harcourt from South Africa, Sir Alfred Milner, who had been associated with him in the preparation of the famous Budget, congratulated him on the surprising results of the death duties. But the ample surpluses which those duties were providing for the Exchequer were being swallowed up by unprecedented new demands for the army and the navy. The panic movement in connection with the latter was stimulated now, not by comparisons with the French navy so much as by alarmist statements as to the new building contemplated by Russia, which had, in the midst of the general peril, resumed for a moment her old position in the popular view as the principal villain of the European stage. That stage was thronged with "villains." France was challenging us in the Nile valley, Germany, under the disturbing influence of the young Emperor, had shown her
hand unpleasantly in the Near East, and Russia was supposed to be menacing our position in the Far East. It is significant that in a voluminous correspondence which Harcourt carried on at this time with Sir A. Haliburton on the subject of the proposed reforms in army administration—a discussion too technical to be dealt with here—he discussed the hypothesis of a war with Russia followed or rather accompanied by a war with France. "My hypothesis is not an impossible one in the estimation of many persons," he wrote to Haliburton, "and will certainly have to be met in argument." The pre-eminence of Russia as the potential enemy lent weight to Harcourt's powerful resistance in Parliament to the forward policy in India which, in antagonizing the mountain tribes of the frontier, would weaken our defensive system against Russian attack. On this subject he spoke with his customary erudition. His old habit of grinding up the facts of any subject with which he had to deal never deserted him, and his knowledge of the physical, ethnographical and political considerations involved in penetrating and holding the passes of the Himalayas made a marked impression on the debate.

II

But the immediate trouble with Russia had its roots, not in India, but in the Far East. After the overthrow of China by Japan, the former country had sought the protection of Russia. Li Hung Chang, as a means of guaranteeing China in the event of an attempt by Japan to obtain a footing on the mainland, had given facilities for the construction of Russian railways in Manchuria. He had also sought to obtain a loan of £12,000,000 from England. To the latter proposal Russia objected, and when negotiations were opened for raising the money in St. Petersburg, Great Britain protested. Eventually the money was advanced by the Hong-Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation with the assistance of a German bank. In the meantime the murder of two German missionaries in Shantung gave Germany the excuse for entering into
the competition for China. Kiaochow was seized and a ninety-nine years' lease of the port was obtained, together with the cession of mining and railway rights in the province of Shantung. Thereupon Russia secured a lease of Port Arthur on the terms accorded to Germany at Kiaochow. These events aroused great feeling in this country, whose interests in China seemed menaced by the substitution of "spheres of influence" for the traditional British policy of the "open door." In the House of Lords, Salisbury sought to calm the public suspicions by the assurance that "nobody has yet suggested the slightest intention of infringing our treaty rights in that part of the world." Germany had, indeed, expressed friendliness for the British policy of the open door. But the subsequent developments, and especially the vetoing of the British loan by Russia, aggravated the alarm, and Harcourt, who, while anxious to avoid a rupture with Russia, was equally anxious for the maintenance of our treaty rights and the "open-door" policy, was alarmed at what seemed the irresolute attitude of the Government in connection with the leasing of Port Arthur. In the course of a letter (March 10) to Mr. Balfour, giving notice of a question in the House, he drew attention to "the pernicious and scandalous scares which are being concocted every day in the Press and notably by The Times," and said:

Harcourt to Mr. A. J. Balfour.

... I wish in this matter, regardless of party considerations, to do as much good and as little harm as possible, but I feel that there is a deliberate attempt in progress to create a dangerous excitement in the public mind which the Government, if they allow it to grow, will find it difficult to control. The idiots who are clamouring for a war with Russia imagine that it will be waged by sea, whereas anybody who knows anything about it is perfectly aware that the Russians in two months would place 100,000 men, and if necessary 500,000 men at Herat, and invite the valiant Roberts to come and meet them there.

Mr. Balfour requested Harcourt to delay his interpellation. It was obvious that Russia, while willing that Ta-lien-wan should be a treaty port, excluded Port Arthur from the
condition. The matter was not discussed in the House until April 29. In the meantime there had been much excitement over the withdrawal of British ships from Port Arthur at the request of Russia, and the British Government had set up a claim to the lease of Wei-hai-wei on the same conditions and for the same period that Port Arthur was held by Russia. In the debate on the Foreign Office vote on April 29, Harcourt subjected the proceedings of the Government to a devastating analysis. Their policy had been wise in intention, but it had failed in fact. They had undertaken to oppose the dismemberment of China, to preserve the principle of the open door, and not to recognize "spheres of influence." But Germany had got Kiao-Chow, and Great Britain had no definite agreement that it would be a free and open port. The principle that there should be no spheres of influence had been abandoned. The British loan had been withdrawn under menace from Russia—a statement hailed with angry cheers not only from the Opposition but from many ministerialists. The indignation on the ministerial benches was renewed when Harcourt read the despatch in which Salisbury explained away the presence of British ships at Port Arthur, and promised their immediate withdrawal. "The British ships," said Harcourt, "were there by treaty right, and should have remained there." Mr. Balfour's defence turned mainly upon the assumption that Wei-hai-wei was a set-off to Port Arthur. We had Wei-hai-wei, Germany had Kiao-Chow, the whole commercial world had obtained wide and valuable concessions in China, whilst Russia had aroused the distrust of the nations and was worse off than she was seven months ago. Speaking on the subject in his speech at Cambridge on May 9, Harcourt said:

... Lord Salisbury claims to be judged by results. Let us look at the results. He set himself against territorial occupations in China because they would dismember that Empire. Well, the territorial occupations have taken place everywhere, and he has taken part in them himself. That is the result of the first principle he has laid down. He negotiated a loan with China. That loan was accepted by China, but it was withdrawn under threats from
Russia, and there was no loan. He stipulated that Ta-lien-wan should be a Chinese treaty port. Well, it is not a Chinese treaty port; it has become a Russian port which is not the same thing. He defended open doors and equal opportunity; he has not got either—either in Shan-tung or Liao-tung. There is hardly a demand that he has made which he has not withdrawn, and how does he meet it all? Why, with an audacity which really, but for the dignity of the man, I should describe as farcical. He spent many months in discussing the terms upon which Russia should occupy Port Arthur, and all of a sudden he discovered there was a great danger in Russia being at Port Arthur at all; it would dominate Pekin and be highly injurious to British interests. It is when Port Arthur is occupied that he says that Port Arthur is of no consequence, that Russia would have been better without it, and that it is no use whatever. Then why did he protest against the occupation of Port Arthur, and why did he take Wei-hai-wei to counteract it? . . . But, after all these things, after all these solemn proposals, he says they were of no consequence. I do not know whether Dickens and his writings have gone out of fashion among the youth of Cambridge. I hope not. But there was a character who always interested me very much in my youthful days—a young gentleman of a very amiable kind, who was constantly making most ardent and tender proposals to a lady and who, when they were refused, in order to console her and himself, always assured her that it was of no consequence whatever. (Laughter.)

There was a significant sequel to the diplomatic struggle in a speech which Chamberlain delivered at Birmingham on May 13. Whatever gloss the peaceful members of the Government might put on the result of the controversy, their pugnacious colleague was not disposed to "take it lying down." He denounced the policy of isolation, referred to Russia in the most provocative terms, remarking that "who sups with the devil must have a long spoon," urged alliance with those Powers whose interests approximated most closely to our own, and said that terrible as war was it would be cheaply purchased if "for a great and noble cause the Stars and Stripes and the Union Jack should wave together over an American alliance." The outburst was the more inexcusable in view of the fact that we were at the time involved in difficulties with France, not only in Siam, but in West Africa, while the two countries were on the brink of conflict in the Nile Valley. But although
the incident-aroused much comment in France and Russia, and was raised in the House of Lords by Kimberley, who said that what Chamberlain proposed was a gigantic change in the policy of this country, there was no immediate reference to it in the Commons. Harcourt did not wish to bring on a debate which would have emphasized some of the worst aspects of the utterance; but his restraint caused strong criticism in some quarters, and there followed this sharp exchange between Mr. Morley and Harcourt:

Mr. Morley to Harcourt.

57, Elm Park Gardens, May 16.—I must say plainly that in my opinion no Opposition so failed in public duty as we did this afternoon. One of the most flagitious speeches ever made by an English minister is allowed to pass by without our even asking that we might discuss it on Friday, or putting so much as a question about it. You will denounce it on Wednesday and so shall I on Saturday, but outdoor fireworks not backed by direct challenge face to face are poor business after all. And why should the scene of action be shifted to the Lords, when we have the misdemeanant himself two yards off in front of us?

*I don't want to trouble you, but my disgust is of the intense species, and I must wash my hands of all responsibility. So I write this which requires no reply.

Harcourt to Mr. Morley.

7, Richmond Terrace, Whitehall, May 17.—I thought you had acquiesced in the view that to give Chamberlain the support of an overwhelming parliamentary majority would not be politic either in a party or an international point of view—especially as you said nothing to the contrary when we were gathered together in my room.

If Chamberlain is to be defeated it must be by encouraging the dissensions on his own side, and not by consolidating them on a vote of censure.

The yeast is working to good effect as you will see by the article in the Standard this morning. I do not find in our Press any sign of dissatisfaction with what passed yesterday.

It seems to me very important that we should know to what extent Salisbury is at the back of Chamberlain.

Mr. Morley to Harcourt.

May 17, 1898.—No division would have been needed on the request for Friday. I said nothing in your room, because the time was past.

I don't agree in the yeast and leaven theory at all. As for our
Press, talk to me of anything but that! However, liberavi animam, and I've no more to say.

When the speech came under discussion on June 10 its meaning, pointing apparently in the direction of an alliance with Germany, was powerfully analysed by Mr. Asquith. The practical conclusion of Chamberlain's utterance, he said, was that we must seek the alliance of a great military Power. If we were to encounter Russia, who could that Power be but Germany? The alliance of Germany was not to be had for nothing, and if we worked with her in the different parts of the world her colonizing ambitions were certain to involve us in conflict with other Powers. He thought our best hope was to act in friendship and co-operation with Russia, but in no case could our object be obtained by a policy of alternate bluster and retreat.

III

Upon these agitated themes there fell on May 10 the news of an event that for the moment silenced all factions and resolved all discord. On the morning of that day Gladstone passed away at Hawarden, and two days later in both Houses of Parliament the tributes of all parties were paid to the illustrious statesman who, in Mr. Balfour's words, was admitted to have been "the greatest member of the greatest deliberative assembly that the world has ever seen." The occasion lifted Parliament to an unwonted level of eloquence, and Harcourt's contribution was not unequal to its fellows. In the course of his speech he said:

... He came into this famous Chamber with a mind stored with various knowledge, ancient and modern, sacred and profane, literary and political, a finished intellect inspired by a native genius. Till the last he was ever looking for fresh materials to feed his inquiring mind in every department of human thought. ... Who that has ever listened to it can have forgotten the rich harmony of that melodious voice, which had a charm almost of physical persuasion. Who will have forgotten the dignified presence, the lucid statement, the resources of reasoning, the high tone of passionate conviction, the vehement appeal to conscience and to truth? ... We can
recollect how on fitting occasions his humour played like the summer lightning around his theme, and how he exposed his opponents without a wound. And no man can say that these divine gifts were ever employed for mean or vulgar uses. They were exercised on high matters and for noble ends. It gave him a power over the hearts of the British people which, I believe, no other orator has ever possessed. . . . His conduct in the House of Commons, whether in Government or in Opposition, bore all the marks of a lofty spirit. He respected others as he respected himself, and he controlled both by his magnanimity. He was strong, but he was also gentle; he was to us not only a great statesman, but a great gentleman. We felt, as the right honourable gentleman has said, that he exalted the spirit of the assembly of which he was the undisputed chief; he raised it in its own estimation and in the estimation of the world, and we recognized that the House of Commons was greater by his presence, as it is greater by his memory. What he did for the House he did for the nation too. I think it is impossible to overvalue the influence which the purity and the piety of his public and private life has had upon the national life of this country. It has exercised a lasting influence upon the moral sense of the people at large. They have watched him through all the trials of a long career passed under the fierce light of political controversy, and they have found in it an example which has permanently raised the standard of public life in this nation. . . . There is not a hamlet in the land where his virtues are not known and felt. . . .

In conclusion, may I say a few words of what he was to those who had the privilege of his intimacy in private friendship and in the life of official colleagues? I speak with an experience longer, I think, than that of any man present, and in the recollection of the constant and gracious kindness of forty-five years. I have heard men who knew him not at all, who have asserted that the supremacy of his genius and the weight of his authority oppressed and overbore those who lived and worked with him. Nothing could be more untrue. Of all chiefs he was the least exacting, the most kind and the most tolerant. He was the most placable of men. How seldom in this House was the voice of personal anger heard from his lips. These are the true marks of greatness. . . .

He has deserved well of us and of our race; he has left us an undying memory and the precious inheritance of an enduring example.

It was with difficulty that Harcourt finished his speech. He was easily overwhelmed by his emotions, whether of anger or affection, and the end of the great political association which, in spite of all the shadows that had passed over it, had been the most enduring and the most treasured
memory of his public life moved him beyond his control. His voice became almost inaudible, and in the final passage touching on his relations with Gladstone as a colleague and as a friend he broke down completely. The House sat in silent sympathy until he regained the mastery of his feeling and struggled in broken accents to the end. At the funeral in Westminster Abbey a week later he was one of the pall-bearers, and writing to Lewis Harcourt of the scene, he said:

_Harcourt to his son, L. V. Harcourt._

7, Richmond Terrace, Whitehall, May 28, 1898.—... I have just returned from the ceremony which passed off as well as possible. All the arrangements excellent. The Lords and Commons well marshalled in each transept. The day fine, but the P. of W. insisted on the pall-bearers wearing their hats, which I regretted. I saw no sign of overcrowding. Gladstone's Government walked by themselves, and had places near the grave. J. Morley was in the H. of C., and I had a good deal of friendly talk with him.

Mrs. Gladstone was a most touching sight. She sat with the relatives during the greater part of the service just behind the coffin, and the pall-bearers in front of the choir seats till it was removed to the grave, where a chair was placed for her with her sons on each side—a terribly pathetic figure with little Dorothy in a black silk sash, very pretty, kneeling at her side. At the close she desired all the pall-bearers to come to her, and she spoke to us all quite collectedly. She thanked me for the letter I had written her yesterday, and I kissed her hand. The whole very touching and impressive. ... Altogether it was a scene worthy of the occasion and the man.

IV

Apart from the disturbed condition of foreign affairs, the Session was one of unrelieved dullness, and the only measure which aroused the fighting spirit of Harcourt was the Benefices Bill, which fanned into flame all his lifelong hostility to what he regarded as the Romanizing influences in the Church of England. His opposition to the Bill led to a prolonged argument in the Press, to which reference will be made later. For the rest the Session calls for no comment. A certain brooding quiescence hung over the South African situation. The Russian quarrel, which overshadowed the spring, and the Fashoda affair, which was to overshadow the autumn, diverted public attention from the Transvaal,
but events were moving there to the inexorable conclusion. What was the conclusion would be Harcourt no longer doubted. He had long been sensible of the essentially warlike temper of Chamberlain, of the potential Imperialist that lurked behind the Radical; he was convinced that Rhodes meant mischief and that his restoration had increased his power for mischief; he was aware that the mood of the country was overwhelmingly Jingo, he distrusted the new High Commissioner, Sir Alfred Milner, and, worst of all, he was aware that Imperialism was rampant in the Liberal Party itself. His gloomy forebodings were revealed in a correspondence with Chamberlain in August. The latter, who was in Switzerland on a holiday, had written to Sir A. Milner on the subject of increasing the forces in South Africa, and in sending Milner’s reply to Harcourt he told him that it was possible that he might find it desirable to increase the defensive preparations. Harcourt replied:

_Harcourt to Chamberlain._

*Malwood, August 29, 1898.*—I am much obliged to you for sending me the A. Milner letters. You need not fear that I have “forgotten S. Africa”—on the contrary it occupies my mind much, and I gather from all quarters a good deal of information as to the state of things there. It is for that reason that I view the ideas of Milner with a good deal of disquietude.

I regard you, the Kaiser William and Milner as by nature the pattern Jingo of these times. There is nothing so irresistible to a new-born Governor-General, fresh to the trade, as the prospect of a sensational annexation, and I see clearly enough that our dear Alfred is bitten by this fly. No one admires or loves him more than I do, but he is not by nature a safe man. When the proper line is given him there is no man who will carry out a policy with greater zeal, loyalty and ability.

As you have been good enough to open the subject, and as, happily, for the moment neither you nor I have anything to do, I will as the gentleman in Shakespeare says “bestowe my tediousness on you,” and expound my ideas on S. Africa for what they are worth. . . . In the first place I entirely dissent from A. M.’s opinion that the improved relations between the Cape Government and the Transvaal are due to your military and naval demonstrations. . . . And yet it is with a view to this that A. M. wants a display of more force—always more force—to “convince Dopperdom that England means war,” if Kruger does not do our bidding. Whatever else he
is, Kruger is not a fool. If England really means war, he and his Boers with the support of the Free State and the Dutch at the Cape will fight you. If it is only as A. M. suggests, a bogus demonstration, he is not the man to be frightened by it. The general opinion in this country—and I believe the true one—is that the Transvaal Government are at present acting in a conciliatory spirit and willing, though slowly, to admit reforms. They see no occasion or justification for fresh troops and warlike preparations. The Transvaal Government were perfectly justified in arming to resist the attacks of Rhodes, Jameson and Co.—perhaps all the more so for the panegyric you recently passed upon them. The notion of Kruger making war upon England is one no sane man entertains. No just person can dispute his right to resist a war made upon him by England. The information I have leads me to believe that the Outlanders themselves do not desire war or rumours of war. Gold is their god, and they worship no other. The Transvaal population in Johannesburg is down on its luck. If they can get their dynamite cheaper and their railway rates lowered that is all they care about. Lionel Phillips, and not Leonard, really represents them. All they want is to be let alone. Like the "needy knife-grinder" no sense of wrong will rouse them to vengeance. And Milner will be as little able as Jameson to kick them into rebellion. The only party who really want a row are the official class at the Grape. They always like to lord it over mankind and magnify their position.

I have always believed that Rhodes since the Raid has been and still is the evil genius of S. Africa. He was a man of unlimited wealth and unlimited unscrupulousness—this gave him his power. But he is now found out, and his influence is only for mischief. I expect he will be beaten horse and foot at the next election. I know he is moving heaven and hell to win, but I see in yesterday’s paper that your two Dutch M.P.’s who gave evidence before the Committee have already received notice to quit from their constituents. I have formed a very mean opinion of Sprigg when I saw him in London... If you and Milner begin to demonstrate against the Transvaal you will most certainly greatly increase the triumph of the Dutch at the elections, and if Milner is supposed to favour such a policy the place will become too hot for him.

Of course much depends upon the future position of Rhodes. If his authority is re-established nothing will avert a war of races in South Africa. There is a blood feud between him and Kruger—which nothing will assuage. But the political existence of Rhodes depends on the success of Rhodesia. I believe it will end like the South Sea Bubble and Law’s Adventure. I can find no one whose opinion is worth having who believes in the gold of Rhodesia...

Rhodes is not really a clever man, or he would not have trusted his fate to Dr. Rutherford Harris and Flora Shaw. On the whole my strong advice to you is to let well alone. For the present at
least things seem to be progressing favourably. An increase of force at this moment will be construed by all parties as a provocation and a menace which will delight some, enrage others and alarm all.

You tell me that Leyds "was disappointed with his interview with the Opposition." You know me well enough to be aware that I was not likely to say anything which would increase the difficulties of the situation. I preached to him moderation and reforms. But at the same time I gave him the assurance that no hostile action was contemplated or would be tolerated in England towards the Government of the Transvaal. I should have thought I was doing a very ill service to South Africa if I had allowed myself to talk of "war with England" in the light-hearted manner of A. Milner. We have quite enough border warfare on our hands in India withoutcourting an additional dose of it in Africa.

Kruger has admitted the obligation to observe the Convention, and he has shown no disposition to violate it. If he does so it is not a "far cry" nowadays to Cape Town, and you can show your teeth in a very few weeks. To do so prematurely would be a great political blunder.

- You remember the days of 1878? What destroyed Beaconsfield after the triumph of Berlin was Lytton and the Afghan War followed by Bartle Frere in S. Africa. Don't let our friend A. M. take up the parable of Bartle Frere.

- I offer disinterested counsel. If I wanted (which heaven knows I do not) to be in your place, I should pray that you might follow the Beaconsfield legend.

Go up to the top of a high mountain in Switzerland and ponder the wise words of the prophet.

To this weighty admonition, Chamberlain, writing from Zurich, wrote an equally cordial and equally outspoken reply, for the full text of which I must refer the reader to Mr. Garvin's forthcoming Life of Chamberlain. He denied that he proposed to increase the forces in South Africa in any provocative way, defended Sir Alfred Milner against Harcourt's criticism, declared that he (Chamberlain) did not want war, because it would bring no credit and because without it the Transvaal was bound to become a part of a South African Federation. The issue resolved itself into a question of how best to deal with Kruger who, if "not a fool," was an obstinate, opinionated and intensely ignorant and narrow-minded man. On that question he and Harcourt differed. If he (Chamberlain) was a Jingo—
which of course he denied—Harcourt was a peace-at-any-
price man and would yield anything sooner than fight. 
That always led to war. As to Rhodes, he denied that he 
had praised him except for his past services. His political 
offences were gigantic, but they were not the sort of thing 
for which a man would be expelled from his club. I regret 
that I cannot quote the letter in full, for, taken with Har-
court’s, it presents the issue in South Africa with extra-
ordinary clearness and dispassionateness.

The situation there became increasingly confused by the 
‘defeat of Rhodes in the election in Cape Colony, and the 
consequent accession of W. P. Schreiner to the premiership. 
“The defeat of Rhodes pleases me vastly,” wrote Harcourt 
from Scotland to Lewis Harcourt. “It would have been a 
real disaster if he had won. I shall write a letter of con-
gratulation to Schreiner presently. He will no doubt be 
Prime Minister. It is a tremendous rebuff to Joe and what 
I regret more, to A. Milner, who has made a serious error 
in backing Rhodes, which I fear will seriously compromise 
his position. Altogether the Jingoites are having a bad bout 
of it.” Returning to Malwood, he plunged with redoubled 
energy into his battle with the bishops, and turned a deaf 
ear to the blandishments of Mr. Morley who had been 
discussing with Mr. Balfour the question of a Catholic 
University for Ireland. He had no love for denominational 
universities, and declined to help the Government. Let 
Haldane take the lead. “It will be an entertaining bear 
fight,” he said. Mr. Morley found his letter “a trifle less 
affable than usual.” “It must have been the fog which 
got into my brain as well as into my throat,” he replied. 
“Pray ascribe it to the liver rather than the heart. I 
confess it did rile me a bit that A. B. [Mr. Balfour] should 
expect me tuer ses marrons. . . . I cannot think that 
A. B. will touch the Catholic University unless he wishes to 
have a row. He had better stick to good golf and avoid 
bunkers.” His correspondence with Mr. Morley had re-
covered all its old intimacy and gaiety, and the discussion 
of many things from Herodotus to the iniquities of Cham-
berlain and the gloom that hung over the world proceeded in an atmosphere of mutual raillery. "Don't take your coat off, but follow my example and put on your dressing-gown," wrote Harcourt when urging Mr. Morley not to break his vows of silence in public on Fashoda. "I take your advice," replied Mr. Morley, "and have ordered my dressing-gown to be newly quilted for a quiet winter. The times become more and more demented." And again, "I would fain promise myself an unruffled sea for what remains of the luckless cruise that you and I have had to sail together," wrote Mr. Morley, to which Harcourt replied, "We are in the same boat, though not always tugging at the same oar." In this spirit of rather despairing jocularity the two friends approached the incident that was to close Harcourt's official career.
stood for in public policy. He was conscious that Liberalism was being honeycombed with the thing he most loathed, that the country was heading for war, that the Party to whose fortunes his whole career had been attached was breaking in two, and that if a crash came its most influential elements would be against him. "I have long known," he wrote to Mr. Morley (October 10), "that the chosen people of the Liberal Press and Party have addicted themselves to strange gods, and that we shall see at least as powerful a contingent of Liberal Jingoism as of Liberal Unionism—Khartum and Fashoda will rally the popular sentiment as much as Trafalgar and Salamanca. The Nile correspondence and the Sirdar will wipe out all the discontent at the Salisbury foreign policy. We shall either see the submission of France which will be popular, or a war with France, which will be more popular still." He was reminded by constant discussions in the Press that the Liberal leadership was still in commission awaiting the return of Lord Rosebery with a more enterprising attitude to the world than that which he represented, and he was aware of the intrigues that were afoot to hasten that happy consummation. From his colleagues on the Front Bench he always claimed to have received the most loyal support, but many of them, and these the most influential among the younger men, were notoriously friendly to a Rosebery leadership. His pride was wounded by the sense that he was supposed to be in competition for a thankless supremacy, and his self-respect by the knowledge that the organizers of the Rosebery movement designed that he, having led the Party in the wilderness, should be superannuated when it came into the promised land. He had made up his mind before the close of the Session of 1898 to end this intolerable situation. Among his colleagues Mr. Morley, his most intimate friend, shared most fully his feeling towards the perplexing problems of external policy. The breach in their friendship was long since healed. Mr. Morley, more than anyone else, had been responsible for the Rosebery premiership, but an entire community of feeling on foreign
policy had brought him decisively back to Harcourt's side, and he was as hostile as Harcourt himself to "the strange gods" to whom so many of the Liberal leaders seemed to be bowing a furtive knee. There is a passage in a letter from Mr. Morley to Harcourt on July 25 which shows that the latter had already opened his mind to him on the subject of retirement from the leadership of the House of Commons. "I do sincerely beg you," wrote Mr. Morley, "not to stir in that other business of which you spoke without giving me the chance of a word with you. Let it go on slumbering—though the provocation is doubtless intolerable."

It went on slumbering through the autumn, until two events awoke it to activity. The first was the intimation that the question of the leadership would be raised at a meeting of the National Liberal Federation at Birmingham. This alone would have given Harcourt the cue for a decisive step. He had no disposition to have his name bandied about at a public meeting as a candidate for a position which, when the time came, could only be filled by the Party in Parliament. The other consideration arose out of a more serious matter. The inevitable collision, which had been foreseen throughout the summer, of the British forces advancing into the Sudan and the French expedition advancing from the French Congo to the upper reaches of the Nile had taken place, and "Fashoda" was on every tongue. The news of the decisive battle of Omdurman was less than a month old when it became known that white men were in possession of Fashoda and had fired on a steamer of the Khalifa's on the Nile. On September 26 there appeared a telegram in the Daily Telegraph stating that Kitchener had been up the Nile to Fashoda, had there found Major Marchand in possession, had invited him to retire on the ground that it was Egyptian territory, that Marchand had declined, that thereupon the British and French flags had been hoisted side by side and that the question at issue had been left for decision to the governments in London and Paris.
There followed a period of extreme tension between the two countries, and for a time war seemed imminent. In the prolonged discussions that took place M. Delcassé, the French Foreign Minister, took the position that the Egyptian claim had lapsed, and that the French had as much right at Fashoda as anybody else. The British Government took their stand on the ground that the recognition of the French sphere north of Lake Chad had excluded any other Power than Great Britain from the occupation of "any part of the Nile Valley," and upon the statement of Sir E. Grey in 1895 that a French advance into the Nile Valley would be regarded as an unfriendly act. It will be remembered that that statement, made in Harcourt's absence from the House and without his knowledge, had been one of the chief sources of difference between him and some of his colleagues in the Rosebery Government. There came into the controversy also the unfortunate Anglo-Belgian Convention of 1894, which Harcourt had strenuously opposed, and which had practically fallen through. Harcourt's general attitude in the controversy was friendly to the Government. "In this particular case of Fashoda," he wrote to Mr. Morley (October 14), "the French Government have really by their previous argument put themselves out of court, and committed the blunder of claiming to occupy by their own right that which they themselves assert to be the continuing possession of Egypt." And in a speech at Aberystwith on October 28 he said:

... It has always been the great and patriotic tradition of this country for men of all parties, independent of political differences, in the presence of national difficulties and dangers, to give to the Government of the Queen their support in the maintenance of the rights of the Empire. At a moment such as the present, under a difficulty, especially with reference to the condition of the French Government to-day, I believe, altogether unexampled, such a duty is more than ever, in my opinion, urgent. I do not think I can add with advantage any argument or any statement to those which have been already made. The issues, the great issues, are now in the hands of responsible and capable men, to whom the fortunes of this country are entrusted. The responsibility is a heavy one, and, in my opinion, we should all abstain from language of vulgar
swagger, or of provocation, or of menace, which might embarrass their conduct or precipitate their action. They will, I hope and believe, be guided by the sincere desire, while firmly maintaining the national interests, to seek a peaceful and honourable conclusion of the difficulties with which they have to deal; and, if they do so, I am sure they will receive the sympathy and support of this nation.

But he was privately indignant at the tone of some of the ministers, and especially at that of Chamberlain. "Chamberlain is at his old game of rubbing vitriol into the French sores," he wrote to Mr. Morley (November 17). "I seem to hear a voice from the tomb [Gladstone's] murmuring 'mad and drunk.' His superfluous appeal to Germany, is the very thing to exasperate Russia and incline her to give active support to France, from which she has hitherto held back." It was not Chamberlain's utterances however which disturbed him most. Lord Rosebery had seized the occasion of a meeting of the Surrey Agricultural Association to intervene as being "ministerially and personally responsible" for the declaration of Sir Edward Grey in 1895, and had delivered a speech in which he said that "if the nations of the world are under the impression that the ancient spirit of Great Britain is dead, or that her resources are weakened, or her population less determined than ever it was to maintain the rights and the honour of its flag, they make a mistake which can only end in a disastrous conflagration." The speech was in tune with the mood of the hour, and when a little later Kitchener was entertained at the Mansion House Lord Rosebery divided with him the honours of the evening, while Harcourt was listened to with something like impatience.

These circumstances bringing out the fundamental fissure within the Party on foreign policy and recalling the attitude adopted by Lord Rosebery and the Foreign Office in regard to communications with the Leader of the House of Commons in 1895, led Harcourt to the conclusion that the moment had come for the step he had been contemplating. He discussed the matter fully with Mr. Morley, and writing to his sister, Emily, he said, "I write to you what is a professional secret to-day . . . the resolution I have come
to for some time with the entire approbation of Loulou and the rest of my friends that I would bring the Rosebery intrigue to an end by declaring that I will no longer continue the lead of the Liberal Party in the House of Commons, but remain there as an independent member to take my own course. It became necessary to announce this at once as it is proposed to raise the question of leadership at Birmingham next Friday." On December 14 the following letters were published in the Press:

Harcourt to Mr. Morley.

MALWOOD, December 8, 1898.—My dear John Morley.—I am informed that discussions are being raised, or proposed to be raised, in reference to the future leadership of the Liberal Party. It seems to be supposed that this is a question upon which I ought to feel a great personal interest and some anxiety. So far as it affects myself, I feel no anxiety on this matter. My record is clear, and my resolution is fixed to undertake no responsibility and to occupy no position the duties of which it is made impossible for me to fulfil. There are people who appear to consider that the office of a leader is one which offers such inducements as would inspire an ambition to be pursued by all means and at any sacrifice. You, at least, are not so unacquainted with the realities of public affairs as to suffer under such a delusion. The protracted labour, the constant anxiety, and the heavy responsibility of that situation are such as no man of sense or honour will undergo, except from a high sentiment of public duty.

For myself, the part that I have played in public life has been governed by a very plain and simple sense of obligation. In the later years of Mr. Gladstone's political life, both in Government and Opposition, he was good enough, with the concurrence of my colleagues, to commission me to render him a necessary, however inadequate, assistance in order to lighten his labours in the burdensome work of the House of Commons and elsewhere. When the time, so disastrous for the Liberal Party, arrived at which he took his final leave as its responsible chief, there were many considerations which would have led me to desire relief from the burdens of office. I determined not to yield to such temptations for two principal reasons: first, because I did not choose that it should be thought that I was governed by personal feeling; secondly, because in the face of a vast deficit caused by the necessary increase of naval expenditure for national defence I thought it my duty to remain at my post as Chancellor of the Exchequer, in order to establish the public finances upon a just and adequate basis in the Budget of 1894, which was then imminent. The task was not a promising
one in the presence of the powerful opposition by which it was encountered. Nevertheless, I felt it would have been cowardly to shrink from the risks and the labour which it imposed, and I resolved somewhat reluctantly to continue to discharge as leader of the House of Commons such duties as seemed to me most conducive to the interests of the Liberal Party, which for thirty years of parliamentary life it has been my constant object to sustain.

At the meeting of the Party (called jointly by Lord Rosebery and myself) on the retirement of Mr. Gladstone, we set forth at the Foreign Office our entire adherence to the principles and the policy which he had bequeathed to us. The late Government fought together through the Sessions of 1894 and 1895, under circumstances of unexampled difficulty, with a narrow and precarious majority the battle of Liberal principles, not, I am glad to remember, without some signal successes. After the great defeat of 1895, in which you and I suffered in common, there were not wanting again strong temptations to any who desired only their own comfort and freedom from toil and responsibility to abandon a defeated army to its fate. That was not a course which recommended itself to you or to me. We rallied the broken ranks and took our places again in the van of the Liberal fight. Even with our attenuated line we inflicted upon the overwhelming majority of the Government a remarkable defeat on the Education Bill of 1896. Our successes were due to the loyalty and united action of the Liberal Party in support of those who led their forces. It is only when such a spirit prevails that anything can be accomplished by a political party, whether in the days of its good or its evil fortune.

A party rent by sectional disputes and personal interests is one which no man can consent to lead either with credit to himself or advantage to the country. You and my other colleagues know well the desire I have ever felt, and the efforts I have made, to secure unity of action in the promotion of the common cause; to reconcile differences of opinion where they might arise; and to consult the sentiments and the feelings of those with whom it was my duty and my satisfaction to act. In this spirit of cordial co-operation, which I gratefully acknowledge, we have ever since the dissolution carried on the work of the Party.

It has been whispered by men who neither know nor care to know the truth that I have allowed personal considerations to influence public action. No man knows better than yourself the falsehood of these unworthy insinuations. If personal proscriptions have been insisted upon, as a ground for refusal of common action in the general cause, they have not proceeded from me. In my opinion such pretensions are intolerable, and, in common with my colleagues, I have always refused to recognize them.

I am not, and I shall not consent, to be a candidate for any contested position. I shall not be party to such a degradation of the
tone of public life in this country. I have been content to the best of my ability in any situation which fell to my lot, to do my duty towards the Party which it has been my pride and my pleasure to serve. If I have arrived at the conclusion that I can best discharge that duty in an independent position in the House of Commons, you will, I feel sure, agree that a disputed leadership beset by distracted sections and conflicting interests is an impossible situation, and a release from vain and onerous obligations will come to me as a welcome relief. I shall be glad if you will make this letter known at once in such manner as you may think fit, in order to remove any misapprehension as to my personal sentiments and position.

Yours very sincerely,

W. V. Harcourt.

Mr. Morley to Harcourt.

57, Elm Park Gardens, December 10, 1898.—My dear Harcourt,—I have read your letter with the concern naturally arising from the gravity of its contents. I cannot feel the smallest surprise that at last you have found it impossible to keep silence in a situation that may well have become intolerable to you. For months past I have often wondered at your steadfast reserve and self-command under the provocation of those "unworthy insinuations" to which you refer, and which, if you had ever thought it worth while, you could at any moment have blown to atoms.

Apart from considerations of self-respect and personal honour in any individual case, nobody on either side of politics can think it good for the credit of public life in this country, or for the character and repute of its public men, that a situation should be prolonged in which the leadership of what has been, and will be again, a great and powerful Party should be treated in a way so demoralizing both to the leaders and to the led. All who value the traditions that have made English public life the healthiest in the world will be glad that you have determined, so far as you are concerned, that these proceedings shall now come to an end.

Nobody who has any real knowledge of the circumstances either does or can suppose that, at a single point since Mr. Gladstone’s retirement in 1894, you were actuated by any other motives than those of genuine public spirit and unselfish zeal for the interests of the Party. If at that critical moment you had declined to go on as leader of the House of Commons and Chancellor of the Exchequer none of us would have had any right to complain. It was lucky for the Liberal Party that you did go on. If you had thrown up the Exchequer, as merely personal feeling might not unwarrantably have induced you to do, the country would have lost the most important contribution made to financial legislation for many a long year. The greatest of our legislative successes as a Party and an Administration was your success.
MR. MORLEY'S REPLY

As for events since 1895, the thing speaks for itself. Anybody who knows party history, and who also knows the condition of our Party after the election three years and a half ago, will agree that no leader of Opposition—not Peel after 1832, nor Mr. Disraeli in 1848 and onwards—ever undertook a more discouraging and difficult task than was laid upon you in 1895. The labour and the strain of such a post in such circumstances can only be known to those who have lived at close quarters to it. And there is in my mind something odious—I can find no other word—in telling a man who has strenuously faced all this, who has stuck manfully to the ship instead of keeping snug in harbour because seas were rough and skies dark, that his position in his party is to be incessantly made matter of formal contest and personal challenge. I remember that when you surrendered the leadership of the House before the elections of 1895 your last words in that capacity were something about its being the chief ambition of every man who has taken part in the noble conflicts of Parliamentary life, whether in majority or minority, to stand well in the House of Commons. We who sit there can see for ourselves how, leader of a minority as you are, you stand with both sides of the present House, politically hostile as the majority in it may be.

I know well enough, as you say, that there have been whispers about your singling out this personage or that as men with whom you would not co-operate. I also know how baseless these stories are; how precisely the reverse of the truth they are; how certain it is to anybody in accurate possession of the facts that it was not from you, at any rate, that attempts at proscription, as you call it, have proceeded. You and I have not always agreed in every point of tactics or of policy since you have been the working leader of the Liberal Party. For Government and Opposition alike the times have been difficult and perplexing, and diversity of view on sudden issues was not on either side of the House unnatural. But I am confident that every colleague we have, who has shared our Party counsels since the disaster of 1895, will join me in recognizing the patience, the persistency, and the skill with which you have laboured to reconcile such differences of opinion as arose and to promote unity of action among us.

We are now asked to dismiss all this from our minds, for no other reason that I know of than that you have not been able to work political miracles and to achieve party impossibilities. On the contrary, I for one feel bound to say how entirely I sympathize with the feelings that have drawn this letter from you. It has doubtless not been written without long and careful deliberation, and I believe that I shall be doing what you desire in making it public without unnecessary delay.

Yours sincerely,

JOHN MORLEY.
The announcement provided a political sensation of the first magnitude, and filled the newspapers for many days with speculation and controversy over the question of the leadership and the future of the Liberal Party. It was realized that behind the personal issue there was the much more serious question of the attitude of the Party towards foreign affairs, and especially in regard to the smouldering fire in South Africa. A proposal was made at the meeting of the Council of the National Liberal Federation that Harcourt should be asked to reconsider his decision, but this was very properly vetoed on the ground that the question of leadership was in the province of the representatives of the Party in Parliament. The general feeling among Liberals in the country was with Harcourt, and the Manchester Guardian expressed the view of the rank and file when it said, "The bulk of the Party knows nothing and cares nothing for personal intrigues, but it knows a strong man when it sees him, and if Sir William Harcourt still cares to lead, we believe the vast majority of the Party will stand by him." But in the Liberal Press in London Lord Rosebery and his policy had strong endorsement. The Daily Chronicle, under Mr. Massingham, it is true, had modified its attitude towards him in the light of the Imperialist tendencies of which he was the centre; but the Westminster Gazette and the Daily News were pro-Rosebery, the latter strenuously so. The new editor of the Daily News, E. T. Cook, had made that journal indeed the most powerful intellectual force on the side of the policy which Chamberlain, Rhodes and Sir Alfred Milner were pursuing in South Africa, and his hostility to Harcourt was quite frank and undisguised. "I am delighted to have unmasked the batteries of the Daily News and shown them up in their true light," Harcourt wrote to Mr. Morley in reference to the article on his resignation. "They hoped to lie low and wear me out in time. They are evidently well acquainted with the transactions of August 1895 (the proscription of Harcourt by Lord Rosebery), and fear their publication, which I expect will surely come about? . . . Now that the shot
is fired we may well sit quiet and look on at the results. I have shaken off the dust and shall turn to the Bishops.”

Harcourt was deluged with letters from his colleagues in Parliament and his admirers in the country, not least of all from his old officials at the Treasury. Francis Mowatt deplored that he could no longer look for another “Harcourt time” at the Treasury—“a time I look back to with the greatest admiration for the work done, and, if I may say so, with the most sincere respect and friendship for the man who did it. And you go at a time when fair trade, imperialism, bimetallism and God knows what other bogeys have their hands on the Treasury back-door handles.” Harcourt was entirely satisfied with the result of the explosion. It had brought the Liberal Party face to face with the issue that was undermining its solidity. Writing to Mr. Morley (December 21), he said:

**Harcourt to Mr. Morley.**

... The article in Tuesday’s Daily Chronicle is very significant. Friend Massingham has discovered that, as the gentleman in the Bigelow Papers says, the London editors “don’t know everything down in Judee,” and that the opinion of the Provinces is not for, but against, imperialism. I think the line we should take is adherence to the established tradition of the Liberal Party and insist that those who want Jingoism had better go to the right shop and point out the absurdity of our attempting to go one better than Chamberlain. ...

My table is covered this morning with applications to publish my forthcoming work The Life of Lord Bolingbroke! That masterpiece of literature is not at present in an advanced state. I might have some satisfaction in gibbeting the greatest scoundrel who ever adorned political life in this country, but I am withheld by a certain sense of shame at the reflection that an ancestor of mine was one of the triumvirate whose transactions are amongst the least creditable in the records of English statesmanship. It is not satisfactory to remember that they were the peace party of that day. ....

“If we manage well,” replied Mr. Morley (December 21), “we ought to give Liberal Jingoism its quietus for a long time to come, but it will need skill and wariness.” Two comments on his resignation gave Harcourt especial pleasure, one, that of Sir Edward Grey, and the other, that of Mr.
Balfour at Edinburgh. Speaking of the latter's "generous speech," he said, writing to Mr. Morley, "After all there is some advantage in being a gentleman and living with them! And Balfour is one of the rare men who make public life tolerable and even respectable." Writing on the general effect of the blow on the morning after, he said to Lewis Harcourt:

_Harcourt to his son, L. V. Harcourt._

_MALWOOD, LYNDHURST, December 14, 1898.—I was very glad to get your telegram this morning and to know that you are well satisfied as I am with the result of the torpedo. The shot has gone home between wind and water. The enemy has been taken by surprise and defeated just at the moment when they believed their game was safe. Nothing could have been better planned, better timed or better organized. Moltke could not have surpassed the strategy. But, my darling, I owe the chief part of it as always to your devotion and capacity. Tell Molly [Loulou had just become engaged to Miss Burns, the present Viscountess Harcourt] you are as good at business and politics as you are at love—and not so long in bringing off events.

You will see from J. M.'s letter that Asquith is rather in the dumps, as is not unnatural, as he knows what may be in store for him. I have written him a soothing letter.

Dear old Kimberley is very good, and so is the philosopher C.-B. You will observe that they and Bryce express no surprise.

Tweedmouth and Spencer for different reasons most discomposed. . . .

I feel very jolly as a free man—and shall watch the play from my stage box with much amusement. . . .

"To have found Loulou a wife and got rid of your faithless mistress [politics] in one month is very good work," wrote Mr. Reginald Brett [Lord Esher]. It would be difficult to say which fact contributed most to Harcourt's good humour, which bubbled over in all his letters at this time. "We are very happy here [Malwood] this Christmas with our two boys well and flourishing—rejoicing in my freedom and Loulou's slavery," he wrote to James. "He [Loulou] will not allow me the honourable retirement which you offer [James had suggested that he should go to the House of Lords], as he looks forward like a young Hannibal to replace Hamilcar in the House of Commons."
The sequel to Harcourt's resignation came in the following January when Mr. Morley followed his example and announced the close of his official association with the Party. In a speech at Brechin he said, "I will not go about the country saying fine things or listening to fine things about Mr. Gladstone, and at the same time sponging off the slate all the lessons that Mr. Gladstone taught us and all the lessons that he set." The split in the Liberal Party was complete, and events were soon to embitter it by the sharp challenge of war.
CHAPTER XXV

THE BATTLE WITH THE BISHOPS

The Benefices Bill—Correspondence with Creighton—Letter to The Times—Practices of Ritualism—The true Erastian principle.

I

MUST break the narrative of events at this stage to glance at a controversy in which Harcourt was the chief figure, and which continued from 1898 to 1900. No man ever loved an argument more or pursued it with more relentless enthusiasm than he did. He enjoyed it for its own sake, much as a dog enjoys a bone, not necessarily with the hope of extracting any nourishment from it, but for the pleasure of the exercise. In his letters to Mr. Morley while he was contemplating resignation he had pictured himself as Diocletian among his cabbages at Malwood, deaf to the temptations of the great world. He said that he would make "quite a spectacle Diocletian." His passion for Malwood and the gardens at Malwood was sincere enough, and he was never tired of singing the praises, not of his cabbages, but of his roses and his flowers, and stopping to say, as he walked round his garden borders with a friend, "What could be more enjoyable?" But these things were only the garnishing of his life, and he loved the battlefield too much to resist the appeal of Maximian to take a part in it, if not in the centre of the fight then on its fringes, if not as leader then as a free lance. And whatever the subject that engaged him, however apparently remote from the preoccupations of the public, the heartiness with which he flung himself into the conflict and the resounding emphasis of his blows made him the centre of the fray. If the subject was an indifferent subject, at least the fight was a good fight.
So it was in the controversy to which during these years he brought all his powerful gifts of argument and raillery and indignation. It is not necessary that I should enter at great length into his prolonged battle with the bishops. The subject with which it dealt has lost much of its reality to-day, and it does not belong to the main current of Harcourt's public life. The verdict of events has gone against him. Writing to him from Toronto, Goldwin Smith, his old colleague of forty years before, said (March 7, 1899), "A letter from me will come to you like a voice from the cemetery of the Saturday Review. I have been reading your letters to The Times. Of course you have entirely the best of it. The poor Bishops are creeping into holes to get out of the thunder." But though he won the argument—as he usually did—it cannot be said that he won the battle. Ritualism has established itself within the Anglican Church beyond any apparent likelihood of serious challenge. Harcourt's fight for the pure milk of Erastianism was a rearguard engagement, and the issue on which he fought has ceased to occupy the public mind.

But to Harcourt it was an issue of the first moment. "My creed in Church and State," he told Creighton, the Bishop of London, "is that of an old Whig and thoroughly consistent Protestant." He carried his constitutional doctrine into the realm of religion as remorselessly as he applied it to the proceedings of the Treasury. The national Church was to him as much a creation of Parliament as the Local Government Board, and he regarded any breach of the law within the Church with the same indignation as he would have felt at the disobedience of an under-secretary at the Admiralty or the Home Office. Liberty of opinion and freedom of conscience were cardinal articles of his creed, and though he was as sound a Church of England man as his grandfather, the Archbishop, had been, he had unqualified tolerance for Catholics, Dissenters, Jews or heretics. But within the Church he was the uncompromising guardian of the law, and would allow no quarter to those who trifled with its stern commandments. If men did not approve

VOL. II.  

II
of the law they had liberty to leave the Church and to worship under other sanctions, but so long as they remained in it, accepted its preferments and subscribed to its articles they must observe the statutory regulations laid down by Parliament. This had been his unchanging attitude throughout life. It formed a part of that eighteenth-century outlook which he was always proud to profess, whether in regard to politics, religion or matters of taste. His public career had opened in the midst of the "No Popery" agitation which followed the Oxford movement, and his first disagreement with Gladstone had been over the question of discipline in the Church. He had shared Disraeli's attitude to the "mass in masquerade," but in a spirit widely different from Disraeli's levity. To Disraeli one form of Christianity was probably as amusing as another, for at heart he was a Jew of the circumcision, but Harcourt's roots were deep in English thought and tradition, and loyalty to constitutional practice was a part of his religion.

It was natural, therefore, that with the revival of the agitation against the extension of ritualistic practices within the Church, Harcourt, contemplating a period of "more freedom and less responsibility," should decide that the rural occupations of Diocletian should be varied by a defence of the institution he loved against the foes within who seemed to be undermining its foundations. The crusade arose out of the Benefices Bill, which was itself a response to the agitation against the inroads which the High Anglicans of the English Church Union were making into the Protestant traditions of the Established Church. Harcourt's cardinal proposition in the discussions on the Bill was that there was an important and active party in the Church of England which was striving to bring public worship as close as possible to the usages and interpretations of the Church of Rome without admitting the papal authority, and he demanded the enforcement by the bishops of literal compliance with every jot and tittle of what was laid down in the Book of Common Prayer—in other words the strict enforcement of the Act of Uniformity. He carried the
controversy outside Parliament into the columns of *The Times*, to which he wrote a long series of letters, not quite so voluminous as those of "Historicus," but as full of precedents and dialectic, in defence of the position that the bishops were the depositaries of the law in the sense that their duty was to see that it was observed, but that their authority was derived from the Statute and that they had not the power to vary the Statute.

Here he was fundamentally at issue with a large number of persons who agreed with him in deprecating the use of confession, the reservation of the Sacrament, the recitation of prayers for the dead and the observance of other ceremonies which had been in use before the Reformation but had not been included in the Book of Common Prayer. In some of these matters, notably the use of confession, which is expressly permitted under certain circumstances in the office of Holy Communion, he went even further than moderate Churchmen were prepared to go. They argued with much show of reason that the absolute insistence on the rubric of the Book of Common Prayer, with the minimum of elasticity of interpretation, would be at least as distasteful to the "Protestant" wing of the Church of England as to the "Catholic" wing. But there was undoubtedly much anxiety as to the wisdom of permitting the approximation of the services of the Church of England to those of the Roman Catholic Church.

But Harcourt's contention of the narrow limits of the authority of the bishops, and his theory of the derivation of their powers from the Statute, ignored the authority which they held in the minds of devout Churchmen, the authority derived from their ordination and from their place in the whole of the Christian Church, which is, as Harcourt's opponents pointed out, an old institution dating from before the Reformation of the sixteenth century. Harcourt demanded that there should be uniformity in the Church, and declared that the Prayer Book itself had been drawn up with the intention of enforcing such uniformity.

A bishop, said Harcourt, had no right to allow or to
propose the use of any service outside those prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer except under certain conditions. Since this rule presented some difficulty in the matter of services which were necessary and did not conflict with the spirit of the Book of Common Prayer the Act of Uniformity of 1872 made special provision for the use of shortened services, for special services for special occasions, and for additional services on Sundays and holy days. These special services were regulated by the condition that they should not contain anything which was not in Holy Scripture or in the Book of Common Prayer. Now the Archbishop of Canterbury had interpreted this as meaning that nothing must be included which was not "parallel with the Book of Common Prayer"—an interpretation which to Harcourt seemed to leave the door open to the invasion of the Ritualists.

From this starting-point Harcourt advanced to an examination of the differences between the contending factions—the Confessional, the Holy Communion, the Reservation, of the Sacrament, the use of incense, and so on. Referring to the Reservation of the Sacrament and the solitary celebration of the Mass without communicants, he said:

... This was no question of mere ceremony or ritual. It went to the root of the whole sacramental doctrine on which the English Reformation hinged, and which opened the chasm which irretrievably divides the Protestant Church of England from the Church of Rome. It is the outward and visible sign of the *opus operatum* of the sacrificing priest—the most potent engine of priestcraft—as distinguished from the faithful communion of the congregation which is the cornerstone of the Protestantism of the English Church.

His claim was that the bishops' veto on prosecutions, which, in his opinion, had served as a shield for the practices of the "law breakers," should go, and the laity should have the power to intervene freely to defend the ecclesiastical law. The Church of England was not a priestly institution, but the Church of the laity, based on parliamentary sanctions and since the bishops had failed to secure obedience to the Act of Uniformity the task should devolve on the public.
Creighton, replying to Harcourt in the discussion of Church discipline in the House of Lords (February 9, 1899), asked:

What really is the state of things to which Sir William Harcourt wishes to go back? What is it that he is so anxious to revive? Is it the old days of Elizabeth and the old Tudor conception of what a bishop’s function is—that he should be the prosecuting officer on behalf of the police, benevolent and kindly, but none the less the policeman established by the State for the purpose of dealing with the clergy who transgress by a hair’s breadth the narrow line of uniformity then laid down? . . . The bishops . . . have not tried to go beyond the limits of that common sense, and they have not ventured to fall back upon the maxims of ecclesiastical autocracy with which your lordships would have been the first to twit them if they had attempted to act upon them. . . .

Harcourt did not want prosecution, but deprivation, and showed from a correspondence with Sir F. Jeune, who had acted for the Protestants in the Maconochie case, that that procedure was effective. It would have stamped out the law-breaking practices, but for the decision of the bishops to shut the gates of the law. He did not want to make martyrs, but he did want to exclude from the Church those who sought to subvert it to Romish practices.

Apart from his letters to the Press and his activities in Parliament, Harcourt carried on an enormous private correspondence with the Bishop of Winchester (the present Archbishop of Canterbury), with Creighton (Bishop of London) and with other dignitaries of the Church. The discussions with Creighton were not without humour. Thus, writing to Harcourt (August 24, 1900), Creighton, maintaining that prosecution would hinder rather than promote order in the Church, said:

The Bishop of London to Harcourt.

. . . With this explanation I will venture one or two remarks about Church matters—simply because you are obviously interested in them and it is natural that you should deal with them as you would with any corresponding political question. But bishops cannot do so. They are dealing with tendencies of thought, which require

1 Lawlessness in the National Church. Reprinted from The Times. Macmillan, 1899.
gentle handling. If speculation has taken a wrong turn it cannot be diverted all at once by heroic measures. Men who have made a mistake, who have gone further than they intended, can easily be stratified into obstinacy, but can only gradually be persuaded to withdraw from a position which has to be proved to be untenable. You object to the bishops that they do not deliver frontal attacks. Their answer is—This is not the way to victory.

... There are only two ways of dealing with religious opinions—that of Gamaliel and that of the Inquisition. I always regard Gamaliel as the first exponent of Liberal opinions. This is why I have ventured to trouble you with this letter. We have to put up with a great deal in consequence of the English conception of liberty of opinion. We have to take it all round, in things we like and in things we don't like. Bishops are not autocrats; for polemical purposes it is convenient to treat them as such. The horrible principles of constitutional government have, unfortunately affected the Church in England. I for one am glad of it.

In the course of his reply, Harcourt said:

... Instead of the examples of the fathers of the English constitution you offer me Gamaliel as the "first exponent of Liberal principles." There is some ambiguity in the scriptural account of the doctrine and the results of the teaching of this eminent Professor. His young disciple Saul tells us that he sat at his feet and was "taught according to the perfect manner of the law," with the result that he persecuted them "even unto death, binding and delivering into prison both men and women," and it required a miracle to convert Paul from the lessons of this "first exponent of Liberal principles." But as you probably refer to another passage (Acts v. 34), when that "doctor of the law" advised the people not to slay Peter and the other Apostles, his moderate counsel seems to have succeeded in repressing their bloodthirsty counsels easily enough, especially as Peter and the other Apostles were not incumbents of the Jewish Church, but simple Nonconformist fishermen entitled to the freedom of their own speculation. If they had been priests in the Jewish establishment Gamaliel might perhaps have reminded them of the fate which overtook the "liberal principles" of the Primate Eli. However, for my part I go further in the way of Liberalism than Gamaliel, by whose advice the people were content to "beat Peter and let him go." I would stop short of the beating even of the successor of Peter's Chair, but I would certainly let his followers go or even make them go out of the offices which they disloyally hold. But are you sure that the policy you advocate is not rather that of another distinguished scriptural character who was not a professor but a judge, and who cared for none of these things but "drave" the complainants "from the judgment seat."...
The correspondence with Dr. Davidson had a less lively character. It was of enormous length, and was conducted on both sides with good temper and a large measure of agreement, though the Bishop of Winchester showed with much force the difficulty of applying the principle of uniformity to modern conditions and expanding needs. Harcourt’s earlier letters to The Times on the subject were published in book form, and formed the basis of the Protestant case during the continuance of the agitation. The effect of the crusade was limited. Harcourt failed in his attempt to get up a popular demand for drastic methods against the offending clergyman who should speak a word that was not in "the schedule of the Statute" (his description of the Book of Common Prayer); but he admittedly strengthened the re-assertion of the law, checked, if only temporarily, the growth of ritualistic practices, and secured a larger measure of obedience from the clergy. But seen across the intervening space of years, it is undeniable that Harcourt’s prodigious polemics were in vain. They were in vain because his ‘Erastianism refused to apply the only remedy that could meet the case—the remedy of freeing the Church from the dead hand of the State. The lesson of the controversy was not the wisdom of attempting to keep the Established Church within the strait-waistcoat of sixteenth-century formularies; nor the practicability of remodelling the Prayer Book to cover the comprehensiveness of the modern Church and all the varieties of its development. The lesson that remained, for Ritualists and Protestants alike, was the necessity of releasing the Church from parliamentary control and leaving it to function, free and unencumbered, in the realm of spiritual ideas.
CHAPTER XXVI

THE SHADOW OF WAR


Meanwhile, events in the political field were moving with gathering momentum. The crisis within the Liberal Party had reached the stage of open rupture between the two schools. Mr. Morley’s resignation, following upon that of Harcourt, had made Imperialism the cardinal issue before the Party, and the immediate struggle turned upon the succession to the leadership in the House of Commons. Many of the Liberals in the House were anxious to call Harcourt back and to form a new party; but neither Harcourt nor Mr. Morley was disposed to take this course. "I think with downright horror of what another Session would have been on the old terms," wrote Mr. Morley to Harcourt (January 23), "and you have at least as many reasons as I have, and more, for satisfaction at what has been done." Harcourt indicated the finality of his decision by leaving England for a long holiday in Italy. Three names were discussed in connection with the leadership of the Party in the House of Commons, those of Mr. Asquith, H. H. Fowler, and Campbell-Bannerman; but before the Liberal members met at the Reform Club on February 6 the first two names had been withdrawn, and the choice fell upon Campbell-Bannerman.
The first business of the meeting was to pass a vote in recognition of the services rendered by Harcourt to the Liberal Party, and there was a struggle over the proposal to include in it a declaration of "continued confidence" in him. This would have made the rupture between the two camps final, and the vote was confined to less challenging terms. After the meeting had elected Campbell-Bannerman to succeed Harcourt, the new leader paid a generous tribute to his predecessor, in the course of which he said, "Sir William Harcourt's commanding personality, his great knowledge of affairs, his keen political perception, his powers of debate, the strenuous energy of his onslaught on a political opponent, made him as a political combatant a man with few equals; and the deplorable loss of such a man from the head of the Party—from our head—is one which we cannot fully expect to make good." Writing to Harcourt about the meeting, Mr. Morley said:

Mr. Morley to Harcourt.

57, Elm Park Gardens, February 8, 1899.—So far as I can gather, the meeting at the Reform was a flat affair—everybody being afraid of an open quarrel. J. E. Ellis and Scott both said to me that it was undoubtedly Harcourtian in sentiment. Everybody confesses to me that if you could have been recalled, you would have been hailed with universal acclamation—like Napoleon when he landed pretty near the spot where you will receive this. . . .

The insertion of the "confidence" was much opposed before the meeting by Tom Ellis on behalf of the leaders!!!! Now I wonder why?

The House was very good-humoured yesterday. C.-B. was very clever—easy, amusing—and a success, as we knew he would be. His passage on the retention of the Sudan, etc., was first-rate. But of course it was dead in the teeth of all that has been said by Rosebery, Grey and Asquith. . . . Our colleagues greeted me civilly enough in the lobby, and Grey went out of his way, like the good fellow he is, to talk on the old terms. . . .

"The deliverance from Westminster is blissful," wrote Harcourt to Labouchere. Apart from giving Creighton "an Ahab for his Elijah," he was devoting himself entirely to the delights of Rome. Italy he had visited off and on for fifty years, and no country outside his own held so high a
place in his affections; but this was the first occasion on which he had been to Rome, and he revelled in an experience which appealed to the passion for history which was one of the most enduring of his intellectual interests. Writing to Mr. Morley, he said:

\textit{Harcourt to Mr. Morley.}

\textbf{Hotel Royal, Rome, February 25, 1899.}—... Cato did not learn Greek till he was past seventy, and I have reserved Rome for a similar maturity. I seemed to know it all by heart before I came, and it is as entrancing in the reality as in the imagination. I did not expect to admire St. Peter's and therefore I was not disappointed. It seems to have no merit but bigness—which is not the most admirable of qualities. It appeared to me cold and garish. I have never been much of a Michael Angelo man, he has too much muscle and too little beauty, and therefore the Sistine Chapel did not impress me greatly. The Raphaelcs of the Stanze are lovely but like old beauties gone in the complexion, and the arabesques of the Loggie have altogether perished. But the real old Rome entrances me, the Capitol, the Forum and the Palatine are "all my fancy painted," and the beautiful Church of the Ara Coeli, the Statue Galeries of the Capitol and the Vatican are beyond all praise. It makes one feel that after all there was some use in spending the best years of one's life in the study of the people who are capable of such creations. The Coliseum has been dreadfully spoiled by the scraping and the repairs. I have now been here five days and taken a superficial glance at the main objects including the Appian Way, with a beautiful drive in the direction of Frascati. And I shall now settle down to a more accurate study of the things I most care about. I have not yet kissed the Pope's toe, but hope to see him celebrate the anniversary of his coronation in the Sistine Chapel next week....

While he was "settling down to a more accurate study" of the things he cared about in Rome, the situation was developing at Westminster. There was a vote on the Sudan which brought the cleavage between the two sections of the Liberal Party on to the floor of the House, and incidentally placed the new leader definitely on the side of the anti-Imperialists. Sir Edward Grey had delivered a speech which was regarded by the Liberals as "very Jingo." "Then C.-B spoke," wrote Labouchere in describing the scene to Harcourt. "Up to the end we all expected that he would vote with the Government. I think that he hardly knew himself what he meant to do. We vigorously
cheered all allusions on our side, and there was a dead silence on our side and cheers on the other when he went against us. . . . The division was really better than it appeared, for on Friday many leave town." ¹ The new leader was "generally beaten in debate by Balfour," and the Liberals did not like this; but on the other hand he was moving in his steady, imperturbable way to the side of the anti-Imperialists, and Harcourt was well pleased with the reports that reached him of the tendencies within the Party and of the attitude of his successor. "I am well pleased at the reaction which the secession of Morley and myself has brought about," he wrote Labouchere from Rome (March 12). "It has reversed the wheels which were running down a steep place. There is uncommonly little now heard of the Rosebery-cum-Grey-cum-Fowler gospel." And to his sister he wrote at the close of a panegyric on Rome, "I am highly satisfied with the Harcourt-Morley show— which has routed the Liberal Jingo party." He looked to the serious financial situation to "open folks' eyes" to the meaning of a policy of adventure. The great surplus he had left behind him at the Treasury had disappeared, and there was a prospective deficit of five millions in spite of the fact that the death duties had already revealed a productive power beyond his most extravagant expectations. He decided to make his reappearance in the House in time to resume, as a private member, his favourite rôle

¹ In a letter to Harcourt describing this memorable debate Mr. Morley said (February 24):

Grey. He never spoke better in his life. Made the case for the Government better by far than any of them could have done. Much cheered by them. Then Labouchere more suo on which I need waste no words.

Then C.-B. Nobody knew on the bench what he would do. He said to somebody that he should not make up his mind until he rose. We listened for a quarter of an hour, without an idea which way he would go. "I made sure he would go with Grey. No, he came with me!! Immense sensation. One of the most dramatic things I have ever seen. A. J. B. said to me afterwards—"Could not have been worse done. He ought to have taken a line firmly and strongly in his speech, if he was going to vote with you." Quite true.
as the champion of public economy. "I am making preparations for departure from this glorious place," he wrote to Mr. Morley from Rome (April 1), "where I have spent I think six weeks of the happiest time of my life." He had not been able wholly to escape politics, for the Italian politicians, complaining that England had betrayed the interests of Italy to France in the hinterland of Tripoli, came and poured forth their woes to him. "Baron Franchetti attacked me so fiercely at dinner and declared that Italy would cast England off," he wrote to Mr. Morley, "that I expressed my regret, and added that 'Inghilterra fara da se,' a mot which has gone round Rome."

II

Harcourt's return was well timed, for the Budget, with its enormous increase of expenditure, its proposals for new taxation and its suspension of the sinking fund, created a bad impression on the public mind, and gave special significance to his reappearance. The House was crowded when he entered it on April 13, and his presence was the occasion of a remarkable demonstration. "One personality and one alone dominated the House to-night," says a contemporary record. "It was that of Sir William Harcourt. Even the introduction of the Budget failed to eclipse as an event of interest the return of the distinguished wanderer. It was for the reappearance of Sir William Harcourt that the House was crowded during prayers, for him that members craned their necks to catch a first glimpse of the stately form, for him, too, that the most resonant cheer of the night rang forth when, after a period of nervous expectancy, he at length came in and quietly took his seat." He passed by the Front Opposition Bench and took his place in the next seat but one from the end of the bench beside Mr. Morley, with whom he exchanged warm greetings amid the cheers of the House. "This," continues the record, "was only the first stage in the welcome of Sir William. One

ex-minister after another pressed forward to shake him by
the hand, and then to the delight of members, all of whom
were watching the curious scene like spectators at a play,
Mr. Chamberlain tripped nimbly across the floor, squatted
on the gangway steps by the side of Mr. Morley, and stretch-
ing over in front of that gentleman, scized Sir William Har-
court's hand and gave it quite a demonstrative squeeze.”
After the introduction of the Budget he rose when the House
was empty, and at the news of his rising all the benches
suddenly overflowed with members. His speech was brief,
but impromptu and therefore in his best vein. Speaking
of the suspension of the sinking fund, he said, “The Govern-
ment have gone in for a policy of blood and glory, and now
they want to bilk the bill.” Sheridan once remarked that
the worst of all possible courses was to muddle away your
income by paying your debts. “That,” he said, “seems
to be the opinion of Her Majesty’s Government.” In this
gay, rattling mood he raked the Ministry fore and aft, and
at the close was again the centre of a remarkable demon-
stration. “Altogether it was quite a Harcourt night,”
says the description from which I have quoted. “I had a
grand reception on my return to the House of Commons
on Thursday last from both sides, and my attack on the
Budget in a ten-minute speech was a great success,” he wrote
to his wife.

A week later, when he resumed the attack in a considered
speech, he surprised and delighted the House by his evidence
of recovered power. “He seems to have gained twenty
golden years back from all-devouring time.” (I quote from
the description of the speech in the Daily Chronicle of
April 21.) “It was the best possible ‘Harcourteuse’—the
easy, familiar dressing of a complex financial argument,
the ready aptness of quotations, the swift passing of the
interrupter, the homely, and yet deadly thrust. The
House knows that style of old—there is no letter of that
alphabet that they have not spelled. They enjoy it like
men returning to an old vintage—who have strayed into a
vineyard when they thought to find a desert. The House
roared with laughter on all sides—the Liberals shouted with joy. But the Government grew more restless as the attack developed and the assault grew fiercer; for it was the most deadly criticism of the Session. It was, of course, all aimed at the sinking-fund raid, and the arguments used for it. The Chancellor must be sorry he spoke; for every argument was turned against him with fatal precision. Sir Michael had argued that he reduced the fund to make the rest safer. If that is so, said Sir William, your argument applies to the whole. 'Strike off three millions more, and then the three millions left will be perfectly safe; leave none, and it will be absolutely secure.' 'It is the case of the artichoke—leaf by leaf.' 'The White Man's burden is—the suspension of the sinking fund.' 'We had our faults, but we were incapable of your financial poltroonery.' 'It is an ignominious Budget.' Let these be some specimens culled from a fine speech—the finest speech that Sir William Harcourt has made for many years, and one that will set him back in the public eye and regard as the foremost living parliamentarian.'

It is not necessary to pursue the fight over the Budget through its various stages; it is enough to say that the formidable attack which Harcourt conducted left, on the one hand, the Government substantially weakened and, on the other, the anti-Imperialist Liberals in a markedly improved position as far as the Party outlook was concerned. It was obvious that Harcourt had not returned with the intention of becoming "a respectable Diocletian" among his cabbages. He had renounced the leadership at an age and in circumstances which practically precluded the idea of a resumption of it; but the fact that he was no longer personally involved strengthened his influence in a matter which still engaged his mind. He was resolved that the Party should not fall under the sway of the Liberal Imperialists, and he threw all his weight into the scale on the side of Campbell-Bannerman. To the Liberal Imperialists the leadership of Campbell-Bannerman was only a temporary episode which would fill up a tiresome interval before the
return of Lord Rosebery to supremacy in the counsels of the Party. It was Campbell-Bannerman's good or evil fortune always to be underrated by clever people. They mistook his character and they mistook his understanding. They regarded him as a genial, good-natured, but simple-minded man, whom circumstances had pitchforked into an eminence for which he was entirely unfitted. It took years for them to discover that behind that plain and unpretentious exterior there dwelt, as in the case of Lincoln, one of the firmest wills, one of the most sagacious minds, and one of the noblest and most disinterested characters that have appeared in the long record of British politics. Harcourt had never been under any misapprehension as to the real qualities of Campbell-Bannerman, and he knew perhaps better than anyone else the strength of his anti-Imperialist convictions. He was content to have so stout a figure blocking the path to a Rosebery revival, the prevention of which was now his principal motive in politics.

The issue between the two camps became intensified as the summer advanced, and open hostilities were declared by Lord Rosebery when, in a speech at the City Liberal Club on May 5, he urged the formation of a new party which would embody all the elements that existed before 1886 and that would give a prominent place to "the factor of the larger patriotism that I have called Imperialism." He emphasized his antagonism to the "Little Englanders" by attacking Mr. Morley's reported attitude—based on the incident of the Mahdi's head—to the vote to Lord Kitchener which, he said, he did not believe, "because it seems to me so incredible." Next day at a meeting of the Welsh parliamentary party Harcourt retaliated in strong terms. What Lord Rosebery was asking for was the wiping out of the

1 Wilfrid Lawson, the "Lobby Laureate," enlivened the controversy with some lines in which he said:

I gather it is Rosebery's creed
That larger patriots we need

Harcourt appears on casual view
The larger patriot of the two.
Radical programme—Welsh disestablishment, land reform, temperance reform and the question of the veto of the House of Lords. "All this came from one who was one of the principal colleagues of Mr. Gladstone, one who was a party to all of that which it was now sought to obliterate." From this he passed to a eulogy of Campbell-Bannerman, declaring that what they wanted in a leader was a man who said to his troops, "Go forward," and not one who was prepared to invite them to the rear. If the Liberal Party allowed itself to be destroyed by such counsels as he had referred to it would deserve to be destroyed. Lord Rosebery replied with a gibe about a party disheartened "by a superfluity of retired leaders," "disembodied spirits" who hovered over the scene, while Mr. Morley retorted with his famous description of Lord Rosebery as "a dark horse in a loose box." "Bravo Bravissimo!" wrote Harcourt. "Nothing could be better. I shall only have to follow haud passibus aquis. The 'dark horse in a loose box' will be immortal." He followed with a speech (May 31) in West Monmouthshire, in which, referring to the now all-absorbing topic of Litt'e Englandism and Imperialism, he said:

... What is this Imperialism which, in the slang of the day, is paraded as the highest form of patriotism? I laugh sometimes when I hear myself and others denounced as "Little Englanders." I confess I did not know that there was a "Little England" to belong to. I always thought that England was the greatest, the most extensive, the most powerful, the most famous nation in the world; that it was one of which any man might be proud to be a citizen and have no cause to be dissatisfied. (Cheers.) Little England, forsooth! Where is it? If I desire (which I do not) to be a Little Englisher, I must cease to be a British citizen, because being a British citizen I am necessarily a Great Englisher, a citizen of a great Empire. (Cheers.) . . .

But what does that Imperialism you hear so much about mean? If it means pursuing a policy which is the wisest and best for that great Empire to which we belong, of course we are all Imperialists in that sense. But then remains the practical question—what is the policy of Imperialism? It is a policy which has its first regard to the consolidation of the vast dominions, the countless millions, and the varied interests which compose our unequalled Empire, the development of their resources, the lightening of their burdens,
the fostering of their natural growth, the relief of distress within it, and the raising of the standard of all sorts and conditions of men who are the subjects of the Queen. That is Imperialism as I understand it. That is a policy which makes the Empire great and keeps it so.

There is another and exactly opposite view of imperial policy. It is to postpone and subordinate all these objects to vanity, to the acquisition of fresh populations, the adoption of additional burdens—that is the extensionists' theory, and the extensionists, it seems to me, are extremely like what in currency are called the inflationists, who are of opinion that the more paper you issue the more wealth you create and the more prosperity you will have. Well, I am not an inflationist in currency, and I am not an extensionist. In my judgment, at least, it is a greater and a wiser policy to cultivate an Empire than to boom an Empire. . . .

To these ends (the ends of the Imperialists) the principal genius of administration and the energies of Parliament are directed. Social reforms are neglected. Indeed, Mr. Chamberlain told us, in a scornful tone, that to talk of their social reforms was merely "parochial," and that what we ought to occupy ourselves with is this inflated Imperialism. Now, what is the end of that? It means that the Empire is committed to land speculators, to mining syndicates, and that they are to determine the limits of the Empire and the methods of its administration. They are not particular—we all know that—as to the methods to be employed. "Expansion, at any rate, at whatever cost, and by whatever means." That is the sleeping genie. (Laughter.) Well, sometimes I think it might be better if it took a little more sleep. (Renewed laughter.)

III

The breach which had now passed beyond the possibility of healing was aggravated by the gathering menace in South Africa, which was bringing the issue between Lord Rosebery and Harcourt to the touchstone of peace and war. How dark the outlook had become was apparent to Harcourt in July. Writing to Lewis Harcourt, he said:

Harcourt to his son, L. V. Harcourt.

MALWOOD, July 6.—. . . I had a very serious conversation with the Chancellor of the Exchequer at his garden party in Downing Street yesterday. I said the Tithes Bill was my only triumph for the Session unless there was to be a vote of credit on the Kruger war. To my astonishment and dismay he replied very gravely that "this was unfortunately very possible." I could see he was greatly troubled, which was all the more significant as they had very recently had a Cabinet. I spoke to him very strongly and said, "You

VOL. II.

K K
could prevent it if you chose." He replied, "No, I could not even if I were to resign." I said, "You will have a heavy responsibility." He admitted that the opinion of the country was greatly divided. I said, "The Crimean War was a blunder; this would be a crime," from which he did not dissent, but added that it was an "exact reproduction of the state of affairs with Bartle Frere in 1879," and said, "I have no doubt if you wished it you might be in office in two years." I said, "It is the last thing I wish, but if you go to war it will be in six months rather than two years." The whole conversation left a very bad impression on my mind, as Beach was very grave and evidently wished me to understand how great the danger was. The news this morning as to Hofmeyr's reception seems more reassuring. But Beach knows and the Press does not.

Donald Mackenzie, who by the by told Lily (Lady Harcourt) he had left The Times, declares that the real firebrand is A. Milner...

The meeting between Kruger and Lord Milner had taken place at Bloemfontein on May 31, but no modus vivendi was reached, and through June and July the controversy between the two Governments continued in an ominous atmosphere of acerbity. It turned mainly on the questions of the franchise and the suzerainty. Chamberlain's proposal was that the franchise should be conceded on naturalization; Kruger's proposal postponed the franchise to newcomers for five years, and to those who were in the Transvaal before 1890 to two years. On the question of suzerainty the Boers took their stand on the Convention of 1884. The dispatch of three batteries of artillery to South Africa in July brought the shadow of war visibly nearer. Harcourt had clung to the belief that the defeat of Rhodes in Cape Colony had "practically defeated aggressive policy on the part of Chamberlain and Milner." "They dare not," he said (April 26), "fly in the face of the Cape Parliament." But this confidence was unwarranted. By the end of July the question of peace and war was plainly in the balance. There was a debate on the 28th, but Harcourt took no part in it. Mr. Morley urged him to intervene. "Depend upon it, dear Harcourt," he said, "twenty minutes or half an hour from you to-morrow would be worth silver and gold." But Harcourt was against "an impotent attack on the
Government whilst their cards are still concealed. It would not tend to induce J. C. [Chamberlain] to 'speak with decency and temper'; on the contrary it would provoke him to throw down the glove and break the windows. . . . A great majority will be taken to express the feeling of the country in favour of J. C. which does not exist, and will make the South African Jingoës more imperative in their demands and the Government less able to oppose them."

The peace influences were still powerful. Harcourt had feared another "Fashoda demonstration" from Lord Rosebery; but this fear was unfounded. Campbell-Bannerman declared that there was no case for war or the idea of a threat of war. And in the Cabinet itself there were cross-currents, Salisbury and Mr. Balfour being supposed to be trying to hold Chamberlain's hand. The discussion on the question of an impartial commission was proceeding, and public opinion was lulled by the belief that the concessions which the Boer Government now appeared to be ready to make must render war impossible. Harcourt seemed to share this view. "Altogether I don't doubt that the real policy of the Government is to bluff Kruger and not to fight him," he wrote to Mr. Morley (July 30). He was confirmed in the opinion that there would be no war by the information that "the Beits and the other millionaires" were now dead against matters being pushed further, that comparatively few Outlanders desired to change their nationality, and that "the entire agitation was based on an attempt by Rhodes to get South Africa into turmoil in the hopes of upsetting Schreiner and his majority in the Cape." In this mood of confidence, Harcourt turned with renewed vigour to his controversy with the bishops. "I am deep in Protestant Liberalism," he wrote to his son (August 8), "and am going on Thursday to — — — whom I shall propose for the stake—dragged there by a donkey. I think we have got these Romanizers now fairly on the hip, and I do not see how they can escape."

He was still concerned at Chamberlain's "offensive and
provocative" language, but "after the concession of the whole of Milner's terms they dare not make war," he said to Mr. Morley (August 9). But Mr. Morley a week later was alarmed at the outlook, and again urged Harcourt to act. "You are the man, for a vast number of reasons, and I begin to feel that now is the hour," he wrote (August 16). "I beg you to think very seriously of this. If last year some people emerged from their firesides with a blazing torch, surely it is the right and the duty of other people this year to waken the constituencies out of this paralysing nightmare." But Harcourt still preached quiescence. He replied:

_Harcourt to Mr. Morley._

MALWOOD, August 18. — . . . I am greatly impressed by the belief that any move upon our part at this particular moment would only enable Chamberlain to evolve a popular outbreak of the anti-Kruger party, which would strengthen his hands in the policy of, provocation upon which he is bent and weaken the position of those in his own party who are willing to restrain him. . . . I have at present fixed the end of September for a visit to West Monmouth, when it is possible that more light will be thrown on the course of the Government. If things come to extremity nothing would serve their purpose better than to cast on us the blame of a breach which they could lay at our door.

The Government, I think, has done nothing so bad as the retirement of Butler from the command.

If it turns out that the last proposals of Kruger are endorsed by the Orange State and the Cape Parliament I think it impossible that the Government can come to blows with the Dutch people. . . .

Mr. Morley agreed that "at the instant nothing could be said," but he added, "my conscience pricks me when I see this infernal villainy going on."

On August 26, at a garden party at Highbury, Chamberlain delivered a menacing speech in which he spoke of Kruger dribbling out reforms "like water out of a squeezed sponge," of the "sands running down in the glass," and so on; but two days later he sent "a qualified acceptance" of the Boer proposals. Harcourt still held his hand. He was convinced that the "stupendous wickedness of war would be avoided," though "Chamberlain was "no doubt
doing all he could to provoke a conflict.” “Your responsibility is heavier than mine,” replied Mr. Morley, “so you are very likely right to hold back, tho’ I wish after J. C.’s speech you had felt otherwise. I will be as reasonable as possible. But really after the talk about the hour-glass it is not right to leave the Party without a ray of light. (Instead of an hour-glass a good old eight-day clock would be more to the point.)” At Mr. Morley’s request for hints for a speech in Scotland, Harcourt sent him a memorandum in which he stated the issue at length, adding, “Fancy a Tory Government going to war with an oligarchy because they take a few months to consider the terms in which they shall consent to a large admission of hostile aliens to political power. I wonder the memories of 1832, 1866 and 1884 do not choke them.” “Many thanks, my dear Harcourt, for your excellent memorandum which will keep me straight,” replied Mr. Morley. “But it only makes me groan the louder that you don’t go to Wales, instead of my going to Scotland.” In a further memorandum Harcourt put his finger on what seemed to him the sinister part of the business, as indicating a deliberate purpose of war:

... The position taken by Milner from the first was to insist on the franchise alone as the means of settling all the particular grounds of complaint. But as soon as the point is reached of Kruger’s consenting to the terms demanded by Milner Chamberlain starts the new demand that “other matters of difference between the two Governments which will not be settled by the franchise” are to be raised, and that “it is necessary that these should be settled concurrently with the matters now under discussion.”

“Truly a great speech” was Harcourt’s comment on Mr. Morley’s deliverance against war at Arbroath on September 5. “Nobody’s approval is more pleasant to me, nor in truth half so pleasant as yours,” replied Mr. Morley; “partly because you are an expert, partly because you are the most generous of critics, and lastly because we have fought so many battles side by side for thirteen years and more, not to speak of a battle or two with one another. I think that between us, we have made out
a case which the Jingoes won’t easily meet. . . . What can to-morrow’s Cabinet be about? To put a sword in J. C.’s hand? Hardly. . . .” Next day he heard that J. C. had had “a check” in the Cabinet, and the negotiations continued. Harcourt at last broke silence in a speech at Tredegar, in which he maintained that Chamberlain’s suzerainty claim was inadmissible, the word having been expressly struck out in the Convention of 1884. On the other hand the Transvaal could not claim to be a sovereign state, for it had surrendered its treaty-making power. He spoke of the Boers’ proposals in regard to the franchise favourably, recalled Chamberlain’s declaration in May 1896, that war with the Transvaal would be “as immoral as it was unwise,” referred to the provocations given to the Boers, the Jameson Raid and so on, and concluded with a passionate protest against war:

. . . A war waged for what? For the details of a franchise bill, for a difference of two years in the qualification. . . . A war between the English and Dutch races throughout South Africa, which when your superiority is asserted, as of course it will be—will leave behind it an inheritance of undying hatred in the hearts of the people among whom you will still have to live, such a war will be a dreadful close to an expiring century and a glorious reign.

“Excellent and admirable, my dear Harcourt,” wrote Mr. Morley on the speech (September 21). “It exhausts the case. Its weight must be felt in every quarter; its fullness of fact, its soundness of argument, its seriousness. Now I am really content. It cannot be answered. You see how limp the truculent Times is. The moment is as good as can be, for the tide is on the turn in the country, and will soon be racing. Your speech will mightily affect the Cabinet to-morrow. . . .”

Harcourt’s intervention cleared the air in the Liberal camp. “It is plain that there will be plenty of cross-currents in the Party on this question,” he wrote to Mr. Morley. “As far as I can judge the majority will be on our side, but in any event there will be a serious schism which will greatly affect future political prospects.” So
far Campbell-Bannerman had not spoken since his speech in the House on July 28, and Mr. Morley was concerned at the lack of a lead from the official head of the Party. When at length Campbell-Bannerman spoke at Maidstone, he was clear on the main issue, but disturbed both Harcourt and Mr. Morley by the emphasis he laid on "paramountcy." Harcourt had completely disposed of the "suzerainty" issue in his speech and in letters to The Times. He had shown that the claim to suzerainty had been deliberately abandoned in the Convention of 1884, and had not been heard of again until Chamberlain revived it in 1897. "Paramountcy" seemed to him only a dangerous equivalent for "suzerainty," and writing to congratulate Campbell-Bannerman on his "strong, clear and sound speech" at Maidstone, he discussed the grounds of intervention, and proceeded:

... Harcourt to Campbell-Bannerman.

October 8.—... What then is there outside these rights?
- We have discarded suzerainty on account of its vagueness and danger. But recourse is had to paramountcy, and it seems to be supposed that this supplies some extra right. But this is ignotum per ignoti. Suzerainty has about it some savour of right—a fatal analogue to a feudal superiority. But what is paramountcy? Is it the assertion of a definite right, or only a declaration of might? If of right, how does it differ from suzerainty which is abandoned—what are its limits and how is it to be interpreted? International law has its code of interpretation. But what is the standard by which paramountcy is to be governed and reconciled with the recognition of the independence of the subordinate? Miseræ est servitus ubi jus incertum, and what a miserable sort of independence is that which is subordinate to a capricious paramountcy defined by nothing but the will of the stronger. We must be prepared to make clear to our minds and that of Kruger what amount of intervention we do and do not intend to base on the claim of paramountcy. Otherwise he will be justified in saying that there is no security for his independence.

What does our "paramountcy throughout S. Africa" mean and involve? Does it embrace the Orange Free State? Is Portugal with Delagoa Bay within its purview? Can we within these boundaries claim what we please for our subjects on the ground of proximity and superior force? Indeed if on the pretension of paramountcy in respect of the general interests of S. Africa we claim a
general right of over-lordship, why are we not entitled to do as we like equally at Beira and Delagoa Bay? Superior force we unquestionably possess, but the question is, does that confer upon us exceptional rights? In one sense we are the supreme power at sea, but have we a paramountcy which justifies us in dealing outside the limits of international law? . . .

Campbell-Bannerman to Harcourt.

Hotel Terminus, Paris, October 10, 1899.— . . . To my entirely lay mind, two of your points present themselves thus:

I. We have no right under the convention to demand or urge a change of franchise.

No. But the Milnerite theory is that we have the right to protect our countrymen from grievances; and that we suggest an effective naturalization as the shortest way of getting the grievances cured, i.e. let them cure them themselves. This will be what the Government will say.

If you ask me my own opinion, I hold this "franchise" movement as the biggest hypocrisy in the whole fraud. It was designed in order that

(a) Kruger, seeing the real drift of it, might refuse it, and supply a direct ground of quarrel;

(b) If he accepted it, it would mean that not being able to get in by the front door they would get the area gate opened and get possession in this way of the country;

(c) The innocent Briton would be gulled by the flavour of legality and of civilized progress in the word "franchise."

But this is only my view of it, and practically they are dropping it because the Outlander does not care about it and would not use it if he might.

Then as to the general power or responsibility of this country, it is no doubt vague, but I think it is substantial. As a matter of fact, the two races in the Colony, Natal, and in the Orange Free State, are hindered from forgetting their differences by this constant quarrel in the Transvaal. The sooner it is settled the better in the interest of S. Africa generally. Therefore we have a stronger inducement or title to intervene than if it was merely the ill-treatment of some Englishmen at Calais.

It is analogous, surely, to the right of the Powers of Europe to try and stop misgovernment in Turkey, which endangers general peace?

And as to the Portuguese, I should answer to your question, Yes, there also, if the same danger arose, but it cannot arise, for the two jealous races are not there together.

This is of course a mere lay view, but I think there is reason in it. It is a case of tua res agitur intensified by our undoubtedly predominant position, which carries with it responsibility, and
responsible:ibility gives a right which if not technically and legally
definite, is yet, as I said, substantial.

But in spite of this disagreement Campbell-Bannerman
had come substantially into line with Harcourt and Mr.
Morley. In sympathy with them were men like Spencer,
Ripon, Kimberley and Bryce. On the other hand, power-
ful influences within the Party, representing the Imperialist
view put forward at the City Liberal Club by Lord Rose-
bury, were moving, if not to the support of the Government,
at least to an attitude of benevolent neutrality which must
lead to support. "Note Haldane's speech in to-day's
Times. Perks yesterday, etc., etc.," wrote Mr. Morley
to Harcourt. "A friend from London writes last night
that the talk there is of two groups, you, C.-B., me for one,
and Grey, Asquith, Fowler for the other."

By this time all hope of a peaceful end to the prolonged
struggle had vanished. "I hope to be fit by the end of
the week when we shall fight like devils for conciliation
and hate one another for the love of God," wrote Harcourt
to his daughter-in-law, the present Viscountess Harcourt.
"Things seem to get more mixed every day as we float
down to Niagara. It is just like two men compelled to
fight a duel they neither of them desire, by the malice
and stupidity of their seconds. I should like to shoot the
seconds." The next day, October 11, came the news of
Krüger's ultimatum, and the country, plunged in a fever
of Jingo enthusiasm, was embarked upon war with the
Boer Republics.

IV

A domestic event, the marriage of Lewis Harcourt to
Miss Mary Ethel Burns, the daughter of Walter H. Burns,
the American banker, had made a profound change in the
current of Harcourt's life. Enough has been said in the
course of this book to indicate the unusual intensity of
the affection that existed between father and son. It was
due no doubt primarily to the tragic circumstances that
surrounded the birth of "Loulou." That event had taken place amid the wreckage of Harcourt's deepest personal attachments, and all the wealth of his family affection became centred in the child who remained the sole heritage of his broken life. The companionship begun in these circumstances continued with unabated passion on both sides to the end of Harcourt's career. It was a union of singularly opposite temperaments. Harcourt was violent and impatient, his voice loud and his laughter unrestrained as a child's. He was quick to anger, but he was as quick to forget his anger, and to make fun of his own impatience. His enjoyment of life was unflagging, and his manners and habits were the free, unconsidered expression of his enormous vitality. In all these, and other, respects he furnished a striking contrast to his son. "Loulou" spoke quietly and moved softly. His voice was never raised in anger, and no circumstances ever disarmed his invulnerable restraint and politeness. Whatever his emotions might be, they were kept under the discipline of an iron will, and he was most to be feared when his voice was most velvety. Unlike his father, who wore his heart on his sleeve for faws to peck at, and poured out all that was in his mind regardless of consequences, "Loulou" pursued his path silently and remorselessly. That path had one constant goal, the interest of the father who was the dominating passion of his life. To that passion he had sacrificed all his own personal aims. Gifted with powers which would have assured him success in most spheres, he had declined to enter Parliament or to accept any office which would separate him from his father, and no drudgery in his service was too exacting or too menial for his devotion. Harcourt had long protested to his son against this elimination of himself, and there is little doubt that whatever disappointment he may have felt in regard to the premiership was due, less to his own ambitions, than to his sense that "Loulou" had not got the only reward he desired. The engagement of his son in November 1898 gave him infinite delight. Replying to a letter from Chamberlain, he said:
MALWOOD, December 2, 1898.—I have to thank you very much for your kind congratulations.

You know what Loulou has been to me and I have often felt that I engaged too much of his life. When I say that I am happy you may be quite sure that I feel convinced that his future happiness—which has ever been my first and last object—is assured.

It is another link in the American alliance. We are all Americans now! I sometimes think we shall have to call the old world into existence to redress the balance of the new. However your experience and mine are encouraging examples. I write this on my wedding day anniversary... Austen must marry an Englishwoman.

Writing, when the time of the marriage was approaching, to his sister Emily at Malvern, he touched on the other side of the picture:

MALWOOD, LYNDHURST, April 24, 1899.—It was a great joy to me to have those quiet days with you—a thing I have not enjoyed for many years. My mind is much filled with the long course of letters I read at Malvern, which, with many sad recollections, bear constant witness to our devoted love for each other, which has ever been one of the sweet anchors of my life. Of course we must expect with gathering years to feel upon us both the weight of age, but I was glad to satisfy myself that you are substantially well and sound, and that we shall have some more years still together.

The reality of the loss of Loulou's constant presence and help sometimes weighs very heavily on my spirits, but the thought of his happiness consoles me. He has already sacrificed too much of his life to my interests, and I cannot repine that he is now to have a life of his own. But still the pain of separation is more and more hard to bear...

The marriage took place at St. Margaret's, Westminster, on July 1, 1899, the ceremony being performed by Dr. Davidson, then Bishop of Winchester, with whom, as we have seen, Harcourt was engaged at this time in correspondence on the subject of ritualistic practices in the Church. "I never thought to have been so sincerely happy as I am at my darling boy's marriage," Harcourt wrote to his sister. "It will make what remains to me of life brighter and happier, and I think she is in all ways worthy of him."
CHAPTER XXVII

THE BOER WAR

Different attitude of Harcourt and Rosebery—Silence of Liberal leaders on the war policy—The Stanhope amendment—Black week—Chamberlain's South African advisers—Preparing for the Khaki election.

The history of the South African War does not belong to the subject of this book except in so far as it affects the concurrent conflict within the Liberal Party and Harcourt's part in that conflict. In spite of their detachment from the official life of the Party, Harcourt and Lord Rosebery were still the principal persons around whom the domestic controversy raged and who embodied most definitely the issue at stake. The challenge of war brought the long dispute between the two statesmen to the complete rupture which had always been latent in it. From their earliest associations there had been visible a fundamental hostility which did not admit of being reconciled. In temperament they were at the poles. Both, it is true, had in a remarkable degree the saving quality of humour; but there the likeness ended. The elder statesman was bold and broad in expression, arrogant in manner, equipped with an unrivalled knowledge of affairs, masterful and combative, loving the smell of the powder of controversy as much as he loved the smell of his roses at Malwood. His rival was sensitive and elusive, subject to moods that blew now hot, now cold, and that brought him suddenly into action and then sent him equally suddenly out of action. Between temperaments so dissimilar there could never have been much sympathy; but it would be unjust to both of them to suppose that their long discord was
merely a matter of incompatibility of temper. Many men in public life as widely separated as they were in manner and feeling have managed to get along tolerably in harness—Salisbury and Disraeli for example.

But behind the clash of temperament was the much more serious clash of ideas. On the crucial question of external policy the two men stood for entirely opposed views. This opposition had been the real source of their differences from the beginning, and it blazed up into fierce activity with the outbreak of a war which challenged their faiths more decisively than any event they had yet confronted. On the day that war broke out, each took his side. "The die is cast and a very bad throw," wrote Harcourt to Lou-lou on October 11. "The situation is critical and what we have to do is not to lose our heads. We must of course vote the supplies to repel an attack on a British colony, but that is not inconsistent with a censure of the policy which has resulted in war, which is what we did flagrantio bello in December 1878 under Hartington's auspices when Whitbread moved a vote of censure on the Afghan War."

"The great thing to aim at," he wrote to Mr. Morley, "is some joint action with the C.-B's." "I confess I am not sanguine of holding the Party together," replied Mr. Morley. "It is so easy for the Fowlers, etc., to say that if the Boers had not delivered the ultimatum, they would have certainly censured the Government, but etc., etc. My expectation is that you will find C.-B. himself in this humour."

Meanwhile Lord Rosebery had publicly thrown down a challenge to the Party. Writing to a correspondent (October 11), he spoke of rescuing our fellow-countrymen in the Transvaal from intolerable conditions of "subjection and injustice," and concluded with a thrust at the Gladstone Government of 1880–85. "Without attempting to judge the policy which concluded peace after the reverse of Majuba Hill, I am bound to state my profound conviction that there is no conceivable government in this country which would repeat it." Writing to Mr. Morley (October 12), Harcourt said, "Rosebery's letter is a masterpiece of cunning and
meanness. The kick administered in the last sentence to the dead lion is thoroughly characteristic, and that from the bear-leader of the Midlothian Campaign, which turned largely on the Transvaal question.” The position of other leaders of the Party had yet to be made clear. Mr. Asquith, speaking at Dundee (October 11), credited the Government with a sincere desire to avoid war; “but now (he said) that it has been forced upon them they will see it through to the end.” Campbell-Bannerman was non-committal, and, writing to Harcourt, argued that we had a substantial right of intervention because the state of the Transvaal endangered general peace. Mr. Morley was against taking any counsel with C.-B. or his colleagues. “No advantage would come of it,” he said. “Their position for the last six weeks has been described by yourself in language strong enough. All that time, when criticism might have been useful, they were silent. Now they say (cf. Asquith) we must be silent because of the Boer ultimatum, but we will speak up manfully some other day. . . . Therefore you must go to C.-B. without my company and without my proxy.”

With this confusion in the ranks of the distracted Liberal Party, Parliament met on October 17 to vote supplies, and on an amendment moved by Mr. Philip Stanhope (Lord Weardale) expressing strong disapproval of the negotiations, Harcourt delivered a formidable indictment of the Government policy. Describing it a contemporary writer ¹ said it was a fighting speech, built on traditional lines, “a kind of three-decked galleon that moved slowly like a thing of weight, but yet poured in its broadsides with terrific effect. . . . Mr. Chamberlain, who at first had worn his customary air of self-centred and inscrutable indifference, began to wince under the attack. Thrice he rose and challenged a point in a subdued tone whose very calm seemed the result of a tremendous effort of self-restraint. But he was scarcely happy in his interruptions. They seemed no more than attempts to deprecate the inevitable flow of argument and,

¹ Manchester Guardian, October 19, 1899.
as he chatted with the two brothers Balfour, a quick gesture of the hands or a sudden play of feature showed that Sir William's onslaught had not failed to move him." Harcourt dismissed the doctrine that when war had once broken out the Opposition had nothing to do but to hold their peace and sanction the policy that led to the war. Chamberlain had said that the present situation was due to the "criminal obstinacy" of the Boers. "'Criminal obstinacy'! Why in one of his despatches the Colonial Secretary says, 'One proposal after another has been an advance and concession on what has been made before.'... Is that 'criminal obstinacy'... Within a month or so of the Bloemfontein Conference the South African Republic actually passed a law which is described in the dispatch of the Colonial Secretary of, I think, July 27, in these words 'that it differs only by two years from the proposal of Sir Alfred Milner.'" The speech was in effect, though moderately stated, a prolonged indictment of Chamberlain's provocative diplomacy, culminating in searching questions as to the delay in formulating the final proposals which the Duke of Devonshire had said would give fair promise of peace, the raising of the question of "paramountcy," and the menacing military movement. He suggested, rather than stated that these things had provoked the ultimatum. A few days later Harcourt attacked the Government for refusing to impose new taxation to meet the cost of the war, and writing to Hicks-Beach, who had informed him of the decision because "I value your good opinion too much not to wish that you should know my reasons," he said, "nothing in my opinion will do more injury abroad than the knowledge that the House of Commons and the public, though ready to stand for the war, are not willing to pay for it."

Already the popular expectation of a swift and triumphant close to the war, with the British troops established in Pretoria by Christmas, had become dimmed by disaster,
and the Boers crossing the frontier east and south-west had enveloped our forces at Ladysmith, and the garrisons of Mafeking and Kimberley. "The horrors of this war oppress me," wrote Harcourt to his sister (November 7, 1899), "but I at least have the supreme consolation that I have done all in my power to avert it. I would not have the guilt of this blood upon my head for all the world can give." His anger at "this detestable war" was mixed with wrath at the whirlpool of dissension within the Liberal Party. Lord Rosebery, speaking at Bath and Edinburgh, claimed Pitt as "the first Liberal Imperialist," prophesied that in ten years "Liberal Imperialism is destined to control the liberties of this country," and claimed that Gladstone himself, after this war, would not be able to repeat his action after Majuba Hill. "Fancy the statue of Pitt set up for the Liberal Party of the future to fall down and worship," Harcourt wrote to Lewis Harcourt. "Shades of Fox and Grey! I shall before long pronounce myself on this theme. The finis of Pitt (who was the worst Foreign Minister and War Minister this country has ever known) was most inglorious, and he only anticipated by his death dismissal from office." Writing three days later (November 1) to Lewis Harcourt he said:

... I agree that the Rosebery rocket should be allowed to fizzle out. It will come down later on stick. The Times will get tired of puffing him, and his hold on our people is limited. I doubt whether even in ten years he will be capable of leading a party. He is too selfish, too trivial, too much a poseur, and I fancy what he admires in Chatham was his isolation which ended in his choosing to act with no one, till no one would act with him. ... He will never take the rough and tumble of party warfare but keep himself for the reclame of safe displays at intervals. ...

The prospects of the anti-war party were darkened by the capture of the Liberal Press by the Imperialists. The Daily News, under E. T. Cook, had been throughout the most powerful supporter of the Chamberlain-Milner policy, and in the first weeks of the war Mr. Massingham had gone from the editorship of the Daily Chronicle and Mr. W. M. Crook from that of the Echo, and every critical voice was
succeeded in the London Press. There was correspondence between Mr. Morley and Harcourt as to the possibility of establishing a new paper; but the project was in the circumstances impossible. "I have been exercised by people about the suppression of Massingham," wrote Mr. Morley to Harcourt (December 3). "No doubt the blow is as heavy as can be. He and C. W. D. [Dilke] came here on Tuesday, and we talked it all over. The whole point is £250,000. That is the figure of M. for a new paper. . . . This figure is absolutely out of reach."

The Party tide was now flowing powerfully against Harcourt and Mr. Morley. Sir Edward Grey had given the Government a bill of acquittal at Glasgow, and Mr. Asquith had declared himself hardly less unequivocally. "Poor C.-B. must feel very uncomfortable surrounded by men he cannot trust and a party which does not care to support him," wrote Harcourt to his son. "My fingers itch to be at them," he told his sister. His anger at events was increased by the unfortunate speech of Chamberlain at Birmingham in which he "read a lesson to France," and, moved doubtless by the success of the German Emperor's visit to England, suggested that Germany might join an entente of England and America in the future.

The one gleam in the darkness was the growing firmness of Campbell-Bannerman exhibited in a speech at Birmingham. "C.-B. has cut the painter of the dinghy in which Rosebery, Grey and Fowler may drift off by themselves," wrote Harcourt to Mr. Morley, who at the same moment was writing to him: "I felt sure that he would have to drop down on our side and he has done it." Harcourt replied:

Harcourt to Mr. Morley.

MALWOOD, November 17, 1899.—You will have seen that I quite concur in the satisfaction you express as to C.-B's speech. He was bold and good. I never think you do that worthy Scot full justice. Mr. Gladstone used to delight to sing Mrs. J. Wood's song in the "Milliner's Bill":

"No matter what you do,
If your heart's only true,
And his heart was true to Poll."
A circumstance you will no doubt record in the *Life.*¹ C.-B.'s heart is true to the Liberal Poll and I *non ignara mali miseris succurrere disco.*

I have written to applaud him. It is a shot between wind and water to the recreants and the shaky ones. I leave you and Lord R. to chant the praises of the hypocritical despot in Palace' Yard [Cromwell] in amœbias in strains.

*Et virtute tu dignus et hic.*

I detest Napoleon too, but he was a much greater genius, and in all ways a bigger human being—and then he had not a wart on his nose. And his *blague* was more tolerable than the other's cant. It is very difficult to discover a really good hero. I think Macaulay was right to fix upon Washington.

In the general stampede to Jingoism, Harcourt was not without personal encouragement that he valued, and none gave him more satisfaction than a letter from his old colleague at the Treasury, Sir Francis Mowatt, to whom he had written suggesting that Lord Esher's name should be put forward for the official control of the Colonial Office. Mowatt, agreeing that Chamberlain needed such a man at his elbow to give him friendly criticism, objected on the ground that Lord Esher could not be spared from the Office of Works, and proceeded:

*Sir Francis Mowatt to Harcourt.*

December 18.—... But, after all, all this is only an excuse for writing to you in a crisis when your own wise words should be in every Englishman's memory. I am a sincere friend of Milner's, and I do not forget what a useful day's work he has done, but his shallow boast that "he would force the pace in South Africa"—of which one of the Ministry told me a couple of months back with smug satisfaction—are to my mind some of the "sorrowfullest words that ever blotted paper."

It is not the Chartered Company or Jameson or Rhodes who are primarily responsible for the War. If they had been promptly disavowed and punished, and if the Imperial Government had repudiated the whole gang, and shown the repudiation to be honest, no horror would have followed. It is the support and admiration of the vulgar rich of this country for Stock Exchange piracy that has made diplomacy impossible. To think that Parliament and Government had not good form enough to rise above this dirty moral squalor is to me the ugliest thing in our history for the last

¹ Mr. Morley was at this time engaged on the *Life of Gladstone.*
1900] DARK DAYS 515
century. It is because you (and longo intervallo John Morley) were
the only statesmen who realized the situation and exposed this
κακον ὄργανον to the House, that I treat myself to the writing of this
letters. Otherwise my official position has shut my mouth from
the moment the Government definitely adopted their present
position.
During the winter Harcourt's activities were suspended
by illness. "I am lying here [Malwood] in perfect solitude
like a bare hulk on the seashore," he wrote to Mr. Morley.
"My bronchial attack has been supplemented by lumbago
and rheumatism, which prevent me eating or sleeping, so
that I am quite hors de combat." But he was back in the
fighting line when Parliament reassembled, and a formal
attack on the policy of the Government was made. By this
time the tale of catastrophe in South Africa had aroused
grave concern. Gatacre's defeat at Stormberg, Methuen's
defeat at Magersfontein, and Buller's failure on the Tugela
river were the outstanding features in a general landscape
of disillusion, only lightened by the fact that Roberts and
Kitchener with new forces were now coming into action.
* The war debate in the House resolved itself largely into
a duel between Harcourt and Chamberlain. Harcourt had
warned Chamberlain that he should call attention to his
exoneration of Rhodes and to the suspicions caused by
Hawkesley's refusal to produce the telegrams to the South
Africa Committee. In reply to Chamberlain (February 4)
he assured him that in what he would say he should not
imply "suspicion of your word." But he added, "You
know that I have deeply regretted and condemned the
unhappy speech in which you appeared to condone the
conduct of Rhodes, whom I regard as the principal author
of the war both in the Raid and ever since." In his speech
(February 5) he seemed, while repeating explicitly his denial
that the Committee had "hushed up" anything, to ask
for the full disclosure of the suppressed documents to clear
away, in the public interest, the suspicions that had their
roots in Chamberlain's ill-omened speech. He met the
plea of the Government that criticism in the midst of war
was reprehensible by recalling the attacks of Chatham,
Earl Grey and Beaconsfield on the Governments of their day in time of war. "What a preposterous doctrine is this," he cried; "the greater the disaster the greater the impunity." He created a sensation by revealing the fact that in 1881 Chamberlain had been the chosen spokesman of the Government in defending the Majuba agreement and recalling Chamberlain's words on that occasion, "I cannot understand how those who have talked so glibly of the honour of this country should fail to see that the greatest shame and humiliation would be in maintaining a high-handed breach of faith and destroying the independence of a people which we have solemnly engaged to respect." "He has altered his opinion," cried Harcourt; "I adhere to mine." From this thrust he passed to a withering examination of the pre-war negotiations, the approximation to a settlement on the franchise and the sinister introduction of a new issue, described as suzerainty, supremacy, paramountcy, all of which were terms incompatible with the independence which Chamberlain had most eloquently justified and which for fifteen years had been accepted without challenge. Replying to the Government's plea that they expected Kruger to yield, he said it was because they chose to be ignorant.

... The great misfortune is (he went on), and it was one of the causes of this war, that the only men who were consulted were men on one side of the street—yes, Sir, that side of the street which was inhabited by the authors of the Raid. Then, Sir, there was another source of the best African opinion at home—the helots, I suppose, who inhabit Park Lane. In my opinion, Sir, it was not the best South African opinion which misled you. (Here Mr. Chamberlain interrupted...) ... The rt. hon. Gentleman asks me what people were consulted. Did Mr. Schreiner or Mr. Hofmeyr, who were the representatives of the Dutch in the Colony, inform the High Commissioner that President Kruger would probably yield. ... And so you broke off the negotiations on September 22. The sands had run out; and you would deliver your own ultimatum. You prepared your military policy; you had a defensive force. You prepared an aggressive force which was to be sent out, and the Boers replied by their ultimatum. That was the finale of the stage of negotiations. If you had been properly informed of the people you had to deal with and the situation that was created, it was from the first a policy of war, and I agree with the Colonial Secretary
when he said that, looking at the whole thing, war was from the first inevitable. From the moment you determined that you would impose when you pleased your will in the internal administration of the Transvaal, war was a necessity and a certainty. But it was a direct reversal of all the policy you had given, and all the guarantees in the Convention by which, up to then, you had been bound. . . .

III

Harcourt made another spirited speech on March 6 on the finance of the war; but he was still, he told his sister, "a very poor creature . . . just able to get down to the House of Commons to do what is absolutely necessary," and looking to a visit to his beloved Italy to restore him to health. But he had his solace. The birth of a granddaughter filled him with delight. "I am very glad it is a girl," he wrote to his sister, "and I hope I may live to hear her prattle on my knee." And "Bobby" was cramming for his Foreign Office exam. "If he succeeds I shall really in the last twelve months have established my family for two generations. I feel very happy to-day." It was no unusual experience. His genius for happiness was never long suppressed, and there were few days on which the sun did not shine whatever sudden storms swept across his sky. His letters from Italy were full of his unquenchable delight in things—the buildings, the weather, the flowers. "The wistaria beyond belief. They treat it as we ought to do, viz., prune it close like vines to a single eye." He had seen splendid white cattle, "the only beasts worthy of North Mymms Park," 1 he wrote to his son. "We went to receive the benediction of the Pope in St. Peter's, but as G. Murray said of Gladstone, 'I did not find him of much use to me' or my influenza." He went to Venice which "still remains to me the Queen"; but, he "did not go to Naples to behold Vesuvius or the Earl of Rosebery in eruption there."

He returned to Malwood in June. "I follow with languid interest the triumph of our arms and the dissolution of our Party," he wrote to Mr. Morley. "The truth is, I

1 Mrs. Burns's country place.
am wrapped up in such a surrounding of domestic bliss that I have little care for external affairs. I compassionate you and all who are compelled to make speeches at this moment. You might as well talk to the lions in the Colosseum.” His domestic happiness was completed by the intimation that his son “Bobby,” having passed his examination, had been appointed to a vacancy in the Foreign Office. “I have written to express my gratitude to Lord S.” (Salisbury), he wrote to his sister. “It is a great satisfaction to me to have the dear boy thus permanently settled and done for. *Felix faustumque sit.* This has indeed been for me a happy year.” He was still unwell, but when he reappeared in the House his old triumphant ebullience reasserted itself. “How long are you going to keep us on the rack?” asked Hicks-Beach in an audible whisper across the table as he rose to speak on the vote for new war expenditure. “I am going to toast you for two hours,” he replied genially, as he launched upon what was acclaimed as “the greatest oration of the Session.” It started from the fact that already £71,000,000 had been spent on the war, of which only £14,000,000 had been raised by taxation, and he charged the Government with adopting this reckless borrowing because they had a “khaki” election in view. The summer had apparently brought the war near the end. Cronje had surrendered at Paardeberg, Ladysmith and Mafeking had been relieved, and Roberts was in Pretoria. The Government were known to contemplate an appeal to the country on the strength of the completion of a victorious war. Harcourt’s attack revived the drooping spirits of the Liberals. “The best thing that has happened to the Liberal Party and the country for many a long day,” wrote Mr. Morley to him. “If you like you can do Midlothian over again.” “J. C. [Chamberlain] was furious at the speech and moved up to cram the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who waved him off,” replied Harcourt. “I suffer much from the *esprit d’escalier* and cannot forgive myself for having failed to ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the present Cabinet were at all acquainted with an *im-
perious colleague' who dictated popular Budgets where you borrowed everything and paid nothing. The things we have not said are always so much more to the purpose than what one does say."

Replying to Spencer who, writing to him on his speech, said, "You seem to have settled the Opposition and astounded them," Harcourt wrote:

_Harcourt to Spencer._

MALWOOD, August 18, 1900.—I was much pleased to receive your kind and interesting letter and to know that you approved my speech, which I think gave some comfort to our distracted Party. The mess that had been made by the folly of Lawson on one side, the malignity of the Roseberyites on the other, was so bad that, as you know, they had made the position of poor C.-B. intolerable, which was what the latter aimed at. I therefore plucked up my courage to give him a helping hand... I did not think it was possible that any one could have been worse treated than I was, but I admit that they have exceeded themselves in their conduct towards C.-B., and if I can do nothing else I think I can defeat their schemes. I am afraid he, poor fellow, feels his position keenly, but we must do what we can to keep him in the saddle—he is an honest Liberal without any adjective, a thing which can be said of very few in what is called the Liberal Party. There is not a man on the Front Bench, I think, except myself who is really loyal to him, and very few behind.

The Roseberyites put him in, in the hope and expectation that he would be the alter ego of R., and when they found they were mistaken they determined to oust him. I am sorry to know that E. Grey has gone in thick and thin with the Perks and H. Fowler gang... I think we who are like-minded ought to stick together. I cannot hear of your throwing up the sponge. I remonstrate with J. Morley, who holds the same sort of language. But if an old post-horse like myself am still willing to run a stage you young ones have no right to go out to grass..."

All through the summer Mr. Morley, who had an affection of the throat, had been in correspondence with Harcourt on the subject of his desire to retire; but Harcourt would not hear of it. "Later perhaps, but not now," was his constant refrain. "This is not the moment when either you or I can with credit desert the ship."
CHAPTER XXVIII

HARCOURT'S LAST FIGHT

Confusion in the Party ranks—The Khaki election—Last election campaign at Monmouth—The Frog and the Ox—Liberal Imperial League—Paying for the War—Daily News changes hands—Death of Queen Victoria—Failure to make peace with the Boers—Activity in the House—The concentration camps—Rival Liberal dinners—Campbell-Bannerman’s prudence—Belligerent rights of Boer leaders—Lord Rosebery’s “Clean Slate”—The St. James’s Hall meeting—Campbell-Bannerman’s isolation in the House—Harcourt’s untiring support—Lord Rosebery and the Tabernacle—King Edward offers Harcourt a peerage.

IT was a hopeless battle in which Harcourt, a free lance, once more, fought his last fight. More than forty years had elapsed since that high-spirited adventure at Kirkcaldy, and his political life was now near its close. He would gladly have escaped the ordeal of another electoral struggle. He was feeling the burden of years, and the cumulative effect of repeated illness. The causes to which he had devoted his life had passed into a more complete eclipse than had overshadowed them for fifty years, and the Party to which he had been attached all his days seemed to be in the last stages of dissolution. In any circumstances it would have been a forlorn battle for Liberalism. The state of war is the negation of all its creed, and the temper of the war mind is intolerant of its appeal to reasonable ideas. When war comes, Liberalism is driven from the hustings to the catacombs, only to emerge when the frenzy is over and the ravages of war have to be repaired. In the present case, its situation was exceptionally desperate. The war had shattered the Party into frag-
ments.¹ With such confusion in the ranks, the only question was the measure of the overthrow. The country was, in any case, overwhelmingly with the Government. It assumed that the war was over, and that all that remained was the settlement of the conquered territories, and in the frame of mind which prevailed there was no disposition to entrust that task to the Liberals. It was true that a powerful section of the Liberals had been almost as definitely pro-war as the Tories, and that Lord Rosebery, raising the banner of Imperialism, had been the first to declare that there were to be no more Majuba Hill episodes. It was true that the Liberal Imperial League, which now came into action as the Roseberyite organization, was as definitely committed to the Government policy as the Tories were, and directed activities against the pro-Boers rather than against the traditional enemy. But this availed them little. Chamberlain was a ruthless person in political warfare, and had no disposition to show his gratitude to his Liberal supporters. This was his hour of triumph, and he exploited it without mercy. He himself gave the slogan of the election in a message to the Government candidate at Heywood—"Every seat lost by the Government was a seat won by the Boers." The telegraphist, inspired by the mood of the moment, amended it to "a vote sold to the Boers," and so it appeared, the error being explained away not by Chamberlain but by Mr. Balfour. With this spirit abroad, the prospects of the Liberals were sufficiently dark. They were not improved by the great ritualist controversy in which Harcourt had been so prominently engaged. Harcourt had antagonized the High Churchmen by his aggressive

¹ The Annual Register computed the strength of the divisions at the time as follows:
Supporters of the War.—Sir H. Fowler, Mr. Asquith, Sir E. Grey, with a party numbering in all 62.
Opponents of the War.—Sir W. Harcourt, Mr. J. Morley and Sir W. Lawson, with a group numbering 68.
Those who, like Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman and Mr. Herbert Gladstone, took a middle line.
About 27 who voted now with one group, now with another, according to the merits of the occasion.
Protestantism, and he had dissatisfied the Kensitites by declining to press for an extension of the existing law on the ground that that law was sufficient if it were enforced. His grievance was not against the law, but against what he regarded as the weak administration of the law.

Three manifestoes were issued to the electorate by the leader and ex-leaders of the Party. Those of Harcourt and Lord Rosebery, representing the two extreme positions, attracted most attention. Harcourt sought to widen the issue from the war to the general failure of the Government in domestic affairs, housing, finance, old age pensions, and so on. It was in vain. The country was seething with the passions of war, and was heedless of anything else. Harcourt had no reason to fear for himself. He was in indifferent health, but in spite of that he spoke every night in his constituency for nine days, and then again, after a break, resumed his campaign. He dealt with the war frankly, declaring that the Jameson Raid was the primary cause and that the Government were culpable for their failure to deal with the true authors of the Raid. "Mr. Chamberlain describes the Raid as a mistake," he said. "That is not the language that ought to be employed by the English Government on such an outrage against the law of nations. It was not a mistake: it was a crime. It was a crime which has had most unhappy and most bloody consequences."

The spirit of his attack may be illustrated by one passage from a speech at Ebbw Vale (September 25):

. . . In regard to our relations with our colonies, Mr. Chamberlain seems to entertain the conviction that he is Captain Cook and General Wolfe rolled into one (laughter), and that he discovered Australia and that he stormed the heights of Quebec (renewed laughter); but historically that is not true. These colonies existed and were great before Mr. Chamberlain became Colonial Secretary, and I want to know what is the ground upon which he claims to himself that the happy relations between Great Britain and her colonies is due to his administration. Of course you saw in the speech he made the other day he talked, speaking of the manner in which we rejoiced in the way the colonies had stood by us, as if that was part of the merits of Her Majesty's Government. The merits they claim confidence upon are always the merits of other people, and not their own.
(Cheers.) But how is it our colonies have become so greatly attached to this country? The colonies have become attached to us because we gave them the great gift of Home Rule (cheers), because we gave them absolute self-government, by which they have made themselves what they are, and which has attached them far more to the British Crown than if we had attempted to govern them from Downing Street.

The result of the poll was less favourable than in 1895, but it was still an overwhelming victory for Harcourt, the figures being:

- Harcourt : . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 5,976
- Gardiner : . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 2,401

a majority of 3,575. The victory, the last he was to have in the electoral battlefield, fell on the eve of his seventy-third birthday. Writing to his "dearest children" on that event, he said, "I ought indeed to be grateful for all the blessings of a long life more happy and prosperous than I deserve, but the greatest of all is that which I have enjoyed in the unselfish and devoted love of my children. . . . I have returned home fresher a good deal than I started. Indeed I never felt in better form both in mind and body than on my seventy-third birthday." He was inundated with congratulations on his election. "What a campaign you have had!" wrote Mr. Morley to him (October 13). "What resources, what indomitable spirit! What skill in topics! . . . J. C. won't get over your frog and ox in a hurry. That was just the kind of figure needed to drive his 'immortal sentence' home.¹ . . . Lloyd George is in

¹ The passage alluded to was the following in a speech at Cwm, on October 10:

George IV was in the habit of saying to the Duke of Wellington that he, when Prince Regent, had commanded the cavalry at Waterloo, and the Duke's reply invariably was, "I have frequently heard your Majesty say so,"—(laughter)—and when Mr. Chamberlain went bragging about the war, and the successes he had had, he (Sir William) was inclined to say, "I have frequently heard your Secretaryship say so." (Renewed laughter.) There was that immortal sentence in his recent speech at Burton-on-Trent: "I might die to-morrow, and still there would remain this great Empire." (Laughter.) It was worth having a General Election to arrive at that truth. If that speech had not been made the people might
some ways the most satisfactory—a brave and clever little man who ought to have a good future.” “I admired your slashing and uncompromising speeches,” wrote Campbell-Bannerman to Harcourt (October 21), “and if more of our people had gone for Joe as you and I did we should have made a better thing of the contest.”

It was a sufficiently disastrous thing. “Khaki” swept the country triumphantly, and the Government came back in formidable strength, the figures being:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Figures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservatives</td>
<td>334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Unionists</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal and Labour</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationalists</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So far from healing the differences within the Liberal Party the overthrow had emphasized them, and the Liberal Imperial League arrived at a policy of proscription. A resolution passed by the Liberal Imperial Council declared that the time had come

to clearly and permanently distinguish Liberals in whose policy with regard to Imperial questions patriotic voters may justly repose confidence from those whose opinions naturally disqualify them from controlling the action of the Imperial Parliament of a world-wide community of nations.

This declaration of war meant the elimination of Campbell-Bannerman. “I am making a declaration of loyalty to C.-B.,” wrote Harcourt to Mr. Morley. “I think he has deserved it, and he is the only buffer against the Perks conspiracy who are longing to dismiss him, which they shall not do if I can help it. I think Joe himself must by this time have become aware that he has ‘over-eggled the pudding.’ How his temper bewrays him. His nature is that of a bully. He showed it before in his violence in 1880 and 1885 and again in 1892.”

The attempt of the Liberal Imperialists to stampede the never have known that the British Empire would survive Mr. Chamberlain. This was really the intoxication of a man after a debauch of vanity. They knew the fable of the frog who swelled itself out to imitate the ox, and said, “When I burst the ox will still remain.”
position ended ingloriously. "You will have seen that Imperial Perks and the silly old Brassey were only able to collect half-a-dozen M.P.'s at their banquet out of the hundreds they claim," wrote Harcourt to Mr. Morley. A proposal to petition Lord Rosebery to return to the leadership of the Party also fell flat, and Campbell-Bannerman, with whom Harcourt was in close communication, remained in official control. Harcourt indicated his readiness to act in co-operation with "C.-B." under his leadership, but this would have meant increased difficulties with the Imperialists, and Campbell-Bannerman wisely determined that "things should be left as they are"—that is, that the official party should be detached from the Rosebery Imperialists on the one side and the Harcourt anti-war party on the other until the situation cleared.

II

The election was hardly over before it became obvious that triumph in South Africa was still a long way off, and that Roberts's arrival at Pretoria, so far from ending the war, had only changed its character. The Boers had sued for peace when Roberts entered their capital; but the proposal had been rejected, the frame of mind of the Government being that of "unconditional surrender." After the election, when the exploits of De Wet began to fill the newspapers, and the return of Roberts was again postponed, it was apparent that the conclusion of the struggle was remote. The new Parliament met in December to vote supply and to face the melancholy fact that the election had been won on entirely false hopes. Harcourt, while supporting the war expenditure, denounced the conduct of the war and the miscalculations of the Government. They had thought the war was over when Mafeking, Ladysmith and Kimberley were relieved. They had thought it was over when Pretoria was entered. They had thought they were making war on President Kruger and not on the Dutch nation. The guerilla war had proved that it was a conflict of nations, and that was a much more serious thing:
No doubt (he said) we ought to give you the money. But the House of Commons and the country will think that the time has come when, having to deal not with Governments which you may overthrow with overwhelming forces, but with a race, a brave race, living in a country which is their own, they will see that it is not by accumulating forces, not by perpetually increasing expenditure of money and armed men, but by a different policy that this matter will be settled. . . . You may depend upon it that on your future dealings with these people whom you have conquered will depend your reputation with the civilized world. . . .

On the question of the taxation of the natives to pay for the war, a proposal suggested by Rhodes, he was emphatic and scornful. They would not mend matters by adding a native rebellion to their troubles. He made great play in Parliament and in the Press with the hostility of the mine-owners to the "suicidal" notion of taxing the mines to pay for the cost of the war. They had wanted the war not in order to have higher taxation, but to have lower taxation, "The Boers could not pay (for the war), the mine-owners would not pay; but the natives should." Harcourt insisted that the only source of wealth in the Transvaal was the mines, and that they should bear their share of the burden. a subject on which he carried on a spirited controversy with J. B. Robinson, the South African mine-owner, in the columns of The Times.

The New Year opened with a score for the anti-Imperialists of the Liberal Party. Writing to Mr. Morley to wish him "the best of new centuries," Harcourt, who had been laid aside with bronchial trouble, referred to "the announcement that the Daily News has changed hands and is to be delivered from the Perksites and restored to the ancient faith, Cook of Berkeley Square being shunted." "The money for the purchase," replied Mr. Morley, "is mainly found by Thomasson and Cadbury, with one or two others, and they hope to raise more elsewhere. The chief engineer in the operation has been Lloyd George. They desired me to be political director—but this I told them was not to be entertained for a moment." The transfer of the Daily News gave the anti-Imperialists a powerful voice
in the morning Press. "We shall now have something besides the Westminster Gazette that we can read," wrote Campbell-Bannerman to Harcourt. Events were consolidating the Left and the Centre of the Party, and on the eve of the meeting of Parliament Harcourt found Campbell-Bannerman "full of fight and with a much stiffened back," declaring that he was tired of "trying to accommodate everybody by paring down a phrase here and a proposal there until nothing was left," and that he meant "to take my own line and they [the Liberal Imperialists] may do what they like."

The Session of 1901 opened under the shadow of national mourning. After a reign of unprecedented duration Queen Victoria had passed away. The event, falling on the threshold of the new century and in the midst of a war that had passed into a phase of lingering weariness, marked very definitely the end of an epoch, and Harcourt felt the break acutely. Writing to the new King a letter of condolence, he said, "I am amongst the few still surviving who can recall the day of her [Victoria's] accession, and whose recollection covers the whole course of her great reign. The memory will remain to the last hour of my life of Her singular kindness to me in private and Her gracious indulgence in the relations of official life which were permitted to me." His relations with the Queen had not been unclouded. He had not hesitated when at the Home Office to risk her displeasure in the administration of the royal clemency, and his spacious manner and high spirits did not quite conform to the severe decorum of the royal household. But on the whole the Queen and he had been on excellent terms, exchanged many little gifts, and had had many mutual memories, centring for the most part in Harcourt's grandfather. The wreath which Harcourt and his wife sent to the funeral was inscribed, "In veneration of a noble and glorious reign and in grateful memory of long years of gracious personal kindness." At the meeting at the Mansion House in support of a national memorial to the late Queen he, in the absence of Campbell-Bannerman, represented the Liberal
Party, and commented on the poverty of London’s memorials of its great dead. “I hardly know of one,” he said, “which is worthy of the greatness of this Empire or the greatness of this City.” He pleaded for a new departure worthy of the occasion. Whether or not he pleaded with success will be apparent to those who look upon the confection in front of Buckingham Palace to-day.

By this time it was evident that a grave blunder had been made in not concluding peace with the Boers in the previous June, when Roberts had declared that his terms were “unconditional surrender.” Chamberlain in the debate on the Address now sought to explain that “unconditional surrender” did not refer to the forces, but only to the claim to independence. The men were to be permitted to retire to their farms unmolested.

“And the officers?” interjected Harcourt.

“And the officers, certainly,” replied Chamberlain.

It was a daring reply, and Harcourt, who never missed an occasion for returning to the loss of the opportunity of peace which kept the war alive for nearly two years, promptly exposed the audacity of the statement in a letter to The Times:

... I interjected the question whether the terms referred to as offered to “all the members of the force” applied to the commanding officers as well as the men. With that hardihood of assertion with which Mr. Chamberlain replaces alike facts and arguments, he replied without hesitation, “And the officers, certainly.” Now, Sir, if there is any fact more notorious than another in the whole miserable catalogue of blunders which have characterized throughout this ill-omened war it is that in the terms of surrender offered to the troops the officers were expressly excepted.

He then went through the despatches, quoting Roberts’s specific instruction to Buller on June 3 that principal officers and officers who had “commanded positions of the Republican forces or who had taken an active part in the policy which brought about the war” were excluded from the offer of freedom. “It is obvious,” he said, “that as regards all the principal officers, like Botha and De Wet, these were terms of unconditional personal surrender.’ They were
to be at the absolute discretion of the victors who were to deal with them as they thought fit—to send them to St. Helena or Ceylon or elsewhere. The accuracy of Mr. Chamberlain’s reply to me, ‘And the officers, certainly,’ may be judged from this recorded correspondence.’ And he asked was it likely that men like the Boers would consent on such terms to abandon their chiefs? ‘Such was the manner,’ he concluded, ‘in which the war was prolonged.’

During the spring Harcourt, in spite of increasing bronchial trouble, was much in the House, and a few extracts from his letters to Loulou, who was travelling with his wife in the Mediterranean, will indicate his activities and his spirit in the pursuit of them:

March 15.—... I had a good day in the H. of C. yesterday on the motion for Committee on Army estimates. C.-B. was quite sound in his argument but not sound in his wind, as he had a bad cold and was hardly audible, so I thought it right after dinner to reinforce the attack and I think with success, as people say I was in excellent voice, which is more than I expected, as I have had a good deal of cough lately, but it comes and goes by fits and starts, and I was happily free last night. Indeed I always get better like an old post-horse when I am once on my legs. The Party seemed pleased and satisfied...

March 20.—... To-day we had a great field-day on temperance. We carried the Children Liquor Bill by 372 to 54. The Government cut a ridiculous figure, Jesse Collings being their spokesman in the absence of Ritchie. I followed, and cut him up to the satisfaction of both sides... 

March 29.—... As to politics—I have been doing a good deal of ‘leading’ this last fortnight with ease to myself and satisfaction I think to the Party. C.-B. has been laid up and not able to be at the House, and I have taken the reins altogether in my own hands. The Government have given several very good openings and we have rattled them about well... Altogether he [Mr. Balfour] has fallen into fearful disrepute in the House of Commons, and especially with his own Party. It is like the Education Bill of 1896 over again. People are all saying he is done for, but I know these things blow over. At all events I do not wish to kill him to make room for Joe.

I had prime sport with Quilter and Chaplin over the Pure Beer Bill with the Pure struck out...
In the debates on the Finance Bill, Harcourt got in many thrusts on the conduct and effect of the war. "The amount of the evil," he said in one of his speeches, "may be measured by the total financial Bill now under consideration—a debt of £150,000,000 and the largest army that ever was collected to meet the smallest foe since the days of Xerxes." He was jovial over the quiescence of the Liberal Imperialists, but in June the domestic quarrel burst out in an aggravated form under the influence of the new policy of the concentration camps. At a dinner of the National Reform Union on June 14, at which Harcourt denounced those who applied to war the maxim of the prize ring, "a fight to the finish," Campbell-Bannerman first used his memorable phrase "methods of barbarism" in reference to the concentration camps, and four days later Mr. Lloyd George raised the issue in the House. Writing to his son, Harcourt said:

20, QUEEN ANNE’S GATE, S.W., June 18, 1901.—The dovecotes of the gentlemen whom C.-B. calls the Lib.-Imps. were much fluttered by Lloyd George’s motion on the refugee camps. They are evidently much incensed at our Friday meeting, especially at the reception of J. Morley, and Lloyd George’s motion gave them the opportunity to show their displeasure.

Fowler went out, having it is said paired for the Government. After much colloquing in the lobby, Asquith, E. Grey, Munro-Ferguson, McArthur walked out, having put up Haldane to speak for them, he being howled down by our people. Of course Lawson, Walton, Norman, Reid and others went with them.

How many abstained I do not exactly know. I see Massingham puts them at 30. The Times number of 50 is certainly greatly exaggerated. About 70 voted with C.-B. . . . On the whole I think the result good, as we could not have had a better subject on which to take issue, and the clear majority of the Party went with us. It would have perhaps been better if the motion had been made by J. Ellis rather than Lloyd George, who is a red rag to a good many of the Lib.-Imps., as Fowler is to our people. But anything is better than doing nothing.

The revival of the conflict was so serious that a meeting of the Liberal members under the presidency of Campbell-Bannerman was summoned at the Reform Club to consider the position, and a resolution of confidence in "C.-B.’s” leadership was proposed and adopted. Harcourt and others
spoke, but the chief interest of the meeting was the declaration of Mr. Asquith that the cliques in the Party, if they existed, existed without his consent:

... And, Sir (he said), nothing has surprised and pained me more in the whole of my political life than that I should have been supposed capable, under the pretext of performing a public duty, and, as I have seen it kindly suggested, for the purpose of winning the transient applause of the Tory press—I should have been supposed capable of lending myself to an intrigue to oust from the leadership of our Party one by whose side I have sat for years, whose counsels and confidence I have shared, and whose exertions in one of the most thankless tasks ever allotted to a man I have warmly appreciated and to the best of my powers and opportunities consistently supported.

But no sooner was unity—on the unstable basis of allegiance to the leader and complete liberty to dissent from him with regard to the one vital question before the country—proclaimed than Lord Rosebery made a characteristic incursion into the field with a letter to the City Liberal Club, which, in the language of The Times, put an end to the fiction of Radical unity “by declaring that the opposed schools, the insular view and the Imperial view, could not be reconciled.” At the City Liberal Club two days later (July 19) Lord Rosebery once more repeated that nothing would induce him to return to the Liberal Party. “I must plough my furrow alone,” he said. “That is my fate, agreeable or the reverse; but it is possible that, before I get to the end of the furrow, I may find myself not alone.”

With this renewed assurance of his loneliness, he disappeared once more, leaving his faithful bodyguard still forlornly fighting. It would be unprofitable and tiresome to pursue the story in detail, with its “war to the knife-and-fork” as it was called—in reference to the dinner to Mr. Asquith as a counterblast to the dinner of the National Reform Union—and the election in Lanarkshire in which the Imperialist Liberal candidate was defeated by the Tory, with the help and concurrence of many Liberals. Through all this unhappy controversy, with its naggings and irritations, Harcourt was constantly urging patience. “We have only
to sit tight and, as the racing men say, the 'horses are bound to come back to us'" was his refrain. "I do not share Tweedmouth's despondency," he wrote to Mr. Morley (October 21). "He seems to regard the game as having resolved itself into a stalemate, but as Bismarck said beati possidentes and if C.-B. will only stick to it he will be beatus." His confidence in Campbell-Bannerman was unfailing. "I sent my 'cram' to C.-B. a few days ago," he wrote to Mr. Morley (October 25). "He has the merit of generally being better than one expects." He sent 'cram' also to Mr. Morley, who was speaking in Scotland, adding as a footnote:

W. IV. to Codrington before Navarino: "Go it, Ned."

W. V. H. to J. M.: "Go it, John."

The proclamation of August 8 had introduced a new element in the discussion of the war. It declared that as the Transvaal and the Orange Free State were now parts of the British Empire the Boer officers who were still maintaining their resistance were no longer entitled to belligerent rights, and that unless they surrendered before September 15 they would be permanently exiled from South Africa. Harcourt had assailed the proclamation in Parliament as bad in policy and contrary to international law. He maintained that:

The combatants in arms (belonging to the two Republics, not to the Cape Colony) were regular belligerents entitled to all the rights of prisoners of war when captured, and that a claim to banish them and confiscate their property was not a lawful proceeding. The Commandants Botha, De Wet, etc. are not and never have been British subjects and cannot be treated as such. They are not rebels, but enemies, and must be treated as such. Their origins naturally cannot be extinguished by a mere proclamation of annexation, nor can their status be changed except either by their surrender on a general peace or by an exclusive and effective occupation of the whole territory such as does not exist.

On this point he was at issue with Mr. Asquith, who declined to say that the proclamation was contrary to the laws of war, though he did not agree with the policy and did not think it would induce the Boers in the field to surrender. Harcourt returned to the subject later in reply to
Chamberlain's threat of "greater severities," and his use of the example of Poland and the Caucasus. "There is no condemnation of severities against guerrilla forces," he said, writing to Mr. Morley (October 26), "more decisive than that of the Duke of Wellington in the Peninsular War, and their rights as lawful combatants were emphatically reserved both in the Russian Conference of 1874 and at the Hague." Writing to The Times (November 8) on the statement of Lord Milner "that in a formal sense the war may never be over," he surveyed at great length the causes of failure. One passage will serve to show the scope of his indictment:

... The significant part of this deplorable business is that from the first to the last the pessimists have been more than right and the optimists have been more than wrong. But even Lord Milner himself seems beginning to be alive to the real facts of the situation. We were first told that, if we would only show our teeth and menace enough war, there would be no war, and the Boers would not fight, and so the war broke out. We were assured that the war would be a mere military promenade to be settled by 10,000 men and as few millions. We have sent out 300,000 men, out of whom the "unreturning brave" have been decimated by death and disease. We were informed on careful calculation that the whole fighting force the Boers could raise did not amount to 40,000 men—less than the whole number of the prisoners of war. Without doubt after the capture of Pretoria the whole resistance was soon to collapse—and Lord Roberts returned to verify the prediction. But from that moment demands for thousands more men were so urgent that recruits—like those of Falstaff at Coventry—were hurried to the front. We were invited to be confident that, if we only burned farms enough, destroyed the flocks and herds, laid waste the whole country, and carried off the wives and families of the Boers and half-starved those who belonged to combatants in arms, the spirit of the Boers would be finally broken—but the resistance only waxed the fiercer. Forty-one futile proclamations were issued, and still the Boers fought on. A final effort was attempted (the last and most imbecile of all), which menaced the leaders with banishment and the followers with confiscation—a threat which every man of sense predicted would be treated with contempt, as is now admitted to be the case—not to mention that they were bogus threats illegal in themselves and incapable of execution. How obstinate are these delusions continuously practised on the country is proved by the latest declarations of the Government. On August 14, in the last moments of the session, I invited Mr. Chamberlain to give to Parliament some information as to the condition of the war. His reply
was—" I stated no later than Friday last all we knew of the present position and the grounds for anticipating that it would be within the power of the Commander-in-Chief to send home a considerable number of troops at the termination of the winter campaign." This was the accurate information, I suppose, derived from the "men on the spot" on whom the Government implicitly rely, and upon whom they are always very anxious to devolve all responsibility. I confess I shudder when I hear the Government proclaim they are about to bring home troops. The return of Lord Roberts and the C.I.V. was only the prelude for demands for fresh levies. Mr. Chamberlain, in the middle of August, expects to "send home a considerable number of troops at the end of the winter campaign." Well, the winter in South Africa was over in September, but not the winter campaign; it continues fiercer than ever in the spring, and, so far from troops being brought home, large contingents of more efficient troops are peremptorily called for, and the "informal" war seems to be more deadly and further than ever from an end.

In a further letter he returned to the subject of the guerilla war, and argued for a real attempt at peace based on amnesty, and, if independence was surrendered, substantial security for Boer interests against confiscation and against the extrusion of one race for the settlement of another. All through the autumn and winter the struggle between the two sections of the Liberal Party continued, and Harcourt's correspondence with Mr. Morley, Campbell-Bannerman and Spencer followed day by day the changing features of the manoeuvres. The "veiled prophet" or the "dark horse" as Lord Roscbery was variously called, continued to be the centre of speculation. He still remained outside the Liberal Party; but on the other hand he was also outside the Liberal Imperial League which existed to support his views. Sometimes it seemed that he was going to denounce the Government, in which case, asked Harcourt, what was to become of the "Perksites" (the Liberal Imperialists), who supported the Government? Sometimes it seemed that he aimed at "a Rosebery-Chamberlain combination at the head of a National Party." Generally, however, it seemed idle to speculate on so incalculable a subject. Writing to Mr. Morley, Harcourt said (November 10):

... He has probably not yet made up his "month's mind," and will change it every week before he speaks. If he goes in for con-
ciliation and against the Government, I, as you know, bear no public malice, and shall co-operate with him or any one else who will take this course. Chatham (from whom he believes the mantle has descended to him), by his wayward conduct in the American War and his refusal to support the Rockingham Whigs, ruined the Opposition and destroyed his own influence. But I think his genius resembles a good deal more that of Charles Townshend than that of Pitt.

"Really the world grows sillier every day," he wrote to Spencer apropos of "the figure of fun Rosebery is making of himself, advertising himself for a great political revelation six weeks in advance." The "revelation" duly came in the "clean slate" speech at Chesterfield. A fortnight earlier the General Committee of the National Liberal Federation at Derby had adopted a resolution in favour of honourable terms of peace being put forward and a mission being sent out to arrange peace. As such a Commission involved the supersession of Lord Milner, this resolution was opposed by the Liberal Imperialists, and Sir E. Grey at Bristol expressed the opinion that the recall of Lord Milner would have disastrous effects. Thus the cleavage in the Liberal Party was once more aggravated. Harcourt watched events with equanimity. The Government had modified their policy in regard to the concentration camps, public opinion was swinging round to peace, and "C.-B." was firmly in the saddle. Writing to Mr. Morley, he said:

Harcourt to Mr. Morley.

MALWOOD, LYNDHURST, December 8, 1901.—... I was glad not to be present at the Guildhall to grace the triumph of Joe. I quite agree that the Prince of Wales's speech made what they call in Scotland a very "fine appearance," of which I am glad for all reasons. He is sensible, simple and attractive. I had a charming letter from him in reply to one of congratulation on his return, in which he spoke gracefully of the Colonials as "my fellow subjects."

I am watching events from my sheltered observatory with amusement and philanthropy. I speculate neither on the variation of the weather nor the opinions of Rosebery. I think Derby a very wholesome reaction and it will puzzle a good many gentlemen how to set their sails to it.
C.-B. is finally fixed in the motor machine of the Party, and Perks and Co. will find it impossible to displace him.

I disapprove of cross bench minds and corner seats only fit for Jack Horner saying "What a good boy am I." I feel more disposed to be chauffeur to the automobile.

C.-B. speaks on Tuesday. He wrote to me to suggest hinting at armistice. I did not encourage this, as it would be regarded as a direct interference with the military successes and mal vu at the moment. . . . I wish him to stick to negotiations, amnesty, and new negotiations. . . .

I doubt if R. will offer Asquith a promising future. He will have all the Tories and most of the Radicals against him. R. is more likely to look forward to a Chamberlain alliance on the departure of Salisbury. We can then heartily wish him bon voyage.

In the midst of all the marchings and counter-marchings of the two factions came the Rosebery deliverance at Chesterfield on December 16, with his call for "a clean slate," and his declaration that he would not work with the Liberal Party except on what may be called coalition terms. The significance of the occasion was emphasized by the presence on the Rosebery platform of Fowler, Sir E. Grey and Mr. Asquith. The deliverance created an immense reverberation throughout the political world. "That settles the question so far as he [Lord Rosebery] is concerned," wrote Harcourt to his sister. "It remains to be seen what Asquith, Grey and Co. will do. C.-B. stands firm and I shall do all in my power to support him." Mr. Morley was on a visit to Harcourt at Malwood when the speech was made, and writing to Lewis Harcourt of their joint views on it, Harcourt said:

December 17.—. . . I pointed out to him [Mr. Morley], and he concurred, that the main point of condemnation was the first chapter of "advice to the Liberal Party" which is contained in the "clean slate." All the traditions, the pledges and the faiths of the Liberal Party to be wiped out. Nothing to be preserved but what we are sure to carry, i.e., nothing to which we cannot secure the consent of the House of Lords!! Fancy this doctrine applied to the former history of the Liberal Party in respect of Catholic emancipation, parliamentary reform, free trade, &c. It is in fact to throw everything overboard in order to get back to office by adopting that which is popular at the moment. . . . The whole language is insulting to
the whole past of the Liberal Party and a betrayal of its growth in
the future.

There followed the famous interview between Campbell-
Bannerman and Lord Rosebery in Berkeley Square, which
"C.-R." described in a letter to Harcourt:

Campbell-Bannerman to Harcourt.

Lord Warden Hotel, Dover, December 23, 1901.— . . . I
propounded the great enquiry, what does it all mean? and I gathered
that it does not mean what the quidnuncs suppose. He has left the
L. Party five or six years ago: he is not (in ecclesiastical phrase) "in
communion with us"; active co-operation is impossible. Ireland
especially stands in the way. All the phrases—phylacteries—shib-
boleths, clean slate, etc.—merely mean a shaking off of the fetters of
the Newcastle programme. I am astonished to hear of the similarity
of language of Sidney Webb and his school.

On the war, he is not aware what other people have been saying;
took his own line. I am against Milner, against the policy of harshness,
believes he himself could make peace to-morrow.

What did he mean when he said he would do all in his power?
This was if the country called on him, not the Party. His cards are
on the table. Is he going to play them? Yes, by activity in the
House of Lords.

The conclusion is no change, no return, no coalition with old
friends.

All this very amiably and quietly stated.

I neither urged nor even suggested anything; merely made
enquiries as to the meaning of things. . . .

J'y suis, j'y reste.

Weeks of feverish discussion in public and in private
ensued. Mr. Asquith and Sir E. Grey spoke approvingly
of the Chesterfield deliverance, but Lord Rosebery's declara-
tion that he was "out of communion" with the Liberal
Party seemed to make any idea of unity impossible. "I
had this morning (December 29) a very friendly note from
R., but he distinctly declares against union with any of us,"
wrote Spencer to Harcourt. It was not even clear that he
had not cut himself adrift from the Liberal Imperial League.
"The next word evidently lies with the Perksites," wrote
Harcourt to Campbell-Bannerman. "It will be for them
to say whether they are 'knights of the clean slate'—whether
they too mean to refuse co-operation with the Liberal
Party and to expunge Ireland and Wales from its volume and to delete peace, retrenchment and reform." Campbell-Bannerman, with his customary phlegm, reserved his public comment on Chesterfield until the temper cooled. He was sincerely anxious for the return of Lord Rosebery, and was indisposed to make co-operation difficult in so far as the war at all events was concerned. But he had no intention of modifying his attitude in regard to the war. Writing to Harcourt, he said:

*Campbell-Bannerman to Harcourt.*

DOVER, January 2, 1902.—. . . . Another most important thing has happened since I last wrote.

Grey wrote to Herbert [Gladstone], and Herbert in indignation at once wrote expostulating with him, and begged me not to take Grey's letter (which he let me see) as final till he had a reply.

I have therefore not troubled you about it, but as the reply does not turn up I will now tell you what Grey says.

He says that he is entirely in accord with R.'s view, and that that view counters me on four vital points—

M. Law [martial law].
Cruelties [concentration camps].
Offer of terms [overtures to Boers].
Milner [recall of Lord Milner].

I must now accept R.'s view, and recant my errors, or Grey will repudiate my leadership. And he finds it "tragic" to think how different the position of the Party would have been had R.'s view been earlier taken, and the anti-national tone repressed.

I call it d-d egotism and impertinence. Then Ronald F. [Ferguson] has been making speeches calling on the Liberals to elect between R. and me on the same four points—thus shewing a concerted plan.

I have made ineffectual attempts through Sinclair and Herbert to get at Asquith and find out his attitude.

When you put this with the spade drill, there can be but one meaning.

Is there then no danger in the St. James's Hall meeting?

While they are digging and entrenching, that meeting can hardly be the scene of an eirenicon.

"My own impression now is that we are in sight of the split overt," wrote Mr. Morley (January 2) to Harcourt. "I do not think the game of the seceders is to overthrow C.-B. at this moment, but to take occasion to *trip him up.*"
replied Harcourt. "Their 'spade-work' will be that of the mole, and the chief digger will be Haldane." Meanwhile he was writing to Campbell-Bannerman urging him at the coming St. James's Hall meeting to "point out the things on which he agrees with Rosebery as to the war and repudiate the 'clean slate.'" He drafted^ ingenious heads for "C.-B." to show that Sir E. Grey's four points could all be reconciled both with the Rosebery and the "C. B." remarks on those controversial subjects. "I cannot thank you enough for them" (the notes), wrote Campbell-Bannerman. "They have been of immense help." In his speech at St. James's Hall on January 13 he took the line suggested by Harcourt, emphasizing the points of agreement on the war, generally holding out the olive branch; but standing firm on essentials and on domestic policy.

When Parliament met three days later the position within the Liberal Party was still chaotic; but Campbell-Bannerman was determined to have a war amendment to the Address if he had "to be his own teller." Harcourt, of course, shared his view that the time had come to force the fight for peace, and was in daily attendance at the House. On the opening day he delivered a speech mainly directed against the suspension of the constitution in Cape Colony. He discussed the subject chiefly from its legal aspect. "I don't care a scrap for the legal arguments on either side," retorted Chamberlain. "We are face to face with rebellion." Harcourt's next intervention was to rally all sections of the Opposition to the attack. The Cawley amendment to the Address had disclosed the distracted state of the Opposition. It was too weak to satisfy the anti-war Liberals, and it was doubtful whether it was not too strong for the Imperialist Liberals. Mr. Asquith was absent, unwell. Sir Edward Grey sat below the gallery in isolation from the

1 He was at this time at Canford Manor, Wimborne, from whence in a letter to Lewis Harcourt he made the following interesting comment: "I find Lord Wimborne very anti-Government, full of plans for a third party with a view to overthrowing them, inspired, I believe, by Winston [Churchill]. I fancy Lord R. is cultivating that young gentleman a good deal."
councils of his nominal chief and his Party. Campbell-Bannerman himself was at the end of his resources. He had done his best for unity, and his attempt had failed. In this desperate situation Harcourt came to the rescue. His aim was to show that on the question of peace and war there was essential agreement between Lord Roseberry and "C.-B.," and essential disagreement between both and Chamberlain. For the moment, he was a Roseberyite with the best. The practical question of the hour, he insisted, was the conclusion of the war with honour and safety to the country. That end could not be attained by "the impious" course of "unconditional submission," by the utter extinction of a nationality. This was really the policy of the Government against the Chesterfield demand for peace on terms. By quotation after quotation he showed the essential conflict between the Rosebery position and the Chamberlain position, driving home the point that the Liberal Imperialists in abstaining from voting would desert not Campbell-Bannerman simply, but their own leader, Lord Rosebery. It was a gallant attempt to bring the "Lib.-Imps." into line with the official Liberals and to secure a common front on the war. Of all Lord Rosebery's triumphs, said Mr. Balfour in replying to Harcourt, the greatest was surely that Sir William devoted three parts of his speech to showing how entirely he agreed with him. He had always thought the Chesterfield speech was a good one; but had never realized how good it was until he heard Harcourt's speech. It was good chaff; but it did not obliterate the force of Harcourt's appeal to the Liberal Imperialists. He had throughout accepted the Chesterfield speech as a great advance to accommodation on the subject of the war: it was its "clean slate" aspect that he repudiated.

But what the Observer called Harcourt's "patient, plodding endeavour to preserve the unity of the Party" was in vain. In a speech at Leicester Campbell-Bannerman made a friendly overture to Lord Rosebery. "I do not know," he said, "down to this moment of my speaking to
you whether Lord Rosebery speaks to me from the interior of our tabernacle or from some vantage ground outside. I practically put that question publicly to him a month ago, but he does not answer it, and I frankly say I do not think it is quite fair to me not to do so." Thereupon Lord Rosebery issued a letter in which he said:

. . . Speaking pontifically within his "tabernacle" last night he [Campbell-Bannerman] anathematized my declarations on the "clean slate" and Home Rule. It is obvious that our views on the war and its methods are not less discordant. I remain, therefore, outside his tabernacle, but not I think in solitude. . . .

With this public repudiation Campbell-Bannerman's position became increasingly painful.

The declaration at the Reform Club of the loyalty of the Party to his leadership had lost its reality. He was left isolated by his nominal colleagues on the front bench. Since his retirement from official association with the Party, Harcourt had sat at the end of the bench; but after the issue of the Rosebery letter he could bear the spectacle of C.-B.'s loneliness no longer. "Up to last night [February 21] he always stopped short of crossing the line marked by the brass-bound box," said Sir Henry Lucy in the Observer. "In the new and crushing blow that has fallen on the Party Sir William found irresistibly the call for personal sympathy. . . . There was C.-B. forlorn on the front bench, with his old colleague and sometime deputy, Mr. Asquith, scrupulously seated apart. When Sir William, entering from behind the Speaker's chair, lifted up his eyes from afar and beheld his successor in the leadership, he halted on his way to his accustomed place, and seated himself on Sir Henry's right hand." Writing next day to his sister, Harcourt said: "The Rosebery rupture has made my attendance in the H. of C. necessarily very close and very constant, generally nine hours without interruption four days a week to support Campbell-Bannerman against the men who are seeking to overthrow him. I am glad to know that the great body of the Party are loyal to him and that Lord R. is making no way."
SIR WILLIAM HARCOURT

The disunion was now publicly proclaimed, and the Liberal League came into being with Lord Rosebery as President, and Mr. Asquith, Sir E. Grey and Fowler as vice-presidents. "The new birth of this morning," wrote Campbell-Bannerman to Harcourt (February 27), "has been taken philosophically: rather with laughter than with tears—and most men can't make out what it means and what the 'policy' really is." Lord Rosebery inaugurated the new League in a speech at Glasgow. "A more empty, ineffective and uninteresting speech I never read," was Harcourt's placid comment to Mr. Morley, to whom he sent points for his coming reply at Manchester.

But if confusion was becoming worse confounded in the Liberal camp, peace was near elsewhere. The country was weary of an inglorious struggle and men's thoughts were turning to the coming coronation. "To-day," wrote Harcourt to Mr. Morley (May 23rd), "is the critical day when the Cabinet is sitting as to peace and I cannot but hope and believe that peace will come in spite of Chamberlain and Milner... I think J.C.'s last speech was the most odious and atrocious he has ever made." Harcourt's hope was realized. The peace of Vereeniging was concluded, and the public, released from the long nightmare of the war, prepared for the coming ceremonial. It was delayed by the illness of the King; but the Coronation honours were published in May. There had been a widespread belief that Harcourt would appear in the list, but his name was absent. The following correspondence explains its absence:

King Edward to Harcourt.

Buckingham Palace, May 23, 1902.—My dear Sir William Harcourt,—In conferring honours on the occasion of my Coronation, I am anxious that they should be as far as possible of a national and not a party nature.

Under these circumstances it will give me great pleasure to hear you are willing to accept a peerage from me—and I make you this offer both on national and personal grounds in recognition of your services to the State and of the high offices which you have filled.

I would propose that the creation should be a viscountcy, and I
may add that my offer has received the cordial approval of Lord Salisbury.

Believe me,
My dear Sir William,
Sincerely yours,
(Signed) Edward R.

Harcourt to King Edward.

May, 1902.—Sir William Harcourt has received with the deepest sense of gratitude Your Majesty's most gracious letter offering to confer upon him the high honour of a peerage on the auspicious celebration of Your Majesty's coronation.

*The terms of kind condescension in which that offer is conveyed add if possible to the grace of the honour proposed.

They evidence that noble sentiment of national as distinguished from party interests which has both before and since Your Majesty's accession to the Throne ever governed your conduct towards all your faithful servants and subjects.

That the humble and imperfect services which Sir William Harcourt has endeavoured to render to the Crown during a long public life should have been deemed worthy of Your Majesty's recognition —to which the King has been pleased to add the valued words of personal grounds"—is a mark of favour which more than repays the labour of a lifetime, and will be treasured hereafter as a precious memory by his family and his friends.

Sir William Harcourt trusts however that he will not be regarded as unworthy or insensible of Your Majesty's great goodness if he feels compelled to say that after thirty-four years spent in the House of Commons he feels unable to leave it for another scene than that in which he has passed his life and in which he may still hope for a brief period to render some service to the Empire under Your Majesty's glorious reign, which is inaugurated under such happy omens.

King Edward to Harcourt.

Buckingham Palace, May 26, 1902.—My dear Sir William,—
Let me thank you for your kind letter received this morning.

Though I much regret that you are unable to accept the peerage, I quite understand and appreciate the reasons you have given and unwillingness to sever your connection with the House of Commons, of which you have been so distinguished a member for thirty-four years.

Believe me,
Very sincerely yours,
(Signed) Edward R.
"I really could not bear to leave the H. of C. until I had made up my mind to leave public life for good and all," wrote Harcourt to his sister. "I should not have known what to do with myself in the other place, and to have left the Liberal Party in the lurch in the House of Commons in its present low condition would have seemed to me an unjustifiable desertion by an officer of the troops in danger and difficulty. I, of course, telegraphed for Loulou as soon as I received the King's letter, and found he was (as he always is) of like mind with me on the matter. And I hope for him a House of Commons career when I am gone." His decision delighted his colleagues. "The more I think of it," wrote Campbell-Bannerman to him (May 27), "the more worthy of admiration and gratitude does your action appear. Pluck and public spirit are not dead among us yet! I did not say enough at the time, being somewhat dazzled, but believe me, apart from the general interest, I am deeply thankful on my own account." Wilfrid Lawson expressed the general feeling of the Party in the following lines addressed to Harcourt:

To our hearts the old Liberal Chieftain is dear
And still dearer 'mid days that are cheerless,
We'd have heartily hailed him if turned to a peer
But to-night we acclaim him as peerless.
CHAPTER XXIX
LAST DAYS IN THE HOUSE


The story draws to a close. With the end of the war a new landscape opened out in the field of politics. The Khaki election had been fought on the single issue of the war, but the Government, supported by a powerful majority, proceeded to use it for drastic legislative changes. The new policy of Tariff Reform which was to dominate post-war politics and was destined to rend the Unionist Party hardly less profoundly than the war had rent the Liberal Party made an experimental appearance in the Budget, with customs duties of 3d. a cwt. on corn and grain, peas, beans and lentils, and 5d. a cwt. on flour, prepared meal, etc. But the main subject of the Session was the Education Bill, which was to destroy the School Boards of 1870. Harcourt fought both schemes with unremitting industry. At no period of his career did he reveal more energy and resource than in his resistance to what he regarded as the great back-wash of post-war reaction. Some indication of his activity, which, in a man now in his seventy-fifth year, was the admiration of friends and foes alike, is contained in the fact that in the Education Bill alone his name figures 150 times in the records of Hansard. During these debates he was virtually the Leader of the Opposition, for
neither Campbell-Bannerman nor the Liberal Leaguers took much part in the struggle.

It is impossible to follow him in detail throughout the prolonged debates on the war and the peace. He made great play with the illusory promise of the Government that £30,000,000 of the cost of the war would be recovered from the gold mines. He insisted throughout that they would get nothing, and, referring (April 15) to Hicks-Beach's promise, said:

That is not the language of those people in the Transvaal who are chiefly concerned. If you ask the gentlemen who are producing the gold they say, "No, it would be extremely unfair; it would be extremely impolitic to do anything of the kind." They say, "You should not kill the goose that lays the golden eggs." But the bird is not a goose at all. It is a bird of a very different description. It is a bird rather like those described by Burke when he called the nabobs of India in the old days "birds of passage and birds of prey." That is the bird you have to deal with. There are mines, as we know, which are floated not to be worked but to be sold. The money made out of these mines is not a source of wealth. It has been what is called "milked." Mines have been started and they have been sold, and most of their projectors are no longer in the Transvaal at all.

His prophecy was fulfilled. The promised £30,000,000 was never collected. Harcourt in later speeches contrasted this phantom contribution with the tax on food which he called "the blackest spot on the Budget—its most glaring vice." Referring in a speech on May 12 to the fact that one person in forty was in receipt of relief and that for one pauper there were many struggling for the means of life, he said:

And that is why I call this a shabby tax—a tax which is not creditable to a nation of this enormous wealth. . . . I say you ought to resort to any other tax; there is none, whatever may be the objections to it, which would not have been better than this. . . . You promised old-age pensions. This is the sort of pension that you offer to the aged—to people who can no longer work. They ask you for bread, and you give them a corn-tax. . . .

He knew that in his hostility to the "shabby tax" and all it meant he was expressing the feeling of many opposite,
including the Chancellor of the Exchequer himself. Hicks-
Beach was one of the men in the House whom Harcourt
most respected, and when he learned that the mutterings
of the Chamberlain policy were to end in the disappear-
ance of Hicks-Beach from the Exchequer, he wrote to him
(July 15) deeply regretting his passing from an office which
he had filled “with such distinction and such unflinching
courage. No one is more able than I am (he said) to
appreciate the good you have done and still more the evil
you have prevented.”

- No less vigorous was Harcourt’s attack on the Education
Bill. He had, as he reminded the House, been in the ranks
of the Birmingham Education League when he first entered
the House, and he stood by the grand axioms of the League
now that its founder, as he said with a wave of his hand
towards Chamberlain, had turned against them. The
School Boards represented to him a landmark, not merely
in education but in the establishment of religious equality,
and their destruction in order to weight the scales in favour
of denominationalism seemed an infamous step back-
wards. This, he said, was not an Education Bill; it was
a Convocation Bill. It aimed at throwing the whole cost
of the maintenance of the denominational schools on the
rates and taxes without conferring effective local control
on the schools. In Parliament, in the Press and on the
platform he fought the Bill throughout the summer and
autumn. “Denominationalism,” he insisted, “is the true
cause of our educational weakness, and the Government’s
policy is to maintain what is weak in our system and to
destroy what is strong.” He crossed swords in more than
one debate with Lord Hugh Cecil, the brilliant son of his
old colleague of the Saturday Review and life-long political
antagonist. Replying to him on one occasion, he said:

No religious difficulty! Why, Lord Hugh Cecil is himself a splen-
did impersonation of it. His objection to the Board School is that
it does not attach a child to a denomination, and he prefers the
voluntary school because it gives the Church a chance of getting a
hold upon the children. That is denominationalism. In other
words, the child is to go in at one door and to come out at the other a highly-finished Churchman. Lord Hugh's alliance between the Churchmen and the Nonconformists can only come about when the parties are on equal terms. As things stand the unregenerate lion may devour the lamb before they lie down together under the millennium.

Apart from the religious issue, he made the strong objection that the new committees would be far too much under the thumb of Whitehall, a criticism which time has justified. "It is a mere abuse of terms," he said in one of his letters to The Times, "to call this a self-governing representative authority. It is only a fifth wheel in the coach. The local authority proposes but it is the Board of Education that disposes." If his criticism on the point had been followed perhaps the head masters and mistresses would be able to spend their time on their proper work of the education of the children instead of on filling up forms required by the Education Authority for submission to Whitehall.

During the autumn there was a revival on the part of Campbell-Bannerman of the idea of suggesting a conference with Lord Rosebery. The discontent within the Party had been slightly mitigated by the course of events after the war, but relations were still strained and the attitude of Lord Rosebery remained hostile, and his speech to the Liberal League seemed to forbid any approach from the official leaders. Campbell-Bannerman, however, still hankered after reconciliation, and discussed with Harcourt and Mr. Morley the wisdom of proposing a new conference. It was not proceeded with, Harcourt suggesting the alternative that Campbell-Bannerman should invite E. Grey, Asquith and Fowler to come and discuss which was the course to be taken in the League Convention.

II

Between the summer and autumn sessions Harcourt made a round of calls, beginning with a visit to his sister at Malvern, proceeding to Harrogate and finishing with a stay with the Londonderrys at Wynyard Park, Stockton-
on-Tees. At the latter place he met Kitchener and had "some pleasant talk with him. He is not at all fierce, but talked very sensibly about South Africa." A proposal from Mr. Morley, who was now engaged on his Life of Gladstone, that Harcourt should agree to the publication of the joint memorandum of himself and Spencer on the difficulties at Osborne with the Queen in January 1881 on the subject of the reference to Kandahar in the Queen's Speech, led to a long dissertation from Harcourt on the question of Cabinet proprieties and the publication of secret documents. When, at his urgent request, Mr. Morley decided to forgo publication, he wrote thanking him that "Like Coriolanus you have sacrificed to my personal wish."

Discretion is one of the infirmities of old age (he continued). You have all the privileges of youth and "boys will be boys." I know that I am old-fashioned in my ideas and that I shrink somewhat from "unlicensed printing." I am very un-twentieth century, and wish myself safe back in the eighteenth. What a pity you did not have access to the private correspondence of Robt. Walpole and his billets doux to Q. Caroline.

An honour which pleased him greatly was conferred upon him at this time in the shape of election to an honorary fellowship of his college at Cambridge, Trinity. Writing to Montagu Butler, the Master of Trinity (November 16), he said: "There is no distinction I could have so much coveted as that of an Honorary Fellowship of the Royal and Religious Foundation, to which I owed so much in the days of my youth long ago, and which I place highest in my estimation in my old age."

The sense of old age was now much with him, and his family letters were coloured by the note of farewell. It was always a cheerful note. He had had a glorious day of life, and now that it was drawing to a close he delighted in its memories and still more in the feeling that the happiness he had enjoyed would be continued by those he loved. Writing to Lewis Harcourt on the eve of his fortieth birthday (Jan. 31, 1903), he said:

1 This document appears in the Appendix to Vol. I of this book.
Harcourt to his son Lewis.

... Your companionship and devoted aid were the chief support and the means of what success I have had in middle life and your unselfish affection is the comfort of my age.

How few there are who can feel that they have never given their fathers one moment's pain or uneasiness.

My time cannot be long, but I bless God that I have lived to see you established with all the happiness you deserve with a perfect wife and children worthy of you both. Your home is to me an euthanasia which is all I could have hoped. And I dwell on the thoughts of another generation which will be as happy as we have been and as you have made my lifetime.

Bless you my darling child (for such you are always to me) and for all you have been and done for me.

His letters to his sister Emily at Malvern, with whom he had kept up an unbroken correspondence for fifty years, were full of the glow of an unclouded sunset. They were "toddling down the hill together," but he cheered the journey with the pleasant gossip of those about him, his wife, his children, his grandchildren—"I have never in my life seen a more enchanting pair"—and happy, unregretful reminders of the long past. "Your affection is the dearest treasure of my old age," he said, "and it grows the longer we live." He was jocular even about his infirmities. "I have your pills all safe," he wrote. "Little have they improved by keeping. In honour of you I promise to take two of them to-night, and if I survive will let you know the result." In the spring of 1903 he underwent an operation, and it was feared that his public life was over. The fact revealed the latent affection for him which prevailed among all parties, and the Press teemed with tributes to the splendour of his parliamentary achievements and the warmth and generosity of his nature.

Not the least pleasant public eulogy was that of Lord Rosebery, who said that "he has been, and will long remain, one of the stately and memorable figures of Parliament."

But the operation was successful. "I am quietly surveying the storm at my ease," he wrote to his sister (May 25). "Sleep and eat well, and allow myself to be bored as little as possible. I am now beginning to see company
and have had visits from Lord Spencer, John Morley, and Lord James, and I shall soon begin to invite the ladies to my ruelle.” When sufficiently recovered, he went with Lady Harcourt to Homburg to recuperate, calling on Pagensteckle, the oculist at Wiesbaden, who assured him (he wrote to his sister) that his defective eye was so much improved that it was as good as that of any man of 20, “which has made me in good spirits.”

III

In spite of his illness in the spring of 1903, the season of that year found Harcourt’s activity unabated. The aftermath of the Boer War brought with it acute problems that aroused bitter conflict. Of these the most prominent, and ultimately the most fatal to the Government, was that of labour in the mines. Although the Kruger regime had, at enormous cost of life and treasure, been overthrown, the mine-owners still found themselves with industrial grievances, now mainly concerned with the insufficiency of labour. The white labour they did not want. “The refuse and wastrels of this country we will not have at any price, because at 6d. a day they would be dear,” wrote Mr. Lionel Phillips. On this Harcourt in a letter to The Times (February 5) remarked:

... That is a frank statement which I imagine will cause some surprise and disappointment to the “honest British workman” who had been encouraged to believe that the new colony which has been acquired at such vast expenditure of blood and of money would afford an outlet for his industry and improve his condition, and that if there were any class of employer who could afford to pay a good price for honest labour it would have been the gold magnates who have accumulated vast fortunes out of the gold mines. . . .

Not only was the white man undesirable; but the black man was a burden to the community, who refused to work in the mines, with the result that there was a fifty per cent. deficiency of native labour. Harcourt pointed out in a debate in the House (March 24) that the deficiency was due to lowering of wages. The mine-owners had failed to bring down wages to the native under the old administration,
and had now effected a reduction, so that the average wages paid throughout the whole of 1901 had fallen to 3½s. a month. The news had spread, and the natives who could live on agriculture had remained in their kraals. There had been an improvement in wages in 1902, but even so the wages did not compare with those paid in other industries. The reason why the mine-owners could not afford to pay more was the policy of opening low-grade mines which were not intended for gold production, but for sale. He denounced the scheme of taxing the natives into the mines. Writing on this subject in The Times, he said:

There are questions of vital national importance not to be decided by Park Lane nor even by Downing Street. There are things more precious than gold, and amongst them is the reputation of the British race, both at home and beyond the seas. There is much to be said and much to be done before such an injustice to a defenceless people who have passed under our dominion can be accomplished. I say nothing of the danger of such a policy—though it is perilous enough—I enter my protest against its profound immorality and its lasting disgrace. In the evil days of American slavery it was thought to cloak the ugly word slave by the euphemism of "persons held to labour." No one will be deceived by the delusive phrase of "indirect compulsion," which, in plain terms, is neither more nor less than forced labour. . . .

Meanwhile, dissatisfied with the quality of white labour and insufficiently supplied with black, the mine-owners had raised a demand for the importation of Chinese under conditions which, said Harcourt, "are repugnant to the opinion of every man in this country." Attacked for not putting forward an alternative, he said (The Times, February 6):

You criticize me for offering no positive suggestion for remedying the deficiency of labour. I will venture to offer one. It is a very simple and practical one—to offer not less, but better wages, and to abandon the policy, on which the mine-owners pride themselves, of "standing alone in making an effort to reduce the pre-war rate of pay," under which they managed to secure enormous wealth. . . .

"I expect the gold magnates will be furious," he wrote to Lewis Harcourt, "but I have the whip-hand of them. I have thought it judicious to assume that Joe and Alfred
[Lord Milner] will never do what I know they are contemplating." But in the House a little later Chamberlain came frankly to the defence of the mine-owners, and declared that if the time came for the importation of Asiatic labour neither Harcourt nor the House at large could possibly prevent it. "It is no use mincing matters," he said. "This is not a case in which we can compel our colonies against their will." Harcourt persisted in his opposition to the importation of the Chinese, and repeatedly warned the Government that so odious a policy would be passionately repudiated by the country. He did not live to see the warning fulfilled in the unprecedented overthrow of 1906; but on no subject was his prescience more completely justified by events.

Meanwhile the unity which the Liberals had not been able to effect by their own efforts became a reality with the last phase of Chamberlain's varied and disruptive career. He provided the party he had left with an issue which closed up the ranks as nothing else could close them up. The coming of his whirlwind campaign for Tariff Reform, the new name under which the ancient and discredited policy of Protection assumed an air of novelty, had been preluded in the corn tax of the two preceding years. Hicks-Beach, as we have seen, had gone from the Treasury as the first victim of the new crusade, but his successor, Ritchie, administered a rebuff to the Protectionists by repealing the corn tax, which, though it had been imposed for revenue purposes, was looked on by the Protectionists as the thin end of the wedge of their policy. Harcourt congratulated Ritchie on the repeal of this "infamous" tax; but on May 15, at Birmingham, Chamberlain raised the standard of Imperial Preference, declaring that we must "recover our freedom, resume the power of negotiation, and, if necessary, of retaliation whenever our interests or our relations between our colonies and ourselves are threatened by other people." On the same day, in receiving a deputation of farmers, Mr. Balfour threw cold water on the idea of a preferential scheme to bind together the colonies and the Mother Country. With these two contrary declarations
the breach within the Unionist tabernacle became acute and public, and there followed the amazing duel between Chamberlain and Mr. Balfour that continued until the electoral catastrophe of 1906 destroyed the Birmingham policy. Harcourt was laid aside by his operation at the time of the outbreak of the controversy; but he followed the developments closely from his sick-room, and was in constant communication with Campbell-Bannerman on the subject of tactics in the House.

He rejoiced at the raising of an issue which consolidated the Liberals and broke up the forces of the Government. "It seems to me that Chamberlain had irreparably damaged this Government and that it cannot long survive his dynamite bomb," he wrote to his son. Long-severed ties were knitted afresh. Devonshire, Goschen and James were once more his allies, and to Mr. Asquith he wrote (May 25), "Hicks-Beach came to see me this morning. He is full of fight and quite prepared to lead the opposition to the Chamberlain programme on the Government sithe of the House."

As soon as he had recovered sufficiently he addressed a gathering of Dorset and Hampshire Liberal Associations at Malwood. Writing to Lewis Harcourt on this gathering, he said:

Harcourt to his son Lewis.

MALWOOD, June 28.—... You will be amused to hear that I delivered an oration of forty minutes to the South Dorsets really quite in my old form and a good "stock" speech. I told them to stick to the tax on food and talk and listen to nothing else. You will see that Balfour is beginning to funk, and pleads that it is not fundamental, in which he gets no support from Joe, who knows of course that if that goes all his colonial preference is at an end. On this issue he must be beaten. I made great play of course with the Dorset labour in old times at 7s. a week. There was a man there who said he himself gave before the Repeal 1s. for a quartern loaf and after the Repeal at the same shop he got three loaves for the same money. They all went away much delighted, and it put me in spirits to find I was so fit... .

His industrious pen was at work in the Press, and in letters to The Times and to correspondents he made devasta-
ting play with "'My Proposal'—propounded by a single Minister—'a mighty maze without a plan,' a conundrum to be puzzled out by the nation, subject to the interim education of the Prime Minister, who is still 'a child on such matters.'" He ridiculed the idea that tariffs alone could hold the Empire together. "To forecast a future of separation seemed of all things the most absurd, it was self-government that held them together. You might as well take immediate precautions to save the Empire in view of an insurrection of the Primrose League to overthrow the Monarchy."

But it is assumed (he said) that a preferential tariff would prove a bond of permanent union. I believe there can be no greater delusion. Treaties of commerce are notoriously short-lived. One party or the other becomes dissatisfied with their position. There is nothing that people quarrel about so bitterly as love and money. When you come to discussion about pecuniary arrangements in family affairs the most affectionate relations fall out. What is here proposed is not a Customs Union or Zollverein, where there is a single arrangement under a central authority dealing with all commodities on the same footing. What is here proposed is a separate commercial treaty with each distinct self-governing colony, just as if it were a foreign State, under which we shall be bound to create different protective tariffs for the various articles which suit the purposes of each colony—in regard to Canada corn, in respect of New Zealand meat, and so in Australia wool. Not only will there be disputes in each case whether the equivalent either party receives is sufficient, but each colony will question whether what it is to receive is equal in value to that granted to the others. It is obvious that these congeries of preferential treaties bristle with all the elements of discontent and disunion. To us it means a perpetual war of tariffs with foreign States with whom now we have no conflicts.¹

He showed the fallacy of adopting the German Zollverein as a model that applied to self-governing dominions scattered over the globe, which had no interest nearer at heart than the development of their own manufactures and would be as little disposed to accept "dumping" from England as from anywhere else. But true to his main strategic principle, he kept his argument steadfastly to the fact that colonial preference meant a tax on food.

¹ The Times, July 13.
He was at issue with Campbell-Bannerman on tactics in the House, insisting that the wise policy was not to make a formal attack from the Opposition Benches on Chamberlain's policy, since that would rally the Government ranks and give Protection a majority, but that the Unionist Free Fooers should make the running and complete the breach in the Government ranks. In this he prevailed for some time, but in July Campbell-Bannerman decided that a frontal attack must be made. Writing to Harcourt, he said:

Campbell-Bannerman to Harcourt.

6, Grosvenor Place, S.W., July 4.—I do not think that anything rash will be done; but of course we do not leave out of consideration the fact that Beach and James and hoc genus omne have objects in view which are not ours: in fact, as James avows, they want to prevent the Radicals from getting into office. I therefore take their concern for the Free Trade cause cum grano.

I told Lou Lou all about the situation yesterday and he said he would communicate with you. Since then I have seen Beach who seems to think he can induce Balfour to give, or get for us, the opportunity of a divisionless discussion. We shall see whether he can propose anything: he is not to be in London again till Wednesday. Until then we lie low. . . .

Harcourt was still hostile to a resolution which would rally wavering Government votes to Chamberlain's policy; but if there was to be a resolution it must be strictly confined to a declaration against a tax on food. "It is absolutely clear," he wrote to Hicks-Beach, "that the taxation of food is the key to the whole position." If the food tax went, he wrote to Campbell-Bannerman, the whole Chamberlain policy crumbled to dust. "As to reciprocity and general Free Trade, if corn is not to be protected free import of everything else follows as of course, for if this main industry is not protected, it is impossible that other interests should be favoured. This followed as a necessary consequence from the repeal of the corn laws in 1846. I am therefore strongly in favour, if it be possible, to abstain from challenging a party division and rely upon raising the country upon taxation of food, which I am glad to think is being already satisfactorily commenced by the different organizations."
Harcourt's view that the wise strategy was to leave the disruption in the Unionist camp to develop was strengthened as the summer advanced and the break in the Government became imminent. The demonstrations of the Unionist Free Traders became bolder, and the question arose as to whether Chamberlain would surrender. "I was walking with Onslow this afternoon," Harcourt wrote to his son, "and he alluded to my letter (The Times, August 19). I said, 'All I fear is lest Joe should run away?' He replied, 'Oh, you need not be afraid of that.' I said, 'That is what I believe. He is not the man to run away from the guns.'" The crisis reached its culmination in September. Writing to Lewis Harcourt, after a brief visit to Homburg, Harcourt said:

_Harcourt to his son Lewis._

OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE CLUB, September 1.—We had a bad passage over the North Sea in half a gale of wind, but I was able yesterday to attend the service at the Abbey [Lord Salisbury's funeral service]. I saw all the principal people of both sides. I then called on Ritchie in Downing Street, and as I rang the bell Valenta came up to me, and said, "Are you taking possession already?" I had a quarter of an hour with him [Ritchie], but it is evident the colleagues have little to say to him. He is determined to go whatever happens. What seems in the air is that Joe may put so much water in his wine as to induce the Duke [Devonshire] to stay for the present and that they will have some dilatory declaration to the effect that opinion is not now ripe for any action. But all this is speculation, no one knows what form Joe's action will take.

... I dined with Spencer last night. He has got so far in the formation of his administration as to suggest that Campbell-Bannerman after his French speech might be Foreign Minister in the House of Lords. ...

I met Moberly Bell in the train from Hook of Holland. He told me he had asked Austen [Chamberlain] whether he was as keen on fiscal reform as his father, to which Austen replied, "No, but then you see I am not so young." Ritchie told me the Hicks-Beach Party are doing very little. Indeed they are checkmated till Joe shows his hand. ...

I am beginning to feel rather better for Homburg now that I have escaped from it. The Duke of Devonshire said to me, "The waters are all humbug, but I hope you learned to play bridge there."

All was confusion in the Unionist camp, and the only question was as to what form the crash would take. The
fall of the Government seemed so imminent that Harcourt's correspondence with Spencer, Campbell-Bannerman and others was largely concerned with what would succeed it. The publication of Mr. Balfour's *Economic Notes on Insular Free Trade* only darkened the situation, and when in September 18 the resignations of Chamberlain, Ritchie and Lord George Hamilton were announced the position was still further perplexed. Which party had won in the strange conflict? Chamberlain had gone; but two of the leading Free Traders had gone with him, and the place of the more important of them was taken by Chamberlain's son, who had succeeded Ritchie as Chancellor of the Exchequer. The mystery was deepened by the fact that the Duke of Devonshire, who was the most influential Free Trader in the Cabinet, remained in office. What did it all mean?

Writing to Spencer, Harcourt said:

*Harcourt to Spencer.*

MALWOOD, September 20.— . . . I have a letter from Hicks-Beach this morning dated Wynyard, 19th. He says "no one there knows why the Duke and others stay while Ritchie and Hamilton go, but my host [Londonderry] has attached himself to the Duke with the understanding that when an election comes he will support F. Lambton as a free trader here. He thinks that the Duke has consented to remain on the understanding that the Sheffield speech [Mr. Balfour's] will postpone or water down the pamphlet feeling." Beach adds, "I much doubt if either Ritchie or Hamilton knew of Chamberlain's resignation before their own was accepted." A pretty piece of sharp practice!

Beach himself is a "bruised reed." He evidently thinks he cannot depend on his section and that they are mostly "retaliators." And he refers me to his Article in the *Monthly Magazine* as showing that he himself is, as he says, by no means orthodox, and indeed he substantially says that he will not fight his own Party against the pamphlet feeling. It is all of a piece with his original error in introducing the 1s. Corn tax, and he is evidently intimidated, I dare say, in regard to his own seat.

I quite agree that the whole affair is a most dishonest intrigue with a scheme that Balfour shall undermine Free Trade inside whilst Chamberlain attacks it outside. The latter will, I believe, certainly fail; the former will, I believe, not succeed in the end, but will save the Government for the moment and do a vast deal of mischief in the meanwhile. . . .
I am sorry to say I suspect that though the Duke was all against taxing food he is not insensible to the advantages of retaliation in the interests of Barrow.

In his speech at Sheffield on October 2, Mr. Balfour said that if he was asked, "Do you wish to reverse the fiscal tradition which has prevailed during the last two generations?" he would reply, "I do." He proposed to alter that tradition "by asking the people of this country to reverse, to annul, and delete altogether from their maxims of public conduct the doctrine that you must never put on taxation except for revenue purposes." Thereupon the Duke of Devonshire announced his resignation, declaring that he could not expound Mr. Balfour's views or those of the Government under these conditions. There was much stirring of muddy water in regard to the whole circumstances in which the Free Traders were manoeuvred out of the Cabinet, and Harcourt took the prevalent view that Mr. Balfour, while giving "any and every pledge which he found necessary to anybody to keep his sinking ship afloat," was only waiting for the success of J. C's progress to declare in favour of the 'grand plan,' and then all his dupes will have to follow in his train. The dishonesty of the whole business becomes more apparent every day."  

Meanwhile, Chamberlain, free from office, started on his campaign to rally the country to the standard of Tariff Reform. The main burden of pursuing him and destroying him fell to Mr. Asquith, and his argumentative victory in that great encounter remains one of the most memorable incidents in modern politics. Campbell-Bannerman, writing to Harcourt (November 27), said: "There never was such a strange 'controversy.' Joe countered on all points: his blunders shown up, his errors exposed: but he never acknowledges, excuses or explains anything! He trusts to vulgar, ignorant applause of the 'strong man,' and to the selfish interests of particular trades. The Duke of D.'s speech is a huge help: but what a feeble lot are his followers—time-servers almost to a man." Harcourt's own

---

1 Letter to Lord James, October 22.
campaigning days were now over; but he fired a couple of farewell broadsides from the platform for the cause in which nearly sixty years before he had made his entry into political discussion at the Cambridge Union. His son had at last consented to stand for Parliament, and Sir William Mather had made way for him in Rossendale, the Lancashire seat, so long held by Hartington. There at the town of Rawtenstall, on October 31, Harcourt delivered a speech in which he made skilful play with the "two-card trick" of Mr. Balfour and Chamberlain, the one playing "retaliation," the other "food tax." He covered the whole field of the controversy in the spirit of one whose own part in it was ending. "I have seen in the course of my life," he said, "the state to which the country was reduced by protection. I have been spared to see the position to which it has been raised by free trade. These are the convictions which cannot, as you may suppose, pass away from my mind or pass away from my conscience." Replying to a letter of thanks from his son for giving him "the first start in my constituency," Harcourt said, "You know well that the greatest pleasure now left to me dwells in you and yours." He followed the contest in Rossendale with enthusiasm, gaily intimating to Loulou that he proposed to "crib" some of his good points for his own speeches. On December 11 he paid what proved to be his last visit to his constituency, receiving a deputation of iron and steel workers on "dumping" and speaking largely on that subject to a meeting at Tredegar. Writing to his sister on his return to Malwood, he uttered the first note of weariness of battle.

Harcourt to his sister Emily.

... I know you have heard of our expedition to West Mon, which was a success, though I expect some trouble from the iron people on "dumping." It was a great exertion and I realize that, though I got through, my time of hard work is up, and it is not for my advantage nor that of others that I should long continue what I am not really fit for. I am looking forward with hope to an early release from the wear and tear of political life, to enjoy what remains to me of life at home where I am always happy. And amongst other things, dear, I shall be able to be more with you. I live always in
thought of your brave and contented spirit in your enforced retire-
ment, and wish I could do more to cheer it. . . .

"I am myself rather shaky and have not altogether recovered from the West Mon. expedition," he wrote Loulou a few days later. "I do not feel at all well." But his keenness in the struggle remained. "I think Joe's Com-
mission [the Tariff Reform Commission] the most revolting thing I ever knew or dreamed of," he wrote. With Camp-
bell-Bannerman he was in close communication on the subject of common action with the Free Trade Unionists, and his letters to Mr. Morley were full of lively comments on the great comedy in the Cabinet. "There has been nothing like the suppression of the resignation of J. C.," he said, "since the days of the Oxford-Bolingbroke Cabinet when they were hatching the Treaty of Utrecht and the fall of Marlborough." In sending a letter to be read by Mr. Morley at the unveiling of a statue of T. E. Ellis, the late Chief Whip, he laid stress on "that high spirit of public honour, free from chicane and underhand methods . . . which have been the great tradition of English politics," and in a private covering note to Mr. Morley he said, "I began my political life in 1852 with a pamphlet on the 'Morality of Public Men' and I may well end it with a similar disquisition. I entirely agree with you that nothing baser is to be found in our political records [than the betrayal of the Free Traders in the Cabinet]. I have used in the enclosed note the word chicane which sounds nasty as I intended it. But I looked it out in Johnson to see if it were permissible English and found the following appro-
priate authority from Prior:

'Unwilling then in arms to meet
He strove to lengthen the campaign
And save his forces by chicane.'

I will make you a present of this." He was eager in his inquiries about his friends magnum opus, the Life of Glad-
stone, now approaching publication. "Yes," wrote Mr. Morley (October 3), "the book is done—very long: some vol. II.
of it interesting; a little of it indiscreet. A copy will reach you towards the end of the week, and may the Lord have mercy on your soul—and on mine.” “A great life of a great man,” was his verdict on the book to his sister, and writing to Spencer he said, “I sat up half the night reading it. I began as I always do with a novel at the end to work back from the catastrophe. He seems to have told the story as well as it could be told and with the least indiscretion which the circumstances admitted.” Writing to Mr. Morley himself on October 14, his seventy-sixth birthday, he said:

_Harcourt to Mr. Morley._

The more I read of the biography [Gladstone] the more I marvel at its combined comprehensiveness and condensation. In that respect it is a literary masterpiece. It will live as a model of what a Life ought to be and is the best monument that could be erected to a great man. It brings before one the wonderful variety of the man in his gifts and his interests, his stupendous industry, and inexhaustible energy. There has never been anything surely simile aut secundum. All this you have portrayed to the life with the pencil of a master.

I should like in a future edition to have more of the Arcadian dialogues: _et cantare pares et respondere parati._

He was present with Lady Harcourt at the royal banquet at Windsor on November 19. “It was young and lively,” he wrote to Lewis Harcourt, “a great contrast to the old Victorian days. . . .” He was busy meanwhile in writing a scathing attack on Chamberlain’s “impudent” Commission by which a jury of _ex parte_ and interested men were to draw up a “scientific tariff.”

In the mellow avuncular mood which now pervaded his correspondence, he discussed the progress of the Tariff Reform struggle with extreme satisfaction. It had done two things which were dear to his heart. Chamberlain’s policy had broken the Unionist Party, and it had healed up the differences in the Liberal Party.” Lord Rosebery, it was true, still declined to commit himself with the Party officially, but otherwise the ranks were closed up. Harcourt followed Mr. Asquith’s devastating pursuit of Chamber-
lain with delight, though he thought his speeches were too closely reasoned for the mob, but his chief admiration was reserved for C.-B. "I have written to tell him," he wrote to Loulou, "that in my opinion it [the speech at Maidstone] is quite the best that has been made on the controversy. Really on the platform he is a I." The course of the by-elections, and the evidence that Mr. Balfour was "drawing off from Joe," confirmed him in the view that the campaign was going well. "The Chamberlain flurry has failed and all his bombast has fizzled out." "It is our policy," he said, "to keep Balfour on his legs for the present in order to fight Joe." For himself he knew that his fighting days were done, and he had no intention to "lag superfluous" on the stage where he had played so great a part. The return of Lewis Harcourt for Rossendale had filled his cup of happiness. "Next to his marriage and his delightful children," he wrote to his sister (February 14), "this is the great joy of my old age and I am preparing my Nunc dimittis. I have always had a strong feeling against people struggling on to maintain a position for which they are no longer fit." In this spirit he announced his farewell in the following letter to the Liberal and Labour Association of West Monmouth:

To the Liberal and Labour Association of West Monmouth.

22, Grafton Street, February 23, 1904.—Gentlemen,—It is with much regret that, owing to uncertain health in the past year, I have not been able to appear more frequently on public occasions amongst my constituents, or to take a more active share in political affairs elsewhere. At my age I do not feel myself equal to the exertion to which I have been formerly accustomed during thirty-five years of parliamentary life.

I have much to be grateful for in the generous confidence and singular indulgence which have been extended to me by my friends and constituents in the nine years during which I have had the honour to serve in the Welsh battalions, which ever stand in the van of the party of progress.

I have, ever since I entered upon political life, given all my energies to public work. I regard the post of a representative of the people as a high trust and a great responsibility, not to be lightly undertaken or imperfectly discharged. Its duties become year by year more
weighty and more imperative; every one is called upon con-
scientiously to measure the power which he possesses honestly to
fulfil them. I do not deceive myself in this matter, and though I am
ready for the present to do what I can to discharge the duties of your
representative, I recognize, as I ought, that I am no longer equal
to do all that I desire and that I ought to do in the service of a great
constituency in the future which lies before the country.

A General Election cannot be far distant. I have felt bound, not
without pain, to come to the conclusion that I should not be justified
in seeking at the next election to renew the lease of my parliamentary
life, the obligations of which I could not discharge in a manner which
would satisfy myself or those I had the honour to serve.

By your kindness, I have in a period of storm and stress done
what in me lay to promote the principles and uphold the flag which
gave me confidence. It is to me a supreme source of satisfaction
to know that those principles will always find their highest representa-
tion and their unbroken stronghold in this great constituency.

The prospects of the Liberal cause were never brighter than they
are to-day, when the reign of reaction is coming to an end, and the
victory of the united party of progress is assured.

Your obedient and grateful servant,

W. V. Harcourt.

The announcement evoked a universal chorus of praise,
both public and private, for the retiring statesman—praise
in which the note of affection, inspired by his own generous
nature, was most conspicuous. Mr. Morley read the an-
nouncement on his way to Cambridge. He had known it was
coming, "but that did not lessen the shock." "I strolled
alone to-day in the gardens of your old college," he said,
"thinking much of you and what your letter signifies to
the House of Commons and to the public and to your friend."
"To the House of Commons the loss is irreparable—that
of the one survivor of the heroic age who kept alive in
degenerate times the memory of greater days," wrote Mr.
Asquith. "I have not always agreed, nor was I always a
good follower," wrote Mr. Haldane (Lord Haldane) to him.
"But there has never been a day when I did not realize how
completely you have belonged to those—and there have
not been many—whom history will reckon in the very first
rank." Goschen, now in the House of Lords, with whom
Harcourt had fought many a fierce battle, lamented that
"the last of the true Parliamentarians, not in respect of opinions, but as regards never-failing veneration for the traditions and dignity of the House of Commons," was saying farewell and leaving a "gap which no one will fill."

"You" and I (he added) have fought many a stiff fight, but I am sure that looking back upon them as we do now, we find that they have left nothing but personal regard behind, and have not effaced our early friendship when we first did politics together nearly forty years ago, when I was member for the City and you spoke in my support at the Cannon Street Hotel. I wonder whether you remember it."¹

"Resignation is better than death, as it allows you to know the good things that are said of you," was Harcourt's comment to Mr. Morley on the pleasant tributes that poured in upon him. None of these tributes gave him more satisfaction than the gift of plate made to him on his resignation by the civil servants who had in years past acted as private secretaries to him "in affectionate remembrance of a service which was to all of us a privilege and a pleasure." Writing to Sir E. Ruggles-Brise in acknowledgment of the gift (a silver inkstand and candlestick), Harcourt said (May 31):

I shall dwell with gratitude on the memory of the happy days we spent together through all the "storm and stress" of public life, which was made to me possible and even enjoyable by the able and self-sacrificing support which I received from the colleagues to whom I owe whatever I have been able to do.

I have come to think that "retirement" is not only the wisest but the most agreeable phase of human existence. He is really happy to whom the pleasures of "Memory" are more dear than the ardour of hope.

"I never knew till now what a considerable person I was supposed to be," he wrote to Lord Currie (March 15). "There is a nice French saying, 'Il faut toujours reconduire la vieillesse,' reconduire being, I fancy, 'seeing one to the door.' Altogether I feel very happy in not being called upon

¹ Lord Goschen writes that the relations between his father and Harcourt continued to be of great friendliness to the end, in spite of all their bitter battles in politics.
to do what I feel unequal to, and above all in having my boy Loulou returned to-day for a great Lancashire constituency without opposition. So I shall swear in young Hannibal at the table of the House of Commons to-morrow and hand him on my armour. He will not have to fight 'Jog' for that worthy is cremated already.'
CHAPTER XXX

NUNEHAM


"W
E had indeed a happy day yesterday," wrote Harcourt to his sister on March 18, describing his introduction of Lewis Harcourt to the House of Commons on the preceding day. "The dearest hope of my life was fulfilled. The House was crowded on both sides, and both equally cheered the rising and the setting sun... I have always thought and said what a lucky mortal I am and how happy I ought to feel—as indeed I do." A few days later an event occurred which suddenly changed his good fortune and with it the whole current of the brief remainder of his life. His nephew Aubrey Harcourt died at Monte Carlo. The victim of a tragic episode—he had been engaged to a daughter of Dean Liddell, who died within a few hours of their contemplated marriage—he had remained single, and the Nuneham estate having been disentailed, the property had been at his personal disposal. On his death it was found that he had re-entailed Nuneham to his uncle and his heirs, a condition of the inheritance being that the family name should be limited to Harcourt, a fact which necessitated the dropping of Harcourt's original surname of Vernon altogether. Harcourt had been totally unaware of Aubrey's intention, and had he been aware of it he could not have anticipated that it would affect him, for his nephew was young enough to have been his son.
The sudden and unexpected change in his career clouded the few months of life left to him. It brought him dignities he did not desire and cares which he would willingly have escaped. All his heart was in the home he had made at Malwood, and he had looked forward to ending his days there in cheerful enjoyment of its pleasures. Many happy memories centred in Nuneham, with its gracious lawns sloping to the river, its pleasant landscape and its distant vista of the towers of Oxford; but it had never been his home and it came to him too late in life ever to be his home. Moreover, though it brought dignity it did not bring the means of maintaining dignity. Writing to his sister after investigating the affairs of the estate, Harcourt said that, even with the money for the sale of Harcourt House, the old family mansion in Cavendish Square, there was no substantial income at all for indoor expenses at Nuneham or personal expenses in living there, or for the heavy repairs necessary to the dilapidated building. "There is no escape from this," he said, "and though I hope to make visits to Nuneham in picnic fashion for a few weeks in the summer, I cannot attempt regularly to inhabit it as my house, but must fall back, as I shall contentedly on my dear Malwood, which I love so well, as my residence, and take care that Nuneham does not suffer in condition for those who come after me and can afford to reside there." The more he probed the situation the worse it became. Writing to his sister again, he said:

Harcourt to his Sister.

22, Grafton St., May 3, 1904.—Dearest Em, What is called a succession is full of trouble. Every day I find that there is more to pay and less to receive. It is now claimed that the whole roof of the house at Nuneham is in a state of decay, having been neglected for the last fifty years, and that it must be stripped and replaced. All the carpets are worn out, and the place wants repainting from top to bottom.

The pictures, it is said, all want cleaning and 'varnishing, and a man is to come down from the National Portrait Gallery to review them. I begin to long for the quietude of Malwood, instead of which all the silly people are worrying me to convert me into a pauper Earl.
I was born a younger son, and retain all the instincts and tastes of that happy estate, worth all the pomp of the unhappy landowner. It was a great piece of luck that poor Aubrey sold Harcourt House, and left me the money which it brought—which is in fact all I have with which to keep up Nuneham.

He threw himself into the heavy task that had fallen on him with his unfailing courage. He sat hour after hour over the big ledgers of the estate with Gale, the agent, terribly depressed by the despairing revelation of its impoverishment. His determination to get to the bottom of things and to learn the worst never faltered. His nephew Henry Rice, who saw him in the last days of his life, said, "I am struck with how much he understands and how he puts his finger at once on the weak spots in the farming." His absorption in the world of great affairs had not extinguished the lessons of his country training, but he could not look forward to time in which to redeem so forlorn a position as that with which he was faced. One day as he sat before the ledgers he looked up and said to his wife, "I feel like Horace Walpole when he became Lord Orford."  

By the irony of events his difficulties were increased by the most illustrious achievement of his life, the death duties swallowing up much of the liquid resources that had come to him through Aubrey Harcourt's sale of Harcourt House. Repairs to the fabric of the building were necessary to keep it intact and much of the furniture was so worn that it had to be replaced. The carpet in the large drawing-room was in absolute rags and he bought another. Old Barston, the estate carpenter (so old that his constant assertion was that he "came under Earl Harcourt and hoped to die under Earl Harcourt"), said the old carpet dated from the Archbishop's time. Lady Waldegrave, when she married George Harcourt, wanted a new one, but her husband asked her to promise that a new carpet should not be danced on,

---

1 "An estate and an Earldom at seventy-four. Had I sought them or wished, 'twould add one fear more—That of making a countess when almost fourscore." Horace Walpole, *Epitaphium Viri Auctoris.*
contemporary writer describing the scene, "sat below the gangway with legs crossed, arms folded and eyes closed. Evidently he was too nervous to watch his father, and he relaxed his attitude only at the end of the speech. On hearing Mr. Chaplin's courtly compliments to Sir William, Mr. Harcourt's face beamed with pleasure. Sir William himself was affected and drew his handkerchief across his eyes when Mr. Chaplin deplored the approaching loss of another old link with the past and another great ornament of the old school. All members cheered the allusion, the Prime Minister's voice sounding distinctly." Harcourt spoke in the House once more, briefly, on July 15, on Education, but his warning to the nation to "halt" was his true farewell to Parliament.

He had throughout his life resisted the requests to have his portrait painted. In his early days in London Watts had made a drawing of him which appears as the frontispiece to the first volume of this book, and there had been other "studies" of him; but even his old friend Millais had not prevailed on him to undergo the ordeal of formal sittings. In this last summer, however, he was induced to sit for a portrait subscribed for by the Liberal Party as a tribute to his lifelong services. Mr. A. S. Cope, R.A., was given the commission, and Harcourt sat for the portrait during July and August. The picture, which represents him in his Chancellor's robes, is a stately and worthy memorial of its subject. It hangs at Nuneham, and replicas of it are at the National Liberal Club and the Oxford and Cambridge Club in Pall Mall, the latter of which, from the beginning of his career in London to the end of his days was his favourite resort in Club-land. But it was at the National Liberal Club on July 27 that he uttered his last word in public. The occasion was the annual conversazione of the Club, held under the presidency of Lord Carrington (the Marquis of Lincolnshire), at which Campbell-Bannerman and Harcourt both spoke. The burden of Harcourt's speech was the abuse of the closure and the

1 *British Weekly*, May 19, 1904.
part that abuse had in the loss of authority and respect from which the House of Commons was suffering. Nothing had been nearer his heart in public life than the maintenance of the dignity and traditions of the House of Commons, and it was appropriate that his last public word should have been on behalf of an institution for which he preserved a veneration which only one who was not merely a great statesman, but a great constitutional lawyer, a great historian and a great lover of liberty could possess.

By August, Nuneham had been got into habitable condition, and Harcourt and his wife, accompanied by Lewis Harcourt's children, went there for a brief stay before settling down at Malwood for the winter. The days flowed by in busy and pleasant occupation, drives to the river-side villages, walks with Lady Harcourt and the woodman over the estate to settle about cuttings and clearings, visits to the Duchess of Marlborough at Blenheim and his cousins, Lord and Lady Abingdon, at Wytham, the reception of callers to the new tenants at Nuneham and so on. They were days full of memories dear to the aged statesman—memories of the courtly Nuneham of the days of "Uncle G." and Lady Waldegrave, of the sober Nuneham of the days of his father. There was no premonition of the end. His letters were as full of high spirits as ever. He made fun to Mr. Morley of Mr. Balfour's "philosophic doubts at Cambridge. . . . He will find (he said) Isaac Newton and Francis Bacon persons more difficult to dispose of as wearers of worn-out phylacterys and musty formulas even than Richard Cobden." He was looking forward to the winter at his beloved Malwood and to freedom from the cares of Nuneham. "Landowning is a more troublesome and less profitable business even than public affairs," he wrote to Mr. Morley. "It is the least restful of all occupations. . . . I have been laid up for some days with a sort of influenza but am now about again." There seemed no cause for anxiety. The grandchildren had just left Nuneham. The last picture that remains of them with their grandfather is of their rushing into the vestibule and seeing him going upstairs.
"Grandpapa, come back, come back," they cried, and he turned saying, "Well, I suppose I must do as I am told," and the children ran forward to him, clasping his knees. On the night of September 30 he sat with Lady Harcourt in the library. He seemed in his usual health, save for a slight cough. He wrote several letters, among them one to Mr. Morley, who was about to cross to America, in the course of which he said, "I do nothing but browse about old books and arrange old pictures and old letters and nurse the dregs of a sort of influenza brought about by a whiff of colder weather." He touched on many political matters with undiminished zest, and referring to George Wyndham, who "is becoming ridiculous," observed, "You must either be a Home Ruler or not a Home Ruler: there is no tertium quid." When the letters had gone, and he was preparing for bed, he said suddenly to Lady Harcourt, "Oh, I must write to Lady Sarah to ask after Spencer." He sat down at his table and wrote the following letter to Lady Sarah Spencer, the last thing he penned.

Harcourt to Lady Sarah Spencer.

NUNEHAM PARK, OXFORD, September 30, 1904.—Dear Lady Sarah,—I cannot thank you sufficiently for so kindly writing me an account of dear Spencer. I had no idea that he had been so seriously ill. Remind him from me that I have always told him that exercise is the thing which destroys everybody.

I hope now that he will take great care not to overdo himself especially with County Councils.

We have spent two months in beautiful weather and enjoyed it much in spite of the troubles of a dilapidated house and a neglected estate. We find really that there is everything to do inside and out, and the last straw is the intelligence that the tower of the old Church at Stanton Harcourt is tumbling down and must be rebuilt.

We have been in such anxiety about our dear friend Mary Curzon, but I trust now she may recover.

Loulou and his family have been with us and we have greatly enjoyed his delicious children, who were left to us when he was in Scotland. He is now with Walter Burns at Myqms and writes me this morning that they shot yesterday 386 brace of partridges for five guns! I hope in a few days you will write me just a line to say that Spencer is going on well.

Yours very sinly.

(Sd.) W. HARCouRT.
The letter was too late for the post that night, and Harcourt left it on his blotting pad, and, retiring to rest, took with him a copy of the current Nineteenth Century, containing an article by Mr. Morley. He read the article in bed, and turned to a jeu d'esprit of Lady Currie's in the same periodical in which there was a pleasant mention of himself. He then fell asleep, leaving the review open at the page at which he had ceased reading. Next morning he was found dead in bed, having passed away in the night in the midst of slumber, quietly and painlessly as a child falls to sleep after the restless day.

The news, startling in its unexpectedness, created universal regret, and messages of sympathy poured in upon Lady Harcourt from all sorts and conditions of men and from all parts of the world. "I have lost," said King Edward in his message, "an old and valued friend in your distinguished husband." The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States cabled the sorrow of the judicial body at the loss of one whose name had been famous in America ever since the mighty argument of the Civil War. The Liberal leaders united in the expression of the irreparable loss the nation and the Party had sustained, and throughout the country the event aroused among the Liberal Party a sense of bereavement unequalled, except in the case of Gladstone, in living memory. The Press of all shades of opinion teemed with tributes to the famous statesman. Those who had fought him in life vied with those who had followed him in their recognition of the splendour of his career, the greatness of his gifts, the generosity of his heart, the wit and the wisdom with which for half a century he had irradiated the public life of the country.

Parliament was not yet in Session when Harcourt’s death occurred; but statesmen of all parties paid honour to his memory in their speeches in the country and when Parliament reassembled the debate on the Address was preceded by formal tributes to the great "House of Commons man" whose place would know him no more. In his
eulogium on his old colleague and friend, Campbell-Bannerman said:

Sir William Harcourt was a devoted member of Parliament. He loved the House of Commons. He coveted nothing so much as to stand well with the House of Commons. He lived and died in its service, and in turn he commanded the admiration and respect and affection of nearly all its members. Our debates will be the poorer by the absence, not only of a skilful orator and a learned constitutional authority, but of a fine sample—the last, I fear, that lingered on it—of the grand old type of statesman.

Mr. Balfour's tribute to "one of the greatest parliamentary figures we have known in our experience" laid emphasis on the generosity of his nature. He said:

This is not the time to attempt any appreciation of the great parliamentary abilities of Sir William Harcourt; but this I may say with the assurance that it will receive the sympathetic support of every man in every quarter of the House—he was a vigorous controversialist, but in the utmost height of party controversy, when feeling was running strongly, when he himself perhaps was taking, as was his wont, a leading place in the fighting line, he never allowed party differences to mar the perfection of personal friendship, and no dialectical display, no strength of party attack, made him forget for one moment that native and ineradicable kindliness which characterized the man. I am proud to say that he honoured me with his friendship for many years, and never was that friendship clouded even when our political differences were in their most acute stage. My experience is the experience of many men in this House; and the result is that I believe he is as much regretted by gentlemen who sit on this side of the House, and who throughout their whole political lives have differed from him on matters of public policy, as he can be by those with whom he was politically associated.

In the family vault of the old church that stands on rising ground among the trees in Nuneham Park, the remains of Harcourt were interred on October 6. The obsequies were carried out with the utmost quietness and simplicity, few persons being present, except the members of the family and the servants and tenantry of the Nuneham and Stanton Harcourt estates. The public tribute to the deceased statesman was paid on the same day in London, where a memorial service, attended by the representatives of the King and other members of the royal family, by the Speaker of the
House of Commons and a great gathering of the leaders and rank and file of all political parties, was held at St. Margaret's, Westminster. In the old church at Nuneham Park a mural tablet was subsequently erected to Harcourt's memory. On March 1, 1905, a replica of the Cope portrait of Harcourt was unveiled at the National Liberal Club by Earl Spencer in the presence of a great gathering of those who had been the political associates of the dead statesman in the past. A committee of both Houses of Parliament, presided over by Viscount St. Aldwyn (Hicks-Beach), was formed to raise a parliamentary memorial of one whose chief glory had been that he was "a great member of Parliament." A fund, subscribed by past and present members of both Houses, irrespective of party, was provided, and Waldo Story, the sculptor, was commissioned to execute a marble statue of Harcourt in his robes as Chancellor of the Exchequer. The statue stands on a pedestal in the members' lobby of the House of Commons. The ceremony of unveiling it on June 16, 1906, took place in the presence of the leaders of all parties in both Houses. St. Aldwyn handed over the statue on behalf of the committee, and Campbell-Bannerman, in unveiling it, pronounced a eulogy on Harcourt's lifelong devotion to the House of Commons. "I have heard him say again and again," he said, "that his great object was to stand well with the House of Commons, and it is here, therefore, that this honourable memorial to him should remain. Here it will stand as a landmark of the passing of the old school of parliamentary politicians. . . . But Sir William stands here in enduring marble for another purpose—as an incentive and pattern for all members who pass by for generations to come, showing them by his life how to do their duty, how to learn and enjoy the gratitude and good opinion of their countrymen, and showing them also, what is perhaps a rarer and in some respects a higher quality, how to win their way to the hearts and affections of the men with whom

1 A photogravure reproduction of this tablet, which was executed by Mr. Emil Fuchs, appears as a tail-piece to this volume.

VOL. II.
they work in public life." It was as a great House of Commons man that the Prime Minister (Mr. Balfour) also spoke of Harcourt. He exalted his great powers in debate, his unequalled knowledge of parliamentary procedure and his rare intellectual gifts. Those were great and rare qualifications, but they were possessed by others who lacked one thing which Harcourt possessed in a supereminent degree—the quality which could only be described as personality. "Whether Sir William spoke or was silent," he said, "no one could forget for a moment that he was present."

That potency remains. Among the spirits of the past that pervade the halls of Westminster none is more vital or abiding than that of William Vernon Harcourt.
CHAPTER XXXI

CONCLUSION

My task is done. I have set down the facts of a great career as faithfully as I could and as impartially as, I think, its subject would have wished, for he was an honest man who cultivated no illusions even about himself. I have extenuated nothing and slurred nothing. It would have been an injustice to Harcourt's memory to have done otherwise. He was large enough to have the whole truth told about him and to gain rather than to lose by the revelation of his weakness as well as his strength. Nothing remains except to attempt an estimate of his character and of his place in history. His life was so long, so various and so rich in material that it has been impossible to do more than to sail, as it were, from headland to headland, leaving the creeks and the inlets largely unexplored. There was about him that sense of abundance which is one of the chief characters of greatness. He was not a pool of still waters; but a roaring torrent of a man, fed by inexhaustible springs of energy and overflowing its banks with careless profusion. All the forces of his great vitality flowed into the channels of the mind. He had been fond both of riding and shooting in early manhood, but the tendency to physical indolence, uncommon in Englishmen brought up in the country, increased upon him yearly. His theory was that all the vigour of a man should be concentrated on brain work and, with his love of humorous exaggeration, he was never tired of warning people like Spencer who lived much in the hunting field that most of his friends had "died from taking exercise." He would have endorsed the maxim of Plummer, the friend
of Sir Walter Scott, that a walk to the end of his garden and back once a day was enough exercise "for anyone but a fool or a fox-hunter." His passion was his garden, and his letters from Malwood glowed with the radiance of his flowerbeds. He recited the names of the flowers with as much joy as Homer recited the names of the Grecian ships—and every year they seemed to be more wonderful flowers than they had ever been before. His happiest moments—if we may discriminate in a life that may be said to have overflowed with happiness—were those when he had a friend he loved with him to take round his flower borders, and to hear his familiar phrase of thanksgiving as he paused in his walk—"What could be more enjoyable?" "You know I am always more reasonable in the country than in London," was one of the inducements which he was accustomed to hold out to his friends to visit Malwood.

"His domestic life was very beautiful," says Wilfrid Scawen Blunt in My Diaries, "and at home he was adored." The early sorrows of his life had given almost a morbid tinge to the deep family affections which were always so marked a feature of his character, and his love of his home had no competing attractions. He had as little taste for gambling as he had for violent recreations. His arm-chair, his cigar, his book, his garden border were all the relaxations he asked, and though fond of society and one of the most brilliant talkers of his time, he hated "gadding about," and liked the talk to go on under his own roof-tree. He would sooner read a play than go to see one, and he was wholly indifferent to music, and far too candid to affect to love what he did not love. "I was able to enjoy it moderately," he wrote in his last summer of a visit to the opera Traviata. "Melba's singing is no doubt wonderful." He was not quite sure, but he was prepared to believe it.

With all his physical indolence, his health throughout his mature life was almost uninterruptedly good. He had a splendid capacity for making up lost or deferred sleep by going to bed at any hour, and when the Press was discussing the fact that another distinguished public man
was suffering from insomnia, he jocously declared that he
proposed to insert an announcement that "Sir William
Harcourt is suffering from somnolence." Apart from his
concern about his eyes, he was no friend to the doctors.
Blue pill was his specific for all ailments, and it was only
by the artifices of his family that he could be inveigled
into seeing a doctor. Writing to his sister of one of these
occasions, he said:

... Lily [Lady Harcourt] without my knowledge and against
my will introduced the beautiful Dr. into my room this afternoon.
He did not bring a pyx or viaticum, but only a stethoscope and a
draught. Of course he passed me sound—as it was his business.
He told me I had bronchial catarrh which I knew; that my tem-
perature was normal, and that I must not catch more cold. All
these ideas had occurred to me. However, I made a full confession
to him, and received plenary absolution. He was very pleasant, and
got away knowing about me nearly half as much as I do myself—
"said what he ort to ha' said and coom'd awaay." However, now
I and my family will escape criminal prosecution for not employing
the faculty. . . .

The strength of his constitution was proof against a
consumption of tobacco that, like so much else about him,
was Gargantuan. He only smoked cigars, but of these he
consumed vast quantities, smoking at any time and almost
anywhere. The fame of the reek he left behind him was
a subject of frequent comment by his correspondents.
"Charlie Tennant put me up in the most comfortable manner
in the world," wrote Mr. Morley to him on one occasion,
"and showed me a room in which you consumed a box of
cigars in a week—a thing by no means incredible to me."
He was not a connoisseur, and smoked anything that looked
like a cigar, but he would not be fobbed off with a small
one when a large one was available, for though he was a
martinet where the public money was concerned he had
no taste for small personal economies. When he was
preparing one of his Budgets he was sent a gift of very large
and very precious cigars, and his son and his official secre-
tary (Sir Rees Davies), horrified at the pace at which
he was consuming them—lighting one and throwing it in
the fire when the division bell summoned him into the House to vote—abstracted the box, and substituted one containing a smaller and cheaper variety. That they were cheaper would not have aroused his suspicion; that they were smaller revealed the infamous deceit practised upon him, and only the return of the large fat cigars appeased his wrath and enabled the wheels of Treasury life to revolve again.

The vast contours of his personality did not fit themselves easily into the small conventions of things. He needed a free air and ample room for his large movements. He bulged over enormously into the world of considered etiquette. He was himself, Harcourt, large, arrogant, joyous, ebullient as a gale from the West, and as hard to confine within the narrow limits of artificial decorums. He had in large matters a profound reverence for the dignity of things. "What an old Tory you are," wrote Mr. Balfour to him on one occasion when he was resisting some departure from customary practice. The constitution was as sacred to him as to Burke; the House of Commons was his ark of the covenant. Woe to the hand that defiled the august sanctuary of the national life. Woe to him who was faithless to its ancient sanctions. But he was as innocent of the small correctnesses of things as he was of "small vices." His reverence for the throne—the throne that is established on the basis of the "blessed Revolution of 1688"—was as absolute as his reverence for the House of Commons, and his approach to the Sovereign had the courtliness of one who inherited a thousand years of courtly ways. But I am told that his spirits were somewhat higher than was customary at Queen Victoria's table, his laughter more abundant, his jokes more free. His tastes and habits were not those of Victorian England, but of the earlier Georgian England, and his spacious manner could not quite accommodate itself to the prim and rigorous regimen of the court of his time. He was liable, as we have seen, to outrage the commandments of dress, as, when first at Balmoral as Minister in attendance, he went to Church with the Queen
in a grey frock-coat, of which he was rather proud, and subsequently received from Ponsonby the message "WE don't like grey on the Sabbath."

But though, in the sense of 1688, Harcourt was as royalist as any king, he was a constitutionalist before he was a royalist. The liberties of the people embodied in Parliament took precedence of the privileges of thrones, and on the rare occasions when there was a conflict between these interests, Harcourt was as stiff as a grenadier on the side of constitutional practice. No one was less of a flunkey, though no Minister was more careful about the sensibilities of royalty in domestic matters. When, after the assassination of Carnot, the French President, in 1894, there was some doubt about congratulating his successor on the ground of precedent, he poured out a torrent of indignation to Kimberley. "If there had been no precedent, one ought to have been made," he wrote. "If it had been a King, or a Kinglet, or a Grand Duke you would have rushed to congratulate on your bended knee. If we did not congratulate, I venture to say we are the only Government in Europe who did not. This is not the way in which Mazarin treated Cromwell." It was a little hard on Kimberley who had asked the Queen to approve of congratulations, and had received a reply in the affirmative, on condition that there was a precedent. Fortunately there was a precedent, the congratulations were offered, and Harcourt's wrath was placated. As a good European he was entirely without national prejudices or favouritisms, but from the fall of his pet aversion, Napoleon III, he was always especially cordial to France. The Journal records that after an unfortunate reference to Agincourt in Lord Rosebery's speech at Sheffield Baron D'Estournelles de Constant, the French chargé d'affaires, called to see Harcourt to complain. Harcourt, who was not often lacking in resource, explained that the English King at Agincourt was really a Frenchman, and that the battle was only an incident in a civil war in France. With this free rendering of history he soothed the indignant Minister.
II

It is probable that he suffered much in the estimation of the vulgar by the atmosphere of jocularity in which he clothed himself, and by the genius for caricature which led him to drive his point home with some resounding extravagance. His gift of comic illustration and allusion, that power of bringing together incongruous ideas in a grotesque relation, was unequalled. He saw life from the humorous angle as steadily as Salisbury saw it from the tragic angle. He loved it with all its absurdities and failures, and because he did not expect too much from it, and saw it with the disillusioned rationalism of his beloved eighteenth century, he was able to laugh over it and with it. No one can read his letters and speeches or catch the echoes of his conversation without being sensible of a certain kinship with Dickens. Perhaps he caught the note of caricature from Dickens; but the likeness is deeper than any imitative quality. It pervades his whole point of view, his love of humanity, his enormous geniality, his delight in the common pleasures of living. It is unfortunate that there was no Boswell to record his sayings, for wit and wisdom flowed from his pen and his tongue alike in inexhaustible profusion. Like Falstaff, he was not only witty himself, but the cause of wit in others. He filled the air with the spirit of laughter, and men became gay merely at his presence. Take this little scene in the House of Commons on the night of July 10, 1894:

Mr. Balfour wished to remind Sir W. Harcourt that he had not only to consider the interests of the Exchequer, but also the equities of the case as it affected the individual. He was told a story the other day of an eminent counsel, Mr. Scarlett——

Sir W. Harcourt: I told you. (Much laughter.)

Mr. Balfour: Oh I you told me. (Laughter.) Then I will not repeat it. (Renewed laughter and cries of "'Go on.""

Sir W. Harcourt: But it was about Lord Erskine. (Laughter.)

Mr. Balfour could not understand how the Chancellor of the Exchequer could have told it. (Laughter.) As he had been invited to tell the story he would do so. The eminent counsel being asked on his death-bed if he had not got off a great many scoundrels in his time, said: Unfortunately that was true, but at the same time
he had got a good many innocent persons condemned, so that on the average justice was done. (Much laughter.) No doubt the average claims of the Treasury were just, but in the case of a great many individuals great injustice was done, and he therefore supported the clause.1

It was a story of the true Harcourt vintage. He had an inexhaustible supply of such, culled from the legends of the law, the pages of history and his own abundant experience of life. Many of them have become classics which need not be repeated here. But his wit and humour did not depend upon an anecdotal faculty. They came fresh and sparkling from his own high spirits, and his habit of giving a humorous turn to grave matters. Lord James used to tell a story of a parson named Baker, of an excitable disposition, who annotated the margin of his sermons with such words as "Steady, Baker," and towards the close, "Go it, Baker." After the Home Rule split, when James and Chamberlain were sitting alongside Gladstone, Harcourt and Mr. Morley on the Front Opposition Bench, James delivered a violent philippic against his old colleagues. In the midst of it Harcourt murmured "Steady, Baker," and James was reduced to incoherency by his own laughter. This note of fun was unfailing. When the Althorp Library was sold to Mrs. Rylands, Harcourt wrote to Spencer: "The best of New Years to you and Lady Spencer. I only trust she will not become hopelessly literary in her tastes. It might spoil her if anything could. There is nothing really to promote reading like getting rid of your library. All that I know (such as it is) is due to my never having any books. When you have a good library you feel you have paid your tribute to letters and nothing more is required." . . . "Don't be too proud," he wrote to Spencer on another occasion. "I also have been chairman of a Parish meeting and elected all my men without a poll. They were all Tories of the deepest dye. If William Rufus had been alive he would have been at the head of the list." When Lewis Harcourt wrote to him that he had been kept awake all

1 Westminster Gazette, July 10, 1894.
night through the nervous excitement caused by one of his father's speeches, he replied: "You are like the clerk at the table who, when Pitt had the wine, he had the headache. If I am to make the speeches and you have the insomnia I shall make no more speeches." When Hicks-Beach wrote to remonstrate with him for supporting a large grant to the Paris Exhibition in 1897 he said, "My principle has always been to be profuse in small things and parsimonious in large. A little oil lubricates these small businesses and gains you a credit for generosity at little cost." His wit was swift and illuminating. When some one remarked to him that Randolph Churchill contemplated forming a centre Party, "Quite so," he replied, "all centre—and no circumference." On another occasion a critic of Churchill finished with the exclamation, "Why, he isn't even an educated man." "No," responded Harcourt pleasantly, "if he were educated he would be spoiled." It was on the cruise of Gladstone with Tennyson on the Pembroke Castle that Harcourt, who with his son had been picked up at Ardnamurchan, chaffed Tennyson, about "the early pipe of half-awakened bards." His gaiety and promptitude were equal to all occasions. One day in the eighties when he was Home Secretary, he attended a levee held by the Prince of Wales, and having forgotten to put on his sword, was stopped by one of the court officials and told that he could not pass without it. "Does Mr. Bright wear a sword when he comes to a levee?" asked Harcourt. "No, but Mr. Bright is a Quaker," replied the official. "So am I—for to-day," said Harcourt, and passed on.

From the Diary of Howard Overying Sturgis, of Queen's Acre, Windsor, with whom he sometimes stayed on his visits to the Castle, I am permitted to select some examples of Harcourt's table talk. Speaking of the folly of distrusting the prosperity of other nations, he said, "In politics as in private life, I am in favour of everyone having everything he wants—it is the only way to be happy." Of the policy of isolation he remarked that "it is all very
well to say 'I am a quiet person and only ask to be left alone,' but you cannot say 'I am a snappy, quarrelsome person, but still wish to be left alone.'" Ridiculing the hunger to own every port of call in the world, he said, "If you want to post from London to York, it is not necessary to own all the inns on the road with the circumjacent farms attached to each." Of Rhodes (January 8, 1896) he said: "I think we had better give Rhodes a cocked hat and a pair of nankeen breeches and send him to St. Helena. I said to Rhodes when he was here, 'Mr. Rhodes, I have always been much impressed with what the Duchess of Buccleuch said to my wife, that it was so tiresome to have to correspond with thirteen housekeepers. Now, what you are trying to do, is to give us a fourteenth housekeeper to correspond with.'" He was rich in stories of Disraeli, and loved to quote a saying of his in reference to his wife—"She was a gay creature—she knew nothing of the past and cared nothing for the future; she always said she did not know whether the Greeks or the Romans came first." The last time Harcourt stayed with Mr. Sturgis was on the occasion of the royal banquet at Windsor in November 1903. Referring to the departure of Harcourt and his wife after that visit, he says, "I never knew any people have train fever quite so badly. They were dressed and down before I had had my breakfast. At 10 their luggage and servants left (for the 11 o'clock train), and nothing would keep them here after 10.30. The dear old boy made me quite a touching little speech about my kindness."

His jests were never purposeless. They were the medium through which he conveyed his comment on affairs and actions. Thus, speaking of the Civil Service, of which he had an exalted opinion, he said that the country would be extremely well governed by the permanent officials (without political chiefs) for twelve or eighteen months and then the public would hang all the heads of the Civil Service to the nearest lamp-posts. "The value of the political heads of departments," he would add, "is to tell the permanent officials what the public will not stand." When Mr. Morley
talked of resigning in 1895, the Government being near its end, Harcourt said, "It is no use committing suicide when one is dying. It is only the addition of an unnecessary crime." Writing to Lord Rosebery about two candidates for the succession to Professor Seeley at Oxford, he dismissed one as a charlatan and the other as dull, adding, "It is very difficult to find a man who is not regarded by the learned as an impostor or by the unlearned as a bore." In all emergencies he took refuge in the reflection that "things are never quite so bad as they seem." "There is nothing so foolish," he wrote to Fowler, "as the temper of those who think that when it is bad weather it will never be fine again." "The next great revolution in America," he said, "will be the war for the emancipation of the American husband." When asked to go out in bad weather he said, "It is exactly that we may remain in them in bad weather that houses are built." "When well stay in the house, when ill go to bed," he said on another occasion. "The House of Commons likes the man who shows its sport," he would say. Of himself he remarked, "I put my whole heart at one time into one thing."

He loathed dithyrambs, and loved common sense. His passion for the eighteenth century was not due merely to sympathy with its tastes, but to approval of its maxims and its enlightened, if sceptical, philosophy. He liked its sanity and its freedom from hysteria. "The nineteenth century in its close has been chiefly marked by its sensational degeneracy and the decay of common sense," he wrote to Mr. Henry Grenfell. "I see no prospect of any revival of masculine sobriety in the twentieth, but the reverse. I think we who have lived in the middle ages of the nineteenth have had the best of it, for which I am thankful." Writing to Mr. Morley apropos of an address the latter was to deliver on the nineteenth century, he said:

11, Downing Street, March 18, 1893.—I wish I could supply you with pabulum. . . . I can think of nothing else than a general eulogy on the "tea kettle civilization" (as Carlyle called it) of the 19th century—which I abhor. Of the unification of mankind
(which I detest) by facility of communication. Of the removal of national prejudices and exclusiveness (which I cherish) by rapid transport of everybody and everything. Of the cheapness and plenty (mourned over by J. Lowther, H. Chaplin and the bimetallists) of which engineers are the principal authors. Of electrical science and its marvellous results which are only in their infancy. Of the freezing of the air into solids so that we may carry our atmosphere in our pockets.

I think on the whole the best text is cheapness due to the ingenuity of man. Say the civil engineers are the great economists of labour who countered the curse upon Adam (We earn our bread by the sweat of our brow).

His temper was high and undisciplined. It burst into flame at small provocation and scorched whatever came within its radius. It was often unjust, but it was never mean or malicious. It burnt itself out with its own fury, and usually vanished in laughter—not seldom at his own violence. He did not realize the smart his power of invective inflicted, nor how much his combative instinct, applied with the uncalculating joy of battle, and often in the wrong place, contributed to his failures in life. He smote and passed on, unconscious of the sore heads he left behind him. Whatever was in his mind came out with unconsidered frankness, and no man in public life ever had less taste or faculty for manoeuvring for position or working for his personal ends. The consciousness of power, the sense that he belonged to the order of magnates, the imperious current of his own mind swept him along indifferent to the artifices and ingenuities by which the smaller practitioners of politics achieve position and success. He had no skill in manipulating the Press, or in organizing a claque to promote his interests.

There was a popular idea that he was a self-seeker. It has as little warrant from the records of his career as the other popular idea that he was lacking in seriousness. The parliamentary life of the latter half of the nineteenth century provides few examples, perhaps only one example, of equal devotion to the service of the State and of equal passion for its highest traditions. His egotism was that of words only. It was the expression of his abounding vitality. Behind this flamboyant play of mind, there was the ceaseless
to him from his father was missing he remarked plaintively, "It is not there, and yet I don't know of any one who could have taken and lost it except myself." Among the English poets he preferred Milton, Dryden and Cowper. The prose work which commanded his most unbounded admiration was Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, and he often referred to Miss Martineau's *Thirty Years' Peace*, and recommended it to his young friends. He was not a great reader of fiction, but delighted in the vehement statement, calculated to annoy his friends, that the greatest female novelist was "Guida." In literature as in other matters of taste, he harked back to an earlier time. When some one said to him that he would like to re-visit the world a century hence, Harcourt said, "I have quite an opposite wish—I would like to go back. I would like to have been a member of the Cabinet of Sir Robert Walpole." He disliked most modern manifestations, whether in life or literature, and when he was induced to read a poem of Mr. Kipling's he rebelled, and said he did not like "a vernacular *Milton*." He read widely in French and Italian, surprised his friends by his facility in taking up and pursuing quotations from Dante, and declared that his own literary style in early life was influenced by Pascal's *Lettres Provinciales*, which he thought supreme in controversial literature. For the classics he preserved a life-long devotion. "How untranslatable is Virgil," he wrote to Mr. Morley in one of his last letters. "I enjoy him more and more. The only sense shown by the medieval monks was in believing him to be a saint—the only one worthy of the Calendar." But he came to distrust the place given to classics in education, and writing to Mr. Morley in October 1897, he said: "We have just been establishing Bobby as an undergraduate at Cambridge, which is a portentous family event. I cannot reconcile myself to his devoting the next three years of his life to the study of Greek accents and the Cretic pause, *more Cantabrigio*, and I think I shall shunt him at the history Tripos, where I believe he will be able to learn something not absolutely useless in life. A good knowledge of Latin
and a moderate amount of Greek is, it seems to me, all that is to be got out of the classics, and he now reads Greek as easily as I do—which is saying very little."

III

In one of those letters to Mrs. Ponsonby in which in his early life he used to discuss with much frankness his own character and aims, Harcourt said that he had the ambition to leave "an English name." I do not think it will be denied that that ambition has been achieved. Political fame is generally short-lived. It springs out of temporary issues and is forgotten as those issues recede into history. Here and there in the course of a generation one figure emerges who defies time and holds the imagination, sometimes by the qualities of the lawgiver of society, as in the case of Burke, sometimes by the energy and passion with which a great issue is met, as in the case of Fox, sometimes by the rare union of spiritual force and executive power as in the case of Gladstone, sometimes by the fascination of personality, bizarre as in the case of Disraeli, intense as in the case of Parnell. These men live on independent of the events in which they moved, and among these men it is safe to say that Harcourt takes his place. He takes it not in virtue of exceptional imaginative or original qualities. He gave little new impulse to ideas, and his eye did not range over far horizons. It may be said that he added nothing to the empire of political thought, though no man of his time did more, perhaps none so much, to clarify and elucidate that empire. The last claim he would have made on behalf of himself would have been that he was a seer. The visionary gleam was not for him, and he had small patience with those who took refuge from what seemed the realities of life in the anodynes of superstition or the quackeries of obscurantism. His mind was all daylight, and the only solution he would apply to the riddle of things was the common-sense reading of observed facts and the honest acceptance of the teaching of experience. His outlook was that of the historian and the constitutionalist,
and the roots of his thought were deep down in the soil of the past. When Mr. Balfour accused him of being "an old Tory," he spoke truly enough so far as his attitude to traditional ways and the "ancient lights" of governance was concerned. His mind was stored with the lore of centuries, and he had a profound reverence for the authority of history and for the wisdom of the fathers that begat us.

But this reverence for the past was not a sterilizing influence in his case any more than in the case of Gladstone. It informed and enriched his thought, but it did not put fetters upon his action. He saw the current of the national life coming down from precedent to precedent, a stately stream of ordered movement, widening and deepening as it flowed, and his conception of the task of statesmanship was to keep the channel clear for the larger unobstructed passage of the future. Though he was supposed to be an opportunist, he was the least empirical of men. The modern doctrine of activism would have seemed blasphemous to one who saw history as the continuous development of human society under the operation of ascertained and inexorable laws. If those laws were outraged the inevitable penalty followed, and it was the business of statesmanship to be the guardian of the commandments by the observance of which alone the national well-being could be secured.

Based upon this philosophy, his political creed throughout his life was singularly coherent and uniform. The opinions he expressed as an audacious young Peelite in the debates of the Cambridge Union in 1848 differed little from the opinions he expressed nearly sixty years later. They were the opinions not infrequently held by the younger sons of great families in youth, but generally discarded in maturity. Harcourt remained an incorrigible "younger son" to the end, and not a little of the intense resentment with which he was regarded by his class was due to the feeling, shared so strongly by his brother Edward, that he was a deserter from that class. "I have been a younger son for seventy-six years," he said plaintively when he had succeeded to Nuneham, "and I cannot be an elder son now." He be-
leyed, none more so, in an aristocracy, but he did not believe in a privileged aristocracy. If the great families were to survive, they must survive on their merits, and not be propped up by external supports at the expense of the general interests of the community. No personal interest was allowed to override this elementary doctrine. His greatest legislative achievement struck a heavy blow at his own family, and, as it proved, at himself personally, but this consideration did not affect his action in regard to the removal of an anomaly at which his legal conscience and his social conscience alike revolted.

It has been said, and said with truth, that his outlook was temporal and secular. He himself delighted in proclaiming his Philistinism, by which he meant the plain interpretation and acceptance of the realities of life as he perceived them. "It was the Philistines who made England," he would say, and for those who, like Cromwell, sought to mould the politics of this world on the assumptions of the next he had small respect. "I am of the earth, earthy," he said, and his idealism in affairs was bounded by the horizon of the visible and the known. But within that horizon his mind worked under the governance of powerful moral ideas which were the heritage of generations of public service and of that disciplined childhood which he had passed under the searching and not uncritical eye of his father.

His opinions moved cautiously to the Left, and in his later years he represented the more Radical sentiment of the party; but essentially he belonged to the great Whig tradition, and the tables of the law were, for him, written in the settlement after the Revolution of 1688. The golden age in English story was the first half of the eighteenth century, and in the enlightened common-sense of Walpole he found his ideal of statesmanship. There was a remarkable kinship between Harcourt and Walpole, but no trait in the earlier statesman appealed to Harcourt so powerfully as his devotion to the cause of peace. The corner-stone of Harcourt's Liberal faith was the love of peace. Himself the most gladiatorial of men in the sphere of intellectual
combat, he loathed war as the denial of the sanity of human relationships. It offended him both by its unreason and its inhumanity. He had a poignant sensitiveness to suffering in any shape, and a childlike gift of happiness. The sense of an enormous enjoyment of life runs through his career like a refrain. He liked to feel that people were happy about him and that the world was filled with laughter and sunshine. Nothing angered him more than interference with the pleasures of the poor, and though his experience at the Home Office changed his attitude to the liquor question, the motive behind the change was still the motive of human happiness. He had been so deeply impressed by the part which drink played in causing crime and domestic misery that he was converted to the view that its control must pass directly to the community that suffered from it.

Upon this idyll of a happy world in which he loved to bask, war came as an outrage to the civilities of life and an insult to the intelligence. It wounded his feelings, but it wounded no less his intellect. It is not customary to think of Harcourt as a lawyer. His spacious personality and his flamboyant humanism do not conform to the legal habit; but no just estimate of him is possible which excludes the part which his legal training played in his statesmanship. He was the most eminent of living international lawyers before he had entered Parliament. The great argument he had waged throughout the Civil War in America had made his reputation on both sides of the Atlantic, and his appointment to the Whewell Professorship of International Law at Cambridge had put the seal upon that reputation. His attainments made any position in the judiciary accessible to him, and if he did not become Lord Chief Justice or Lord Chancellor it was only because he loved the House of Commons and the centre of the political battlefield too much to leave them. But the laborious years spent in pursuit of the law remained the background of his political thought and activities, just as his journalistic experience sharpened that faculty of handling diverse questions masterfully and popularly which made him so formidable
a combatant in any controversy in which he was engaged. The law was to him not a mean expedient for getting an advantage over an opponent: it was the covenant by which civilized life was sustained. It embodied the experience of history and the wisdom of the founders of our liberties. It had made the domestic life of peoples secure from the arbitrament of force, and the extension of its authority to the sphere of international relations was the supreme task left for the achievement of statesmanship. The impact of war upon a mind so governed by law stung him like an outrage to the deepest sanctities of life. As a practical statesman he did not rule out the thought of war or the need of preparation for war; but he hated the spirit of aggression and plunder which invited war, and he was the hot gospeller of the "Blue Water" doctrine which, in his presentation of it, limited our war aims to purely defensive purposes.

The vulgar notion that patriotism consists in a desire to paint the map red and whip unwilling peoples into obedience to our rule never had a more powerful or more tireless assailant than Harcourt. He loved England with the affection of a son for his mother, but he loved it not for its possessions, but for itself, for the beauty of its countryside, the qualities of its people, the splendour of its intellectual achievements, the inspiration it had given to the world in the conceptions of social order and human liberty. The wider the influence of its spirit spread over the world the more he was content, and there was nothing in which he took greater pride than in the triumph of the Liberal doctrine of self-government which had made the overseas Dominions equal partners in a community of free nations inspired by the English spirit of liberty. But Jingoism and Imperialism were the negation of the English spirit. They aimed, not at widening the borders of freedom, but at imposing by force the will of a conquering race over subject peoples, and the fact that that conquering race was one whose chief contribution to the world was the idea of liberty added to the wrong the sense of disloyalty to
the soul of England. It is not my function here to inquire whether he was always right or sufficiently measured in the advocacy of his views, though if we test his wisdom by such outstanding incidents as the case of Egypt or the case of the Boer War, it will hardly be denied that the comments of time and of events have been overwhelmingly on his side. But, leaving this question apart, his courage in taking an unpopular stand in great crises of our history, his indifference to the personal consequences to himself, and his passion for the imponderable things which he believed to be the things of price in the assets of a nation make his passage through life a memorable incident in our annals.

It was because he was a great Englishman that he was also a great citizen of the world. The virulent nationalism that cultivates the hatred of other nations and sees in their prosperity a menace to its own was abhorrent to a mind which by sentiment and training rejected so narrow a creed. He knew that the well-being of England was bound up with the well-being of Europe, and that the only reasonable and defensible nationalism was that which conceded a place in the sun to other nations. His nationalism was not the negation of internationalism, but its complement and fulfilment. He conceived of England as the moderator of the European assembly, not in virtue of any peculiar merit of her own, but by the good fortune which had made her an island power and had given her world interests rather than continental preoccupations. He wished to translate the geographical isolation into political detachment, not in terms of hostility but in terms of general friendship and goodwill. He was too sensible a man ever to cultivate so irrational and unstable a thing as national hate, and the experience of his life, in which he had seen international relations change with the facility with which partners change at a dance, had confirmed him in the sense of the folly of exclusive friendships or excluding animosities. During the long period in which Russia was the principal object of fear in the English mind he was persistent in his plea that there was room in the world for both of us and
that an accommodation with that Power was possible on easy and honourable terms. When the French alliance with Russia, and the French attitude in regard to Africa imperilled our relations with that country and brought us twice within half a dozen years to the brink of war, he exerted all his efforts to mitigate the cause of irritation between the two governments and came into strong collision with his Imperialist colleagues on the subject. Before his death he saw the pendulum swing violently towards France, and the beginning of the fateful association which culminated ten years later on the battlefields of France and Belgium. To the foolish observer he laid himself open to the banal charge of being "a friend of every country but his own," but in the retrospect of history the wisdom of his counsel is clear, and his life-long hostility to fettering alliances which brought us into the web of continental politics and committed us to designs we could not foresee or control is abundantly justified.

Bounded up with his philosophy of peace and anti-militarism, was his economic and financial doctrine. He believed in Free Trade, not merely because it was vital to a great industrial community that lived by the exchange of its manufactures for the raw materials of other countries, but also because it was the key to that policy of benevolent neutrality which he held to be the true service which his country was called upon to fulfil in the troubled affairs of Europe. And his financial activities were directed to the same end. He was the last of the Chancellors of the Exchequer of the Gladstonian tradition. He was as stern as a martinet of Treasury control as Gladstone himself, and he exercised the power of the purse to limit the extravagances of policy and to check those tendencies to competitive armaments which, as he saw, were policy in the making.

The eighteen years that have passed since his death have seen the stage swept clean of all the traditions of peace and economy for which he fought so brave a rear-guard battle, but as we survey the wreck of Europe to-day we may legitimately ask ourselves whether we or the world have been
gainers by the abandonment of those traditions, and whether
the greatest testimony to the sagacity of Harcourt is not
to be found in the fruits of that abandonment. By, the
light of after events we see plainly that the struggle within
the Liberal Party from 1892 onwards was not a personal
struggle for supremacy of place, but a struggle of ideals,
a struggle for the standard that should wave over the Liberal
cause. To Harcourt the emblem on that standard was
to be the old legend of "Peace, Retrenchment and Reform."
It was not a popular legend at that time of feverish specula-
tion and territorial expansion, and the legend offered by
Lord Rosebery, the legend of "Liberal Imperialism," had a
much more attractive sound. It was new, it was vague, it
had the merit of seeming to claim a half share in the policy
of the Opposition and to blur the lines of party strife.
In the conflict as to who should bear the banner and write
the signal on it Harcourt was overthrown. He was over-
thrown not by the party in the country nor by the party
in the House of Commons. If the choice had been left
to either such a triumph of ingratitude would have been
impossible, for he was not only the most distinguished
living statesman, with a record of disinterested service
and with powers of mind, a comprehensiveness of vision
and a habit of industry unparalleled among his contempo-
raries, but he was, both in the country and in the House,
easily the most popular and the most representative of
the Liberal leaders. He was overthrown by colleagues—
some of whom, and those not the least responsible for his
defeat, regretted it within a month—backed by a campaign
in the Liberal newspapers, some of which also found speedy
reason for repentance. It is commonly supposed that he
was defeated because he had a difficult temper. He had
a difficult temper. Whether, in its boisterous impulsive-
ness, it was a more difficult commodity to live with than
that of "a veiled prophet" who uttered incantations and
disappeared into his sanctuary is a matter for speculation.
But the fact, of course, is, that Harcourt was defeated,
not because of the difficulty of his temper, but because
of the issue that was rending the party at its centre. The resignation of Gladstone and the withdrawal of that dominating influence—a withdrawal as we now know accelerated by the impatience of certain of his colleagues—brought the Liberal Party to the parting of the ways. Harcourt stood for the old traditions, and Lord Rosebery for a new gospel which was to bring Liberalism into true relation with the Imperial mission of which Chamberlain was about to become the chief propagandist. Lord Rosebery was chosen, and, though he speedily surrendered his task and remained an indeterminate and perplexing figure in public affairs for the next eight years, the decision marked the practical overthrow of the Gladstonian tradition. The party in the country became disintegrated under the stress of the Boer War and the dissensions of the party chiefs, and, though the raising of the Protectionist issue seemed temporarily to restore the ancient watchwords of the cause, Liberal Imperialism had triumphed, and had become a party to the balance of power and the policy of continental entanglements.

Harcourt had lost his last battle; but he died, as he had lived, fighting gallantly for the creed that represented to him the soul of English Liberalism. Reckoned in the terms of conventional success, his career failed of full achievement. With his great gifts, the highest position in the State, whether in the realm of law or statesmanship, seemed his beyond challenge. He missed them both. But no office could add distinction to a career so many-sided or to a personality so vital and so commanding. He has left "an English name" that time will not obliterate and the record of a life of service to his country and to humanity that will be an enduring part of English story.