MARGOT ASQUITH

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

VOLUMES THREE AND FOUR

WITH TWENTY-THREE ILLUSTRATIONS
AND NUMEROUS REPRODUCTIONS OF
LETTERS AND DRAWINGS

"Les chiens aboyent, la caravane passe."

Margot Asquith 1922

MARGOT ASQUITH

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

VOLUME THREE

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MARGOT ASQUITH: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY, VOLUME THREE. I

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PREFACE

In the first volumes of my life* I dealt as faithfully as I could with my youth, my home, my family, my education, my friends and the episodes that led up to my marriage. In these final volumes I have confined myself to chronicling the political events and incidents connected with them which took place under my own observation, finishing with the Armistice and General Election of 1918.

I have nothing to complain of in the reception by the public of my first volumes though most of the reviewers abused me. I should not have written about the living; it was unpardonable to criticise the dead; bad taste to publish letters; worse to mention love; and, to crown the crescendo, egotistical to write about myself. As these criticisms were directed more against myself than my art, I was not discouraged from finishing this second and final part of my autobiography.

After Lord Crewe's personal sorrow, I felt I

* Margot Asquith: An Autobiography. Volumes One and Two. New York, 1920.

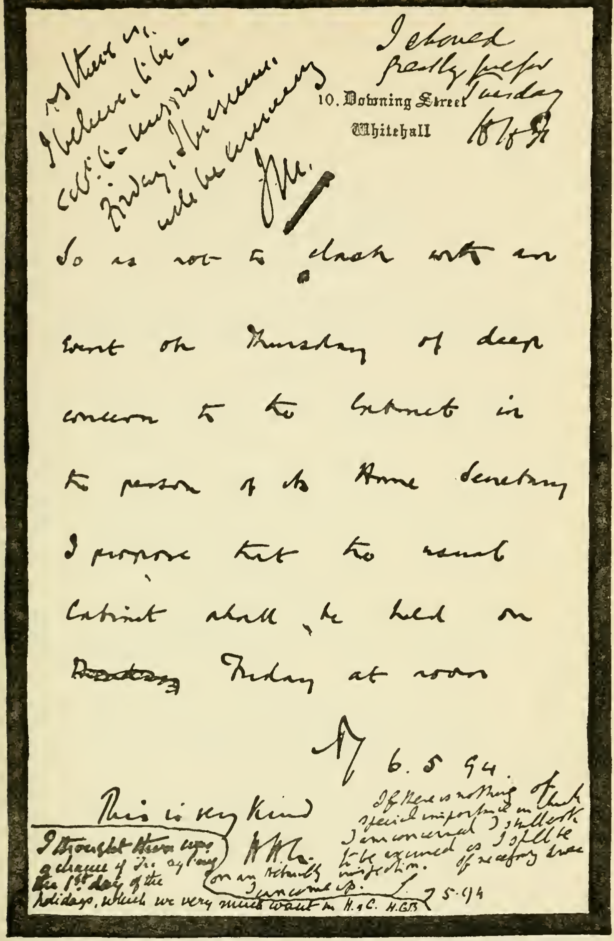
could not trouble him with my Ms., and our dear friend Mr. Teixeria de Mattos having died I asked Mr. Masterman to look over my proofs. I can never adequately thank him for the ungrudging time he spent on me or the care he took in going through these pages. I wish also to thank Mr. Desmond McCarthy for suggestions.

At the suggestion of my son-in-law, Prince Antoine Bibesco, I select for the motto of these final volumes a Persian proverb:

"Les chiens aboyent, la caravane passe."

MARGOT ASQUITH.

Summer, 1922.



as there is I believe to be C.W.C. meeting Friday, Thursday will be convenient.
J.M.

I should greatly prefer Tuesday
H.H.F.

10, Downing Street
Whitehall

So as not to clash with an event on Thursday of deep concern to the Cabinet in the person of the Home Secretary I propose that the usual Cabinet shall be held on ~~Thursday~~ Friday at noon

R 6.5.94.

This is very kind
H.H.A.

If there is nothing of that special importance on that I am concerned I shall ask to be excused as I shall be of necessity away on an Admiralty inspection.
S. 7.5.94

I thought there was a chance of Tuesday being the 1st day of the holidays, which we very much want in H. of C. H.C.B.

LORD ROSEBERY'S LETTER CHANGING THE DATE OF THE CABINET SO AS NOT TO CLASH WITH OUR WEDDING. SIGNED BY LORD MORLEY, SIR HENRY FOWLER, MR. ASQUITH, LORD SPENCER AND SIR HENRY CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN

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MARGOT ASQUITH
AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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CHAPTER I

THE JAMESON RAID—ROBINSON'S GOLD MINE—MILNER'S WARNINGS—MEETING WITH DOCTOR JIM—THE RHODES COMMISSION—"THINKING IMPERIALLY"

SOON after our marriage, in the early part of the year 1896, England was stirred to its foundations by the news of the Jameson Raid—an abortive expedition undertaken by a handful of British soldiers and civilians to frighten President Kruger in South Africa.

You cannot have a better example of the change that has taken place in the moral conscience of this country than by comparing the indignation of the public over the foolish Jameson Raid and the apathy they showed over the cruel and futile policy of reprisals in Ireland.

With the exception of a few people in Mayfair,

everyone combined in 1896 to repudiate an enterprise which covered England with ridicule, and the friends of Mr. Rhodes and Mr. Chamberlain with confusion.

Lady Warwick *—or "Comrade Warwick" as I ought to call her since she joined the Labour Party —wrote the following letter to the Editor of the *Times*:

"Warwick Castle,
"*Jan.* 4, 1896.

"Sir,

"It passes belief that to-day the English press is so far forgetful of its bright traditions as to discuss, in cold blood, the prospective shooting or hanging of Englishmen by the Boers. To what is it owing that this nomadic tribe is encamped in the Transvaal at all? It is owing to the determination of our nation that unspeakable indignities perpetrated on the negro race and its traffic in African slaves should no longer be permitted within a colony under the English flag. Are the unrequited wrongs of Kaffirs and Hottentots, are all the outrages which resulted in the 'bag and baggage' removal of the Transvaal Boers to be at this date

* The Countess of Warwick.

supplemented by the judicial murder of Dr. Jameson?

"Sir, would any Englishman worthy of the name and the nation have failed to act exactly as Dr. Jameson and his gallant companions have done? He is appealed to by the leading residents of Johannesburg to come to the assistance of their women and children at a moment when a revolution is seen to be inevitable. On his way to succour his countrywomen with a force of mounted police, and after having disclaimed every intention of hostility to the Boers, he is apparently attacked by their armed forces. Further than this we as yet know nothing.

"But, whatever may have been his fate, there is not an Englishwoman of us all whose heart does not go out in gratitude and sympathy to these brave men. They did their duty, and if they have gone to their death, even in a fair fight, so much the worse for the Boers. But if they have been taken prisoners, to be afterwards done to death in cold blood, then there is no longer room in South Africa for a 'Republic' administered by their murderers. Neither German nor French jealousy can weigh in the balance at such a moment.

"'Freebooters' and 'Pirates!' Are English gentlemen—personally known to many of us—are such as these 'land pirates' and 'thieves' because when implored by a majority of the respectable residents of an important town they attempt to police that town at a moment of extreme urgency?

"Are we, in short, so stranded in the shallows of diplomacy and of German intrigues, that it is a crime for our kinsfolk to succour their kinsfolk in a mining camp in South Africa? Had Dr. Jameson, on the contrary, turned a deaf ear to the appeal of these of our race, and had an outbreak of race-hatred placed our kinsfolk in the Transvaal at the mercy of that community, so vividly depicted by the late Lord Randolph Churchill, then, indeed, Dr. Jameson had rightly incurred the reprobation of the German Emperor.

"Happily—and this is the one bright light in all this black business—there is a large-minded Englishman in South Africa upon whose resolute personality our hearts and hopes rely.

"I remain, Sir,

"Yours faithfully,

"Frances Evelyn Warwick."

On January 11th (1896), the *Times* published a poem called "Jameson's Ride," from a famous contributor to the *Daily Telegraph,* the then Poet Laureate (one of the late Lord Salisbury's rather cynical appointments).

I will quote a few of the verses:

Swinford Old Manor,
Jan. 9th, 1896.

"Wrong! Is it wrong? Well, maybe:
But I'm going, boys, all the same.
Do they think me a Burgher's baby,
To be scared by a scolding name?
They may argue and prate, and order;
Go, tell them to save their breath:
Then, over the Transvaal border,
And gallop for life or death!

"There are girls in the gold-reef city,
There are mothers and children, too!
And they cry, 'Hurry up! for pity!'
So what can a brave man do?
If even we win, they'll blame us;
If we fail, they will howl and hiss.
But there's many a man lives famous
For daring a wrong like this!

"So we forded and galloped forward,
As hard as our beasts could pelt,
First eastward, then trending northward,
Right over the rolling veldt;
Till we came on the Burghers lying
In a hollow with hills behind,
And their bullets came hissing, flying,
Like hail on an Arctic wind!

"I suppose we were wrong, were madmen:
Still I think at the Judgment Day,
When God sifts the good from the bad men,
There'll be something more to say.
We were wrong, but we aren't half sorry,
And, as one of the baffled band,
I would rather have had that foray
Than the crushings of all the Rand."

ALFRED AUSTIN.

A few days after this my husband and I were dining with Lord and Lady Reay. I was introduced to the great South African millionaire, Robinson, of Robinson's Gold Mines, who had taken Dudley House for the London season. He was tall and deaf, and, as he offered me his arm to take

me in to dinner, he paused on the stair, looked at me and said in a voice of thunder:

"What is your name?"

To which I replied almost as loud: "Asquith!"

Still standing in the middle of the staircase and blocking the way to the dining-room, he said:

"Any relation to the famous Asquith?"

At which I shouted: "Wife!"

He appeared so surprised that I wondered what he thought Henry's wife ought to have looked like. After a short pause during which he seemed puzzled, he conducted me in to dinner and placed me opposite Sir Donald Wallace, who was then foreign editor of the *Times*.

I opened the conversation with my millionaire by asking him to tell me about South Africa, hoping to hear both the details and his opinions of the Jameson Raid. He asked me if I had ever been out there, to which I replied "No."

Mr. Robinson: "Are you rich?" to which I answered no, but that my father was.

Mr. Robinson: "Who is your Arthur?"

I explained that I had not said "Arthur" but father.

Mr. Robinson: "Oh, well, I'll tell you how I

made my money, if you'll tell me afterwards how he made his."

I gave myself up for lost, but soon became absorbed in his story.

He told me that he had started life in a humble way by keeping a little shop. One day a man came to him, with whom he had a slight acquaintance, and said that he was in great difficulties, adding that, if he could be helped with the loan of fifty pounds, his life would be saved: he promised that he would pay everything back, and Mr. Robinson lent him the money.

Time passed, but he heard nothing of his debtor. Two years later he received a letter from him, saying that he had been away trekking out of all reach of posts, which accounted for his silence. There was a map attached to the letter, giving a detailed description of a field on a farm which he said would some day be of enormous value, as he had prospected it and found gold there. He enclosed his debt; and Robinson started off up country the same day.

The Boer farmer, who owned the field, received him with suspicion. They walked over the estate, and, when they came to the part indicated on the

map, Robinson said that it looked an arid kind of place, but that he would like to buy it, as he did not suppose it would be dear, and he wanted to start farming in a mild fashion.

To his surprise the Boer opened his mouth rather wide, asking him £500,* to which Robinson demurred. But the farmer was obdurate, so he gave way and bought the field. When the business was over, they returned to lunch in the bosom of the Boer family, a neighbour or two having strayed in to see the foreigner. At the conclusion of the meal, the host, gazing steadily at Mr. Robinson, lifted his glass, and said he proposed to drink his health in honour of the day's sale, and with a rapid wink at his son he gulped down the country claret.

Mr. Robinson ended the story by telling me that after this he was pursued by all the women and children of the place, offering him dolls, beads and every kind of cheap ornament, as they looked upon him as a zany capable of buying anything.

This was the beginning of the great Robinson Mine.

When he had finished I turned to my other neighbour, feeling that I had perhaps neglected

* I am not quite sure if this was the exact sum.

him, and found him in the throes of an argument about the Jameson Raid; he said that Jameson was a hero in spite of his failure, and that he himself was an Imperialist and thought it was high time we fought the Boers. He added in the vernacular of the day that it was only the damned Radicals who criticised Jameson, and they were well known to love every country but their own. After a little talk I found the young Imperialist's conversation not so new to me as Mr. Robinson's, and, fearing lest he should discover I was a "damned Radical," I turned round and asked Mr. Robinson why the girls in the gold-reefed city had sent the famous telegram.

"How can you be so green?" he answered; "that telegram came from London!"

On hearing this, Sir Donald Wallace leant across the table and said that he was the only person in the world who was in a position to contradict this as the telegram had passed through his hands before being published in the *Times*. Not hearing what he said, Mr. Robinson interrupted by giving me a poke with his elbow.

"What is he talking about?" said he. "Does he say I'm a liar?" To which I answered firmly:

"Yes, Mr. Robinson."

I have often wondered and doubt if we shall ever know what the true history of that telegram was; for, though Sir Donald Wallace was a man of the highest honour, he might have been taken in. Mr. Robinson told me nothing further about Dr. Jameson, and we all got up from the table.

In connection with South Africa and Sir Starr Jameson, Lord Kitchener, on his return from the Boer War, came to see me before going to India. In the course of our talk he told me that the two best people he had ever met in his life were Dr. Jameson and Lady Waterford,* and added that his experience of the so-called Loyalists in South Africa had not been a happy one—they were people of no sort of judgment and far too fond of money —that he had never known them right on any question of politics—and ended by saying:

"Doctor Jim was the only one of the lot who could have made a fortune, but never owned a shilling! he was a really fine fellow."

Lord Kitchener was right. Sir Starr Jameson was an uncommon person and had great beauty and simplicity of nature; I heard an equally high

* The sister of the present Duke of Beaufort.

testimony paid to him many years later by General Botha.

My husband and I met the Doctor first—a week or ten days before his trial and sentence—at Georgiana Lady Dudley's house: and the night before he went to prison, he dined with us alone in Cavendish Square.

Dr. Jim had personal magnetism, and could do what he liked with my sex. He was one of those men who, if he had been a quack, could have made a vast fortune, either as a doctor, a thought-reader, a faith-healer or a medium; but he was without quackery of any kind. I never thought him a fine judge of people, but here I may be wrong. If his brains had been as good as his nature, he would have had a commanding position in any country. The reason that convinced me that they were not was when he told us of the great scheme that had failed: which was to kidnap President Kruger and carry him off in person. This somewhat jejune intention was happily frustrated. The Doctor was tried for "fitting out a warlike expedition against a friendly State in breach of the Foreign Enlistment Act" before Lord Chief Justice Russell, and on the 20th of July, 1896, he was condemned.

In connection with this trial my husband had a bet with a famous Irish Member of Parliament. This is what he wrote:

"House of Commons.

"Bet lost to Mr. Asquith ref. the trial of Dr. Jameson.

"Bet being a sixpenny stamp to a twopence halfpenny one that the prisoners would be convicted.

"The penalty of the wager enclosed.

"Michael Davitt."

The responsibility for the Raid could not, however, be confined to Dr. Jameson. Both Mr. Cecil Rhodes's and Mr. Joseph Chamberlain's reputations were involved, and everyone was stirred.

Admirers of Mr. Rhodes went about saying that, if his name was struck off the list of Privy Councillors, they would show Joe up; and admirers of Mr. Chamberlain were going to show someone else up; and a Government Committee was appointed to show everyone up. The secret history of this affair may or may never be written: but it would be of interest to learn how much those in authority knew of the intentions at the time of the South African Raiders.

I remember opening the front door of 20 Cavendish Square to Mr. Chamberlain one morning about that time, and showing him into my husband's library. At the end of a long visit I went into the room and said:

"What did Joe want, Henry?" To which he answered:

"He asked me if I would serve on the Committee of Inquiry into the responsibility of the Jameson Raid—they call it 'the Rhodes Commission'—and I refused."

I asked him why he had refused, to which he answered:

"Do you take me for a fool?"

I never spoke to Mr. Cecil Rhodes in my life, but I met him once at a party in Downing Street, when Mr. Balfour was Prime Minister.

It was early in 1899 when South Africa was in a state of suppressed turmoil. Sir Alfred Milner *—the then Lord High Commissioner—was writing letters from Cape Town, warning us of the exact situation, but the Government turned a deaf ear to all his warnings.

Mr. Balfour had been told that if you listen to

* Viscount Milner.

the man on the spot you cannot go wrong, and that Cecil Rhodes—the great hero of South Africa—was the proper person to consult about the Boer problems over which Milner and so many of us were exercised.

Mr. Rhodes had a name that was famous all the world over. Men and women trembled before him. A phrase much in vogue at the time—"Think Imperially"—was attributed to him; also the poignant epigram, quoted by the more enlightened Tariff Reformers, that it was not the Article but the Art that ought to be encouraged in British trade. It is perhaps hardly fair to credit him with both these sayings, but it is certain that his lightest word carried weight. Lord Fisher, writing to me from the Admiralty, quoted a talk he had had with Rhodes which impressed him deeply; his letter ended with:

"Rhodes is a wonderful fellow! I will finish this long letter by quoting a clever thing he said to me to-day:

" 'I have found one thing, and that is, if you have an idea and it is a good idea, if you will only stick to it, you will come out all right.'

"Your affectionate

"FISHER."

On arriving at Mr. Balfour's party at 10 Downing Street, where I was to meet Mr. Rhodes, I took my host aside and asked him if "the man on the spot"—generally a favourite with the stupid—had given him his views on South Africa, to which he replied:

"Yes: he doesn't think there is the slightest chance of war; he says, not only that the Boers *won't* fight, but that they *can't*."

"Thinking Imperially" had made us confident that, after an experience of twenty years, Rhodes must know his South Africa, and we all took comfort together.

I looked round me at No. 10 but saw no one I wanted to talk to, so I penetrated into the next room. There, for the first time, I saw Burne-Jones's *Legend of the Briar Rose* hung on the high panels put up by Disraeli in the Downing Street dining-room; but more striking than this was the circle of fashionable ladies crouching at Cecil Rhodes's feet. He sat like a great bronze gong among them: and I had not the spirit to disturb their worship.

CHAPTER II

THE DUTIES OF A MOTHER—ROGER ASCHAM'S PORTRAIT OF JANE GREY—BIRTH OF ELIZABETH ASQUITH, NOW PRINCESS BIBESCO; HER FITS OF TEMPER AND WILFULNESS

IN marrying a man whose time was divided between the Law Courts and the House of Commons, with a permanent home in London, and having to look after a family of five children, I was aware that I had undertaken serious responsibilities; and those who mistook vitality for frivolity kept a sharp eye upon me to see what I was going to make of them.

My duties were no longer voluntary and intermittent achievements but regular performances, and the life I was facing, though composed of many of the same people, was strangely different from that of my girlhood.

With the exception of a dangerous dysentery contracted in youth, I had known no illness; and neither my work among the poor, nor play among the rich, nor travels abroad had affected my gen-

eral health; but for many years after my first confinement I was a delicate woman.

I wrote in my diary:

"I am not old enough to acquiesce in loss of health, and feel as if I were too young to die. I have always realised the shortness of life; and have watched with amazement in past years the millionaires screwing over their money, the silly fussing over their dignity, and the rotten wasting their substance; but, though I am not afraid of death and know that the old have to die, I thought that I and my contemporaries, would go on living side by side for ever, and it never entered my head that I might become an invalid. I do not know at all what is required of me, and whether I am going to linger on weak and wretched, or die under an operation; but I would prefer the doctors to open me up and find out what is wrong—I will make my will and leave good-bye letters for Henry and the children to read when I am dead."

[*End of Diary Quotation*]

Not the least sorrowful part of having neurasthenia is that your will-power, your character and your body are almost equally affected by it. Time,

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE H. H. ASQUITH, WITH HIS DAUGHTER ELIZABETH, NOW PRINCESS BIBESCO

oxygen and diet, added to regularity of hours and an untainted atmosphere, are essential for complete recovery; and, what is even more vital, a patient and perfect understanding in your daily surroundings. I was delicate for so long that in the year 1908, when my husband became Prime Minister I went to St. Paul's Cathedral and prayed that I might die rather than hamper his life as an invalid.

I had bouts of health golfing in Scotland and hunting in Leicestershire—an occupation I had given up, but which I resumed on the advice of my doctor, Sir John Williams, and through the kindness of my friend, Sir Ernest Cassel, who mounted me—but sleep had lifted itself like a veil from my eyes. No one who has not experienced over any length of time real sleeplessness, can imagine what this means; and when I hear men and women describing at length the wretched nights they have had, and look at their comfortable figures and complacent countenances, I confess my attention wanders. Being of sound mind myself I can only say that insomnia is akin to insanity.

The station-master at Waverley, in Edinburgh,

was the first person * who gave me any real hope. Mr. Paton had known and cared for me and my family for many years and was distressed at seeing me look so ill.

"You seem very poorly, what's wrong wi' ye?" he asked one day; and, when I told him that I was almost afraid to go to bed for fear of wakefulness, he said in his pretty Scotch accent and putting his hand upon my shoulder:

"You ought to be very glad; people sleep far too much in their lives—I never allowed myself more than five hours; you can always doze now and again, and get a wee bit rest in the off times."

This was a great saying, and when I went to bed that night I determined that if I should live I would set myself to feel gratitude instead of fear in the future. I did not weigh seven stone, and, agreeing with Lady Wenlock,† that my skeleton was too instructive to be exposed to those who go out for amusement—I gave up balls and parties and threw myself into domestic life.

From my youth I had a passion for little children and at the time I was expecting my second baby

* The next step towards my recovery was due to the wisdom of my present doctor, Sir Thomas Parkinson.

† Lady Wenlock of Escrick, Yorkshire.

I was working out theories upon education which I had long held and deeply considered. Before relating of my experiences I will quote what I wrote upon my theories:

"There is no position, not even the President's in the United States, as unchallengeable as a mother's; she has a start over her children which winged feet cannot overtake. The comings in and goings out, the clothes, the food, the very hairs of their heads are known to her; she has a power like unto God's.

"The greatest of all love being that of the mother it is also the rarest. Maternal instinct is Nature and needs no witch to perceive; but the kind of Love I mean is Inspiration. To save them from suffering, women have killed themselves and their children. It was not good manners that prompted men on sinking ships to make way for women and children; but the recognition of this great Love.

"There are women who specialise in motherhood; they collect, catalogue and kodak themselves with their children; these are the mothers *who dedicate their family to themselves,* subconsciously setting up a personal worship; but neglect is less

suffocating than advertisement, and, though it is harsh reflection, a child left to the dull arrogance of an aunt has a better chance of finding itself than if it is brought up by the self-enfolded mother.

"It is a matter of unconcern to this kind of woman, if the child pleases her, that it does not please other people, and I notice that she cannot bear a breath of criticism. Mothers who dedicate themselves to their children do not suffer from this blindness of heart. They are unnerved by screams, maddened by pertness and wounded by disobedience.

"Some people say, 'We can't alter anyone in life; people remain what they are born, and you only learn by experience,' but I should not care to live if I thought we had been given incommunicable lives.

"Can it be true that all the love, all the prayers, all the money and the counsel we give one another, is useless? Are children to be left to the guidance of a governess, Eton, or some squalid personal experience to arrive at the heights? I could not bear to believe this, and said to myself a perfect mother should start a school, or found an Order.

"There are Orders that go in for nursing, pray-

ing, starving, or contemplation; and others for promoting wild-birds or uplifting bad girls; but they seldom meet Life.

"You may live on haddocks' heads and think you flatter Christ; or call yourself or your Order a Free Mason, a Free Forester, a Free Thinker, or by any other name: you may wear the Green or the Primrose—and dress your baby in blue and vow her to the Virgin, but a true mother must arm herself first and then her child, if she wishes to challenge the world.

"There are parents who believe in bringing up their children without education or religion. Some say:

" 'Don't speak to me of your schools where they take scholarships, no child of mine shall be pushed —give me old Eton where they will make a gentleman of him'; and others, who are either angry with God or superior to Him:

" 'I don't like goody-goody men! Heaven forbid that my son should be a milksop.'

"I have known the offspring of both these parents and can only say that nothing children can be given later in life can compensate for the disadvantages of such a beginning.

"A child is unlucky if it is not taught early by its mother or nurse that the object of life is to go to Heaven, and that, if we are good when we die, we go there. Going to Heaven is departing from Self and is not only the teaching of Christ but the foundation of all Education: so much did our Lord believe in Self-departure that He startled the world by the greatest of all sayings: 'Love thine enemy.'

"You may or may not believe in Christ, but He never said a negligible word.

"The road to the Cross is softened for Roman Catholics; they rest on their way to worship the Virgin and Child: but for us there can be no rest, and only one way.

"It therefore comes to this: the gift that is sent to lighten our darkness is the Child, and I made up my mind as I watched for that light that I would dedicate myself to my children."

This is the end of the paper I wrote upon my theories.

One day, shortly before the birth of my baby, I was discussing these matters with my husband, and he read me the following extract:

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

FROM THE ENGLISH WORK OF ROGER ASCHAM,
PRECENTOR TO QUEEN ELIZABETH
BORN 1515. DIED AT THE AGE OF 53.

"Before I went to Germanie, I came to Brodegate in Leicestershire, to take leave of that noble Lady Jane Grey,* to whom I was exceeding much beholdinge. Her parentes, the Duke and Duches, with all the household, gentlemen and gentlewomen, were hunting in the parke. I found her in her chamber, readinge Phaedon Platonis in Greeke, and that with as much delite, as some jentlemen would read a merie tale in Bocase. After salutation and dewtie done, with some other talke, I asked why she would leefe such pastime in the parke? Smiling, she answered me:

" 'I wisse, all their sport in parke is but a shadoe to that pleasure that I find in Plato. Alas! good folke, they never felt what trewe pleasure ment.'

* This discourse with this excellent lady he thus expresses in a letter to his friend Sturmis:

"Hac superiore æstate, cum amicos meos in agro Eboracensi viserem, et inde literis Joanis Chechi in Aulam, ut huc proficiscerer, accitus sum, in via deflexi Leicestriam, ubi Jana Graja cum patre habitaret. Statim admissus sum in cubiculum; inveni nobilem puellam, Dii boni! legentem Græce Phædonem Platonis; quem sic intelligit, ut mihi ipsi summam admirationem injiceret. Sic loquitur, et scribit Græce, ut vera referenti vix fides adhiberi possit. Nacta præceptorem Joannem Elmarum, utriusque linguæ valde peritum; propter humanitatem, prudentiam, usum, rectam religionem, et alia multa rectissimæ amicitiæ vincula, mihi conjunctissimum."

"'And howe came you, Madame,' quoth I, 'to this deepe knowledge of pleasure? And what did chieflie allure you into it, seeinge not many women, but verie fewe men, have attained thereunto.'

"'I will tell you,' quoth she, 'and tell you a truth, which perchance ye will marvell at. One of the greatest benefites that ever God gave me is, that he sent me so sharpe and severe parentes, and so jentle a schoolmaster. For when I am in presence eyther of father or mother; whether I speake, kepe silence, sit, stand, or go, eate, drinke, be merie, or sad, be sowying, playing, dauncing or doing anie thing else, I must do it, as it were, in such weight, measure, and number, even so perfitelie as God made the world, or else I am so sharplie taunted, so cruellie threatened, yea presentlie, sometimes, with pinches, nippes, and bobbes, and other waies, which I will not name for the honour I bear them, so without measure misordered, that I thincke myselfe in hell, till time come when I must go to Mr. Elmer; who teacheth me so jentlie, so pleasantlie, with such faire allurements to learninge, that I thinke all the time nothing whiles I am with him. And when I am called from him, I fall weeping, because whatsoever I do else, but learninge, is full of grief,

trouble, feare and whole misliking unto me. And this my booke hath been so much pleasure and more, that, in respect of it, all other pleasures, in very deede, be but trifles and troubles to me.'

"I remember this taulk gladly, both because it is so worthir of memorie, and because also it was the last taulk that ever I had, and the last tyme that ever I saw that noble and worthir ladie."

. . . . . .

I will here quote from my diary:

"My baby was born on the 26th of February, 1897, at 2 o'clock in the morning, in 20 Cavendish Square, and I christened her Elizabeth Charlotte Lucy. After reading a life of Goethe's mother I thought that if ever I had a girl I would call her Elizabeth.

"Had my choice been Mary-Jane, baby's name could not have been more condemned. Someone consoled me by saying that her initials spelt 'Ecla' which might be prophetic. I could not have handicapped her from the start by calling her 'Margot,' and personally I love the name Elizabeth. In Hebrew it means 'God is my covenant': Eli—God; Shabeth—Covenant. It is reminiscent of old

houses, finely mown lawns and valueless pictures, and has a kind of square grace which will work well in the future whether she is plain or pretty.

"Her godfathers at her baptism on the 10th of April, 1897, were Godfrey Webb and brother Eddy; her godmothers, Charty, Lucy and Con Manners. As Eddy could not attend the christening, he wrote:

" 'Elizabeth shall have all she wants in life and Glen shall be to her what it is to us. She will learn to love all that we have loved, and I will take her by the hand and talk to her. God bless you and her.'

"Lady Harcourt came to see my baby the day after she was born, and Lord Rosebery, Arthur Balfour, Milner, George Curzon and Randall Davidson came when I was allowed to lie upon the sofa.

"In April, 1898, Elizabeth walked towards me for the first time.

"In August of the same year, at St. Andrews, she burst into tears because I did not look up at the nursery window from the links. Her nannie wiped her eyes and said: 'There! there! your mumma's golf mad.'

"She ran up to me on my return saying: 'Guff mad! mumma, Guff mad!'

"She has a wonderful ear and by December (1898) could sing 28 songs with all their words in perfect tune. The ones I love best are, 'In Dublin's fair City'; 'I'm your little true Lover'; 'Someone stole my heart away liding (riding) on a load of hay'; and 'You stick to the boats, lad!'

"On the last day of the year while she was saying her prayers after finishing with 'God bless Margot,' as she always calls Violet, she ended, 'And Everybody Else Amen!!' clapping both her fat little hands. She is quite fearless and has a violent temper.

"On February the 26th, 1899, she was two, and we were walking together in Cavendish Square; we passed an old fellow sitting half-asleep on the handle of his barrow, at which she stopped and in a lowered voice of much compassion, said:

" 'Oh! poor man! look, mother, at the poor old man!'

"I am more interested by this than anything that has happened, as showing heart at the age of two is rare.

"When asked her name she always answered, 'Baby Asquith in the Park; Lizbebuth at home.'

"In spite of constant references to 'Gawd' my baby is a wicked little creature of sudden temper and violent impulse which distresses me. I treat her tantrums as an illness, sponging her face with cold water, coozling her in my arms and singing while she batters me with her wool boots, calling me 'Uggerly! nasty! beasserly mother!'

"She argues too much for a child of three and has all the Asquith love of controversy as well as their logic.

" 'Don't darling!' I said one day to her. 'I'm too old to argue'; at which she said in a condescending voice:

" 'All right! *All right! You* is right and *I* are wrong.'

"On the 30th of July, 1900, while saying her prayers at Wanboro, she ended: 'Don't let the katten bite my hair; and make mother truthful and obedienet. Amen.'

"She asked me one day, 'why God had taken her nannie's mother to the sky,' adding, 'hasn't He got a mother of His own?' I could see the Almighty seemed incomplete to her for many years

after this. Jesus Christ coming down upon earth was another puzzle.

" 'I know He comes down sometimes of course, on His Christmas and all that, but why not oftener?' she asked.

"She continued for a long time to be argumentative, but happily for me the responsibility of the controversies was put upon her dolls. In December, 1900, she told me her Christmas dollies

" 'Contricted each other something dreff'ul! Betty says B does not spell for baby; that B-A-B-Y is bun!! now there's no Y in bun as we all know, and so they go on, mother!' she added with a matronly smile."

[*End of Diary Quotation*]

On the 22nd of January, 1901, we heard of Queen Victoria's death, and early in February I left Elizabeth to go to St. Moritz by the doctor's orders. Anxiety at parting from my baby did not improve my health, but I thought of the saying of St. Augustine's mother, "l'enfant de tant de prières ne peut s'égarer," and leaving her in the charge of my stepdaughter—who was always a natural mother—somewhat reassured me. The re-

markable letters I received from Violet when I was in Switzerland kept me in constant touch with my nursery, and Elizabeth wrote to me every week, ruling her own crooked lines and writing in huge letters on the envelope, "FOR MOTHER ASQUITH," enclosing:

"I love you.
Baby."

In a letter from Violet, dated February, 1901, she wrote:

"Baby said to me to-day, 'I do hope if I have another baby it will have brown eyes! I've had 9 children and they've all got blue eyes—not one of them takes after their mother, which seems a great pity!' "

Later in that year Violet developed a strange kind of paralysis which was a terrible grief to us all. One night her father went up to sit with her and found baby playing on the bed. She scowled at him and said: "There are some gentlemen which I wish had never been born."

On being asked who these could possibly be, she answered:

"Mr. Asquith," but, not liking the look of reproach upon Violet's face, she added airily:

"And Mr. Lilac and Mr. Laburnum!"

One day in January, walking with her brothers, Arthur and Bertie, they told me she had said: "You young fellows and gentlemen don't know half the beautiful things we girls and young ladies know," and, when one of them asked her to give them an instance, she answered:

"You don't call each other nice names like we do—'dearest darling; friend of my heart; saint of my soul; loverly sweet.' "

After a disturbing day I walked on tiptoe into baby's bedroom and found her lying awake in the dark. As she had worn herself out that afternoon with her own temper I had hoped to find her asleep, but she said in a ringing voice from her cot:

"I knowed it was you! I heard you come tasselling along; not many love as we do, do they, mother?"

She was devoted to her father and amused him by saying in an understanding manner after hearing his criticism of a new acquaintance:

"There are a lot of odds in the world, aren't there, father?"

In talking over serious matters one evening she said to me:

"We don't know much about Gawd, do we, mother?"

To which I reluctantly replied:

"No, darling, not very much, excepting that . . ." At this she interrupted me with vehemence:

"Oh! don't let's talk about Him!"

Death was a great puzzle to her, and one day at Cromer in 1901 she said with what she described as a "nice cheered-up little face" she would not mind dying a bit; at this I answered evasively:

"No, darling?"

"We shall all be together, you know. And there'll be flowers what won't die?" she added consolingly. "Won't there, mother?" I answered:

"Yes."

"What won't die?" . . . she repeated thoughtfully, and after a pause added: "I s'pose we shan't see that apricot again what you and I ate together on the wall at Wanboro. Do you know what I am always thinking about, mother?"

I told her I could not guess; she said:

"I want to die the same day as you; I *must* die

MARGOT TENNANT, WITH HER NIECE BARBARA LISTER
(WIFE OF SIR MATHEW WILSON)

the same day as you! The sad part is we shall never know."

With this she burst into tears.

On Sunday, the 9th of November, 1902, my son was born.

Before relating of Anthony I would like to finish with an experience I had of Elizabeth when she was three years old which rather upset my theories.

Things were going well for me in the household: the hours were regular, the servants contented, the step-family perfect and my nursery beautiful.

I had succeeded in making baby so devoted to me that, at the sight of a friend or a sister, she would fling herself upon the floor and swallow the mat.

When an elderly lady settled down to tea Elizabeth would say in a ringing voice:

"Hope you will go soon!"

The friend may be deaf but you are not, and you are tempted to say:

"You had better go upstairs, darling, if you are so rude," but refrain as you are not sure that your darling will obey, and I always questioned the morality of making a punishment of either my nannie or the nursery.

The same thing happened every day unless I took the precaution to say I was out.

One afternoon as I watched my baby in the boudoir brandishing a Chelsea cup which I had left within her reach while adjusting my veil before going to a matinée—I felt the moment had come to put my theories into practice.

I knelt down and tenderly but firmly dislodged the cup from her hand. I felt a yearning towards her as I not only detested matinées but I was giving up my afternoon with her. Placing the cup slyly behind my back upon a chair, I lifted my veil and bent forward, leaning my face lovingly against hers: with unforeseen alacrity she seized my hat and threw it into the fire. Whether from a sense of sin or the shock of the flames I do not know, but she clung to me with both her arms and burst into tears.

My Paris hat was of fine straw trimmed with flamingo-coloured Prince of Wales feathers and the last word in fashion. Touched by her sobs and in no way regretting the matinée, I lifted my baby into my arms and sitting upon the chair was prepared to show her with becoming gravity the enormity of her crime, but the passion of her re-

morse was steadily telling upon me, and I found my only desire was to comfort her: while I was disengaging myself from her embrace to fumble for my handkerchief, she perceived the Chelsea cup lying upon the chair behind me. Her sobs instantly ceased and with a cheerful "Tisty! Tosty!" she waved it round her head and dashed it to the ground.

Her tears, which I had taken for remorse, were baffled rage, which not even consigning my feathers to the flame had appeased, but the discovery of the forbidden cup was more than consolation, and she scrambled off my lap gazing with glee upon the broken bits of china.

I felt it was "up to me" as the Americans say to make her feel how much her wilfulness had hurt me, and, as she was nearly three years old and understood perfectly all that was said to her, I explained that she would have to have her tea without me that afternoon as I could no longer play with her; that her nannie would be as shocked at her behaviour as I was; and ended by saying no one would love a little girl who resembled her in any way whatever. She listened attentively but was unmoved. I took her hand and we walked silently

out of the room. Before reaching the gate at the top of the nursery stairs, she began shouting:

"Sorry! Sorry!! Sorry!!!" which she repeated in a vehement crescendo, hoping to enlist the approval of her nurse. Nannie, with that faint look of efficiency which comes to nurses on seeing the failure of the mamma, took Elizabeth from me, and after resisting kissing her I slowly closed the nursery door reflecting that my cup was broken, my hat burnt, my matinée missed, and that I had punished myself even more than my baby. Tears came into my eyes as I thought how easily I could have educated other people's children.

Finding myself without an engagement in the world I wandered into the Square hoping to meet Elizabeth; but nurses like other people have their own shopping, and, what with the matinée and the rumpus, I had forgotten to find out the plans of my perambulator.

On my return, not having much appetite, I fingered the scones and wondered whether I wanted my baby to be miserable and unhungry without me, or eating a hearty meal upstairs. I walked stealthily to the nursery and listened at the open door. It takes a clever nurse to remove the chill that a

mother's absence has caused without condoning the child, and I heard the table-talk resigning itself into technicalities.

"Munch slowly, now! . . . What are those dandies doing, baby? . . . Get on with your sponge-cake, darling," etc., etc. The nursery-maid, feeling that it would be out of place, refrained from showing the strangers in her tea-cup, and, except for the click of the crockery, there was not a sound to be heard.

After remaining alone in the passage with the rocking-horse I turned sadly away from my nursery, and reflected as I went downstairs that punishing my baby was a discipline I would practice with caution in the future.

The violence of her temper distressed me, and I wondered if she was not living too much with older people. I thought if I invited a few small children for her to play with it might make all the difference! So in high spirits I went off to buy her first expensive party-frock.

Fine clothes are usually a help in these entertainments, but from what cause I have never discovered nannies are usually cross on party days, and by the time you have watched your child's

face polished, the curls wrenched off its forehead and all the ribbons tied, the fine flower of the party has faded, and fatigue takes the place of gaiety in your heart.

I would have been better advised to have left my night-nursery while the process of dressing went on, as nannies brighten up when they become hostesses, and fussing about with hats and cloaks takes the edge off their tempers.

Although I had never enjoyed parties myself when I was young, I had always hoped that my babies might, and had spared no pains that day to make everything perfect. I left the nursery to enquire if the cakes I had chosen had arrived, and returned in time to see my daughter receiving the last of her guests with a look of strained suspicion. Toys were produced from cupboards and lent—but not for long. I observed my hospitable baby grabbing every bear and doll away from the guests with violence and even emotion. In vain I said:

"Oh! darling, do let the dear little boy have it, he won't keep it! Do let him have it just once to play with, he will give it back to you." Toy after toy was clasped to an agitated chest till I prayed for tea. Tea is the slowest of all meals to hurry,

although everything is there except boiling water, of which there is presumably some always in the kitchen; but, seeing that matters had come to a standstill as the hostess was unwilling to play herself or give up anything for the others to play with, I felt that the moment had come for direct action, and crossing the room I nerved myself to present a toy to each little visitor. Elizabeth stood ice-bound, gazing at me with her brown beautiful eyes. My heart ached, her heart ached; she eyed her treasures held by the awe-struck guests and saw her kingdom slipping away from her. With a gulp and a leap she butted a hot head against my breast and I was only too glad to sweep her off into the night-nursery.

After tea we played "musical chairs" and I saw with concern that every time the music stopped the strongest visitor lifted my baby into an already occupied chair. This monotonous courtesy wound up a sorry afternoon, and I felt sad to think that my first party had been such a failure.

When I had finished undoing the tapes of Elizabeth's cotton corsets at bath time I tried to explain to her what a pity it had all been; but the departure of her guests had put her in intoxicated spirits,

and gliding off my knee she began to jig about naked on the floor. I sat silently watching her, feeling unequal to clouding the end of an exhausting day. Over-excitement brought her finally into my arms, and, after listening to a yawning hymn, we scurried through the Lord's Prayer, and kissing her many times I left the room.

On my way to bed I went into the night-nursery and found my white cot in painful disarray; nothing but the bars kept the blankets from the floor. A hot little creature with matted curls was lying completely naked on her back; and murmuring in sobbing sleep:

"My mother did take away all my toys! . . . All . . . *All* . . . ALL my toys!!"

Discouraged but persistent, at our next little gathering I guided Elizabeth into a corner at the end of the nursery and surrounding her with every toy she possessed I took the guests away by the hand, saying to them in a loud voice:

"Now, darlings, I will read you a lovely story and show you the pretty pictures."

In pretending to find my place in the book my eyes strayed furtively to the corner of the room. I observed most of the bears manœuvred into posi-

tion and with a fine gesture my baby was pressing the head of her Highland doll into a gallipot: bricks were piled up one upon the other when suddenly humming broke upon my ear. I started reading in a slow clear voice, but the humming got louder: feigning complete detachment, I read on with firmness and with fervour, but as the story developed so alas! did the singing. The dolls begin to dance and the song becomes lyrical; I dare not move and my heart fails, but not so "The Magic Fishbone *"; there is a pause; she looks up at me from her play, and oh! joy! my Elizabeth has had enough of herself and scurries across the room to join the party.

* A story by Dickens.

CHAPTER III

ANTHONY IS BORN—THE INFLUENCE OF BOOKS ON THE YOUNG—VIEWS ON RELIGION—LORD MORLEY'S VISIT TO THE ASQUITH HOME

IT is easier to talk than to write about one's children; but I can hardly leave them out, and those who remember Mahomet's saying, "Paradise lies at the feet of Mothers," will forgive me.

Anthony was born in Cavendish Square on November the 9th, 1902, and was a fragile, delicate little creature. When I showed him to Elizabeth, who was six years old, after her first expression of delight and surprise, she bent her head and lowered her eyes, and I could see that she was jealous. I remember the occasion very clearly, because, fearing that I should not be strong enough to spend Christmas with the family at Easton Grey and hoping to remove the unfortunate impression that baby had created, I asked her to sing "While Shepherds watched their flocks" to me. When she had finished she said:

"I don't like 'the heavenly babe you there shall find to human view displayed, all meanly wrapped' —I'd like Him to be a tiny bit smarter and have a crib of his own, mother."

In discussing Christ together, I said that many of the great men that had lived before Him had said the same things, but none of them had told us to help the weak, or love our enemies. It was this that had startled and held mankind, as before His birth the cripples went to the wall, and Force governed the world. After a little reflection she said:

"I wish all the same that things were different, mother; and that the world would go round the other way! Then foxes would not eat rabbits, or water-rats eat hens; and we should all have blue eyes and fair hair."

As baby was fair I hoped that this was a promising sign, but her jealousy of him till he went to school caused me much unhappiness. This was not the outcome of a small nature, but of her passionate love for me. I need not have worried, however, as the love Anthony and Elizabeth have for one another to-day is as great as the devotion I felt for my sister Laura.

My son Anthony, better known in the family as

"Puffin," combines in nature and intellect the best qualities of an Asquith and a Tennant. Added to fine susceptibilities, he has good manners, reasoned judgments and a love of literature. He is a real artist with an enthusiasm for colour, rhythm and line, which was expressed at an early age both in his dancing and his music. Being delicate, my husband was not in favour of sending him away from us, but I thought the irregularity at home, due to his constant fatigue and uneven sleep, was worse for his health than the punctual monotony of a school.

We started his education early, under the guidance of a perfect governess, by name Anna Heinsius, and at the age of seven he had learnt French and German sufficiently well not to forget them, in spite of the carelessness with which foreign languages are treated at our public schools. Before he was nine he went to a day school in Sloane Street every morning, returning to Downing Street for lunch.

One day, when we were motoring home together, I observed a bleeding scar upon his knee. I dried it with my handkerchief and asked him how it had happened.

"A boy did it in a fight," he answered, "and he hurt my head by throwing a magnifying glass at me."

I examined his curls and found a long wound matted with blood and hair. I put my arm round him feeling I could have killed his assailant but said nothing.

"Mother," he asked after a pause, "if you saw two bigger boys fighting would you try and stop them?"

"I hope so, darling," I answered.

"But, mother," he said tentatively, "if you knew it was no use and you would only get knocked about yourself?"

"I would do it all the same," I said, "as you could never be quite sure it would be useless."

Turning to look at me, and a little hurt by my lack of sympathy, he said:

"But suppose I was thrown violently down and lamed for life!"

At this I drew him closer to me and said I thought God would look after that.

A few days later when he told me he had won the prize for light-weight boxing I was surprised, and asked his master how it had come about.

"We do not give little boys a prize for their prowess, Mrs. Asquith," he said, "but for their grit. Anthony showed not only great courage but fine temper."

He was a delicate little boy when he left his day school, but nevertheless, I decided I would continue his education, and my confidence in Dr. Williams and his wife determined me to send him to Summerfields, a decision that I have never regretted.

Both my children were fond of books, and in looking through my diaries, I see that in December, 1904, Elizabeth chose the "Canterbury Tales" to read out loud to me, roaring with laughter over the merry friar Hubert, who "earned by begging more than his regular income, for he had such a pleasant way with him." Chaucer is never an easy writer to read whether to yourself or to anyone else, but though she was only seven she had advanced tastes in books.

I seldom read out loud, as I think it discourages children from reading to themselves, but it is an arguable point. Although it is certain that a wise mother should never forbid an undesirable book, it is equally true that she can guide the tastes of

her children. There is time enough when you are young to justify delay in reading what is ugly, however brilliant, and books have an unconscious influence upon the character which Mr. Freud and others of the same mind do not say much about.

I took my little son to school in the Summer Term of 1912. Having built myself a house on the Thames to be near Oxford, I was able to go every Saturday afternoon and watch him racing about without a hat in the beautiful playing grounds of Summerfields. As he was forbidden by the doctors to go for the regular school walks, he and I spent most of our Sunday afternoons together, playing the piano, reciting verses or telling stories, and generally ended by saying our prayers in the garden before I motored back to join my guests at the Wharf.

On the 10th of June, 1916, we heard that Anthony had won the 3rd Winchester Scholarship, following in the footsteps of Henry's two sons, Raymond and Cyril. In honour of this he spent Sunday with us at the Wharf and was allowed to dine down stairs.

After dinner Henry proposed "Puffin's health," which we all drank standing up. Flushed with

pleasure and modest as a maid, he rose and thanked the company. Lord Morley, who was staying with us at the time, said to me when he sat down:

"How glad I am that you allowed me to be a witness of this pretty scene. You are a very lucky woman in your children and I really don't know which of them is the more remarkable. Clever men do not often have brilliant sons or daughters, and Asquith has broken every record."

He wrote me the following letter after leaving us on the Monday morning:

"FLOWERMEAD,
"*June 12th,* 1916.

"DEAR MRS. ASQUITH,

"I never had such a delightful visit. Your house is enchanting with all its new developments. The music was divine;* the talk was downright good. Everybody was pleased with everybody else; I, at any rate, felt the charm of my years of close association with the host and hostess.

"I shall not soon forget it all. And with affectionate sincerity and good wishes for the days to come, I am always your friend,

"JOHN MORLEY."

* Anthony played the piano to Lord Morley.

ANTHONY AND ELIZABETH ASQUITH

Dr. Alington,* who accompanied the Summerfields Boys to Winchester for the examinations, told me that as Anthony was passing through the lounge of the hotel he read in a newspaper lying on the table that Lord Kitchener had been drowned; this threw him into a state of the greatest perturbation, upon which his master with instantaneous resource warned him never to believe anything he saw in a newspaper. I shall always be grateful to Dr. Alington for the insight he showed upon this occasion, as I doubt if Anthony would have passed his examination if the shock of hearing of the death of such a friend had not been instantly removed from his mind.

In the last letter I had from Dr. Williams, dated Summerfields, November 14th, 1915, he wrote: "Anthony has the mind of the blessed Saints ('The spirit of the holy gods,' as in Daniel's case Nebuchadnezzar called it)."

I felt profoundly unhappy when I took Anthony to Winchester on the 20th of September, 1916. My summer Saturdays were at an end, nor could I reach him from the Wharf on Sundays. The Oxford road, instead of being a friendly *officier de*

* Dr. Alington: The present headmaster of Summerfields.

liaison between me and what I loved, would merely be a familiar mileage bereft of all interest, and for aught I could tell, new and entertaining Winchester men might efface some of my influence with my little son.

I was unhappy also about the position of affairs in Downing Street, and in sharp disagreement with many of its inmates over Lord Kitchener's successor.

The deep personal sorrow of Raymond's death a few days before—to which I shall refer later on—had taken my husband off his guard, and had it not been for Elizabeth, I felt like hiring rooms near Winchester College to watch my boy and await events.

A few days later I received a letter from Winchester, in which Anthony wrote:

"In translating the following Latin passage I thought of you, Mother.

" 'Apparet filios non tam in gremio educatos quam in sermone matris. Utinam in Tiberio Graccho Caioque Carbone tale ingenium ad rempublicam bene gerendam fuisset.'

"It appears that her sons were educated not so

much in the breast of their mother as in her advice (or conversation)."

When the time of his Confirmation was approaching I began to feel anxious; and after some hesitation wrote to the second master.

I made a copy of my letter, a thing I seldom do, as I not only wanted to show it to my husband, but to keep it for reference. Before sending it I somewhat modified the original text. This is what I first wrote:

"*October 9th,* 1918.

"Dear Mr. Williams,

"I hear you are going to prepare my Anthony for his confirmation, and as I think it an important time in a boy's life I take this opportunity of writing to you; for although I shall be with him as often as I can at Winchester I may not be able to see you for long enough to discuss what I feel upon the matter.

"My sister Laura and I were by nature deeply religious, though I never remember anyone speaking to us on the subject except our eldest sister, Pauline Gordon Duff, and our cousin, John Tennant *—a man of saintly life and enthusiastic rev-

* Mr. John Tennant, 19 The Boltens.

erence; but we talked to each other, and when I was thirteen I asked to be allowed to go with her to her Confirmation classes in London, where the fine teaching of the Rev. Capel Cure left an ineffaceable influence upon my mind and character.

"I have discussed every aspect of religion with Elizabeth and my little son from their earliest age, and it is because I wish you to know the form these discussions have taken that I write to you to-day.

"I want Anthony to meet life in the spirit of Christ, whose authority rested neither upon His knowledge, or His position, but upon the Love and Faith to which His life was dedicated. It is in this spirit that men should approach the pupils they are going to prepare for the Holy Communion, and it is for lack of it that parsons fail.

"Some of us are unlucky in our choice, as many of the clergy are more at their ease with God than is convincing—a sign of moral vulgarity which I distrust in people and detest in priests. Familiarity breeds as much contempt in religion as it does in Society.

"I would like Anthony to read his Bible. My husband knows his Bible and Shakespeare as intimately as the classics, and though I prefer such

Greek literature as I know—through Professor Gilbert Murray's translations—to Hebrew, there is nothing that I have read in matters of advice comparable to the sayings and teachings of Christ.

"I believe you might as well go out hunting in an omnibus as try to find what I value in religion through the intellect. It is here I think that what is called 'preparation' goes wrong.

"Men are made up of so many different parts; temperament, character, nature and brains, but all these, whether developed through knowledge, conduct or emotion, should be the servants and not the masters of the soul.

"It is a hard matter for this view to meet with the agreement of men of intellect, but it would be easier if it could be shown in preparation to be a soaring rather than a subjugation of the mind.

"The spirit of man is an inward flame; a lamp the world blows upon, but never puts out, and this is what I want you to teach my son. If the clerical guides to Christ would emphasise the development rather than the destination of the soul, and avoid the Heaven and Hell part of their teaching, I cannot but think they would achieve their purpose.

"I would like Anthony to feel the significance

of Compassion as compared with pity. I would like him to be fundamentally humble and tender, without which we cannot hope to help one another; and I want him to have no intellectual arrogance, or that fatiguing dialectical skill that scores; but a desire to search for and to find the Truth.

"I would like him to have no blindness of heart, and perfect moral manners as well as moral courage. Most of the earlier virtues which I care about have passed out of fashion. Consideration for the old, and discipline for the young, and although the fear of God has disappeared, it has taken with it both Awe and Mystery.

"I want my son to keep his Saturdays as well as his Sundays; to protect people's failings instead of making copy out of them, and to spread what is of good report. I want him not to laugh at other people's Gods, and never to be afraid of saying what is right even if it is, or even if it is not, an epigram.

"Thanking you for all you do for him,

"I am always,

"Yours in sincerity,

"MARGOT ASQUITH."

My son is not spoilt, and if he keeps his health, should, I think, go far in life. The Headmaster of Winchester, in thanking me for a letter I wrote to him, after hearing who had won the Balliol Scholarships, wrote to me:

"I do indeed value your assurance that you are grateful for my charge of Anthony. It is a heavy responsibility, to put it in a negative way. not to dim the brightness of young and rare spirits like his, or of the great literature which he loves. Yes, he is indeed a rare spirit. I look forward eagerly and wistfully to find his proper niche."

On receiving this letter I wrote in my Diary:

"I too am wondering what my son's proper niche will be.

"When I realised as early as the spring of 1916 that Henry was not working with gentlemen on whom I could build an absolute trust—to misquote Macbeth—I wrote in this book:

" 'He hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
So clear in his great Office, that his virtues
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued against
The deep damnation of his taking off.'

"And I can only hope that my son will inherit

from his father as great an Office as he has inherited his rare nature."

We were sitting by the sea, Anthony and I, watching the gulls hovering over Moray Firth, on August 11th, 1914, and after reading my letters, I asked him what sort of a wife he would like to have.

"Well, Mother," he said thoughtfully, "she must be medium high, pale complexion, dark gold hair, black eyes. She must have free movements and not walk like modern girls. She must not have an anæmic nature, as I don't want a bloodless wife, and she must be witty, sweet and musical. If I can't get this girl, I will have a short well-proportioned wife; black hair, violet eyes or green, like Kakoo's *; Spanish colouring as against red. Nature fiery almost passionate, but of course her temper must be quickly over. Mother, how shall I know her children from mine?"

In the autumn of 1915, I joined the children at North Berwick, and one morning, while he was lying by my side, my little son revived our former discussion upon his future wife. He asked me which of the girls, or married women, that I knew, I would like him to have married. I answered

* The Marchioness of Granby.

I would prefer him to give me his own opinion, and that as long as she was not too pretty or too clever, but genuinely alive, good-humoured, courageous and kind, with a sense of duty and of honour, I should be satisfied; to which he replied:

"Well! Mother! Elizabeth is the only person except yourself that this at all describes—of course, if I could marry a girl like her I should be divinely happy, but perhaps she would not marry me!"

CHAPTER IV

JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN AND TARIFF REFORM—DINNER AT WINDSOR CASTLE—PORTRAIT OF SIR H. CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN—DEBATE ON SOUTH AFRICA

IN this final volume of my life I do not propose going into details of old political controversy, which are certain to be ably dealt with in the coming biographies of Sir William Harcourt and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman; but as the events of 1905 and 1906 killed the Conservative party, and not only brought the Liberals into power with the largest majority ever seen, but led to my husband becoming Prime Minister, I shall quote passages from diaries in which I chronicled with great fidelity the happenings of every day.

From my diary.

"Survey of the year 1903, written in November, 1904."

"In May, 1903, the Unionist Government was in a good position. They had finished the Boer War

and had won their Khaki Election, but the Commission set up following upon the war had disclosed serious blunders of organisation in many Departments. Mr. Brodrick's * new army scheme was a failure; the Budget was criticised, and the Education Bill was unpopular; the general expenses were enormous, and a universal feeling of lack of efficiency was abroad: the excuse given by the Government for this was that they had been too long in Office and were all completely exhausted. They talked fluently of being ready and willing to give up but nevertheless clung comfortably on.

"On the morning of the 16th of May, 1903, my husband came into my bedroom at 20 Cavendish Square with the *Times* in his hand.

" 'Wonderful news to-day,' he said, 'and it is only a question of time when we shall sweep this country.'

"Sitting upon my bed he showed me the report of a speech made at Birmingham the night before by Mr. Chamberlain.†

"Joseph Chamberlain at that time stood in the eyes of his fellow-countrymen as the Business man;

* The Earl of Midleton.
† The Right Honourable Joseph Chamberlain, Colonial Secretary.

the great Imperialist and the Strong Fighter. The sort of praise one was always hearing of him was: 'No shilly-shallying about Joe! He hits straight from the shoulder! He'll give it 'em!! A pity there aren't a few more Joes!" etc.

"Political bruising, perfect speaking, artistic self-advertisement, audacity and courage combine to make Mr. Chamberlain to-day the most conspicuous politician since Gladstone.

"On the 15th of May, 1903, before the Whitsuntide recess he delivered a speech to his constituents at Birmingham which, as my husband said, had transformed the position of every political party. It advocated for the first time a policy of naked Protection, and woke up the barely controlled hopes of the whole Tory party. This caught on like wildfire with the semi-clever, moderately educated Imperialists, the Dukes, the Journalists, and the Fighting Forces; incidentally bringing unity to the Liberals and chaos into the Government ranks.

"The Prime Minister * had one opportunity if he did not agree with his Colleagues, and we wondered if he would take it.

"On the adjournment of the House of Commons

* The Right Hon. Arthur Balfour.

on the 28th of May, 1903, I went to the Speaker's Gallery full of excitement to hear the debate, and, meeting Mr. Balfour's secretary, Mr. Saunders, I seized him by the hand and said: 'Tell Arthur Balfour this is a *most* important occasion and do not let him think he can slip out of it.'

" 'Don't be anxious, Mrs. Asquith, Joe is not going to speak to-day and all will be well,' he said, smiling sweetly at me, with the sympathy of one who thinks he scents an unconscious love affair.

"Mr. Chamberlain, however, did speak; Arthur Balfour did not repudiate him, the fat was in the fire, and it has been bubbling and boiling over ever since; this fire cannot be put out, and at the present moment the Government majority has diminished by half.

"On September the 9th, 1903, Mr. Chamberlain resigned. He ended his letter to the Prime Minister by saying he thought he could promote the cause of Protection which he had at heart better if he were outside the Cabinet than in. His resignation was followed by several other members of the Cabinet, and when Arthur Balfour filled their places with avowed Protectionists people began to grope about for the Prime Minister's convictions.

"The methods by which Mr. Balfour contrived to rid himself both of the Free Traders and Mr. Chamberlain in his Government was a matter of speculation at the time, upon which I shall pronounce no judgment. He wound up a speech of importance at Sheffield on October the 1st by saying:

" 'My request therefore to you to-night is that the people of this country should give to the Government, from whatever party that Government may be drawn, that freedom of negotiation of which we have been deprived, not by the force of circumstances, not by the action of over-mastering forces, not by the pressure of foreign Powers, but by something which I can only describe as our own pedantry and our own self-conceit.'

"Upon this speech the *Times* (October the 3rd, 1903) wrote: 'What is the net result of the proceedings at Sheffield? It is that the Prime Minister has directly challenged and condemned a fiscal system which has held undisputed sway in this country for two generations, and in doing so has received the absolutely undivided support of the most authoritative gathering of Conservative representatives that it is possible to convene. People who think that nothing must be singularly ignorant of

the political history of their country. We do not hesitate to tell them that it is a great deal more than they had any right to expect, and a striking testimony to the political sagacity and admirable leadership alike of Mr. Balfour and of Mr. Chamberlain. It is a perfectly astonishing thing that it seems to have been left only to the more clear-sighted opponents of these two men to perceive that they are playing the game with the perfect mutual understanding and the consummate skill of accomplished whist players.'

"Poor Arthur Balfour! In his anxiety to build a bridge upon which his colleagues can stand, he calls himself a Retaliator and says that he is *against Protection.* Free Traders are ousted from the Government and the Liberal Unionists have captured the Party Machine. In the by-elections the Tory candidate is blessed by both Balfour and Chamberlain, and though the Government profess absolute loyalty to the Prime Minister not a member of the front bench knows what to say or how to say it.

"What the Prime Minister enjoys doing with his subtle, detached and dissenting intellect, the

rest of his followers perspire over in a labyrinth of confused platitudes and contradictory figures.

"I have come to the conclusion that the imagination that can work out and foresee the definite results of any policy proposed is rarer than the imagination that creates nymphs, moons, or passions.

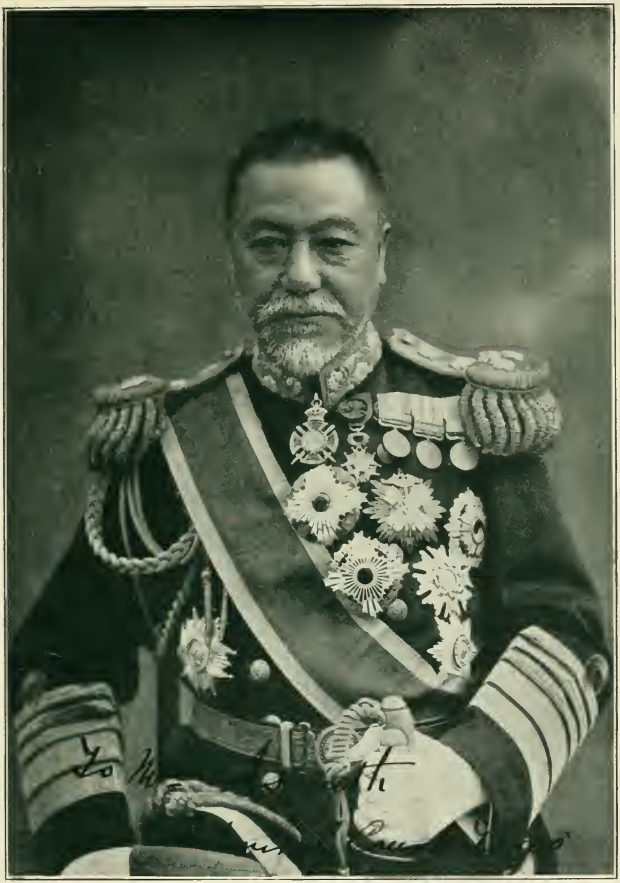
"A group of young Tory dissentients led by Lord Hugh Cecil called themselves Free-Fooders. These young gentlemen were either going to break with the Unionist Party and join us or compel the Prime Minister to break with Mr. Chamberlain; but I never much believed in them, and the result of it all is that they have broken with one another.

"A small party which included Sir Edgar Vincent,* Sir John Poynder,† Mr. Winston Churchill, and others, joined us.

"In June, 1903, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach said to me: 'Of the two policies, Chamberlain's or Balfour's, I prefer the former; if retaliation were carried it would be infinitely more dangerous, but luckily it is impossible; it can never be a policy, rarely a remedy, and at best a bad expedient.'

"I saw little of Sir Michael this summer of

* Lord D'Abernon.
† Lord Islington.



ADMIRAL TOGO, THE COMMANDER OF THE JAPANESE FLEET
IN THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR

1904, but last year he was a frequent caller; he is handsome and agreeable, though a trifle uncertain. Henry, who likes him and thinks him an admirable speaker, said that people mistook for courage in him what was very often temper.

"There will be a great redivision of parties in the future and we want new blood. Gladstone smashed us over Home Rule, and the Boer War divided us again, but now I believe the future is with us.

"The Chamberlain men get more annoyed with Arthur Balfour as his followers woo and draw him away from Protection, and the baffled and irritated Joeites hope against hope. The dividing line between the two is a tax upon food.

"Mr. Chamberlain is booked to address several meetings, and, the oftener he speaks, the better for us. Henry has followed him in all his fiscal orations.

"The flaws of the shallow Protectionist mind are just his subjects; a large grasp of accurate figures and the imaginative insight that is needed to expose the moral and commercial consequences of Protection show him at his best, and his arguments have neither been met nor answered. He has un-

swerving industry, a persistent and precise memory, and real judgment. The stand he has made against the fallacies and light reasoning of his opponents has been appreciated by both divisions in our Party —the C.B.ites and the Imperialists, and I doubt if he has ever stood higher than he does to-day."

. . . . . .

From my diary of 1905.

"On the 2nd of January, 1905, the fall of Port Arthur brought the Russo-Japanese war to an end. It needed no witch to foretell the outcome of this conflict.

"The internal condition of Russia had been horrifying thoughtful people for months past, nor can it be said that Peace as understood by the present Russian Government * is much better, if you can apply such a word to the safe indifference and active hatred shown in that melancholy country to-day. Docile Russians are dying in thousands, not for making extravagant demands, but merely for asking for a little happiness, and the Czar, who was their Father and their God, counts for nothing.

* On the 28th of October, 1905, Arthur Balfour said to me at dinner at Whittinghame: "It is ridiculous and boring to draw parallels, but really the French Revolution was not much worse than what is going on in Russia to-day."

"Any form of Government that continued for years against the will of the governed must degenerate into barbarity, as force has never been a remedy.*

"On the 22nd of January, 1905, a body of peaceful unarmed men went to the Palace with a deputation from the strikers to ask for decent treatment and a chance of life, but the Czar hid and would not see them, and the soldiers fired and killed the men, women and children.

"There will be no necessity for Anarchists now for the Czar has multiplied them; he will not be forgiven, and there are thousands of Russians to-day ready to kill and be killed for their country.

"Admiral Togo has annihilated the Fleet, which is a crushing blow, and there is only one disaster left for Russia to suffer now, which is a well-organised, complete and bloody internal Revolution.

. . . . . .

"We were dining at Windsor Castle in November, 1905, two months before the General Election. After dinner Lord Farquhar, my husband, Mr.

* I remember the same futile remark "Law and Order first" being made about Russia then as is made about Ireland to-day. Belief in Force is what will always differentiate the Unionist Party from ours.

Chamberlain and General Oliphant went into the smoking-room, where they discussed the whole political situation. Henry told me about this talk; he said he had questioned the wisdom of the Government going for a General Election when everyone was saying the result would be defeat. At this Chamberlain said that, although we were sure to win, we could not last as our majority would not be independent of the Irish and that then his policy would triumph throughout the country.

"This appeared to Henry as it does to me an astonishing forecast. He was amazed and said:

" 'Well, my dear Chamberlain, I am not a betting man, but I am prepared to make you a small bet.' At that moment Lord Farquhar rushed into the room and said:

" 'Come along quick! The king!!' General Oliphant uttered an irreverent epithet, and they joined us in the tapestry room, where we had been standing first upon one leg and then upon the other ever since dinner.

"On the 8th (March, 1905) Winston Churchill brought in a private members' motion that 'This House was against Protective taxes on food as not promoting the unity of the Empire.'

"The Whips were in a wild state of fear lest the Government should be turned out as their majority had dwindled to 70.

"We dined in the House that night with Mr. Ernest Beckett,* our fellow-guests were Herbert Gladstone, John Morley, Harry Cust and Jack Poynder. Winston made an admirable, short and telling speech after dinner.

"Chamberlain's fire seems to have gone and his speech was dull. The House got impatient and shouted 'Time! Time!' as they wanted to hear Lord Hugh Cecil, Henry, and Arthur Balfour. I should think this has never happened before to Mr. Chamberlain.

"I wrote to Winston Churchill congratulating him on his speech and saying I was surprised that 12 of the Free Fooders had had the courage to vote with us; and this is his answer:

* The late Lord Grimthorpe.

March 9th 1905

105 MOUNT STREET,
W

Dear Mrs Asquith

Your letter is a kind
& I am delighted to hear
you were pleased.
You are wrong about the
Free Traders. No other
similar body of men would
have displayed such
consistency amid such
conflicting strains. I have
always considered Edgar V
quite sensible in his
line - tho I do not

agree with that view
& quite understand
that it does not
commend itself to
the liberal party
The world is not
made up of heroes
& heroines — luckily
or where would you
& I find our
backgrounds!

Yours ever sincerely

Winston S. C

From my diary, March, 1905.

"On the 30th of March (1905) I lunched at 10 Downing Street; Evelyn Rayleigh, Arthur Balfour, Alfred Lyttleton and Gerald Balfour were there. They looked profoundly harassed, and I wished I had not accepted Evelyn's invitation. Not wanting to mention politics I talked of Chesterton's new book on Watts (the artist). Arthur Balfour asked me absently if I meant Dr. Watts the hymn writer or the steam man, adding: 'By the way, he is Watt, I think.'

"We then got on to biography; Arthur said that Mommsen, Stubbs and Creighton thought Macaulay the greatest historian that had ever lived; I said that perhaps he was, but that he was a noisy writer, to which Arthur answered: 'If great knowledge and accuracy welded into a picturesque whole is the function of History, Macaulay can well lay claim to being the greatest.' Alfred Lyttleton quoted John Morley's remark about brass instruments, but that 'he missed the mystery of the strings.'

"Walter Long, who had taken no part in the conversation, got up saying that he had to go to the House of Commons and the party scattered.

. . . . . .

"There has been a keen correspondence on the late Lord Salisbury's views upon Protection. On March the 30th Mr. Chamberlain wrote to the *Times,* Lord Hugh Cecil, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, Henry and others following him.

"I am a witness of Sir Michael Hicks-Beach's account of his last talk to Lord Salisbury. He came to tea with me at 20 Cavendish Square, and said:

" 'You will never guess where I have been all this afternoon.' As I was unable to guess, he told me he had been at Hatfield saying farewell to his chief. Not knowing that Lord Salisbury was fatally ill I expressed my distress and asked how he was, to which Sir Michael replied:

" 'I never heard him talk better and nothing you can say, Mrs. Asquith, against the Chamberlain policy or methods is as strong as what Lord Salisbury said to me this afternoon. He told me he had at one time been rather bitten with Protection, but that he had come out on the other side. I said to him: "My dear Chief, you need not tell me this!" for I can assure you, Mrs. Asquith, that I had been very anxious at that time over Lord

Salisbury's marked want of orthodoxy, and I told him so.'

"In this conversation Beach went on to say that Retaliation was a more dangerous policy than Protection, but that as it was an impossibility he had ceased to consider it seriously.

"Remembering this talk vividly I thought Sir Michael's letter to the *Times* on the Salisbury controversy was too mild, and fearing that I had exaggerated what he had said to me in my diary I copied our conversation carefully out and enclosed it in a letter reminding him of his visit to me and asking him to tell me if I was right or wrong. He answered:

"'*April 7th,* 1905.

"'DEAR MRS. ASQUITH,

"'. . . You are quite right in your recollection of what I said to you in 1903.'

"Sir Michael Hicks-Beach came to see me in 20 Cavendish Square on the 11th of April, 1905. He was in low spirits, and said he thought at the General Election his Party would have a great smash, but that they might remain in over that Session. Among other things he said of Lord Salisbury:

April 7/1905

Dear Mrs Asquith

I have hardly been here at all this week – or you should have had an earlier answer.

I am very sorry that I cannot call on Thursday afternoon but the Budget will then be going on, and of course I am rather specially interested in it. If there was a chance of your being in on either Tuesday or Wednesday at 5, I should be very happy to come.

You are quite right in your recollection of what I said to you in 1903

"'My Chief had strong prejudices and strong convictions; I have never found either in Arthur Balfour.'

"We met Lord James of Hereford at the Cosmo Bonsors', where we went on July 22nd for a Sunday. He was as keen as a kite about Protection. 'The curse of cheapness' he said was a cry that filled him with amazement; it showed a depth of folly which roused his whole nature, and he ended an excellent talk by saying to me:

"'When your new Government comes in, Asquith can have whatever he likes.' I remember Dizzy pointing to Randolph Churchill and saying: 'He can have anything he asks for, and will soon make them take anything he will give them.'

"On the 27th of July, 1905, the Duke of Devonshire moved a resolution against food taxes in the House of Lords and was followed in the debate by Lord Robertson, a law lord of great eloquence, who said in a fine speech that he remembered 20 years ago he had followed a leader in the House of Commons whose name was also Arthur, but the Arthur Balfour whom he had followed with an enthusiastic admiration, which even after that lapse

of time he could never forget, was a leader whose 'Yea' was 'Yea' and whose 'Nay' was 'Nay.'

"On the 31st of July, 1905, Milner came to see me. He stayed for two hours and we had a memorable talk. In spite of not being quite a man of the world, he has great distinction, and after a short conversation you long to talk more to him. He is not a diplomatist nor has he much 'flair' about his fellow-men, but he has fascination of mind, and a character remarkable for its conscientiousness. He is both affectionate and truthful.

"He was in good spirits and pleased with Alfred Lyttleton's work in the Colonial Office on South Africa.

"He told me how strongly Mr. Chamberlain had opposed Chinese Labour, and that had it not been for Alfred's backing it could never have been carried.

"Whether from meeting men whose opinion he valued and who differed from him over Chinese Labour, or from what other reason I do not know, but he was not bitter, and was less disposed to think our Opposition a mere 'Party cry.'

"Peace between Russia and Japan had been

arranged under the patronage of President Roosevelt.

"Staying that autumn with my brother-in-law, Tom Duff, I met Randall Davidson,* who wrote for me the following rhyme upon Roosevelt composed by an American:

A wee bit of Lincoln but not very much of him,
A dash of Lord Cromer but only a touch of him,
Kitchener, Bismarck and Germany's 'Will,'
Chamberlain, Jupiter, Buffalo Bill.

. . . . . .

From my diary, November, 1905.

"The Unionist majority was getting shakier every day and the political situation developed rapidly. On Monday the 13th of November (1905), Henry came into my bedroom at Cavendish Square, where I was having my hair washed and told me that he had seen Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman.

"Hearing this I could not wait, but tying a towel round my head ran down to the library, where I sat down on one of the leather arm-chairs. Henry walked up and down the room and told me all he could remember of his talk with C.B.

* The Archbishop of Canterbury.

"He found him in his library in Belgrave Square looking at a newspaper called *The Week's Survey,* which he asked Henry if he had ever heard of.

"Henry replied that he had not. They then proceeded to discuss Russia and Germany. Henry was glad to find him sound on Germany. He dislikes the Kaiser and thinks him a dangerous, restless, mischief-making man.

"Suddenly he said that he thought things looked like coming to a head politically, and that any day after Parliament met we might expect a General Election. He gathered that he would probably be the man the King would send for, in which case he would make no phrases but would consent to form a Government.

"Henry said: 'C.B. then looked at me and said: "I do not think we have ever spoken of the future Liberal Government, Asquith? What would you like? The Exchequer, I suppose?"—I said nothing—"or the Home Office?" I said, "Certainly not." At which he said: "Of course, if you want legal promotion what about the Woolsack? No? Well then, it comes back to the Exchequer. I hear that it has been suggested by that ingenious person,

Richard Burdon Haldane,* that I should go to the House of Lords, a place for which I have neither liking, training nor ambition. In this case you would lead the House of Commons. While Lord Spencer was well and among us, nothing under Heaven would have made me do this! Nothing except at the point of the bayonet. Spencer and I talked it over, and he was quite willing that I should go to the House of Lords." '

"C.B. then went on to say what a generous fine old fellow Lord Spencer was, but that he feared he would never again be able to take office; should he, however, recover sufficiently, he might be in the Cabinet without a portfolio and asked Henry what he thought of the idea.

"I could see that the impression left upon Henry's mind while he was telling me of this conversation was that it would be with reluctance and even repugnance that Campbell-Bannerman would ever go to the House of Lords.

"C.B. then asked my husband whom he thought best fitted for the Home Office; to which Henry replied that that depended upon who would have the Woolsack, and added:

* Viscount Haldane of Cloan.

SIR EDWARD GREY
Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

SIR H. CAMPBELL BANNERMAN
Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury

THE RT. HON. H. H. ASQUITH
Chancellor of the Exchequer.

THE MARQUIS OF RIPON
Lord Privy Seal.

THE RT. HON. R. B. HALDANE
Secretary of State for War

THE EARL OF ELGIN
Secretary of State for the Colonies.

THE RT. HON. JOHN BURNS
President of the Local Government Board.

SIR ROBERT REID
Lord Chancellor.

THE RT. HON DAVID LLOYD GEORGE
President of the Board of Trade.

SIR HENRY CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN AND HIS CABINET, 1906

" 'For that, my dear C.B., there are only two possible people, Haldane or Reid,' * and went on to say that Reid had told him in past days that he did not fancy leaving the House of Commons, 'in which case,' Henry said, 'why not give him the Home Office and Haldane the Woolsack.'

"C.B. answered, 'Why not *vice versa*?'

"When Henry told me this—knowing as I do that Haldane had set his heart on being Lord Chancellor, I was reminded of George Eliot's remark, 'When a man wants a peach it is no good offering him the largest vegetable marrow,' but I merely said that I hoped Haldane would not stand out if Reid desired the Woolsack. He went on to tell me that C.B. had then said:

" 'There are two more delicate offices we've not mentioned, Asquith—the Colonial and the Foreign Office.'

"Henry said he thought Edward Grey † should have the Foreign Office; C.B. answered that he had considered Lord Elgin for this, but Henry was very strong upon Grey. He said that he was the *only* man, and that it was clear in his mind

* Lord Loreburn.
† Viscount Grey of Fallodon.

that Grey's appointment as Foreign Minister would be popular all over Europe. He expatiated at great length and convincingly on Grey's peculiar fitness for a post of such delicacy.

"C.B. said he wanted him for the War Office, but Henry told me—having been unshakable upon this point—he felt pretty sure that he had made an impression, as C.B. ultimately agreed that Lord Elgin would do well in the Colonial Office.

"Henry ended our talk by saying to me:

" 'I could see that C.B. had never before realised how urgently Grey is needed at the Foreign Office and I feel pretty sure that he will offer it to him.'

"I said Grey could fill with equal success at least six places in the Government, including a noble appearance as Viceroy of India."

[*End of Diary Quotation*]

Although possessed of many of the qualities for which he was deservedly popular, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman differed fundamentally from the public conception of him, and he was fortunate in having Mr. Balfour as a political foil; they not only fought with very different weapons, but, with the exception of fine manners, two men of more

THE OPENING MEET

The New Hunteman and First Whip.

Harrison Weir

SIR HENRY CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN AND MR. ASQUITH

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different type, temper, and training could not have been imagined.

"C.B." (as he was called) was as much stimulated as Mr. Balfour was irritated by his opponent, and, considering the inequality of their intellect, they made a fair duel. Sir Henry's patent sincerity constantly pierced the armour of Mr. Balfour's insolent detachment, and the Tories who took him to be a guileless person found themselves confronted by an unforeseen combination of pawkiness and courage.

No one can become Prime Minister of this country without having exceptional qualities; and, in spite of being easy-going to the point of laziness, Sir Henry had neither lethargy nor indifference. He recoiled from what was not straight, and had a swift and unerring insight into his fellow-men.

A certain lack of dignity prevented him from ever carrying much authority in the House of Commons, and he was always nervous about his health; but his modesty and good humour endeared him to all, and he was both loved and trusted.

As the principal characters concerned in the events that took place after the fall of the Balfour Ministry—Lord Grey, Lord Haldane and my hus-

band—are alive, I cannot write freely about them, but it is well known that Lord Grey and Lord Haldane wanted Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman to be Prime Minister in the House of Lords, and my husband to lead the Commons, and were loth to accept Office under any other arrangement, so I shall be betraying no secrets by writing of the discussions which took place over the matter.

It is difficult to imagine any of the prominent politicians of the present day showing the same qualities of straightness or simplicity that were shown by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, Edward Grey, and my husband in these transactions. Their behaviour would have been remarkable at any period; but writing as I am in the Autumn of 1921, when there is a lack of straightness, Statesmanship and manners in high places, it appears to me that those negotiations mark the end of the great political traditions of the 19th century.

On the 4th of December, 1905, the night before Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman kissed hands with King Edward, he had an interview with Sir Edward Grey, in which the latter had put his own situation with painful fidelity before him, and on

the morning of the 5th C.B. sent for Henry to talk things over before he went to the Palace.

I will here quote from my diary:

December 5th, 1905.

"On the 5th December, 1905, C.B. and Henry had a moving interview. *No* one could have been straighter and nicer than Campbell-Bannerman was to him. He told him of the talk he had had the night before with Sir Edward Grey. He spoke well of him, but said he was a regular Grey and had all the defects of his qualities. He added that he (C.B.) was well aware that Henry was better equipped to lead the House of Commons than he was; that he easily recognised this; but that, after standing all the stress and strain of the last few years, he did not wish people to say that he had run away when the pinch came—he could not bear the idea that anyone should think he was a coward.

"Henry answered that the position was almost too delicate and personal for them to discuss; but C.B. pressed him to say frankly everything that was in his mind. Henry pointed out what a fearful labour C.B. would find the combination of leading

the House and being Prime Minister, as they were practically two men's work; that no one could possibly accuse him of being a coward; that the House of Lords was without a leader, and that it was placing him (Henry) in a cruel and impossible position if under the circumstances Edward Grey refused to take Office; he was his dearest friend as well as supporter, and to join a Government without such a friend would be personal pain to him, as they had never worked apart from one another.

"Henry left after this as the King was to see Sir Henry at a quarter to eleven; he said he would return when C.B. had kissed hands. When they met after the interview C.B. told him His Majesty had been most amiable and expressed himself delighted at hearing he would undertake to form a Government. He warned him, however, by saying that being Prime Minister and leading the Commons at the same time would be heavy work, and added:

" 'We are not as young as we were, Sir Henry!'

"He suggested he should go to the House of Lords, to which C.B. seems to have answered that no doubt he would ultimately be obliged to do this, but that he would prefer starting in the Commons

if only for a short time. The King, instead of pushing the matter—which was what I would have liked—seemed to fall in very pleasantly with the idea and shook him warmly by the hand. Knowing that he ought to kneel and kiss hands, C.B. advanced and waited, but the King interrupted by some commonplace remark; when he had finished speaking, C.B. again advanced meaning to kneel, but the King only wrung his hand, at which he felt the interview was over, as to have had another try would have been grotesque. He retired from the presence of His Majesty to Lord Knollys's room and told him he feared he had never kissed hands at all, to which Lord Knollys replied that it did not matter, as he would see that it was properly published and in the right quarter the next day.

"When Henry had finished telling me all this I could see by his face how profoundly anxious he was. He had left C.B. saying that as the matter was one of vital importance to him personally it could not be settled in a day, and that he must be given time to think things over.

"On December the 6th, Violet and I went to Hatfield in the afternoon, and Henry arrived later on the same day. He went straight to his room,

where I joined him, and we talked for an hour before dressing for dinner. He told me that he had seen John Morley that day who had been wonderfully nice and clever throughout the troubles; that C.B. had spoken to him (Morley) at great length about Edward Grey, of his character and of their interview, and that Morley had ended by saying:

" 'C.B. is not a big man; he should either have ordered Grey out of the room after this, as Mr. Gladstone would have done, or accepted Grey's alternative suggestion.' C.B. had told John Morley how touched he had been at Henry's wonderful delicacy in presenting the case for him (C.B.) to go to the House of Lords.

"In this connection I may say Henry is always considerate; of course, this could hardly be a test case as he could not very well have asserted his superior qualities for the leadership, but Henry has sensibility for other people's feelings to a greater degree than anyone that I have ever known. He realises what will make for peace, and, having no vanity or wish to give his enemy a pat, he can deal with the most subtle situations as if they were of no personal interest to him. Edward Grey is not

only perfectly fearless but prides himself upon his own characteristics. He wants nothing for himself but would like Henry to lead the House of Commons and Haldane to be Lord Chancellor.

"Henry ended by telling me he had gone himself to see Grey after his conversation with Morley and had found him in an uncompromising three-cornered humour.

"That night at dinner at Hatfield, my husband looked worn out, and I admired him more than I could say for throwing himself into the social atmosphere of a fancy ball, with his usual simplicity and unselfcentredness.

"On Wednesday (the 6th of December) we motored to London. Henry went at once to see C.B. and Herbert Gladstone came to talk over the whole situation with me. Herbert told me that he himself had urged C.B. to go to the House of Lords and thus remove all difficulties; that he had impressed upon him how hard his father (Mr. Gladstone) had found combining the Office of Prime Minister and Leader of the House; but C.B. had answered that his wife was to arrive from Scotland at seven that night and that she would be the final

arbiter; at which Herbert had left him to come to me, feeling pretty sure that he *would* go to the Lords. Hearing that Herbert had been given the Admiralty I congratulated him and asked him if there would be any objection to Haldane going to the War Office since the Woolsack was disposed of by Reid's acceptance.

"I said that every soldier I had seen was keen upon his appointment. He did not answer this, but said he had heard nothing definite about the Admiralty for himself; and after this he left me.

"Herbert Gladstone is not only one of the straightest, best, and most loyal of men, but one of the companions of my early youth, and knew me before any of my other friends.

"I returned to Hatfield that evening where Henry joined me. He was much moved in relating what had occurred that day. In view of Edward Grey's difficulty in joining the Government he had done what he never thought possible—he had been to C.B. and made a great personal appeal to him.

"Henry (to me): 'I said, "It is no use going over the ground again, my dear C.B. I make a personal appeal to you, which I've never done be-

fore; I urge you to go to the House of Lords and solve this difficulty." I could see that C.B. was moved, but he repeated what you tell me he said to Herbert Gladstone about the arrival of his wife, and that he wished her to be the final arbiter; with which our interview ended.'

"The next evening at Hatfield (7th of December) when Henry arrived I saw at a glance that it was all up. He told me that C.B. had said to his secretary, Sinclair,* that morning at breakfast that he had had a talk with his lady the night before, and that she had said:

" '*No surrender.*'

" 'I don't often make up my mind, Sinclair, but I've done it now—I shan't go to the Lords.'

"After Sinclair had told him this Henry went to see C.B.

"HENRY (to me): 'He looked white and upset and began like a man who, having taken the plunge, meant to make the best of it. He spoke in a rapid, rather cheerful and determined manner: "I'm going to stick to the Commons, Asquith, so will you go and tell Grey he may have the Foreign Office and Haldane the War Office." '

* Lord Pentland.

December 8th, 1905.

"We left Hatfield the next day, and, opening the *Times* in the train, read that Sir Edward Grey had definitely refused to join the Government.

"On arriving at 20 Cavendish Square we seized our letters.

"Henry had a line from Haldane:

"'*7th December,* 1905.

"'My dear A.,

"'I have talked the question over with E.G. and have induced him to reconsider his position as regards taking the F.O. He is to see C.B. in the morning.

"'My decision will follow his after he has seen C.B.

"'Ever yours affectly,

"'R. B. H.'

"After reading this Henry left me and went to see Lord Haldane. At 12 o'clock Herbert Gladstone came into my boudoir, his face shining with happiness; he opened his arms and said:

"'It's all right, Margot!'

"'Not possible!' I exclaimed.

"Herbert: 'Yes—Grey and Haldane are both

in and the two men that deserve gold medals are Spender * and Acland.' †

"Herbert could hardly speak of Henry's conduct throughout the whole anxious week without emotion, and ended by saying:

" 'You have done nobly throughout, Margot, and I've been much struck by your wisdom and generosity.' At which I burst into tears.

"So we were all in, and not *one* of us had got what we wanted! I sent a telegram to Louis Mallet‡ at the Foreign Office, which I had promised to do:

" 'Settled Maria'; and this is his answer:

" 'Thank you and God. Suspense awful. Mallet.'

"The Foreign Office adore Edward Grey and were in a state of trembling anxiety lest he should stand out. Both Reggie Lister § and Louis Mallet had made me promise to wire to them the moment I knew of Grey's final decision. I suggested that 'Maria' would be a wiser signature than 'Margot.'

* Mr. Alfred Spender, the editor of the *Westminster Gazette.*
† Mr. Arthur Acland, who was Minister of Education.
‡ Sir Louis Mallet.
§ The late Hon. Reginald Lister.

"This is what Grey wrote in answer to a line from me:

"'FALLODON,

"'*December* 11*th*, 1905.

"'DEAR MRS. ASQUITH,

"'My bolt is shot. . . . As to the Government, the only declarations of Policy which count are those of the Prime Minister; having entered his Government my statements will be in line with his as long as I am in it.

"'There is no difficulty about this, for my views as to what should be done in the next Parliament are not different from his, but he must state them in his own way.

"'Yours sincerely,

"'E. GREY.'

"On the 11th of December (1905) our new Ministry was published in all the papers. I looked down the list and my eye rested upon:

"'*Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Asquith.*'

"On the 12th I went to see my father and found him far from well, which filled me with sadness. He asked me how I liked the idea of going to 11 Downing Street and letting my own house. I told

IN BATTLE ARRAY.

THE OUTGOING OF THE CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT

Reproduced by kind permission of the "Westminster Gazette"

him that I would either have to farm out my own, or my stepchildren, as there was no room for both a nursery and a schoolroom at No. 11.

"He was most dear and generous and said that he would pay us the rent which we hoped to get for 20 Cavendish Square to enable us to live there, and in consequence we have lent 11 Downing Street to the Herbert Gladstones, who have no London house.

"On the 21st of December I received a letter from Lord Hugh Cecil, in which he says:

" 'The new Government makes a good show, better than the late one; the weak spot in this Government is the Prime Minister, in the last it was the one strong point. I don't think you have lost much by taking office. My guess is that your party will come back 230—giving you a majority of about 40 over us and the Irish together.'

. . . . . .

January 8th, 1906.

"On January the 8th Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's election address was published in the papers. It was quite good, but not as striking as Robespierre's which I read the other day:

"'Our purpose is to substitute morality for egoism, honesty for honour, principles for usages, duties for proprieties, the empire of reason for the tyranny of fashion; dignity for insolence, nobleness for vanity, love of glory for the love of lucre, good people for good society, merit for intrigue, genius for brilliance, the charm of contentment for the satiety of pleasure, the majesty of man for noble lineage, a magnanimous, powerful and happy people for an amiable, frivolous and wretched people: that is to say every virtue of a Republic that will replace the vices and absurdities of a Monarchy.'

"On Sunday the 14th we heard that Arthur Balfour's seat and all the others at Manchester had been won by Liberals, and after that I knew that we were safe.

"The results of the General Election were that the Liberals had an immense majority—Liberals 379—Labour 51—Nationalists 83—Unionists 155.

"I won £150 in bets that I had taken with Edgar Vincent,* Jack Poynder† and others the week of Chamberlain's first speech on Protection, made on the 15th of May, 1903, as I prophesied that the whole country would revolt against any such folly.

"I congratulated Mr. Chamberlain on his gains in Birmingham, and he answered me in this letter:

* Lord D'Abernon. † Lord Islington.

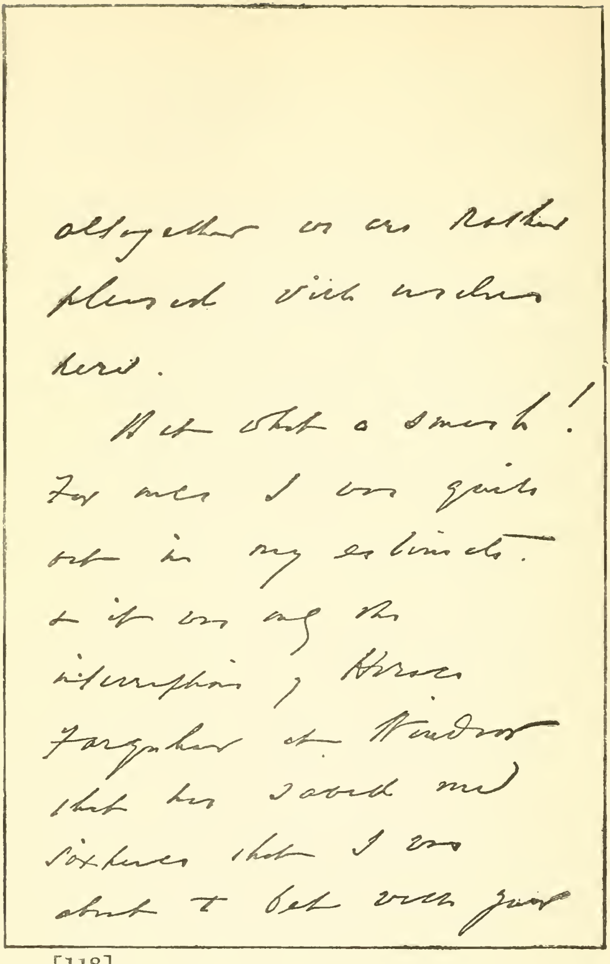
TELEGRAMS TO KINGSHEATH.

Highbury.
Moor Green,
Birmingham.

Jan. 23. 06

My dear Mr. Asquith

You at least have
the magnanimity the
others; which I thought
I detected in our friend
Prime Minister. Many
thanks for your congratu-
lations. We have won.
All today in Handsworth
& in Austin's division, &


altogether as an Author
pleased with useless
merit.
But what a smash!
For once I was quite
out in my estimates.
& it was only the
interruption of Horace
Farquhar at Windsor
that has saved me
sixpences that I was
about to bet with you

has been against his having a majority over the Irish.

Well! we shall see what we shall see. Your Coach has about 12 horses & will require skilful driving.

You are quite right in saying that I agreed with you that every week or day in after the end of 1903 cost us many votes — but even then I did

not anticipate the labour
controversy

It is also very interesting

Believe me

Yours very truly

J Chamberlain

"When the final figures of the Elections were published everyone was stunned, and it certainly looks as if it were the end of the great Tory party as we have known it.

"In discussing the results of this amazing General Election with Henry, I said that Balfour's and Chamberlain's minds were too different ever to work well together, and that it had been an unfortunate alliance. He answered: 'Joe drives further, but Arthur beats him at the short game.'

" 'It ought to have been the strongest of combinations,' I said; to which he replied:

" 'Unfortunately they have both been in a bunker for the last three years.'

"The Press published a correspondence expressing divided opinions as to the reasons of the smash. Half the letters said that the Elections were not fought on Fiscal Reform, and the other half dwelt upon the unsatisfactory Leadership of the Unionist Party. Mr. A. Gibbs gave up his seat to Arthur Balfour in the City, which he accepted, and then the scrimmage began! the *Morning Post*ites and other papers of the same complexion loudly protesting against the future Opposition being led by Balfour unless he accepted the full Chamberlain

policy. On February the 8th, Lord Ridley received a letter from Mr. Chamberlain, which he published in the *Times*. At the end of it he said:

" 'You will see by this long letter that there is no question of repudiating the leadership of Mr. Balfour or of putting undue pressure upon him to abandon his opinions or his friends. On the other hand Tariff Reformers sincerely believe in their principles, and cannot expect to put them aside to suit the exigencies of party wire-pullers. They are ready to work with their Unionist colleagues for common objects, but they cannot accept a policy of inaction and mystification with regard to the main object of their political life, convinced as they are that in the acceptance of a full measure of Tariff Reform lies the best hope for the future success of the party.'

"A meeting of the Unionist party was held immediately after this at Lansdowne House.

. . . . . .

February, 1906.

"Letters from Mr. Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain appeared simultaneously in the papers of the 15th (February, 1906), in which the former for the

first time announced that he was in favour of a tax upon food:

"'The establishment of a moderate general tariff on manufactured goods, not imposed for the purpose of raising prices or giving artificial protection against legitimate competition, and the imposition of a small duty on foreign corn.'

"When I read this in the *Times* of that morning I felt sad. It is always unwise to prophesy how long a party in Parliament with such a vast majority as ours will last; complications are sure to arise, and with the German Emperor in his present temper even war might break out; but one prophecy I will make and that is that Arthur Balfour is politically finished. His brain will be glorious in Opposition, a feast of intellectual fun and retort, but as a political power he is a spent force.

"I went to the Leo Rothschilds' for the week-end, leaving Henry to dine with the King. He joined me on the Sunday.

"The Edgar Vincents, Maguires, Dick Cavendishes and Duke of Devonshire were there. Mrs. Leo is an alert, clever hostess and her husband has a sweet and generous nature. All the Rothschilds are angels of kindness and keen about politics.

"Leo spoke to me strongly about South Africa; he thought Henry's speech on the 24th had been too severe upon the question of the Chinese and that we should shake the confidence of the country by not guaranteeing enough Labour, or safeguarding the loyal vote of our new Constitution.

February 26th, 1906.

"Henry's speech had made a considerable sensation not only among the Opposition but among some of our own people who had shares in the South African mines." *

"On February the 26th I went down to hear Lord Milner's maiden speech upon South Africa in the House of Lords. It lacked grandeur and flexibility and left me with a feeling of dryness.

* Writing now, it is difficult to remember the violent opposition that there was to Henry's South African Constitution. People said then as they say about Ireland to-day: "How can you trust an avowed enemy of England?" There were as many conflicting parties in South Africa at that time as there are in Ireland to-day and a much smaller majority for self-government in the country governed. There had been a war in which 22,450 of our men had been killed, and after this to give the Boers back their freedom seemed unthinkable to the average mind. People who came to see me said their sons had died in vain if we granted freedom to the Boers. The same silly things were said then that are said now. It appears to be a belief common to human nature that War is a failure unless the Peace declared after it is inspired by Revenge or Fear; I observed it in 1906 and it has been painfully evident all over the world since the Armistice of 1918. There is no limit to the powers of self-deception in human beings, and the belief that you can wage war to end war is as erroneous as the illusion that keeping a large army will preserve peace.

Bitter as he may feel he should have avoided the past, and delivered his warning with the authority of a great experience, instead of which what he said was neither wise nor temperate.

"If there was a good case for the Boer War it was indifferently put and I doubt if a single nation understood it.

"Our Government will doubtless have to pursue its own course and cleanse the whole thing up without listening to anybody.* They will have the Press and the West End of London as well as the masses of the big and small shareholders against them, and create a bitterness of feeling which will hardly be allayed in my lifetime, but the country will be built up slowly and will gradually emerge strong and stable.

. . . . . .

"I felt annoyed that the first thing that happened in the new Government was a Vote of Censure upon Lord Milner by a member of the rank and file, to which our front bench moved an amendment saying that though they disapproved of flogging

* Lord Kitchener when saying good-bye to me before going to India said:

"Well, Mrs. Asquith, I have finished with South Africa, but I will give a word of advice to anyone who has to deal with it in the future: If you listen to the Loyalists you are done."

in the mines we objected strongly to the censuring of individuals. Though this amendment was carried by a large majority, it was moved by Winston in an ungenerous, patronising and tactless speech. Milner had already acknowledged and regretted the flogging of Chinamen, and what Winston said is calculated to hurt and offend everyone.

"Milner came to see me on the 28th of March, and we had a long talk; he was wonderfully nice and absolved us from what was more than a regrettable Parliamentary incident. I watched him as he sat upon the sofa with his mild, slightly donnish eyes, narrow rather bureaucratic views, fine character and distinguished address, and wondered what it was that had produced the violence of his mind; as an intellectual machine it appears to be as good as Arthur Balfour's, but there is something out of drawing with his judgment. He has got it on the brain that we shall lose South Africa, and everything that he writes and says upon the subject points to the idea that if you wish to maintain British supremacy you must encourage hate.

"I went to the House of Lords to hear the debate inaugurated by Lord Halifax as a counterblast to Winston's foolish attack upon Milner. Lord Lore-

burn made a remarkable speech; the House of Lords suits him far better than the House of Commons.

"Mr. Hilaire Belloc wrote the following poem, which he dedicated to Lord Halifax:

VERSES TO A LORD WHO, IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS, SAID THAT THOSE WHO OPPOSED THE SOUTH AFRICAN ADVENTURE CONFUSED SOLDIERS WITH MONEY-GRUBBERS

You thought because we held, my lord,
An ancient cause and strong,
That therefore we maligned the sword:
My lord, you did us wrong.

We also know the sacred height
Up on Tugela side,
Where those three hundred fought with Beit
And fair young Wernher died.

The daybreak on the failing force,
The final sabres drawn:
Tall Goltman, silent on his horse,
Superb against the dawn.

The little mound where Eckstein stood
And gallant Albu fell,

And Oppenheim, half blind with blood
Went fording through the rising flood—
My lord, we know them well.

The little empty homes forlorn,
The ruined synagogues that mourn,
In Frankfort and Berlin;
We know them when the peace was torn—
We of a nobler lineage born—
And now by all the gods of scorn
We mean to rub them in.

"The Winston-Byles debate over Milner filled me with dejection. I do not see Henry's chance in this House of Commons under Campbell-Bannerman in spite of our huge majority. The fluctuating mind and uninspiring personality of our Prime Minister cannot impress others and is not easily impressed.

. . . . . .

June, 1906.

"On the 3rd of June we were staying at Littlestone-on-Sea when I received a letter from my father written from Broadoaks, Weybridge, and on the 6th I heard of his death.

"He was buried in Traquair Kirk on the 8th and we all travelled up from London the night before for the funeral.

"We arrived at Innerleithen Station on a characteristic Peebleshire morning—misty, pearly and windless, and followed the coffin at a foot's pace in covered carriages along the winding road leading to Traquair. My mother, Jack's wife, Helen, Laura and her little son, and all of us are buried in Traquair. I have knelt many times in the dark and said my prayers without disturbing the lambs huddled against the cross of Laura's grave and I love the churchyard. It is away from the noise of life, guarded by the Yarrow and the Tweed, and surrounded by the beckoning hills. I wondered as we stood by the open tomb that morning which of us would die next, and whether I would be buried in Traquair."

[*End of Diary Quotation*]

CHAPTER V

NUMBER 10 DOWNING STREET—PORTRAIT OF JOHN MORLEY—WITH KING EDWARD AND HIS QUEEN AT WINDSOR—LAUNCHING OF THE H.M.S. *Collingwood*

I WILL here quote from my diary.

"On the 27th of March, 1908, Henry came into my room at 7.30 p.m. and told me that Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman had sent for him that day to tell him that he was dying. They had talked for over an hour, and Henry's voice shook as he repeated their conversation to me.

"C. B. began by telling him the text he had chosen out of the Psalms to put on his grave, and the manner of his funeral. He was resigned and even cheerful, but after a little while with his strong immovability he turned the subject deliberately on to material things, flimsy matters, such as patronage, titles and bishops, etc.

"He said that he had had a visit from the Archbishop of Canterbury which had given him great

pleasure, and that one of the things Randall Davidson had said that had profoundly pleased him was, 'You are leaving us at a time when your name will be associated with the greatest measure * that any Party has ever brought forward in the Government of this or of any other country.' He looked at Henry steadily and added:

" 'I have no illusions, Asquith; I know that the credit for this is yours, but we have talked it over many times together!'

"I told Henry I thought it wonderful that Randall Davidson should have said just what he did; including C.B. in a movement that had required so much courage and provoked so much attack when the power of life was slowly leaving him, showed a true and feeling mind.

"Henry was deeply moved when he went on to tell me that Campbell-Bannerman had thanked him for being a wonderful colleague.

" 'So loyal, so disinterested and so able.'

"At this I put my arms round his shoulder and we cried together. He continued:

" 'C.B. all but broke down, and after struggling

* The South African Constitution.

10. Downing Street,
Whitehall. S.W.

April. 5. 1908.

Dear Mr. Asquith

Sir Henry desires me to let you know that he has been reluctantly compelled, owing to the State of his Health, to tender his resignation

to the King, and that
His Majesty has, in
the circumstances, been
graciously pleased to
accept it.

Sir Henry writes me
at the same time to
express his regret that

he has not been able
to tell you sooner of
his decision to resign.
but he felt it incumbent
upon him first to
ascertain whether his
resignation at this
moment would harmonize

with His Majesty's
Convenience

Yours very truly
Vaughan Nash

I send this to show what
has been sent round
by your Whisperer.

with a few brave tears said as I got up to leave the room:

" ' "This is not the last of me; we will meet again, Asquith." '

"John Morley told Henry that when he had seen Campbell-Bannerman the latter had said to him:

" 'Morley, you and I have not always seen eye to eye with Asquith, but we have never served with a greater gentleman.'

"A few days after this a new doctor was called in to No. 10, who told his patient that it would relieve him physically if he were to retire, and on Thursday, the 2nd of April, C.B. sent his letter of resignation to the King. He had felt too well at first to think that this was necessary, and he had become too ill later on for anyone to suggest it to him. The last time he saw Henry he said:

" 'You are different from the others, Asquith, and I am glad to have known you. God bless you!'

"The situation had become critical both for Henry and the Cabinet; the public was all agog and the House of Commons had degenerated into a gossip shop.

"Sir Arthur Godley * wrote this letter to me:

* Lord Kilbracken.

" 'MILNEY LODGE, FARNBOROUGH, HANTS,
" '29*th of March*, 1908.

" 'MY DEAR MARGOT,

" '. . . What a strange weird time this is for all who are directly or indirectly concerned in politics! John Morley described to me yesterday a visit he had paid to C.B. most interesting; you can imagine how well J.M. would tell it. Meanwhile I am reminded of a passage in one of Sydney Smith's essays: "The sloth spends its life in trees" (he is reviewing a book on Natural History) "but what is most extraordinary he lives not *upon* the branches, but *under* them. He moves suspended, eats suspended, and passes his life in suspense like a young clergyman distantly related to a Bishop." Such is the situation of the Liberal Party at the present moment.

" 'Ever yours affectionately,

" 'ARTHUR GODLEY.'

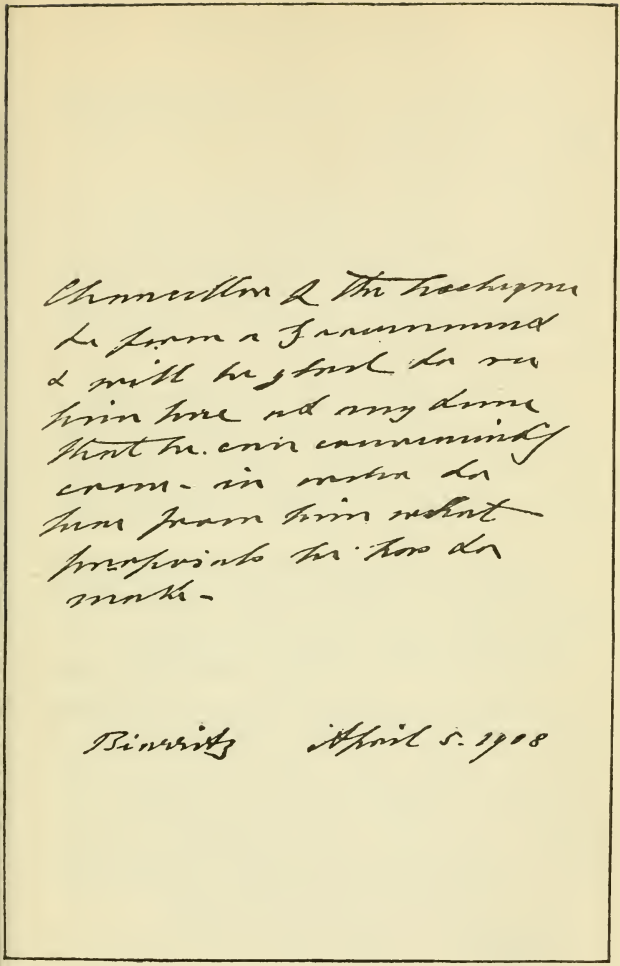
"Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's resignation having been accepted we expected to hear at any moment from the King.

"At five o'clock in the evening of Sunday, the 6th of April, 1908, my husband received this letter from King Edward, and he left the same night for Biarritz.

The King has received a letter from the Prime Minister tendering his resignation of the important posts he occupies owing to the very precarious state of his health & also by the advice of the Medical men who are attending him.

Under these circumstances the King regrets that he has no other alternative but to accept the resignation and has summoned Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman to that effect.

The King recalls in the



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"Miss Mahaffy was staying with us at the time and we dined early. In the course of conversation Henry said to me:

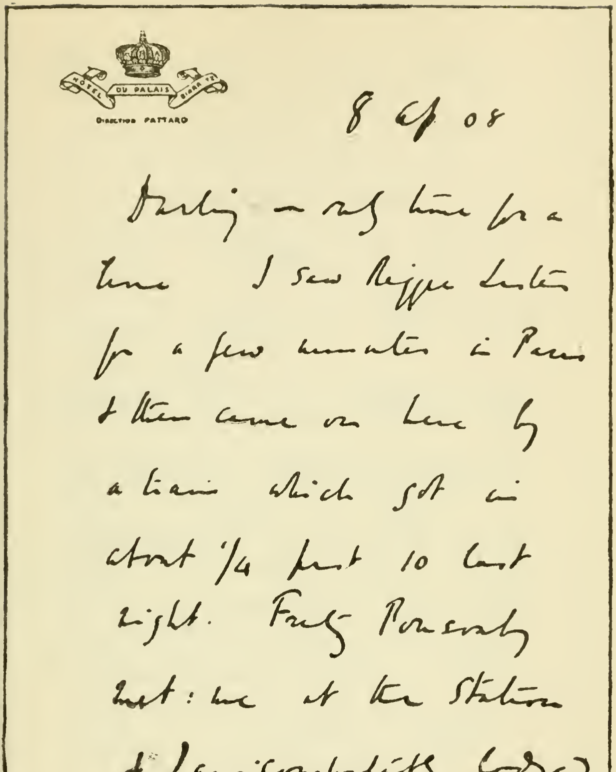
" 'Puffin * has the best manners of any of my children. I dream every night of my life as you know, and last night I dreamt that as I walked into the room I heard baby say, "I don't like old men," and seeing me he added, "I hope you don't think this applies to you, father." '

"Not feeling well enough to go to the station we parted on the doorstep and he waved to me out of the motor as it disappeared round the corner of the Square. On the 8th I received a wire from Biarritz:

" 'Have just kissed hands; back Friday, ask Grey to dinner. Bless you. H.' And on the 10th (April, 1908) I met him at Charing Cross.

"There was a dense crowd outside the station, and a large one on the platform. I shook hands with a few waiting friends, and observed a thousand Pressmen taking notes. When at last the train came in and room was made for me, I greeted Henry, and arm in arm we walked to our open motor, bowing through the crush of people all mad

* My son Anthony, who was then five and a half.



8 Ap 08

Darling — only time for a line. I saw Reggie Lister for a few minutes in Paris & then came on here by a train which got in about 1/4 past 10 last night. Freddy Ponsonby met me at the Station & I am completely lodged in the King's hotel.

This morning I put on

a frock coat, and escorted
by Fritz & old Stanley Clarke
went to the King who was
similarly attired. I presented
him with a written resignation
of the Office of Chr of the Exr,
& he then said 'I appoint
you P. M. & 1st Lord of the
Treasury' whereupon I knelt
down & kissed his hand.
Voilà tout!

He then asked me to
come into the next room
& breakfast with him

We were quite close for
an hour & I went over
all the appointments with
him. He made no objection
to any of them and discussed
the various men very freely
& with a good deal of
shrewdness.
I am going to dine in his
company at Mrs Cassel's
villa to-night. The
weather here is vile beyond
description, pouring rain.

& plenty of wind. I leave
at 12 noon to-morrow (Thursday)
& arrive Charing Cross 5.12
Friday afternoon. You
will no doubt arrange
about dinner that
evening — Love
Ever yours

Edward R. & I.

KING EDWARD VII

with enthusiasm, some even throwing flowers at us.

"We drove to 10 Downing Street, and I waited outside while Henry went in to enquire after Campbell-Bannerman.

"The street was empty, and but for the footfall of a few policemen there was not a sound to be heard.

"I looked at the dingy exterior of No. 10 and wondered how long we should live in it.

"Leaning back I watched the evening sky reflected in the diamond panes of the Foreign Office windows, and caught a glimpse of green trees. The door opened and the Archbishop came out.

"The final scene in a drama of Life was being performed in that quiet by-street. The doctor * going in and the priest coming out; and as I reflected on the dying Prime Minister I could only hope that no sound had reached him of the crowd that had cheered his successor.

. . . . . .

"On the 29th of April, 1908, a Party Meeting was held in the Reform Club to endorse Henry's Prime Ministership, at which the following resolution was moved:

* Sir Thomas Barlow.

" 'That this meeting of representatives of the Liberal Party in Parliament and the country most warmly welcomes the Right Hon. H. H. Asquith on his accession to the high post of First Minister of the Crown; expresses its ardent confidence that his strong sense in council, power in debate, and consummate mastery of all the habit and practice of public business are destined to carry triumphantly forward the good causes to which the Liberal Party is committed and the solid principles which it exists to supply and enforce; and it assures him and the Government of the unbroken continuance of loyal, steadfast, and zealous support in the many stout battles for the common good that now, as always, confront the Liberal Party and its leaders.'

"Henry admired the wording of this resolution so much that after showing it to me he asked me to guess who had written it. I told him that I had no idea; my mind was a blank.

"He said it was the finest compliment he had ever had paid to him, and added:

" 'There is only one of our fellows I think who could have done it. It is obvious to me that John Morley wrote it.' It turned out that he was right."

[*End of Diary Quotation*]

April 6 / 08.

38: Berkeley Square: W.

My dear Asquith.

I must send you a line of hearty congratulation on the official announcement of today, and of sincere wishes for continued success. My prophecy of 1896 is at length accomplished. But it was so obvious and easy that I only feel the intellectual complacency

of a new Prophet!

Yours

N

Don't think of answering this.

May 5th, 1908.

When we moved into 10 Downing Street on the 5th of May, I could not help a feeling of sadness as I am faithful to a fault and sensitively sentimental about my home. All the colour, furniture, grates, curtains, and every chair, table, and rug in Cavendish Square I had chosen myself. Houses like people should be individual, and though it is better to talk of a Queen Anne, Elizabethan, Jacobean or Georgian house than Sindlay, Lenygon, or Maple, I want people who come into a room to say this is "Frances Horner," "Annie Tennant," "Margot Asquith" or any of the people of taste.

Rich men's houses are seldom beautiful, rarely comfortable, and never original. It is a constant source of surprise to people of moderate means to observe how little a big fortune contributes to Beauty.

You may go to a house in which all that you are shown is priceless. You spend your day with fellow-guests in a chorus of praise touring till you are tired looking at pictures that are numbered, books that are autographed, furniture which is dated, and bronzes that are signed. Your host swallows with complacency in a circular smile all that is said, while

punctuating the pauses with complaints of his own poverty.

"God knows!" he will say with a smile and a shrug, "how long any of us will be able to keep anything."

And the company is shocked when you suggest that the contents if sold of a single vitrine would square his bank-book.

You risk bursting a blood-vessel after dinner if you pull up a tapestry chair, and the beauty of the brocade is scant consolation when you retire to bed, for bells that bring no one, and lights by which you cannot read. It is a sure sign of lack of imagination if you do not make your guests comfortable, and money has never yet bought imagination.

It is the general atmosphere, colour and arrangement that makes a house beautiful, and there was little of this to console me in my new home.

10 Downing Street ought to be as well known in London as the Marble Arch or the Albert Memorial, but it is not. Although I lived there from April, 1908, till December, 1916, I nearly always had to tell my driver the way. I was taken to Down Street, Piccadilly, when I was sleepy or unobservant; or there was a risk of the children and

umbrellas being thrown into the streets by the taxi-man opening the door suddenly from his seat and asking me where Downing Street was.

This historic house is in a quiet cul-de-sac off Whitehall and of such diffident architecture that the most ardent tourist would scarcely recognise it again.

Knowing as it did every Cabinet secret, and what was going on all over the world, I could not but admire the reserve with which 10 Downing Street treated the public. Even the Press while trying to penetrate the Prime Minister's heart was unable to divulge the secret of his home.

Liver-coloured and squalid, the outside of No. 10 gives but little idea to the man in the street of what it is really like.

Having been intimate with four Prime Ministers—Gladstone, Rosebery, Balfour and Campbell-Bannerman—I thought I knew what in the sixties was called "the Prime Minister's lodgings" pretty well; but when we went to live there I found I was wrong.

It is an inconvenient house with three poor staircases, and after living there a few weeks I made up my mind that owing to the impossibility of circula-

tion I could only entertain my Liberal friends at dinner or at garden parties.

Having no bump of locality, soon after our arrival, I left the drawing-room by one of the five doors and found myself in the garden instead of the hall. By the help of mildly lit telephones and one of the many messengers, I retraced my steps through a long and sepulchral basement, but I began to regret the light and air of my deserted home in Cavendish Square.

I will quote a sentence that I wrote in my diary about Number 10:

"I never knew what prevented anyone coming into this house at any moment: some would say after lunching with us that nothing had. There was a hall porter who looked after our interests when visitors arrived, but he was over-anxious and appeared flurried when spoken to. Poor man, he was never alone; he sat in his hooded chair, snatching pieces of cold mutton at odd hours; tired chauffeurs shared his picture paper, and strange people —not important enough to be noticed by a secretary or a messenger—sat watching him on hard sills in the windows; or, if he were left for a moment, the baize doors would fly open and he would

find himself faced by me, seeing a parson, a publican or a protectionist out of the house.

"But our porter was not a strong man, and any determined Baronet with hopes of favours to come about the time of the King's birthday could have penetrated into Number 10."

[*End of Diary Quotation*]

The Board of Works, an admirably run office, and Lionel Earlet—the most assiduous and capable of Civil servants as well as our excellent friend—set to work upon the house, and we were soon comfortably installed in it. The large garden was a joy to us, although a London garden is more delightful in theory than in practice. All my dresses were either torn or dirtied by disentangling Anthony's aeroplanes from the sooty shrubs; but the green trees and large spaces after the traffic of our Square were infinitely restful.

I amused King Edward by asking him one day if he would allow me to shoot some of his peacocks in St. James's Park as their Spring screams disturbed my early sleep.

The ivied wall was also a danger, and several of our Colleagues told me with what anxiety they

had watched the athletic feats of my little son, which they could see from the windows of the Cabinet room.

Things started well for us in Parliament, and Henry's Colleagues were a perpetual study. Their moral and intellectual stature, as well as their appearances, manners and habits became extremely familiar to me, nor can I say I was far out in any of the predictions I made then upon their characters.

When John Morley heard that Winston Churchill was reading the lives of Napoleon he said:

"He would do better to study the drab heroes of life. Framing oneself upon Napoleon has proved a danger to many a man before him."

He said this to me in a memorable talk soon after my husband became Prime Minister.

We were sitting in the garden at Flowermead discussing men and things. He spoke of his youth and how he had met Mrs. Morley first at a students' ball. We spoke of his early intellectual heroes—John Stuart Mill, Meredith and Carlyle.

"One day," he said, "I asked Carlyle what Mrs. John Stuart Mill had been really like, to which he

answered: 'She was full of unwise intellect, asking and re-asking stupid questions.' "

We then got on to the different gods that men worship and I told him that Arthur Balfour once said to me:

"If there is no future life this world is a bad joke! and whose joke?"

Although he is neither humble nor penitent, John Morley is a religious man who does not finish God in a phrase. He fights, gropes and aspires; he is never dry or smug but always tender, humorous and understanding, and there is nothing fine that does not appeal to his feeling mind. I was glad that his peerage had made no stir. It is a far cry from "Honest John" to "Viscount Morley of Blackburn," but it excited no criticism. He is not only the most distinguished living Englishman, but a natural aristocrat. My husband called him a man of moods, but he is also a man of courage, sensitive to a fault, and responsive as a woman. An artist in conversation he can talk about himself without being self-centred. He is never obvious or predictable, and although easily flattered is an encouraging companion, as he can quote what you have said in former conversations if it has struck him

July 22 08.

India Office.
Whitehall S W

Yes — "love and frank and understanding." Those words of yours exactly hit the mark. I was a little jarred when you came. When you went I was stimulated and refreshed more than I can say.

I never keep my own MS. I don't believe I've

a single scrap. All my life
I've been rather improvident
of sacred mementoes.

Yours Affectionately

[illegible]

"The noblest a soul is, the more
objects of Compassion it hath."

Bacon.

as sound, and always responds to what is new or witty. I can truly say I would rather talk to him than to anyone I have ever met.

When we left the garden and went into his library he showed me Bacon's saying inscribed in stone upon his mantelpiece: "The nobler a soul the more objects of compassion it hath."

After he had given me tea, I told him that Henry had appreciated the fine wording of the Resolution at the Party meeting that week, and had without difficulty guessed its authorship; this touched him visibly. We said good-bye to each other and with his usual affectionate courtesy he saw me off from the front door.

. . . . . .

I paid my first visit to Windsor Castle that year (June 20th, 1908), for though Henry had already been there and I had attended the big banquets I had never stayed in the Castle before.

You must be rather stupid or easily bewildered if you do not enjoy staying at Windsor Castle. There is something there for every taste; fine food and drinks, fine pictures, fine china, fine books, comfort and company.

I will quote what I wrote in my diary of this visit:

Windsor Castle, June 20th, 1908.

"On the 20th of June, 1908, we motored Violet * to the garden party at Windsor, and after sending her back to London we walked up to the Castle. We turned in at the Lancastrian archway and were greeted by Sir Charles Frederick. Before going to rest, having been told that dinner was at 15 to 9, I examined the Prime Minister's apartments. They consist of two bedrooms, with marble baths attached to each; and a small sitting-room with large windows looking out upon the park. Hanging on a shiny grey and white wall-paper are indifferent portraits of Gladstone, Peel, Lord Cross, Melbourne and Disraeli. We found flowers on the tables and every kind of newspaper laid out for us to read.

"I wore a Parma-violet satin dress for dinner with long silver sashes and a kind of loose netting over the skirt; and at twenty minutes to nine Henry and I walked along the circular corridor gazing at the pictures as we passed the vermilion servants.

* Lady Bonham Carter.

Photograph by Princess Victoria

LORD MORLEY AND MRS. ASQUITH AT WINDSOR

"I was taken in to dinner by my friend the Marquis de Soveral, the cleverest foreigner I have ever met, and I may say a remarkable man in any country.

"We assembled in a large uninteresting room—the ladies standing upon one side and the men upon the other while we awaited the entrance of the King.*

"The Castle party consisted of Gladys de Grey,† Alice Keppel,‡ Lady Savile, Lady Lowther and her husband, the Turkish Ambassador, John Morley, Edward Grey and Count Mensdorff.§

"The King and Queen were in high spirits and more than gracious to us. She looked divine in a raven's wing dress, contrasting with the beautiful blue of the Garter ribbon and her little head a blaze of diamonds.

"She chaffed me about the Suffragettes who had been pursuing us with true feminine and monotonous malignity.

"After dinner we played bridge—Grey and I,

* King Edward.
† Late Marchioness of Ripon.
‡ The Hon. Mrs. George Keppel.
§ The late Austrian Ambassador.

Mensdorff and Sir Gerald Lowther—while Henry played with the Queen; and the King made a four with Alice Keppel, Lady Savile and the Turkish Ambassador.

"I am always happy with Sir Edward Grey and have a deep affection for him. His reality, thoughtfulness, and freedom from pettiness give him true distinction. He is unchangeable and there is something lonely, lofty and even pathetic about him which I could not easily explain.

"On Sunday the 21st I had hoped to have gone to St. George's Chapel, but the service was held in the Castle. After carefully pinning on a black hat, our page—a Dane of 75 or 80, who sits guarding our apartments on a chair in the passage—told me I was not to wear a hat, so I wrenched it off and fearing I should be late hastily joined the others in the gallery.

"We heard a fine sermon upon men who justify their actions; have no self-knowledge, and never face life squarely; but I do not think many people listened to it.

"The King and Queen and Princess Victoria sat in a box above our heads and were faced by the

Prince of Wales * with his eldest boy and girl in the gallery opposite.

"Gladys looked handsome, but seemed over-anxious. No one appeared to me to be quite at their ease in the presence of Their Majesties; the fact is, if you do not keep a firm grip upon yourself on the rare occasions when you are with the rich and the great, you notice little and enjoy nothing.

"Royal persons are necessarily divorced from the true opinions of people that count, and are almost always obliged to take safe and commonplace views. To them, clever men are 'prigs'; clever women 'too advanced'; Liberals are 'Socialists'; the uninteresting 'pleasant'; the interesting 'intriguers'; and the dreamer 'mad.' But, when all this is said, our King devotes what time he does not spend upon sport and pleasure ungrudgingly to duty. He subscribes to his cripples, rewards his sailors, reviews his soldiers, and opens bridges, bazaars, hospitals and railway tunnels with enviable sweetness. He is fond of Henry, but is not really interested in any man. He is loyal to all his West End friends: female admirers, Jewish financiers

* King George, the Prince of Wales and Princess Mary.

and Newmarket bloods, and adds to fine manners rare prestige, courage and simplicity.

"The friend he confides most in is a 'short study' but not a 'great subject.' E—— is a man of infinite curiosity and discretion, what the servants call 'knowing,' and has considerable influence at Court. His good spirits, fair judgment and frank address make him plausible and popular, and he has more intelligence than most of the Court pests. Slim with the slim, straight with the straight, the fault I find with him is common to all courtiers, he hardly knows what is important from what is not.

"After lunching with the household I retired to my room leaving Henry talking to Morley and Grey.

"Our Dane informed me that we were to join their Majesties in the Castle Courtyard at 4 o'clock to motor first to the gardens and then to Virginia Water, where we were to have tea. On my arrival in the courtyard the King came up to me and said:

" 'Where is the Prime Minister?'

"Curtsying to the ground, I answered:

" 'I am sorry, Sir, but I have not seen him since

lunch: I fear he cannot have got your command and may have gone for a walk with Sir Edward Grey.'

"His Majesty (angrily turning to his gentlemen-in-waiting, Harry Stonor and Seymour Fortescue): 'What have you done? Where have you looked for him? Did you not give him my command?'

"The distracted gentlemen flew about, but I could see in a moment that Henry was not likely to turn up, so I begged the King to get into his motor. He answered with indignation.

"'Certainly not! I cannot start without the Prime Minister, and it is only 10 minutes past 4.'

"He looked first at his watch and then at the Castle clock, and fussed crossly about the yard. Seeing affairs at a standstill I went up to the Queen and said I feared there had been a scandal at Court, and that Henry must have eloped with one of the maids of honour. I begged her to save my blushes by commanding the King to proceed, at which she walked up to him with her amazing grace, and in her charming way, tapping him firmly on the arm pointed with a sweeping gesture to his motor and

invited Gracie Raincliffe * and Alice Keppel to accompany him: at which they all drove off.

"I wandered about anxious to be with John Morley, and finally followed with him and Lord Gosford.

"While walking in the gardens talking to John Morley, Princess Victoria came up and asked if she could kodak us together. (She afterwards sent a copy to both of us.)

"When we returned to the Castle we found that Henry had gone for a long walk with the Hon. Violet Vivian, one of the Queen's maids of honour, over which the King was jovial and even eloquent."

[*End of Diary Quotation*]

The year 1908 ended in an event which made a deep impression upon me.

The First Lord of the Admiralty † asked me if I would launch the latest Dreadnought, and on the 7th of November Henry and I, Pamela McKenna and her lord, travelled by a special train to Devonport.

I wore my best garden-party dress; biscuit-coloured cloth with a clinging skirt, string blouse and

* The Countess of Londesborough.
† The Rt. Hon. Reginald McKenna.

winged hat of the same colour. Bouquets and addresses of welcome had been presented to us at every station on the journey, and we were met upon our arrival by Admiral Cross and other Naval officers. We drove through the decorated streets straight to the dockyard.

It was a brilliant blowing day, and on a dancing sea hundreds of crowded craft were bobbing about between the evil-looking battleships. I climbed up red cloth steps to a high platform, where the neighbours of distinction were collected under an awning. Clinging to my hat I kept my skirts down with difficulty. After receiving a bouquet and a water-colour of the ship, and making myself generally affable to the Admirals and Commanders, I looked at the vast erection etched against the sky above. This was the ship. The lines of her bows were stretched as the wings of a bird and the armour of her plating pulsated like a diamond in the sun.

The ceremony opened with prayer and the responses were sung by a choir.

I stood away from the people close to the railing that separated me from the ship and looked down upon the dockyard below, which was packed with thousands of enthusiastic people. "Eternal Fa-

ther, strong to save" was sung with vigour and supplication; every docker, bluejacket, marine, parson, and Admiral singing with all his heart against the clean sea wind.

After the blessing had been said, the constructor came bustling up to me.

"Come on! Be quick!" he said, pushing a hammer and chisel into my hands. "Don't you see she's straining? Look at the dial!"

Oblivious of his meaning and completely flustered I snatched the hammer begging him to let me hold the chisel by myself, but he insisted upon helping me, at which I missed the mark and brought the hammer down upon my own wrist and the constructor's: he instantly let go, and, recovering myself, I raised my hand above my head and said in a slow, loud voice: "I name you Collingwood. God bless you and all who sail in you," and with a violent blow severed the four ropes that released the galleys and the ship slid splashlessly into the sea.

Every head was strained and every arm raised to bless her as she struck the water, and we ended the ceremony by singing "Rule Britannia!" with moist eyes to the massed bands.

While the company buzzed about, I watched the

bluejackets below me stuffing small bits of rope into their pockets for luck. A slip of paper was sent up to the Admiral from the yard saying that all the people had heard me, and at the evening party Dévonport men told me they had never before heard the name of a battleship at a launch. I said I should indeed have felt inadequate had I muttered as if I had been in front of a mouse-trap.

On Sunday (November the 8th) the McKennas, Henry and I went to morning service on the first-class cruiser Leviathan. We sat about 200 of us under a long, low roof below the upper deck. I looked at the faces of the bluejackets; jolly, indifferent, keen men of every type: plain and handsome, tall and short, and thought if they had been women how they would have stared about at the Prime Minister, possibly even at Pamela and myself; but men are uncurious and occupied; they are not whispering, inquisitive busybodies. People may say what they like, but men and women are not what the Suffrage ladies think; they are of a different kind and not a variation of the same species.

I asked Admiral Fawkes, with whom we lunched, if he or any of his sea friends were afraid

of the German Fleet. He said he thought the Navy that was copied and did not copy was likely to remain the most powerful, but that the sea scare had done the Service harm, as it kept young men in the home waters when they should have been gaining experience abroad. He added that they knew all about the German Fleet except her target practice at sea.

When I went to bed exhausted and thoughtful, I wondered upon what mission my beautiful Collingwood would first sail.

CHAPTER VI

THE PEERS AND THE BUDGET—VISIT TO THE CHAMBERLAINS—DEATH OF KING EDWARD—THE MASTER OF ELIBANK—DEBATE ON THE LORDS' VETO

10 *Downing Street.*

OUR political differences over the House of Lords came to a head in 1909, the year before King Edward died.

They had started in 1908 when after a private meeting in Lansdowne House the Lords rejected the Licensing Bill. For a Democracy to endow two Chambers with equal powers although one represents an elected public and the other the Peers, is, as the Chinese would say, "distinguishable from true wisdom."

No one who valued the moral, mental or physical energies of the people in this country could have watched with indifference the paralysing effect that drink and tied houses had upon the public. Except for rare crimes of fraud, our prisons were full of men detained for crimes of violence; and the drink

problem, though hampered by teetotallers, became a Crusade.

My husband had taken every care over his Bill, and it needs courage for a Liberal to attack privileges which affect the working man more than the leisured classes. The Unionists, who have always been in sympathy with "the Trade," counted on the popularity of their cry to cover the clumsiness of their conduct; but in the years of which I am writing there was a public conscience stronger than there is to-day, and from the moment the Licensing Bill was rejected the powers of the Peers became a question of first-rate importance.

Whatever our Party passed in the House of Commons which was controversial was rejected by the Peers; and it had become a settled policy that every measure a Unionist Government could devise had an easy passage through the Lords. We were being governed by a single Chamber. One danger of allowing this state of things was that, while striking a blow at the Constitution, it must ultimately have succeeded in making the Crown unpopular.

There was no choice before my husband if he were to strengthen the Commons or safeguard the

King; but when he undertook to alter the relationship of the two Houses few of his colleagues thought he could succeed. Neither changing our prison system, providing Old Age Pensions, scotching Protection, or giving the South Africans self-government was as difficult as removing the veto of the House of Lords.

The opportunity came in 1909 over the Finance Bill.

The famous Budget of that year was largely the creation of Sir Robert Chalmers, a clever man and a friend of ours. Its somewhat oriental method of asking for more than it intended to take did not appeal to me. But nothing we did was comparable to the classic behaviour of the Upper Opposition. The Dukes' speeches gave us an unfair advantage, backed as they were by the lesser lights—Earls, Marquises and Barons.

It was hardly to be believed that men who could read and write would have written or spoken in the manner they did. One noble Marquis wrote that if the Budget were passed he would be compelled to reduce his annual subscription to the London Hospital from five pounds to three a year; and in

the same paper it was announced that he had bought a yacht "rumoured to cost £1,000 a month."

Another noble Earl, speaking in a different vein, said:

"If we Peers are obliged to, we will do our duty; and from what we hear in the country we have nothing to fear."

I never understood anything about Finance, but gathered from the discussions which took place over the Budget that it was an ingenious, complicated, perfectly sound measure, with a touch of "art nouveau" and an inquisitorial flavour, which was deeply resented.

. . . . . .

On the 4th of November, 1909, we drove down to the House of Commons to hear the final debate upon the Budget, and found it crowded from the ceiling to the floor.

Henry and Arthur Balfour wound up, and the Division was taken at midnight.

When the figures were announced that our majority (independent of the Irish) was 230, the uproarious cheering and counter-cheering betrayed the mixture of hate and enthusiasm with which the Bill was regarded.

The remarkable thing about the passing of this Budget was the unanimity with which people of different views backed it. Even the men who act according to their humour, which in party politics may make you fancy yourself a leader, but seldom gets you followers—voted for the Bill.

Non-party men do not succeed in this country because we are a political race and understand the rules of the game. Cabinet government is a corporate conscience, and concerted action is more valuable than individual opinion. Men subordinate their opinions on small matters for the sake of larger issues, and only part from one another when those issues are at stake. It is more from vanity than reflection that men of a certain sort always vote against their own Party; and in my judgment the non-party politician is well named when he is called "a moderate man." The alternative to the Party System is Coalition, which ended by being all things to all men and scrapping principles for promotion. To sell your faith for your advancement can never succeed, and Politics conducted by Coalition must ultimately lead to disaster.

The house adjourned for nineteen days after a

dinner given by the Chancellor of the Exchequer to celebrate the passing of the Budget, which my husband attended. On his return he gave me the following card, with which every guest had been presented:

SOUVENIR OF THE BUDGET

Dinner given by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, November 5th, 1909.

April 29th—November 4th, 1909.
70 Parliamentary Days.
554 Divisions.

Second Reading (June 10th)	For -	366	
	Against	209	157
Third Reading (November 4th)	For -	379	
	Against	149	230

	Divisions.
Rt. Hon. H. H. Asquith - - - -	202
Rt. Hon. S. C. Buxton - - - -	328
Rt. Hon. W. Churchill - - - -	198
Mr. A. Dewar - - - - - - - -	296
Sir S. T. Evans - - - - - - -	505

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE H. H. ASQUITH

	Divisions.
Rt. Hon. R. B. Haldane - - -	215
Rt. Hon. C. E. H. Hobhouse - -	440
Rt. Hon. D. Lloyd George - - -	462
Mr. C. F. G. Masterman - - - -	420
Sir H. Norman - - - - - - -	279
Rt. Hon. J. A. Pease - - - - -	518
Sir W. S. Robson - - - - - -	434
Rt. Hon. H. Samuel - - - - -	296

I received a letter from Sir Edward Grey the following day, which ended with:

"It seems incredible that the Budget should be over in the House of Commons; one had come to believe unconsciously that the Session would never finish, and it is a surprise to find that the end is in sight. I haven't an idea what will follow or be the result of the Elections. I am no optimist: X has made too much running, I fear, to carry the electors with us: in this country they move slowly and distrust rhetoric.

"Yours sincerely,

"Edward Grey.

"*November 5th,* 1909.

"Fallodon."

I made a real and lasting friendship with Sir Edward Grey and will quote from my diary what I wrote of him in the earlier part of this year.

From my diary, 1909.

"Sir Edward Grey is a very complete person and part and parcel of a golden mixture of character and judgment. He has shown me deep sympathy over Charty's terrible illness. He understands more than most people both the agony and the inevitability of Death.

"When I told him that I was going to Paris to see my dear friend, Aline Sassoon, the moment I heard that she was dying he wrote me this letter:

"'ITCHEN ABBAS,

"'ALRESFORD,

"'*July 17th,* 1909.

"'DEAR MRS. ASQUITH,

"'I can really say nothing in answer to your letter. There is a suffering which purifies, raises and strengthens and in which one can see the Crown as well as the Cross, but where there is no Crown visible it is terrible even to see suffering and must be intolerable to undergo it. My own belief is that if we could know all we should understand everything, but there is much in the world that cannot

be explained without knowing what came before life and what is to come after it, and of that we know nothing, for faith is not knowledge. All that we can do is to take refuge in reverence and submission. "God is in Heaven and thou upon earth, therefore let thy words be few" is one way of expressing the reverence, and: "I was dumb and opened not my mouth for it was Thy doing" is an expression of submission. They are hard things to say, but I don't know what else is to be said, and it is better to say them than to rail against what we cannot understand, or to attempt to belittle it, and put a gloss upon it. That is all I can say to you of what you have been through: and what could be said to Lady Sassoon is beyond me. The abyss is unfathomable to those who stand upon the brink, and I fear each of us who has to descend into it must find for himself or herself on what ledges a foot can be placed: and the path by which one can find his way is not always that which is practicable for another. I have been through that which would make it very easy for me to die, but that path is no use for anyone who has to die and wants to live.

"'Yours sincerely,

"'EDWARD GREY.'"

On the 15th of November, 1909, we went to stay at Windsor Castle, and, upon our arrival, Henry had a long interview with the King.* When he came back I asked him if they had talked about politics, and he said:

"Yes; we discussed freely the folly of the Peers. I told him that Queen Elizabeth had sometimes refused to sign her assent to Bills, but that this has not been done since her reign, and had become obsolete for 200 years. He is much vexed with the Lords, and said to me: 'Not a line of any sort have I received as to their intentions, and I know no more than the man in the street what they are doing!'

"Surely it is not at all nice of them!" I said; to which Henry replied:

"Oh! they aren't bound to tell the King what they are doing. H.M. thinks party politics have never been more bitter, but I told him I was not so sure of that; I thought they were bitterer in the days of Home Rule."

I asked him if the King had agreed about this, and he replied:

"Perhaps he did, I am not sure; he is not at all

* Edward the Seventh.

argumentative, and understands everything that is properly put to him. He is a clever man and a good listener, if you aren't too long. He has an excellent head and is most observant about people; he said some surprisingly shrewd things to me about Lansdowne and Balfour. The situation really distresses him and he told Knollys to-day he thought the Peers were mad."

The Lord Chamberlain * at that moment interrupted us to tell Henry that the King wished Ministers to wear white breeches at the Investiture of the Garter for the King of Portugal, which was to take place on the following day.

Henry said: "I think I am quite safe, my dear Bobby, in my Trinity House dress."

To which Mr. Spencer, looking a little nettled, replied: "No one must dictate to the Prime Minister, of course!"

He went on to tell us how nice the King had been over the Budget, and added:

"It has not always been so: we Liberals, my dear Prime Minister, have often suffered over politics at Court. I had a long talk with Fitzmaurice †

* The late Earl of Spencer.
† Lord Edmund Fitzmaurice, brother of the Marquis of Lansdowne.

yesterday, who was most frank about his brother Peers."

After this the Lord Chamberlain left us and we hurried to our rooms to prepare for dinner, as everyone was as punctual at Windsor Castle then as they are to-day.

I wore a silver dress with a cornflower-blue chiffon sash and Henry put on his Trinity House uniform. He had become an Elder Brother the year before, when King George, then Prince of Wales, had written the following letter:

"Frogmore House,
"Windsor.
"*Nov.* 17*th*, 1908.

"My dear Mr. Asquith,

"It would give me, as Master of Trinity House, great pleasure if you would allow me to appoint you an Honorary brother of that ancient Corporation, a position which has been held by so many of your distinguished predecessors in the office of Prime Minister. Mr. Gladstone, Lord Salisbury, Lord Rosebery, Mr. Balfour and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman have all been associated with the Trinity House.

"I know that your acceptance of this proposal would give the keenest satisfaction to all the members of the Corporation. Perhaps if this is agreeable to you, you could spare an hour to come and be sworn in some time in the month of February.

"Believe me, dear Mr. Asquith,

"Very sincerely yours,

"GEORGE P."

I had a short conversation with the King after dinner, and was struck by the clearness and strength of his opinions and wondered if half the House of Lords had any knowledge of them.

The next day we opened the papers and read that Lord Lansdowne had given notice in the House of Lords that, on the motion for the second reading of the Finance Bill, he would move:

"That this House is not justified in giving its consent to this Bill until it has been submitted to the judgment of the country."

This was a declaration of war which made the General Election in January of the following year inevitable.

. . . . . .

We left Windsor immediately after breakfast, and, in spite of the tremendous feeling over the

Peers and the Budget, felt that everyone had shown us the greatest courtesy at the Castle. The Queen, dazzlingly beautiful, whether in gold and silver at night, or in violet velvet by day, succeeded in making every woman look common beside her.

When we returned to London, political feeling was running high, and incredibly foolish things were said in fashionable society; but I can never remember the time when wise things were said in Mayfair, and the only topic of discussion was the possible action that the King might take over the Budget.

The Unionists were in a difficult position, as most of their supports, including the Brewers and Tariff Reformers, were strongly in favour of Rejection.

November 18th, 1909.

I wrote in my diary on the 18th of November, 1909:

"Acceptance of the Budget would look like weakness, but in the end it would be better for them to give way: the Lords would hear no more of their veto, the Bill might get less popular, and, between now and the time for dissolution, we may make ourselves more disliked. If the Lords re-

PARLIAMENTARY GOSSIP.

CHARWOMAN OF HOUSE OF LORDS. "YOUR PEOPLE GONE AWAY FOR A BIT O' QUIET THINKING?"
CHARWOMAN OF HOUSE OF COMMONS. "WELL, O' COURSE, I DON'T *KNOW* NOTHINK, BUT YOU MARK MY WORDS, THERE 'S HINFLUENCES A-GOIN' ON. 'OWEVER, MUM 'S THE WORD, GOD BLESS 'IM."

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ject the Budget I will back us to get in at the next Election, although by a smaller majority.

"I stick in this excellent cartoon out of Punch."

[*End of the Diary Quotation*]

The assembly of the House of Lords to discuss the rejection of the Budget was the largest ever known. Aged Peers came from remote regions of the country-side who could not even find their way to the Houses of Parliament. The galleries were packed with all the great ladies of England, and the debate extended over ten days.

The best speeches made were by those who while hating the Bill, realised that its rejection would raise a bigger question than that of the Budget. Lord Rosebery, Lord Cromer, Lord Balfour of Burleigh, and the Archbishop of York appeared in words of great eloquence to their fellow-peers not to raise this question. But the Lords acted as if demented. What blindness could have fallen upon Lord Lansdowne and others to urge the Peers down these slippery slopes to the sea will always remain a mystery. It is said that the Whips had promised an immense majority in the country over Tariff Reform. But even if they had won that

election their doom could only be a question of time, for it was evident that in future no Liberal Government could take Office without guarantees for the destruction of the Veto.

Obdurate to all these considerations, and influenced by the speeches of Lord Milner and Lord Willoughby de Broke, the Lords by an overwhelming majority rejected the Budget, and on the following Saturday an immense multitude filled Trafalgar Square to demonstrate not so much in the interests of the Budget as against the action of the Lords.

The position which Henry had foreseen had come to pass, and he instantly asked for and obtained sanction for the dissolution of Parliament.

The controversy which raged up and down the country between the Peers and the People was an issue which could have but one result.

The Lords had committed suicide.

The last weeks of the year 1909 we spent in touring all over the country making speeches, and after an unsatisfactory but predictable General Election we were returned in January, 1910, by a reduced majority. The general public showed an enlightened interest in the question of Protection,

which, considering the ignorance on all financial matters of the majority of people, surprised us. We received many and amusing letters; among the best is the following from Lord Hugh Cecil:

"HATFIELD HOUSE,
"February 18th, 1910.

"DEAR MRS. ASQUITH,

"Lloyd George has got you into a nice mess: nothing left for you but to try and create 500 peers and perish miserably attacking the King. That's what comes of making an irresponsible demagogue Chancellor of the Exchequer.

"Yours ever,
"HUGH CECIL."

When we returned to Downing Street, successful and defeated candidates poured in to give us their experiences of the elections. Among others I saw Mr. John Burns,* an old and valued friend of ours, whose career, if he would write it, would be among the great and interesting autobiographies of the world.

Among other adventures he served a short sentence in prison for a riot in Trafalgar Square and

* The Right Hon. John Burns.

was defended in the Law Courts by my husband before he became Home Secretary. In protesting against the long hours of the railway men when he was standing in the witness box he said:

"You should always give a man an opportunity of telling his wife he is still her sweetheart."

Mr. John Burns started life as a riveter on the railway line, and ultimately became a Cabinet Minister. Among other excellent things he said to me once when we were motoring together to spend a week-end with my sister Lucy at Easton Grey:

"X—— knows nothing of nature. Nor indeed very much about anything!" Pointing to the reddening sky he added:

"He would neither observe nor admire a sunset like that! and if you mentioned Cimabue he would only think you were talking of a new kind of asphalt."

In discussing the General Election with me that afternoon he criticised the violence of some of the speeches, and said:

"Before a man in the position of Chancellor of the Exchequer talks of 'the first of the litter' he should make quite sure that it is going to be drowned."

I did not meet any of the Conservatives whose opinions were worth recording till a few days later, when Mr. Chamberlain asked me to go and see him in his house at Prince's Gate.

Although I had not met him since his health had broken down we had always remained friends.

Mr. Chamberlain was neither sly nor mean and saw with great clearness a very short distance. He thoroughly understood the view that the average elector was likely to hold, and predicted from the beginning the antipathy there would be to Chinese Labour in this country.

Like many successful organisers he was an interesting man with an uninteresting mind. His intelligence was superior to his intellect, and his sense of drama, love of action, and lack of moods, freed him from complications, which made him an easy man to deal with. Affectionate and faithful to his friends, he was a bad enemy. Though never a knight in the arena, he was too great an artist to be described as a bruiser. He started his political career as an advanced Radical and became the hero of the Tory Party.

History repeats itself in strange ways, and I continue to wonder why the Conservatives, who are so

easily tamed, should be as leaderless to-day as they were then.

I was welcomed on my arrival by the lovely Mrs. Chamberlain and found her husband sitting erect in his arm-chair near the tea table; his hair was black and brushed, and he had an orchid in his tightly buttoned frock coat.

The room we were shown into was furnished in early Pullman-car or late North German-Lloyd style and struck me as singularly undistinguished.

My host's speech was indistinct but his mind was alert. After greeting him with a deep inside pity and much affection, I asked him if he had been pleased with the results of the General Election. I added that I myself had been disappointed with the South, but that the North had gone well for us; to which he answered that he had expected to beat us, and wondered why Scotland was always so Liberal. I amused him by saying that we were an uninfluenceable race with an advanced middle class, superior to the aristocracy and too clever to be taken in by Tariff Reform, and added:

"You know, Mr. Chamberlain, I would not much care to be a Unionist to-day!"

Mistaking my tone for one of triumph, he said:

LORD ROSEBERY

"But you also have great difficulties ahead of you."

I explained that I meant that the Protectionist party could not feel any satisfaction at being led by Arthur Balfour, as he had never been one of them. To which he replied:

"He is coming on a little, but the truth is he never understood anything at all about the question."

Continuing upon our Cabinet, he said of one of them, pointing to his heart:

"He is a vulgar man in the worst sense of the word and will disappear; give him enough rope and he will hang himself; I admire nothing in a man like that. Winston is the cleverest of all the young men, and the mistake Arthur made was letting him go."

I indicated that, however true this might be, he was hated by his old party; to which he replied:

"They would welcome him to-day with open arms if he were to return to them."

We ended our talk by his telling me that he had always been a Home Ruler, and that nothing could be done till the difficulties in Ireland were settled.

Wanting to show some of the compassion I felt

for him, I told him before leaving that I also had had a nervous break-down, and added:

"You know, Mr. Chamberlain, I was *so* ill that I thought I was *done*:" to which he answered:

"Better to *think* it, Mrs. Asquith, than to *know* it as I do."

I never saw him again.

. . . . . .

Mr. Chamberlain was right; our party had great difficulties ahead of them; and I began to realise of how little value brains can be; I was tired of cleverness and thanked God that Henry had more than this. In the great moments of life; in times of love, or of birth, or of death, brains count for nothing. The clever among Henry's colleagues were not always loyal, and the loyal, with notable exceptions, were not too clever.

April, 1910.

I will quote what I wrote in my diary, at 10 Downing Street:

"I sit in No. 10 and wonder how long we shall stay here. Our Lords' Resolutions will be over on the 14th, and on the 28th of April we take the third reading. For the moment we do not know

how the Irish will vote, but if they join the Tories against us we shall resign.

"Henry wants a complete change of scene. He dines with Lloyd George on the 28th (April), at the Savoy, to celebrate the passing of the Budget, and motors to Portsmouth after dinner with the McKennas, who take him on the Admiralty Yacht to inspect our fortifications at Gibraltar. He had to say good-bye to the King, and, fearing he might not get back before dinner, left me the following letter:

" 'Downing Street,

" '*April 28th,* 1910.

" 'As you know I am dining with Lloyd George to-night, at the Savoy, to celebrate the Budget and go on after dinner with the McKennas to Portsmouth. If I can, I will look in on the chance of seeing you. Send all letters through the Admiralty. I am glad to get away but sorry to leave you. All through these trying weeks you have been more than anyone sympathetic, understanding, loyal and loving. I have felt it much.

" 'I had a good talk with the King this evening and found him most reasonable.

" 'Ever your own.'

"Left alone in Downing Street, I dined with the Hamiltons * on the 5th of May, 1910. I saw no posters in the streets on my return to Downing Street, but was told afterwards that the news of King Edward's illness had been advertised in the Strand and Piccadilly.

May 6th, 1910.

"Frances Horner telephoned to me early on the morning of the 6th, and asked me if I was anxious, as she feared the King was seriously ill. I seized the *Times* and read the bulletin of the King's bronchitis signed by the Drs. Powell and Reid. Realising that this was grave, I dressed quickly and hurried round to the Palace. I read in silence the latest bulletin hanging on the wall, while several of my friends were signing the King's book:

" 'No progress: condition causes grave anxiety.'

"I felt full of apprehension, and wondered if the Admiralty Yacht would be in reach of news. I found Charlie Hardinge † on my return to Downing Street, who told me he had left Lord Knollys in tears and suggested my sending Henry a telegram: I sat down and wrote:

* Mr. and Mrs. Charles Hamilton.
† Lord Hardinge of Penshurst.

"'Advise your returning immediately. The King seriously ill: all London in state of well-founded alarm: Margot.'

"This was sent from the Admiralty in cypher. I felt shattered, and received my lunch party with a silent heart.

"Lord Kitchener, Lady Frances Balfour, John Burns, Nathalie Ridley, Lucy, Elizabeth and I sat down to lunch. K. of K. walked up to the window and broke the silence by saying the flag was still flying at the Palace, a remark which jarred upon me profoundly; but excepting Frances Balfour none of the company seemed at all able to realise the gravity of the situation.

"While we were eating our lunch messages came from the Palace:

"'No improvement.'

"I sent a note to Lord Knollys begging him to send for Kingston Fowler, as Court Doctors are not always the best. He answered with his unfailing courtesy:

"'Many thanks for your letter, I will at once tell the Doctors what you say. I am afraid I can give you no better news.'

"Our Secretary, Roderick Meiklejohn, came in

after lunch and reassured me by saying he was certain the Yacht would know of the King's illness, and while he was talking I received the following note from John Burns:

"'*May 6th,* 1910.

"'*Private.*

"'DEAR MRS. ASQUITH,

"'I hear and I hope it is true that you have sent to the Prime Minister to come home. The Admiralty will code it on to Spain at once.

"'News serious and confirms your view of to-day.

"'Yours sincerely,

"'JOHN BURNS.'

"In the afternoon I went to see Anne Poynder*; she told me that her husband had had an audience of the King upon his appointment as Governor to New Zealand the day before; and that although he had been up and dressed he looked alarmingly ill. On his return he had said to her:

"'I don't know what other people feel, but *I* think I have been with a dying man to-day!'

"All London is standing still with anxiety and I can hardly refrain from crying.

* Lady Islington.

"That night saying my prayers with Elizabeth and Puffin we prayed out loud that God might save the King.

"At 10.30 p.m. after dining alone with the Islingtons I went round to see the Hardinges. Edward Grey came into the room with Sir Charles * and I noticed they both looked white with sorrow. We did not shake hands: I asked for the latest news. One of them answered:

" 'It is practically over; he is unconscious. He sent for Sir Ernest Cassel this morning and insisted on sitting up in his clothes although breathless and unable to speak; his courage is amazing.'

"None of us spoke.

"Sir Edward Grey drove me away from the Hardinges and said when we were alone in the taxi:

" 'This is a very big moment; these things have to be, but it has come as a terrible shock in its suddenness.'

"He dropped me at Anne Islington's, where my motor was waiting for me. Our footman had copied the latest bulletin stuck up for the crowd to see

* Our Ambassador in Paris.

outside the Palace and gave it to me as I got into the car. It said:

" 'The King's symptoms have become worse today and His Majesty's condition is now serious.'

"I motored Anne to Buckingham Palace on my way home at 11 p.m., and there we found large silent groups of people reading this same bulletin. On my return to 10 Downing Street I went to bed.

"The head messenger,* followed by his wife in her nightgown, came down to see me, and standing in the doorway of my bedroom asked for the latest news; I said it was practically all over, and they left the room shutting the door noiselessly behind them.

"I lay awake with the lights turned on, sleepless, stunned, and cold.

"At midnight there was a knock at my door. Mr. Lindsay walked in, and, stopping at the foot of the bed, said:

" 'His Majesty passed away at 11.45.'

" 'So the King is dead!!' I said out loud and burst into tears.

"I slept from 2 till 5 a.m. and then wrote my

* Mr. Lindsay.

diary. I sent letters to the Queen, Lord Knollys and Sir Ernest Cassel.

"After the Privy Council the next morning Sir Ernest came to see me and we cried together on the sofa.

"I dined that night at Mrs. George West's, and met Winston Churchill, the Crewes and the Harcourts. At the end of dinner Winston said:

" 'Let us drink to the health of the new King.'

"To which Lord Crewe answered:

" 'Rather to the memory of the old.'

[*End of Diary Quotation*]

. . . . . .

May, 1910.

Henry * returned from his cruise on the 9th of May, 1910, and on the 10th he paid his first visit to the new King. He came away deeply moved by his modesty and common sense.

* He wrote the following account for my diary on his return: "The 'Enchantress' after visiting Lisbon was making her way from Cadiz to Gibraltar when we received a wireless message that the King was ill. This was confirmed when we reached Gibraltar, and I directed that we should at once return home, though there was nothing in the message that seemed to call for immediate alarm. We started at once, and about three in the morning of the 7th of May, 1910, I was awakened with the news that a wireless had just arrived announcing the King's death. I went up on deck, in the twilight before dawn, and my gaze was arrested by the sight of Halley's Comet blazing in the sky. It was the first and last time that any of us saw it."

"On the 11th we went to the House of Commons to hear Henry and Arthur Balfour move their messages of condolence to the Court.

"Having just come away from an audience with our beautiful Queen, who had taken him in to see her dead King, Henry's voice trembled so much when he was speaking that I thought he would break down. In the course of his speech he said:

" 'He loved his people at home and over the seas. Their interests were his interests, and their fame was his fame. He had no self apart from them.

" 'I will not touch for more than a moment on more delicate and sacred ground; on his personal charm, the warmth and wealth of his humanity, his unfailing considerateness for all who were permitted to work for him. I will only say in this connection that no man in our time has been more justly beloved by his family and his friends, and no ruler in our or in any time has been more sincerely true, more unswervingly loyal, more uniformly kind to his advisers and his servants.'

"On the 20th of May, 1910, I dressed at 6.30 a.m., and walked into the streets to see the crowd. It was the day of the funeral and people from all parts of the globe were thronging the town. I had

sent the children the night before to Lady Lewis's * house in Portland Place, as the police had warned me it would be easier for them to go from thence to Lady Wernher's,† from whose balcony they were to see the Procession. Henry and I breakfasted alone, and at 9 a.m. we walked to Westminster Hall to see the coffin start and the cortège collect for Paddington station.

"We walked slowly down the middle of the soldiered street under a grilling sun, and joined the small official group which consisted of the Speaker, Lulu Harcourt, John Burns, Lord Carrington and the Crewes. We stood upon a red carpet outside Westminster Hall awaiting the arrival of the nine Kings who had come from various parts of Europe for the funeral. As most people wanted to see the procession from a balcony, and some were motoring or going by train to Windsor, Peggy Crewe and I were the only women among the officials.

"We all stood in silence and watched the forming up of the Procession.

"The gun-carriage came first, followed by the charger with the military boots reversed; then came

* Lady Lewis, the mother of Sir George Lewis.
† Lady Ludlow.

the King's kilted loader leading his wire-haired terrier * by a strap.

"Crewe and I patted the little dog, who was most friendly—but the beautiful charger, which I had approached with confidence, stretched out his fine neck and showed me all his teeth.

"At 10 a.m. the Kings clattered into the quadrangle followed by two coaches. The Queen, Princess Victoria and the Wales children were in one and Queen Alexandra and the King sat alone in the other. They were closely followed by the Kaiser and the Duke of Connaught, who were mounted upon horseback. They all pulled up a few yards from where we were standing and the Kaiser opened the carriage door with conscious promptness for Queen Alexandra, who stepped out, a vision of beauty, dressed entirely in crêpe with a long black veil floating away behind her. We curtsied to the ground with bowed heads as she passed us. The Archbishop of Canterbury received the King and his mother in the open doorway and they followed him back into Westminster Hall. The only others who went with them were the Kaiser and the Duke of Connaught.

* Cæsar was the name of the terrier.

"We were told that the horsemanship of the Kings might, if they dismounted, lead to complications, so they remained seated while we made a study of their faces. These were not impressive. I liked the Crown Prince of Austria's the least, and the King of Spain's the best; but the Kaiser's cut features, observant eyes and immobile carriage, as he swung a short leg across a grey hunter, made him the most interesting figure of them all.

"I could not help thinking what a terrifying result a bomb thrown from Big Ben would have had upon that assemblage, and blessed this country for its freedom.

"The Kings, the soldiers, and the retinue held the salute like bronzes when the coffin came out upon the shoulders of Guardsmen and was placed upon the gun-carriage; and continued holding it while the white pall, Union Jack, the Crown and the Insignia were placed upon the bier. The Earl Marshal,* heavily decked in gold, sat uneasily upon his horse and the procession moved slowly away.

"We crawled to the station in the motor and found Paddington like the Ascot enclosure. It was closely packed with famous and dazzling people,

* The late Duke of Norfolk.

their uniforms glittering with decorations, and all the fashionable ladies were in black. We travelled down to Windsor in the same carriage as the Crewes, Edward Grey and John Morley.

"On arriving at the Cloisters we looked at the flowers piled up in stacks to the roof. With the curiosity that makes most of us try and pick out our own faces in a photographic group I tried to find the wreath we had sent. It was large and made of sweet briar with a bunch of eglantine roses at the stem, but I never saw it. I do not suppose that there were ever collected in one place so many lovely flowers, or with such moving inscriptions written upon them as we saw that day.

"When we went into the Chapel I was interested to see how many times the pew-openers would change their victims' places. The Opposition, the Queen's Pages, the Knights of the Garter, and their foreign equivalents were ruthlessly shoved about, while every new pew-opener of greater prestige than the last rolled and unrolled his list till the seating became a mosaic of indecision and confusion. Luckily, Henry, as the King's chief male and the Duchess of Buccleuch as his chief female servant,

occupied the best seats in the choir, and I was placed next to them.

"Gazing opposite at the Corps Diplomatique I caught a friendly recognition from Countess Beckendorff,* but the long musicless wait had a stupefying effect, and what with short nights and an excess of emotion I fell into a deep, short and unobserved sleep.

"I was awakened by the music of the massed bands playing Chopin's Funeral March in the street. The choir came up the aisle followed by the Bishops and Archbishop, and stood upon the altar steps.

"The King walking with Queen Alexandra followed the coffin closely. At some distance behind them came the Dowager Czarina, the Duke of Connaught and the Kaiser; and these were followed by the other seven kings. A prie-dieu was placed behind the coffin for the Queen, and when she took her place in front of it the King and the others all fell back and she was left standing erect and alone.

"When the coffin was lowered, and slowly dis-

* The wife of our late Russian Ambassador.

appearing into the ground she knelt suddenly down and covered her face with both her hands.

"That single mourning figure, kneeling under the faded banners and coloured light, will always remain among the beautiful memories of my life."

[*End of Diary Quotation*]

. . . . . .

10 *Downing Street, November,* 1910.

With the accession to the Throne of King George —whom my husband and I had known and loved since boyhood—the Constitutional question dealing with the House of Lords became much more difficult. Rather than embarrass the new King, my husband decided to refer the subject to a round-table Conference, over which he held high hopes; but after six months of deliberation the negotiations broke down; and on the 10th of November, 1910, I received a telegram while I was staying with the children in Scotland, in which he wrote:

"Tout est fini."

It was clear to me that there was nothing for it but for us to have another General Election and as quickly as possible before the discontent of our party could become vocal. I sent our Chief Whip

'Aha! Monsieur Ask-huit! (Prime Minister winces.) One vairy nice room, Sair. Nomber EIGHT—ozzerwise nossing!!'

'That beastly number again! Oh, no it isn't; but I believe that wretched waiter knows something!!'

'Most becoming, Sir! It's a number H'EIGHT, Sir.'

'Wot's that a-strikin', Sir? That's EIGHT bells, that is, Sir.'

[Reproduced by kind permission of 'Punch']

ASQUITH AND THAT CONFOUNDED NO. 8. (EVEN THE CONTINENT, IF HE HAD GONE THERE HIS HOLIDAYS, WOULD HAVE AFFORDED HIM NO RELIEF.)

'Caricature of Mr. Asquith When, as Prime Minister, He Wished to Increase the Navy by Four or Five Capital Ships. Mr. Churchill and Mr. Lloyd George Worked Together Against Him With the Little England Party in the House of Commons and the Tories Wanted Eight Dreadnoughts. It Was a Burning Question.'

—the Master of Elibank—a telegram to this effect, and another to Henry, who had gone to Sandringham to see the King.

The patience and resolution that the Prime Minister had shown over the Budget had made an impression upon the country, and as the Unionists had no programme I felt no fears as to the result of the Elections. Our opponents were fiercely divided over several questions, and neither lauding the peers nor taxing food was likely to attract the public.

Knowing what my husband would feel at the breakdown of the Conference, I started for London in the evening of the day I received his telegram.

The Cabinet drew up a State Paper of first-rate importance, and on the 15th of November, 1910, Henry took it to Buckingham Palace. He spent two hours with Lord Knollys explaining its various points before he had his audience with the King.

On his return to Downing Street I asked him which of his colleagues had contributed most to this Document. Had Winston?

"No," he answered, "all Winston's suggestions were discounted."

"What about X——?" I said.

Henry answered it was not his "genre" as he

was useless upon paper. Lord Crewe had been wise; John Morley had made valuable verbal alterations; but Grey and he had contributed the bulk. He ended by saying:

"If the King refuses to exercise his prerogative, I resign at once and explain the reasons for my resignation by reading this paper in the House of Commons. If we are beaten at the General Election the question will never arise, and if we get in by a working majority the Lords will give way, so the King won't be involved."

I asked him if he thought we should get in; to which he answered:

"Yes, I think we shall, though the future has a nasty way of turning up surprises."

Lady Frances Balfour said to me that she had written to her brother-in-law, Arthur, and told him she had travelled all over the country, and that unless he could controvert dear food we should be returned by an overwhelming majority.

. . . . . .

On the 17th of November Henry went to see the King and at seven o'clock of the same evening he walked into my bedroom.

After a pause he sat down and told me that Lord

Crewe and he had had a remarkable talk with His Majesty; that they had found him without obstinacy, both plucky and reasonable. He read him the State Paper, and pointed out the impossibility of allowing affairs to drift on as they were doing. He said that, after six months of Conference and doing all that lay in his power to find a solution of this difficult problem, no one could ever accuse him of undue haste. His Majesty listened attentively to him and ultimately agreed.

The audience was over.

Putting an end to the rival powers of the two houses of Parliament was a political act of supreme courage, but my husband is as convinced to-day as he was then that it was the only way in which he could safeguard either the Commons or the King.

In telling me of this interview he was deeply moved and ended a memorable conversation by saying:

"You can only make changes in this country Constitutionally: any other method leads to Revolution."

Lord Knollys told us that when Henry had left the Palace the King had said to him:

"Is this the advice that you would have given my father?"

He replied:

"Yes, Sir; and your father would have taken it."

. . . . . .

Between the 17th of November and the 20th of December, 1910, the General Election was over and we were returned by a majority of 124 (one seat to the good).

It was a purely personal Election and could not have been won without my husband. I must also add that our Chief Whip had organised the country from top to toe.

Alec Murray—better known as the Master of Elibank—was a rare combination of grit and honey, with a perfect understanding of men and their motives. Having a sunny temper—never taciturn, sudden or contentious, he could "get into touch"—to use his favourite expression—with Liberal, Labour or Tory with equal ease. Although at times rusé, he was trustworthy, and Lord Fitz-Alan told me that during all the time they were rival whips of the Unionist and Liberal Parties in the House, they had worked together in perfect loyalty.

I loved the Master and have never known anyone at all like him. He was a mixture of slim and simple that no country but my own could have produced, with a devotion to schemes and persons only equalled by an Italian servant of the 15th century.

When I am disgusted by lack of heart, candour or character in the people I meet, I do not want to see them; but the Master had no such recoil; I feel it a waste of time being in mean company, but no one wasted the Master's time; he was plump and laughed, and, though an indefatigable worker, was ready to see anyone at any time and in any place. He found a fish in every net, caught some and let others go, and his thinking powers were entirely concentrated upon people. I never knew what his political convictions were, but he devoted the best part of his life to Liberalism. He had a real affection for Mr. Lloyd George, and did his best to make him work loyally with my husband. His flair for stage-management amounted to genius and he was familiar with every form of advertisement.

Working daily with a man like Henry, whose modesty amounts to deformity, and whose independence of character baffles the prophets and irritates

the Press, our Chief Whip's ingenuity and resource were invaluable to us in 10 Downing Street, and when he left we never found his successor. His pleasure in this world, as well as his duty, was concerned in making men live harmoniously together, and Lord Murray of Elibank should have a high place in the next, if the Almighty keeps His promise to the Peace-makers.

December 21*st,* 1910.

After the final figures of the Elections were known he came to see my husband. He told us that the Unionists, being wrong in their calculations, were raising an outcry over the results of the Election, giving every reason but the right one to account for our success.

He ended his talk by saying:

"I met Acland Hood, who is suffering from all the abuse and recrimination of a defeated Party; he said to me: 'Our people want to know how it was we didn't win. I told them frankly that, wherever I went all over the country, I heard the same thing; no one fancied the Lords or dear food."

. . . . . .

Suspicions and divisions in the ranks of our Op-

ponents obscured our difficulties, but nevertheless they were accumulating.

The Parliament Bill went forward from February till July, but, in spite of large majorities in the House of Commons, the Lords reduced it to impotence.

On the 21st of July, 1911, my husband informed the Press that the House of Commons would not accept the Lords' amendments and the King had agreed to exercise his Prerogative of creating sufficient Peers to enable the Bill to pass into law.

This declaration caused an uproar.

Conscious of their follies and smarting under their defeat the more short-sighted of the rank and fashion determined to have their revenge.

I will here quote from my diary:

July, 1911.

"On Monday, the 24th of July, 1911, we drove in an open motor to the House of Commons and were cheered through the streets.

"The Speaker's Gallery was closely packed, and excited ladies were standing up on their chairs. My husband got a deafening reception as he walked up the floor of the House; but I saw in a moment

that the Opposition was furious and between the counter-cheers I could hear an occasional shout of 'Traitor!'

"When the hubbub had subsided he rose to move the rejection of the Lords' amendments; at this Lord Hugh Cecil and Mr. F. E. Smith,* led an organised and continuous uproar which kept him on his feet for over thirty minutes.

" 'Divide! Divide! 'Vide! 'Vide! ! !' was shouted by the Opposition in an orgy of stupidity and ruffianism every time he opened his mouth. The Speaker tried in vain to make them listen, but the House was out of hand and the uproar continued.

"Looking at the frenzied faces from above, I realised slowly that Henry was being howled down. Edward Grey got up from his place four off from where my husband was standing, and sat down again close beside him. His face was set.

"I scrawled a hasty line from our stifling gallery and sent it down to him, 'They will listen to you—so for God's sake defend him from the cats and the cads!'

* Lord Birkenhead.

"Arthur Balfour followed, and when Grey rose to speak the stillness was formidable.

"Always the most distinguished figure in the House, he stood for a moment white and silent, and looked at the enemy:

" 'If arguments are not to be listened to from the Prime Minister there is not one of us who will attempt to take his place,' he said, and sat down in an echo of cheers.

"Mr. F. E. Smith rose to reply, but the Liberals would not listen to him and the Speaker adjourned the House on the ground of grave disorder.

"I met Edward Grey for a moment afterwards alone, and when I pressed my lips to his hand, his eyes filled with tears.

"Sir Alfred Cripps * and Colonel Lockwood,† with the fine feeling that has often differentiated them from the rest of their Party, called a private meeting to draft a letter of apology to the Prime Minister for what had taken place. Among many letters, I received the following from my dear friend, Lord Henry Bentinck:

* Lord Parmoor.
† Lord Lambourne.

53 Grosvenor Street.
W.
July 25

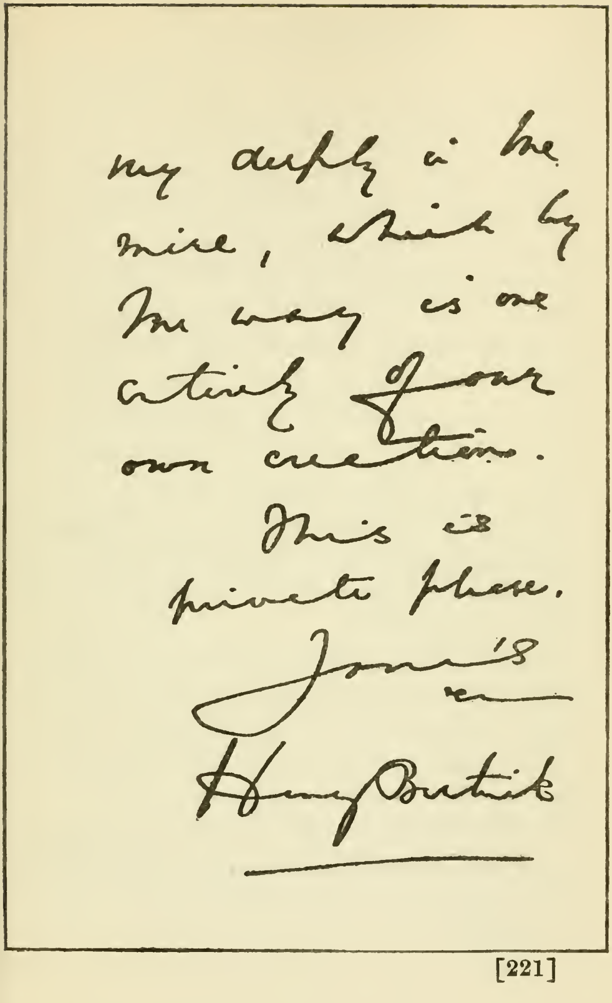
Dearest Margot:

I have been
away from London
& have only just
returned, consequently
have had no
opportunity of signing
the letter of regret
for the hooligan
business on

business which I
understand Sir
Alfred Cliffe has
forwarded to
Mr Asquith. I
should be very
grateful if you
would tell him
how deeply I

deplore the
ungentlemanlike
behaviour of
a Section of our
party, and how
gladly I would
have signed
the letter had I
been in London —

I fear we



my deputy in the mine, which by the way is one entirely of our own creation.

This is private please.

Yours ever

Henry Bentick

"'*July 25th*, 1911.

"'I have been away from London and therefore had no opportunity of signing the letter of regret for the hooligan business which I understand Sir Alfred Cripps has forwarded to Mr. Asquith. I should be grateful if you would tell him how deeply I deplore the ungentlemanlike behaviour of a section of our Party and how gladly I would have signed the letter. I fear we are deeply in the mire, which is a situation entirely of our own creation.

"'Yours,

"HENRY BENTINCK."

"On the 25th of July, the *Times* and other papers published the full text of the speech that my husband had been prevented from making in the House the day before.

"After giving a complete history of the Veto Bill and the principle upon which it was founded, and which had been approved by the House of Commons in 1907, and endorsed at two subsequent General Elections, he ended by saying:

"'We have, therefore, come to the conclusion—and thought it courteous and right to communicate that conclusion in advance to leaders of the Oppo-

sition—that, unless the House of Commons is prepared to concede these essential points, there is only one constitutional way of escape from what would otherwise be a deadlock. It is the method of resort to the Prerogative which is recognised by the most authoritative exponents of Constitutional law and practice, when, as here the case, the House of Commons must be presumed to represent on the matter in dispute the deliberate decision of the nation.'

"He wound up with:

" 'I need hardly add that we do not desire to see the prerogative exercised. There is nothing humiliating to a great party in admitting defeat. No one asks them to accept that defeat as final. They have only to convince their fellow-countrymen that they are right and we are wrong, and they can repeal our Bill.'

"For a fortnight the excitement continued and the Tories moved a vote of censure on the Government. Ashamed of their action of two weeks before, they listened to my husband in silence. In this vindication of the action he had taken throughout the controversy and the manner in which he had kept the King's name out of the dispute, Henry made one of the most moving appeals ever

addressed to the Commons. It was a speech which will live in history, and, as he built up his case in orderly sequence, the ranks of the Conservatives looked shattered and broken. Even the *Times* had to admit that 'Dexterity was a special characteristic of the speech: as it has been of his conduct throughout the whole controversy.'

"He ended:

" 'I am accustomed, as Lord Grey was accustomed, to be accused of breach of the Constitution, and even of treachery to the Crown. I confess that I am not in the least sensitive to this cheap and ill-informed form of vituperation. It has been my privilege, now I think unique, to serve, in close and confidential relations, three successive British Sovereigns. My conscience tells me that in that capacity, many and great as have been my failings and shortcomings, I have consistently striven to uphold the dignity and just privileges of the Crown. *But I hold my office, not only by favour of the Crown, but by the confidence of the whole people. And I should be guilty indeed of treason if, in this supreme moment of a great struggle, I were to betray their trust.*'

"When he sat down the whole Liberal Party

AWFUL SCENE OF GLOOM AND DEJECTION, WHEN THE MINISTRY HEARD OF THE LORDS' DECISION TO REFER THE BUDGET TO THE COUNTRY

rose and applauded him, and it seemed as if the cheers would never cease."

[*End of Diary Quotation*]

The end is soon told. The Bill reached the House of Lords in a state of confusion. There were Die-hards and other Peers who were fighting each other; friend attacked friend, and the issue remained uncertain until the last moment. Some of Lord Murray's possible Peers watched from the gallery, hoping for rejection, the Archbishop of Canterbury was cursed and blessed, as he moved from group to group, persuading and pleading with each to abstain.

Amid passionate excitement the Bill was finally passed by a majority of 17. Most of the Peers abstained from voting.

Thus was accomplished the greatest Constitutional Reform since 1688, a success due to the patience, ability and foresight of one man, and that—the Prime Minister.

END OF VOL. III

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