LIFE OF ROBERT
MARQUIS OF SALISBURY
LORD SALISBURY, 1888

From a photograph by Russell & Sons, Baker Street
LIFE OF ROBERT MARQUIS OF SALISBURY

BY HIS DAUGHTER

(LADY) GWENDOLEN CECIL

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CHAPTER I
1887

THE WAR SPECTRE

It was a troubled Europe, east and west, which faced Lord Salisbury on his return to the Foreign Office in January, 1887. With the larger questions of policy raised by the kidnapping and abdication of Prince Alexander of Bulgaria, in the previous September, he had already had to deal as Prime Minister.¹ The abdication had been a disheartening sequel to the struggle which he had waged on the Prince’s behalf in the preceding year; the outburst of indignation which the kidnapping had aroused throughout the principality and the enthusiasm which had greeted the Prince on his return, had left his surrender an unexplained catastrophe.

To Lord Cranbrook, September 5, 1886.

"I do not know what to say or think about Alexander. It is disappointing and very disastrous. Everything points to the belief that it is Bismarck’s doing—who has taken to answering us almost as briefly and brutally as the Czar answers the Prince. But how he has contrived to persuade the Prince I cannot conceive. My feeling is that if I had received from a big relation the scandalous treatment that the Prince has received from the Czar, I would have taken

¹ See Vol. III. p. 318.
a good deal of trouble, and run a good deal of risk, in order to pay him out. I am afraid that Alexander has forfeited European sympathy,—but he leaves the Eastern problem before us in a hopeless condition.”

The Queen was much troubled—with grief for the calamity which had overtaken the “hero-prince”—with indignation at the treacherous ingratitude of his officers—with alarm and anger at what she felt to be Russia’s diplomatic triumph over England. She reproached Lord Salisbury and Lord Iddesleigh with their lack of fore-knowledge and the former admitted failure. Evidently in no good humour either with himself or others, he replied to her complaints by cataloguing the disadvantages under which England laboured in comparison with Russia, where Oriental diplomacy was concerned.

Russia had an unlimited command of secret service money; England could only dispose of a sum too small to be worth having, and no House of Commons would consent to increase it. The military force which she could bring to bear at any given point would be incapable of meeting that of even a second-rate Continental Power, and therefore, at all places at a distance from the sea, her diplomatists were limited to platonic exhortation. Then, the organisation of her service made for inefficiency. He protested against the system of promotion by seniority which diplomacy shared with the rest of the Civil Service and which the irresponsible influence of the House of Commons made more rigid.

To the Queen, August 29, 1886.¹

“'If the practice is departed from (as it legally can be), the outcry is so violent as to make the service very discontented, and even to invite the interference

¹ Letters of Queen Victoria, 3rd series, vol. i. p. 194.
of Parliament. In 1878, Lord Salisbury appointed a Secretary of Embassy from the lower ranks of the service. A motion of censure in the House of Commons was the result, and though it was not carried, it effectually prevented Lord Salisbury from trying the experiment again. In the same way, it is almost impossible to remove a man who is unsatisfactory, unless he has done something which can be publicly proved against him, or unless he can be sent to some better post; or unless the close of his official term is at hand. . . . There is much else that weakens our diplomacy;—our shifting foreign policy during the last ten years—our precarious Governments—the necessity of adapting our foreign policy to the views of a Cabinet of fourteen or sixteen men, usually ignorant of it, and seldom united in their views . . .

"There is no reason for losing heart, or for neglecting to do everything in our power to carry into effect the policy that is most advantageous to England. But it is a reason why the efforts and frequent failures of Your Majesty's servants in foreign affairs must be viewed with indulgence. It is their destiny to be always making bricks without straw. Without money, without any strong land force, with an insecure tenure of power, and with an ineffective agency, they have to counterwork the efforts of three Empires, who labour under none of these disadvantages."

Whatever may or may not have been their general justification, these laments were not well timed. Both in the conception and in the working out of this Bulgarian adventure, Russia had shown herself reassuringly inept. Her Government was, as usual, only partially responsible. By general consent the kidnapping outrage was laid to the charge of the Pan-Slavist Committees—a mysterious organisation, secret in its composition but believed to include red revolutionaries with crusaders of the Orthodox Church in common pursuit of a fanatical racialism. These
Committees wielded an influence far beyond the limits of their membership, and though the Czar's Government consistently repudiated them, it seemed powerless to resist or control them. Their existence may be reckoned among the major causes of European calamity. The ceaseless propaganda of revolt which they carried on in neighbouring communities was promoted by means of wholesale corruption, secret conspiracy, and even, by common report, open assassination; and the cumulative exasperation which these methods engendered in the Governments concerned could hardly fail of war as its ultimate outcome.

For more peacefully patriotic purposes the intervention of this subterranean influence was generally, as in this instance, suicidal. The main object of Russian policy at this time was to dominate the Turkish capital by securing paramount influence in Bulgaria. A brutal outrage perpetrated upon a notably popular ruler was the initial contribution of Pan-Slavism towards this object. The arbitrary violence with which the Czar sought subsequently to crush the adherents of the fallen man completed what his dangerous allies had begun. After the Prince's abdication, he sent an Imperial Commissioner, General Kaulbars, to enforce his wishes upon the native Regents to whom Prince Alexander had committed the internal government of the Principality. The General ordered them to pardon and release the military traitors who had been the actual perpetrators of the outrage; travelled about the country inciting the villages to rebellion against them; demanded the dissolution of the popularly elected Sobranje because it refused to choose for the vacant throne an obscure Caucasian Prince whose only qualification for the post was that of being a Russian subject. "The commands of the Emperor must not be discussed:" was his one
reply to protests against his requirements. Russian diplomacy at Constantinople was successful in invoking the Sultan's authority as Suzerain for the liberation of the criminals; but, for the rest, the Regents, backed by their indignant compatriots, were stolidly defiant, and by the end of November, General Kaulbars abandoned the struggle and withdrew, leaving as the only result of his mission a substantial increase in the hatred with which his country was regarded by the recalcitrant province.

Decorous opinion on the Continent was scandalised by these proceedings. When Lord Salisbury, in all the formality of a Guildhall speech, said that the traitors had been "debauched by foreign gold" and spoke of Europe's dismay at "seeing the resources of diplomacy exhausted to save them from the doom which they so justly merited," he was applauded by the Press of every capital except St. Petersburg. The Russian ambassador remonstrated warmly. Lord Salisbury explained that, as regarded the "foreign gold" he had had the Slav Committees and not the Russian Government in view, but repeated his opinion as to the conduct of the Czar's representative. M. de Staal, so he told the Queen, had admitted that "General Kaulbars' mission had been a mistake."

But except for such oratorical support, and for counsels of prudence and encouragement urged privately upon the Regents, the British Government took no direct part in the quarrel. Lord Randolph Churchill thought the encouragement needlessly emphasised; the Queen was highly dissatisfied with the inaction. Upon Lord Salisbury as Prime Minister fell the task of defending his colleague at the Foreign Office against this double attack upon his rear. It involved considerable epistolary labour. When not arguing with his Chancellor of the Exchequer as to
the risk of allowing Russia to become master up to the gates of Constantinople, he was striving to persuade his royal mistress of the uselessness of trying to help the Bulgarians by means of diplomatic defiance or naval demonstrations. Throughout the two months of General Kaulbars’ mission, every fresh insolence reported of him brought a renewed outcry of indignation from Balmoral or Windsor. It was met on each occasion by assurances of sympathy balanced by a remorseless appeal to the logic of facts. Russia had been guilty of no overt breach of the law of nations; verbal remonstrance would be futile and undignified; for the moment we were diplomatically powerless—though it is a question whether that last assumption would have proved convincing for passivity had he been himself in direct control of the Foreign Office or less hampered by his efforts to keep on terms with his House of Commons’ leader.

One indirect argument for caution he was able to urge on the Queen with effect. Rumour had been rife from the first as to Prince Bismarck’s share in the catastrophe. His published attitude was in support of Russia. A recognition of her “paramount interest” in the eastern half of the peninsula had formed part of the agreements recently come to between the three Emperors at Kremsier and Skiernivice. “The impression prevails,” wrote Lord Salisbury on September 7,¹ “that Germany is in genuine terror at a possible union between France and Russia; that she has purchased reassuring promises from Russia by the sacrifice of Prince A., and possibly of something more, and that on the strength of these promises she means to require disarmament from France on the pain of war if it is refused.”

But this overt complaisance to his eastern neigh-

bour formed only one limb of the Chancellor's complex policy. He has left on record much argument to prove the fidelity with which he adhered to all the incongruous engagements into which he entered in these closing years of his ministry. So far as the rival claims of his two Imperial neighbours were concerned, he could make out a good case for himself. He did his best at this time, both in private and in public, to persuade Austria to acquiesce in Russia's claims to paramount interest in Bulgaria, and M. de Giers, the Russian Minister, though suspicious, admitted that he was keeping his promises.\(^1\) Presumably no such promises had been made in respect of England. Certain it is that, while both in Vienna and at Constantinople his ambassadors were working avowedly in Russia's support, he himself was, all the time, doing his utmost to urge the British Government to a more active resistance to her.

One of his methods was characteristic. The letters that summer of the Crown Princess Frederick to her mother, Queen Victoria, had conveyed more than one warning of approaching trouble in the Balkans from Russian activities. When the September crisis came, Lord Salisbury had humbly to admit the superiority of his Sovereign's information to his own. But the warnings, however accurate, had not been colourless. The Princess's informants emphasised to exaggeration the evils that must follow. The success of Russia in her present schemes would secure her control of Constantinople and her final domination in the whole of the Near East. If England wanted to retain a shred of reputation or influence in those regions she must be up and doing without loss of time. Once or twice the Chancellor was directly named as the confidential informant; in other instances Lord

\(^1\) Gr. Pol. der Eur.-Kab. vol. v. p. 115.
Salisbury had no doubt as to the original inspirer of the intermediary agents who were mentioned.

The evil which proverbially flows from backstairs diplomacy was neutralised on this occasion, as far as England was concerned, by the Queen's quality. Though her sympathies were dubiously with her Minister, she effectually eliminated any flavour of intrigue from her family correspondence by at once transcribing all such passages and forwarding them, generally without comment, for his information and judgment. They corroborated with illuminating detail deductions which he was simultaneously drawing from Count Hatzfeldt's language and supplied him incidentally with a useful argument towards bringing his royal mistress round to his own point of view.

On September 14, he reported a long conversation with the German ambassador, "In the main, his effort was to induce England to take the first step in resisting the advance of Russia; holding out hopes that, if we went on, Austria would follow. This advice so manifestly suits the present objects of Prince Bismarck that it cannot be accepted as disinterested." A fortnight later he enlarged on the same theme.

To the Queen, September 30, 1886.

"The disturbing and misleading element in the present aspect of affairs is, in Lord Salisbury's judgment, the extreme desire of Prince Bismarck to get Russia occupied, and therefore disarmed. This is the origin of the taunts that have been showered upon us by the German press; this taints and renders valueless the advice he gives us; probably it affects the suggestions which he gets conveyed to the Crown Princess. From Count Hatzfeldt's language and from many other indications, Lord Salisbury infers that he wishes to force us into a position where we shall have no choice but war. Your Majesty's telegram of this
morning confirms this view. He would like to see Russia at Constantinople, for he believes that Turkey, England, and Austria would then be forced into war, while he maintained a benevolent neutrality, or, if the occasion should arise, struck another blow at France.

"It is very necessary under these circumstances to pick our steps very carefully, so that we should neither, on one side, pull Bismarck’s chestnuts out of the fire, nor, on the other, from fear of that mishap, neglect to defend our own general interests."

Since Lord Salisbury and Lord Iddesleigh were neither prepared to purchase the friendship of Russia by acquiescing in her absorption of Bulgaria and achieved vassalage of Turkey, nor to go to war with her in order to be agreeable to Prince Bismarck, it became urgent that she should be discouraged from following up her envoy’s menaces by armed intervention. To this avenue of escape Austria held the key, and for the remainder of that year the efforts of the British Foreign Office were concentrated on the always difficult task of obtaining a clear declaration of purpose from the statesmen of Vienna.

Count Hatzfeldt, with an ingenuousness of which he would hardly have been guilty after a longer intimacy with the British Minister, had suggested that, if England would take the lead in warning Russia away from Austrian frontiers, “it might be hoped that Austria would follow.” Lord Salisbury had decorously returned the ball by expressing a belief that “vigorou action on the part of Austria would have great influence on national opinion in England.” Vigorous action was not easy to the distracted counsels of the Dual Monarchy. The Emperor Francis was pro-Russian in his sympathies; both he and his Minister, Count Kalnoky, were still distrustful of
England; the secret understandings of Skiernivice and Kremsier had not been repudiated. But General Kaulbars' proceedings, acting on Hungarian sentiment, made adherence to them difficult. Remonstrances at St. Petersburg proved without effect, and on November 10, Lord Salisbury reported to the Queen that, in response to persistent questionings, the Austrian ambassador's tone had become "less cautious": "He not only admitted that if Russia occupied Bulgaria, Austria would protest, but he even went so far as to say that if Russia's occupation took a permanent character, war must be the result."

Russia's decision upon this issue still hung in the balance when the new year opened. She had warned the Bulgarians that, if they chose any Prince whom she had not nominated she would exercise the power of veto which she enjoyed as a signatory of the Berlin Treaty. The Bulgarians were equally resolved upon rejecting anyone whom she did nominate, and with their constitution thus indefinitely suspended, their internal politics lapsed into a turmoil of plot and counter-plot which was only saved from crystallising into civil war by the inflexible handgrip of the leading Regent, M. Stambouloff—the "Bismarck of the Balkans." The populace clamoured at intervals for national independence or the return of Alexander; Lord Salisbury pressed counsels of patience and self-control upon the Regents with varying expectations of success; and for twelve months the dreaded sequence of Bulgarian disorder, Russian intervention, and European war remained the expectation most convincing of probability.

But to the western onlookers this anxiety was overshadowed by a nearer and darker menace. The one forecast which greeted Lord Salisbury from nearly every Court in Europe on his return to the Foreign
Office was that war between France and Germany was inevitable and its outbreak to be looked for in the coming spring. The prediction was not confined to diplomats. Though no overt cause of quarrel appeared, the statesmen of both Berlin and Paris professed an equally earnest conviction of each other's sinister intentions: the newspaper press teemed with headlines on the "State of Europe," with warnings from "well-informed quarters" and head-shaking hopes that "counsels of peace would prevail"; while the Bourses of the different capitals gave ceaselessly mobile expression to the anxieties of investors.

It would be difficult even now to say upon which side of the Rhine the fire was lighted which accounted for this volume of smoke. There were sinister features in France's political mentality at that time. The expenditure of blood and treasure for a most inadequate return which had accompanied her excursion two years before into colonial enterprise—notably in Tonquin and Madagascar—had produced a reaction against the experiment and its author, M. Jules Ferry. He had associated it with a policy of conciliation towards Germany, and when, held up to execration as le Tonquinois, he was driven from public life, a return of devotion to la revanche as the national ideal was a congruous sequel. There were also disquieting symptoms of a loss of political balance, of a shaken faith in the country's constitutional basis. For the first time since the years immediately following the establishment of the Republic, elections had shown an increase in the royalist vote, and the republican majority, panic-stricken, had responded by edicts of banishment against the Orleans princes. From the opposite direction there had been labour troubles on a large scale, accompanied by violence and bloodshed—a reminder of the red terror of 1871. Discontent was
being intensified by protracted revelations of corruption in high places; a year later the son-in-law of the President of the Republic himself became involved in them, and the President was forced to resign.

Whether it was to be looked upon as a product of this pervading unrest or a contributory cause to it, the phenomenon of the "Boulanger fever" directed it indubitably to warlike issues. General Boulanger had become the popular idol of France. He was an officer of no professional distinction; an extreme Radical in home politics, but, as a fellow-opponent of the existing order, receiving the unavowed support of the royalist parties. His only apparent claims to the hero-worship of which he had become the object were his admitted readiness to defy civil authority, the beauty of the black horse upon which he paraded the streets of Paris, and his addiction to flamboyant phrase-making about the glories of France and the valour of her soldiers. A negative reason for the national obsession could be found in the absence of any competing personality. France was politically leaderless; twenty-four changes of Ministry could be reckoned in the four years from 1885 to 1888—none of them expressing any movement of political opinion in the country. In submission to popular enthusiasm rather than by the free choice of politicians, General Boulanger had been made Minister of War at the beginning of '86, and, though the Prime Minister who appointed him was, as usual, turned out a few months later, he had survived into the next Cabinet. By an unfortunate coincidence, a Commission appointed some years previously had, just at this juncture, reported in favour of strengthening developments in France's military organisation.

Therefore, a simple explanation was arguable of the anxiety attributed to Prince Bismarck in the
autumn and of his intricate diplomacy towards Russia: a genuine conviction of France's will for war would have accounted for much. In December he gave public expression to such a conviction by introducing to the Reichstag a Bill providing for a substantial increase in the German army. In the debates on this measure he dwelt openly upon the imminence of the danger threatening upon Germany's western frontier. His inspired press reiterated the warning with ardent insistence. It was the reception which France gave to these loud-voiced proclamations of her aggressive purpose which made their sincerity difficult of belief. The Paris mob might cheer General Boulanger and his black charger; hot-heads here and there might shout for the révanche, and royalist propagandists hold out its promise as the reward of revolution. But the obvious tremor which passed through the nation as a whole showed that the peacefulness innate in the peasant and the small rentier was still vividly reinforced by memories of 1870. So strongly was this evident that there were times when Lord Salisbury suspected the man of blood and iron of a deliberate intention of unprovoked attack upon his neighbour should conditions in Europe prove favourable, and of preparing, through a skilfully manufactured "scare", a suitable moral atmosphere for the enterprise as well as an increase of material force. At other times he would deduce a less cynical and more complex inspiration—a real fear of what the rudderless course of French popular sentiment might lead to; a will to frighten it into self-control; and a readiness to profit by the opportunity in order to induce a peace-loving Reichstag to strengthen his authority in Europe by enlarging his army.

The Reichstag, or its majority, was peace-loving;

1 See above, p. 8.
militarism had not yet permeated German society. In January, in spite of Prince Bismarck’s insistent warnings, it rejected his Army Bill. He wasted no breath in protest but instantly dissolved it. During the following six weeks the problem of purpose became hopelessly obscured in a tumult of electioneering. The only certainty was the Chancellor’s resolve, with whatever ultimate object, to secure his Army Bill. It was witnessed to by the price which he paid for the deciding vote of the Catholic party—closing his twelve years’ quarrel with Rome by an unconditional surrender to Vatican demands which must have been a bitterly reluctant one. Meanwhile, the nerves of Europe were kept constantly on the stretch by the increased energy and unanimity with which every voice at the Minister’s command, whether in public or in private, emphasised the nearness of the catastrophe.

Such was the international atmosphere, east and west, in which Lord Salisbury resumed work at the Foreign Office in the beginning of 1887. It sufficiently accounted both for the unanimity with which the Cabinet had rejected Lord Randolph’s proposed retrenchments in armament and for Mr. Goschen’s insistence upon securing the most authoritative direction that could be had for the country’s policy abroad.

The German Chancellor still clung to the hope of recruiting England as an auxiliary defender of his eastern frontier.

To the Queen, January 24, 1887.¹

“Lord Salisbury with his humble duty respectfully submits that the German ambassador called this

¹ Letters of Queen Victoria, 3rd series, vol. i. p. 262.
afternoon at the Foreign Office. Lord Salisbury has reported the substance of his conversation by telegraph. The most remarkable feature in it was his assumption that war with France was very near, joined to a constant disclaimer of any wish for war on the part of Germany. He again and again asked if we should be able to look quietly on, especially if Turkey and Austria were involved. He pointed out the advantages which we enjoyed from the position of Germany towards France, in that France could not do us any mischief because of the fear of Germany—and he pressed for 'reciprocity.' He ended by telling Lord Salisbury that he thought that no more salutary thing could happen to England than to be involved in a 'good war'; and he expressed his ever-recurring astonishment at the ignorance of public opinion in this country.

"Lord Salisbury indicated his own personal opinion that Austria and Turkey ought not to be abandoned if seriously pressed; but he did not conceal his entire uncertainty as to the course which parliamentary opinion might take.

"Mons. Waddington called very shortly after and was evidently very uneasy. . .

"The prospect is very gloomy abroad, but England cannot brighten it. Torn in two by a controversy which almost threatens her existence, she cannot in the present state of public opinion interfere with any decisive action abroad. The highest interests would be risked here at home, while nothing effective could be done by us to keep peace on the Continent. We have absolutely no power to restrain either France or Germany, while all the power and influence we have will be needed to defend our influence in the South East of Europe." ¹

To Sir Augustus Paget, January 26, 1887.

"Rumours of warlike preparation come from Italy, but I suppose it is well ascertained that Austria has

¹ It should be noted that Parliament had not yet met when this letter was written, and that the solidarity of the coalition majority under the shock of Lord Randolph's defection was still untested.
nothing to fear on that head and that Italy’s concupiscence is directed towards Savoy and Nice. I can hardly believe that all these warlike speculations rest upon any solid base of reasoning or fact; but the fact remains that the Chancellor, even in his closest intimacies, maintains that the danger of it is imminent. It is curious that everybody should be arming if there is no real danger, and yet there is no shadow of a pretence for it."

Sir William White was now formally accredited as ambassador at Constantinople.1 Lord Salisbury wrote to him with reference to a rumoured Russian proposal for summoning a Conference on the Bulgarian question:

To Sir William White, January 26, 1887.

"It may serve conveniently to fill up the time till France and Germany are by the ears. If that event should happen, the Emperor of Russia will be more than human if he does not try to get some advantage in the Balkan Peninsula, because he will be certain that Austria cannot be assisted by Germany. But will there be war between France and Germany? The tone of the German ambassador would distinctly forebode it, and the Rothschilds seem to think so. What I hear of Bismarck’s utterances to private friends points in the same direction. But it may be one big electioneering shave, and it certainly is difficult to imagine how Bismarck will get a pretext for attack out of the meek mood in which France continues to live. . . ."

On the 30th, he wrote to the Queen 2 with regard to the interdependence of the double crisis in a strain

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1 In 1885 he had been there on a temporary mission between the departure of one ambassador and the arrival of his successor. In consequence of the revolt in Eastern Roumelia he had been kept there till the ensuing crisis was over, and in October 1886, after Prince Alexander’s kidnapping, had been transferred there permanently as ambassador.

2 Letters of Queen Victoria, 3rd series, vol. i. p. 265.
which would not have commended itself to Count Hatzfeldt. Prince Bismarck had made it clear that, so long as the tension with France continued, he could do nothing to thwart any enterprise of Russia’s in South-Eastern Europe. The moral deduced for Lord Salisbury’s benefit by the ambassador—and apparently also by the Crown Princess in writing to her mother—was one of increased belligerency on the part of England in defence of her own and Austria’s interests. But the conclusion which he impressed upon his Sovereign was precisely the contrary one. During this period of Germany’s paralysis, every effort must be made to avoid provocation to Russia. The Czar’s character must be taken into account: “He is a passionate but slow-witted man: in his cooler moments, hesitating and helpless, and nervous as to the political effects of war on his own country.” Left to himself he would be averse from risking it. Lord Salisbury had therefore urged upon the Bulgarian delegates who had visited England that winter, the extreme importance of doing nothing which would be so derogatory to him in the eyes of his own subjects as to force him into fighting. He was glad to say that they had acquiesced.

His further counsels at Sofia that spring were punctuated by similar urgings, and needless occasions of offence were, in fact, avoided.

Her Majesty was naturally one of the channels chosen for disseminating that view of the situation which the German Chancellor was anxious should obtain. At the end of January she forwarded to her Minister a letter written this time, not by her daughter but, more responsibly, by her son-in-law, the Crown Prince Frederick. He reported that Prince Bismarck thought the “chances of war nearer than he had hitherto done” and he himself evidently shared that
opinion. France was making military preparations which could only be explained in one way; another ministerial crisis was imminent in Paris, whose outcome might well be the elevation of Boulanger to be "Minister-President." Then we must look for acts inspired by his vanity and his ambition for the rôle of a second Napoleon. The usual moral as to England’s duty was deduced, though the form which it took was new. The Chancellor hoped, the Prince said, that England and Italy would come to such an understanding as would enable them to make a joint naval demonstration on the coast of France.

At the end of a very characteristic letter of the Queen’s, in which comments upon the characters of certain Bulgarian politicians, the dubious policy of the Court of Vienna, a society scandal in London, the inadequacy of one of her ambassadors, and the good manners of an under-secretary flowed together in unordered sequence, she added a postscript, evidently suggested—and as evidently uninfluenced—by her son-in-law’s communication: "Could not Lord Salisbury ask Prince Bismarck what ground he has for going to war with France and also ask the French Government the same? In ’70, it was always said that if Lord Clarendon had not died there would not have been war. Lord Salisbury is a stronger man than Lord Clarendon and could surely devise some means to prevent so great a calamity and so wicked an act" (January 26). The eminent common sense of the opening suggestion did not make it easier for translation into diplomatic practice, and the Foreign Minister in his reply passed the postscript over in silence. But he was not allowed to escape. A further letter noted his omission. "Lord Salisbury has not answered her question as to whether he could not urge peace, and some soothing expressions on
“SO GREAT A CALAMITY . . .”

the part of Germany and France in that direction. She always thinks of 1870 and that not enough was done then to avert war” (January 31).

Lord Salisbury promised to do his best, and two days later reported that he had represented to Count Hatzfeldt Her Majesty’s “earnest horror of the possible calamities of an impending war and impressed considerations of that kind as strongly as possible.” “He only replied, as Lord Salisbury expected, by the most earnest asseverations of the pacific intentions of the German Government. Nevertheless, Lord Salisbury thought he traced in a very long conversation indications of great anxiety, and a disposition to press the idea that the beginner of actual operations was not necessarily the aggressor but might be forced into war by the preparations of his opponent” (February 2).1

Another topic was also dealt with in this “very long conversation.” Though the German Chancellor’s hopes for an understanding between England and Italy outstripped their fulfilment, they were not unfounded. Italy’s ambitions as a Mediterranean power had overcome her age-long hostility to Austria, and of late years she had been in close relations with the Central Powers. The Slavicising of the Balkans and the Gallicising of Northern Africa were the two things which she most dreaded, and she shared with an even greater fervour of conviction in German alarms as to the threatening possibilities of French restlessness. During the winter her ambassador had approached Lord Iddesleigh with proposals for a closer understanding between the two Powers, and Lord Salisbury did not allow the correspondence to drop.

1 Letters of Queen Victoria, 3rd series, vol. i. p. 268.
To Sir Savile Lumley, January 21, 1887.

"There is no State with whom we could work more heartily. Our political objects seldom clash and we have the enormous advantage in dealing with Italy that we have no accumulation of grudges in the past to smother kindly feeling in the present. In all our relations with Russia and France, this source of difficulty is never closed.

"I have asked Corti to be a little more precise as to the mode of co-operation proposed by Robilant and to ask what is the particular point on which Italy might discern danger to herself from the advance of Russia. At present it is satisfactory to see there is no thought of the Trentino."

Count Corti duly particularised the nature of the understanding for which his Government wished. Lord Salisbury's reply was interesting as establishing thus, at the outset of his Ministry, the principles which were to dominate his response to many similar invitations in the future.

To the Queen, February 2, 1887.

"Yesterday Count Corti came to see Lord Salisbury. He was the bearer of propositions from the Italian Government for a closer understanding between Italy and England. He left a memorandum with Lord Salisbury of which the effect was to offer an alliance in case of war against France. There were other propositions of co-operation which were more acceptable—such as common efforts for maintaining the status quo in the Aegean, the Adriatic, and the Black Sea, and on the African coast. But the paper ended with a proposal that in case either Power was at war with France, the other Power would give it naval assistance. Lord Salisbury promised to bring the

1 British ambassador at Rome.  
2 The Italian ambassador in London.  
3 The Italian Foreign Minister.  
4 Letters of Queen Victoria, 3rd series, vol. i. p. 268.
matter before his colleagues, but told Count Corti first that England never promised material assistance in view of an uncertain war of which the object and cause were unknown; and, secondly, that any promise, even of diplomatic co-operation, could not be directed against any single Power such as France. But that on the other hand the policy of Italy and Great Britain was very similar, and that within the limit of the principles mentioned by Lord Salisbury, we should be glad to co-operate with them; especially in the maintenance of the status quo.

"To-day the matter was discussed at length in the Cabinet and it was resolved that Lord Salisbury should draw up a reply in the above sense. This afternoon he saw Count Hatzfeldt, who brought a message from Prince Bismarck, earnestly recommending an understanding of this kind as a means of preserving peace. A similar message had been sent by Sir E. Malet in a private and secret telegram. Lord Salisbury discussed the matter at length with the German ambassador in the same tone. He impressed upon the latter that, though the assistance of England might be confidently looked for to maintain the status quo in the Mediterranean, and might be very probably looked for if France were to attack Italy, and Italy found herself in any danger, it was very unlikely to be given if Italy made an aggressive war on France. Count Hatzfeldt pressed the case of a war in which Italy should be the nominal assailant, having attacked merely to anticipate a certain attack from France. In this case, Lord Salisbury did not hold out any hope of English sympathy and aid."

A postscript to this letter is illustrative of the writer's methods of doing business:

"Lord Salisbury prays Your Majesty to let him have this letter back to copy, as it is the sole record he has kept of these conversations. At present he is keeping the matter secret even from the Foreign Office, and has told no soul except his colleagues."
Three days later he again saw the Italian ambassador and his German sponsor. The latter, while avoiding any suggestion of his own Government's being included in the arrangement, urged that the present moment was a "Wendepunkt," that a new grouping of the Powers was imminent, and that if England did not wish to be left out in the cold she must take her part. Lord Salisbury told Mr. Goschen (February 5) that he had encouraged the "grouping idea," on the understanding that Germany showed herself diplomatically helpful in other directions.

To the Queen, February 5, 1887.

"Lord Salisbury has seen Count Corti and Count Hatzfeldt to-day, and has discussed with them further the projected Italian understanding. He has made them understand that this country cannot promise its assistance to any other country till it knows what the casus belli is; and that we could not under any circumstances take part in an aggressive war against France. On the other hand England has great interests that neither France nor Russia should increase their domination over the shores either of the Mediterranean, the Aegean, or the Black Sea; and would be disposed to co-operate heartily with Italy for that end.

"It seems likely that some informal understanding will be arrived at; but both the ambassadors understand that we can enter into no formal Treaty, and that we can only speak for the existing Ministry with certainty."

The form finally adopted for this cautiously limited entente was an interchange of notes between the Foreign Secretary and the Italian ambassador which were not even identical. Agreement was recorded in

1 "Turning-point."
2 Letters of Queen Victoria, 3rd series, vol. i. p. 271.
both as to the policy of maintaining as far as possible the *status quo* on the shores of the Mediterranean and its adjacent seas, and of averting an "extension of dominion" upon them by any of the great Powers. In the event of these objects being endangered, Count Corti intimated—though with the mistiness facilitated by the subtleties of diplomatic French—a readiness for combined action in defence of common interests. But Lord Salisbury confined himself to the expression of an edifying wish for a co-operation which was deliberately left undefined: "the character of that co-operation must be decided by the two Governments when the occasion for it arises, according to the circumstances of the case."

"Italy," he wrote to Sir Augustus Paget at Vienna, "has asked us to come to a closer understanding and we have been exchanging despatches with her, more effusive, perhaps, than precise; but Robilant's first proposal—which, according to our traditions of course, we could not accept—was for an offensive and defensive alliance against France" (February 9). He deprecated the importance which the Germans seemed to attach to the negotiation. "Our professions are so guarded," he wrote to Sir Edward Malet, "that they do not seem to me to amount to more than might have been assumed without any despatches at all" (February 16).

The despatches were signed on the 12th of February—he had already sent their text to the Queen.

*To the Queen, February 10, 1887.*¹

"The English despatch—which, of course, is the only one binding on this country, is so drawn as to leave entirely unfettered the discretion of Your Majesty's Government as to whether, in any particular

case they will carry their support of Italy as far as 'material co-operation.'

"But, short of a pledge upon this subject, it undoubtedly carries very far the 'relations plus intimes' which have been urged upon us. It is as close an alliance as the parliamentary character of our institutions will permit. Your Majesty's advisers recommend it on the whole as necessary in order to avoid serious danger. If in the present grouping of nations, which Prince Bismarck tells us is now taking place, England was left out in isolation, it might well happen that the adversaries who are arming against each other on the Continent, might treat the English Empire as divisable booty, by which their differences might be adjusted, and, though England could defend herself, it would be at fearful risk and cost. The interests of Italy are so closely parallel to our own, that we can combine with her safely. The despatches are only drafts, and the English one will of course not be signed till it has Your Majesty's approval."

A fortnight later the Austrian ambassador asked for a similar understanding on the same restricted basis. Lord Salisbury was willing and notes were duly exchanged in March, while an agreement of the same nature effected between Austria and Italy completed the circle of acknowledged sympathies—it scarcely amounted to more.

A letter to Mr. Alfred Austin of this date recalls the underlying realities which gave significance to even such cautious interchanges of goodwill.

To Mr. Alfred Austin, March 8, 1887.

"My dear Austin—I have read the article in the Standard this morning, on the condition of Europe, with great satisfaction. It is a very good article and will do a great deal of good. It expresses the facts exactly as I believe they are. I believe that England will fight in company with Austria, Turkey and Italy
in case Russia should attack the Balkan States; and it is well the Czar should know it—though, of course, in a parliamentary State, we can give no specific promises."

In despite of the general anticipation, the tension in the west of Europe relaxed with the coming of spring. In Germany the elections had resulted in a complete victory for Prince Bismarck and his Army Bill, and the press war-campaign ceased. Shortly afterwards there was another change of Government in France and the incoming Ministers, painfully impressed by the risks recently run, decided to reject General Boulanger as a colleague. His successor at the Ministry of War took an early opportunity of removing him from Paris to a provincial command in Clermont-Ferrand. He had not been finished with, but, for the time, his influence was in abeyance.

In the east the prospect was still disquieting through the growing unrest in Bulgaria. Lord Salisbury’s suspicions were aroused by Count Hatzfeldt’s new insistence upon the Czar’s will for peace and the consequent impunity with which the Bulgarians might now embark upon interesting political experiments.

To Sir William White, April 5, 1887.

"During the last fortnight the Regents have given us rather a scare. We were informed that they were resolved on re-electing Prince Alexander and on declaring their independence of the Porte. A more ingenious combination for leaving themselves in an absolutely helpless condition could not have been devised. They must have had Turkey and Russia on their backs at once—and no other Power would have had a pretext for helping them, even if it had had the inclination.

"However, we now understand that this was all a
mistake—that they never intended anything illegal, and that they are only asking Prince Alexander as a matter of form, being certain he will refuse. Let us hope that all will come straight.

"The present aspect of European affairs is rather puzzling. The best explanation I can offer is that Bismarck has tried to induce Russia to sit still, or take a bribe, while France is being crushed, and that Russia has declined. Next, he has tried to get Russia involved in the Balkan Peninsula, and here too he has failed. And now he is thinking what he shall try next. But I believe he is still true to the main principle of his policy—employing his neighbours to pull out each other's teeth."

He sent the Queen a somewhat similar diagnosis of recent history:

To the Queen, April 4, 1887.¹

"Lord Salisbury, as the result of many conversations with Count Hatzfeldt and piecing together indications furnished by chance expressions, is disposed to believe that Prince Bismarck did wish for war with France; that the Emperor of Russia, afraid of being left without an ally, informed Prince Bismarck or allowed him to see, that France would not be altogether abandoned, and that since that time the Prince has been trying to make trouble between Russia and Bulgaria, hoping that thereby the Czar’s hands would be too full to suffer him to interfere on behalf of France, and on the other hand that no harm would come of it in view of the recently concluded understanding between Italy, Austria, and England.

"This is mere conjecture, but Count Hatzfeldt's evident desire to persuade Lord Salisbury to advise the Bulgarians to pursue an adventurous policy has led him to think that there must be some explanation of the kind. It is to be hoped, however, that if this be

¹ Letters of Queen Victoria, 3rd series, vol. i. p. 294.
true, he will be foiled,—for the Bulgarians, though under great temptation, are behaving prudently.”

An interesting comment on this “mere conjecture” is to be found in the German Foreign Office documents. Secret negotiations between Russia and Germany had begun early in January for the conclusion of what came to be known later as the Reinsurance Treaty, to replace the defunct Drei-Kaiser-Bund. Soon after they were opened, they were unaccountably held up at St. Petersburg and towards the end of February Prince Bismarck wrote irritably to his ambassador there, asking for some explanation of M. de Giers’ prolonged silence. In his reply, the ambassador mentioned, as possibly throwing light upon the subject, that he had been warned that Russian opinion would not tolerate an overwhelming defeat of France or one that would eliminate her as a great Power. M. de Giers had assured him of his confidence that the German Government aimed at no such issue—but did not in fact volunteer a resumption of negotiations until after the intensive German propaganda against France had stopped in the third week of March.

2 By the provisions of this Treaty—which was signed in the following June—Germany recognised Russia’s “historical” rights in Bulgaria and—in an “archi-secret” protocol—promised her “benevolent neutrality” in any measures which the Czar might find it necessary to take in “guarding the key of his Empire” at Constantinople. Russia on her side promised neutrality in the event of a French attack on Germany. The Russian Minister insisted on absolute secrecy owing to the extreme unpopularity of Germany with his countrymen at the time.
3 The Russian Foreign Minister.
CHAPTER II

1887

THE WOLFF CONVENTION

Lord Salisbury’s refusal to join in any alliance directed specifically against France was complementary to an effort upon which he was at that time preparing to engage to establish better relations with her. They were certainly capable of improvement. It was not only in Egypt that her unfriendliness was displayed nor was Lord Salisbury convinced that that quarrel was its sole originating cause. There were patent reasons why the timidity of her ephemeral Ministries, bound in self-defence to find some objective for popular ill-humour, should seek to direct it elsewhere than across the Rhine.

However that may have been, the result appeared in the emergence of a multitude of small but embittering controversies. For the continuance of one of these Lord Salisbury admitted his own country to have been largely responsible. The free passage of the Suez Canal in time of war had never yet been internationally guaranteed. The other Powers interested had declared themselves ready to accept any settlement upon which France and England could agree. Lord Granville in 1885 had promised to co-operate; France was eager to safeguard de Lesseps’ great achievement; but, irritated by her unceasing and captious interferences in Egyptian administration,
FRANCE'S PROVOCATIONS

the subsequent British Governments, absorbed in the excitement of a double general election, had been in no hurry to satisfy her. In November '86, as has been related, the majority of the Cabinet, under Lord Randolph's impulsion and in opposition to their chief, had still voted for postponement. After the January reconstruction they presumably suffered themselves to be persuaded or overruled, and in a message to Sir Henry Wolff on February 18, Lord Salisbury announced the opening of informal negotiations on the subject with the French ambassador.

Other questions in dispute, however, could not so easily be solved by British complaisance. Early in February, those already in existence were added to by the action of a French naval officer, who planted his country's flag on a desert spot on the Somali coast, whose only attraction to desire appears to have been the fact that the Union Jack was already flying there. It was well within the undisputed limits of the British Protectorate, the delimitation of whose frontier with that of French Somaliland was being negotiated at the time. The moment chosen for this demonstration was when the thunders were pealing at their loudest on the other bank of the Rhine, and when Lord Salisbury was actually engaged in resisting Italy's pressure for an offensive and defensive alliance against France. He wrote to Lord Lyons in a mood of pardonable irritation:

To Lord Lyons, February 5, 1887.

"The French are inexplicable. One would have thought that under existing circumstances it was not necessary to make enemies,—that there were enough provided for France by nature just now; but she seems bent upon aggravating the patient beast of

1 Vol. III. p. 322.
burden that lives here by every insult and worry her ingenuity can devise.

"In Newfoundland she has issued orders which, if faithfully executed, must bring the French and English fleets into collision. At the New Hebrides, spite of repeated promises, she will not stir. In Egypt she baulks a philanthropic change out of pure 'cussedness.' In Morocco she is engaged in appropriating the territory by instalments, threatening to reach Tangier at no distant date. And now, just as we are entering upon pacific negotiations, the French Government send orders to do precisely that which, a month ago, Waddington promised they should not do,—namely, run up the French flag at Dongarita. It is very difficult to prevent oneself from wishing for another Franco-German war to put a stop to this incessant vexation.

"We have protested earnestly about Dongarita—which has more the air of a studied insult than any of the others. As to the Newfoundland fisheries, if they execute their threats they render the passage of a Bait Bill next year a matter of certainty. We have strained the goodwill of the colonists very far in refusing to allow it this year. The other matters will, I suppose, be the subject of slow negotiations."

Two months later he made mocking reference to the continued French delay in closing the futile Somaliland dispute. "At Dongarita itself the two flags were flying side by side; but a provident Somali who passed that way thought it would simplify the situation to carry them both away. So now the place is utterly desert." (To Lord Lyons, April 27.)

France claimed that her activities in Morocco were limited to unaggressive negotiations with the Sultan for

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1 The abolition of the corvée or government exaction of forced labour. In July '86 the International Debt Commission had given leave to add £250,000 to the limit of administrative expenditure for the purpose of replacing the corvée by paid labour, but the French had objected to ratify this permission. (Modern Egypt, vol. ii. pp. 412-416.)
the "rectification" of her Algerian frontier. But in that year of strained European nerves, Lord Salisbury's suspicions were shared elsewhere to practical effect. In May, Spain entered into a four years' secret engagement with Italy and her Teutonic backers—which was confidentially communicated to the British Minister—for the maintenance of the status quo in North Africa and the common renunciation of separate understandings with France.

The quarrel over the fishing rights off Newfoundland had attained the dignified age of nearly two centuries, having originated in the provisions of the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, which gave French rivals in the cod-fishery the invidious right of landing and drying their fish on the territory of their competitors. Their Government had recently embittered a perennial bad feeling by subsidising in neutral markets this offensive competition with the Newfoundland fishermen, and the Newfoundland legislature had responded by passing a Baits Act devised expressly for the injury of the foreign intruders. Lord Salisbury, on his introduction to this latest phase of the ancient quarrel, had appealed to his Colonial Secretary for information. Sir Henry Holland was among the most personally intimate of his colleagues and was possessed of a very kindred sense of humour to his own:

To Sir Henry Holland, January 17, 1887.

"My Dear Holland—On my first appearance at the Foreign Office, Waddington has fallen upon me with extreme ferocity on the subject of 'Newfoundland bait.' What have you been doing with bait? Pray be pacific, but, if you intend plunging into hostilities upon this absorbing subject, at least let me ask for some arguments to defend myself with. I have got a vague notion that it is connected with the French
bounties; and whenever Waddington said ‘bait,’ I said ‘bounty.’ But when he asked me how I got from one to the other, I entirely broke down.”

The next day he had apparently solved the problem and wrote in graver mood to warn Sir Henry that the question was a “very awkward” one and to urge delay in allowing the Newfoundland Act. The fishermen on both sides were meanwhile taking the law into their own hands and British and French gunboats appeared shortly afterwards upon the scene. The Baits Act was postponed for a year and by means of strenuous ingenuities in compromise, critical developments were averted for the moment. Lord Salisbury used to declare that this Treaty of the dead past had caused him more worry and labour than all its modern successors put together.

Imperial ill feeling of a more serious and widespread character was aroused by another of the grievances catalogued in his letter to Lord Lyons. The New Hebrides group of islands, lying some 1000 miles from the coasts of Australia on the one hand and New Zealand on the other, and about a third of that distance from the French penal settlement in New Caledonia, had been made the subject of a self-denying convention between France and England, precluding both Powers from its annexation. Nevertheless, in the spring of 1886, the French, pleading native outrages upon their nationals, had landed troops upon one of the islands and were credited with the intention of transferring their criminals there. Though it was, in fact, further from the Australian continent than New Caledonia, the Colonial Governments, who had regretfully surrendered hopes of British annexation in deference to the pledge given, were clamorous that France should also be made to honour it. Lord Rosebery first,

1 See Chapter XII. for their more serious recrudescence three years later.
and then Lord Iddesleigh, had emphatically supported their protest. The French admitted illegality but they did not withdraw their soldiers, who talked openly of permanent occupation. Lord Salisbury resumed remonstrance but the Paris Government remained obstructive and, in the spring, Australian anger rose to fever height.

That was the year of Queen Victoria’s Jubilee and became notable in the Empire’s history for the meeting of the first Imperial Conference. The later development of its functions was as spontaneous and undeferent as other growths in the British Constitution, and on this first occasion it was summoned only for the limited purpose of discussing what contribution in men and ships each self-governing colony was prepared to make to Imperial defence. But, having assembled in London, its delegates took the opportunity to express their views upon other subjects in which they were interested. Among them, the French occupation of the New Hebrides. There was much vigorous criticism of Downing Street slackness. Discussion was initiated with the Prime Minister through the Colonial Secretary as intermediary. Lord Salisbury had suggested utilising the Suez Canal question as a counter in the negotiation. The overseas representatives, still innocent of international responsibilities which their children were to learn thirty years later in a school of fire, saw no necessity for bargaining on such a clear issue. Why did not the Prime Minister insist upon France’s keeping her word without more ado? The Prime Minister, who for weeks past had been battling his way for world peace through a complicated European crisis, did not take the criticism meekly. “Insistence” addressed to a great Power without softening of negotiation, meant threat of war and nothing else. Was that what the delegates
wanted? The unsophisticated visitors repudiated such bloodthirsty purpose but continued to protest that the Government of a great nation ought not to be bribed to the fulfilment of its pledges. Lord Salisbury's feelings were not soothed by an accompanying proposal that one of their number should go to Paris to negotiate separately according to their own ideas with the French Foreign Office. "They are the most unreasonable people I ever heard or dreamt of," he complained. Sir Henry suggested placably that he should come and address them himself. He did so, warning his colleague beforehand that he should "speak the truth in love." In spite of such ominous preparation his speech proved effectually persuasive to his fellow-subjects. The proposal for independent negotiation was not pressed and he was left to prosecute his defence of Australasian interests at his own time and by his own methods.

These did not involve any exculpation of the French aggression and "the truth in love" seems to have been impartially distributed. Official publicity for the discussions in Conference had been laid down as a fundamental condition of the new experiment. Lord Salisbury forgot this provision and was only reminded of it when the report of his speech was sent to him for correction previous to publication. He was horror-struck, penitently admitting that it was all his own fault, but declaring that if his candid criticisms of the French Government were published, all further negotiation would be hopeless. Attempts were made at drastic editing—but they broke down—and, finally, Mr. Goschen was appealed to for a detached opinion. He gave it without hesitation: his chief's remarks were "quite unfit for publication." So a formula was agreed upon for communication to the press which became an enduring precedent: "The proceedings
of this day related to matters in discussion with foreign Governments and were therefore confidential."

These various disagreements, though they seriously irritated British opinion both at home and overseas, had no wider repercussions. It was in Egypt that France's persistent hostility became, indirectly, of importance in European affairs. Lord Salisbury's letters reveal the extent to which its reaction, particularly upon Anglo-German relations, influenced him in the new and often criticised departure in Egyptian policy which he attempted this year.

Co-operation with Germany had not been productive of the content hoped for eighteen months before. Lord Salisbury still recognised Prince Bismarck's claim for her as being pre-eminently the "satisfied" power in Europe. The ambition for colonial and naval supremacy which had already bitten her traders, professors, and service-men, had not yet attacked her Government. The architect of the German Empire was anxious to rest and be thankful in the contemplation of his achievement, and this disposition in him contrasted favourably both with France's unstable direction and pervading restlessness of discontent and with the incoherent aggressiveness of Russian Pan-Slavism. But recent happenings had suggested doubts as to whether his methods were not as great a danger to European peace as the aims of the others. Satisfaction, unfortunately, is no guarantee of security and Prince Bismarck's nerves had become irritable and enfeebled by age. His fears, operating through his innate unscrupulousness, presented ugly possibilities. The scare on the Rhine frontier taught the same lesson as the ceaseless pressure to induce a quarrel between England and Russia against which Lord Salisbury had been diplomatically digging his heels in since the day that he took office.
There were other causes for discontent. The Chancellor's habit of using his friendship as an instrument of coercion had been getting on his English colleague's nerves. Overseas questions between the two countries were fortunately not numerous at the moment. There had been trouble in connection with Samoa. The Consuls of Great Britain, Germany, and the United States had for some years, by right of the commercial interests of their nationals and the number of them who were settled in the islands, assisted the native rulers with advice which was sometimes imperative and often contradictory. The reigning king —Malietoa—had quarrelled with the Germans and had, embarrassingly, invited annexation by England. The German Consul had responded by espousing the cause of a rival claimant to the throne; conditions virtually amounting to civil war had supervened, and negotiations for some modus vivendi between London, Berlin, and Washington had been in progress since early in '86. They had proceeded with comparatively little friction, but it was mainly because Lord Salisbury refused to treat the matter as one of primary importance to Great Britain. In November, he had enjoined upon Sir Philip Currie the necessity of "sitting upon the Colonial Office" with regard to it: "We shall get into a new Angra Pequena trouble if we do not look out. That is to say, we shall force him [Bismarck] into a menacing position upon a matter upon which we are not prepared to resist him to the end and the result will be a discreditable 'skedaddle'" (November 30, 1886).

In East Africa the reactions of the German Chancellor's temper were more unavoidable and more troublesome. The decision of the International Commission appointed in the autumn of 1885 had established the Sultan of Zanzibar's sovereignty over the
Arab-inhabited coast-line and further negotiation had issued in a Convention signed in 1886, under which the half-explored territory behind had been divided into German and English "spheres of influence" according to the operations already engaged in it by the respective trading companies. In the process of delimitating this frontier and negotiating with the Sultan for ports and coast concessions, Prince Bismarck's assumption of creditor's rights to the friendly offices of the British Government had become incessant and exasperating. Now and again British delegates or Consuls would show what he considered to be an excessive partiality for the interests of their compatriots, or fail of the support at the court of Zanzibar which he thought himself entitled to receive from them. Then messages would come through Sir Edward Malet or Count Hatzfeldt, warning the British Foreign Office that unless it mended its ways, it need expect no further help or countenance from Berlin.

It was in Egypt that these threats had operative power; it was upon his friendly offices there that the Chancellor mainly based his claims to "reciprocity." In spite of Sir Evelyn Baring's ingenious thrift, it was still necessary, from time to time, to resort to financial expediants for which international consents were required, and France's opposition to any proposal emanating from the British administration was always available for diplomatic support. And it was not only its economic needs that made it a temptation to provocative experiment. In view of England's own pledges and the Khedive's vassal status his consent could not fully regularise her position there. Apart from Prince Bismarck's requisitions Egypt had become an instrument always ready to the hand of Russian diplomats for stirring up Turkish jealousy
and creating yet another difficulty for British diplomacy in the Near East.

Such considerations acted this year with cumulative effect upon Lord Salisbury’s personal attitude towards the occupation. He had never contemplated it as permanent but he now became actively anxious for its termination. Already Sir Evelyn’s achievement in reducing economic chaos to order had opened out possibilities of escape which two years before had been unappreciable. Thus, between two phases of greater willingness for dominion, Egypt was mainly envisaged by him during the earlier months of 1887 as an intolerable hamper upon England’s policy in other parts of the world. The responsibilities which she had incurred to the Egyptian people must be fulfilled; her own Imperial interests must be safeguarded after her departure; but if these conditions could be satisfied, the sooner that that event could take place the better. Sir Henry Wolff was again sent out to Constantinople, this time with purposeful instructions for a settlement which, had France suffered it to be concluded, might have altered the history of Europe for a generation.

At the outset there seemed possibilities for compromise with her. Lord Salisbury, in February, wishing to reassure Sir Evelyn Baring as to the effect which an engagement for early withdrawal might have upon his projected reforms, reported to him a conversation which Sir Edward Malet had had with his French colleague, M. Herbette, at Berlin, in which the latter had insisted that all our difficulties were due to our refusal to fix a date for evacuation. “Only name a day—and Herbette promises that the corvée shall be abolished, the capitulations reformed, the press law passed, and powers of re-entry in certain contingencies secured to ourselves. ‘Only let us have the credit of
having induced you to fix a date!"—Meanwhile the Iron Chancellor is hinting that if we do not behave well, he will give the French their heads" (February 4).

On February 10, he sent the Queen a draft of the terms of settlement which it was proposed to offer to the Sultan.

To the Queen, February 10, 1887.\(^1\)

"It consists of 'suggestions' for the settlement of the Egyptian Question; and is designed to furnish a basis of Sir H. Wolff’s negotiations at Constantinople. It has become evident that a permanent occupation of Egypt will not only be against our pledges and exceedingly costly, but it also means permanent disagreement with France and Turkey which may at any moment take an acute form. On the other hand, we are pledged not to leave Egypt to the danger either of internal anarchy or of foreign invasion. The enclosed 'suggestions' are designed to reconcile these difficulties. England undertakes to leave Egypt in five years, if at the time there is no apprehension of internal or external disturbance, but she retains the power of entering again at any time if there shall be danger of invasion, or anarchy, or of Egypt not fulfilling her engagements.

"It is very probable that France will not consent to these proposals, and that the negotiations may be protracted, but they will be acceptable to Turkey, which chiefly desires to see the flag of the infidel disappear, and they will exonerate Your Majesty’s Government from any charge of attempting to ignore their pledges."

M. Herbette proved to have been too sanguine in his assurances.

\(^1\) Letters of Queen Victoria, 3rd series, vol. i. p. 272.
To Lord Lyons, February 19, 1887.

"Waddington is gloomy and rather ill-tempered, either from the fogs or the crisis. I have not had any further talk with him about Egypt lately. I think he avoids the subject. Wolff tells me that the Chargé d'Affaires at Constantinople is a mere creature of Nelidoff's.¹ Our negotiations are dragging on with little prospect of success. We are willing to fix a distant date for our leaving, if we receive a Treaty power to go back whenever internal or external securities are threatened. The tone in which both France and Turkey have received this proposal may best be expressed by the colloquial phrase 'Damn their impudence.' I do not expect to carry what I want at present but, before modifying these terms, I should like to know what is going to happen in Europe."

Prince Bismarck, from the opposite point of view, was almost as critical. Faithful to his principle of *do ut des*, he responded to the British acceptance of the Italian advances by instructing his ambassador at Constantinople to support Sir Henry at the Porte. But he protested strongly to Sir Edward Malet against the idea of evacuation, unexceptionably basing his protest upon the injury which would be inflicted upon German trade by any shaking of stability at Cairo. Lord Salisbury accounted for it in a less simple fashion, and was proportionately strengthened in his desire to be quit of his burden.

To Sir Edward Malet, February 23, 1887.

"Your account of Bismarck's criticisms on our Egyptian policy is discouraging. He is hard to please. Unless we take the chestnuts out of the hottest part of the fire, he thinks we are shirking our work. But we

¹ The Russian ambassador at Constantinople.
cannot go beyond a certain point to please him, especially as his *quid pro quo* is purely negative.

"We have willingly ranged ourselves with the Central European Powers,—that has always been our policy. A distinct estrangement from France has followed, which has cost us a pack of bothers in various parts of the world. But when he wants us—as he evidently does—to quarrel with France downright over Egypt, I think he is driving too hard a bargain. It is not worth our while. Our policy is not, if we can help it, to allow France either to force us out of Egypt altogether or to force us into a quarrel over Egypt. Therefore our negotiations must be circumspect, slow, and a little hazy and ambiguous. The Chancellor, of course, will like clear statements, definite policies, and a breach as soon as possible. Our position in Egypt is one that the public opinion here will not allow us to abandon altogether, but it is a disastrous inheritance, for it enables the Chancellor to demand rather unreasonable terms as the price, not of his assistance, but of his refusal to join a coalition against us."

*To Sir Henry Wolff, February 23, 1887.*

"We are steering in very narrow channels and we are in constant danger of running aground on one side or the other. On the one hand, English opinion is not prepared for an evacuation of Egypt, still less for the abandonment of it. They will not be reconciled to it till they see that France is strong enough to enforce it, and that conviction they naturally cannot acquire till this suspense period is ended one way or the other. On the other hand, we must keep it diplomatically in our power to satisfy France on account of Bismarck's attitude. His policy in a humbler walk of life would be called *chantage*. He is perpetually telling us of the offers France is making of reconciliation on the basis of an attack upon England in Egypt, and of the sacrifices which Germany makes by refusing these proposals; sacrifices for which, he adds, England must make some
return, and then he demands this and that. I heartily wish we had never gone into Egypt. Had we not done so, we could snap our fingers at all the world. But the national, or acquisitional feeling has been roused; it has tasted the fleshpots and it will not let them go.

"However, our only safe course is to follow out our negotiations on the lines of the instruction or 'suggestions.' They are sufficiently careful of our interests to be able to produce, if at any time it should be necessary to do so; on the other hand, they are reasonable enough to deprive France of the pretext for breaking off in a huff."

There was one brief interruption to the support which Count Radowitz gave to the Wolff mission which, in its origin and circumstance, was very typical of the conditions which so tried Lord Salisbury's temper. During an interim vacancy of the Consulate-General at Zanzibar diplomatic business came into the hands of a subordinate Consul whose conduct of it appears to have been resented by Prince Bismarck. Lord Salisbury admitted a want of tact but pointed out that, with the arrival of the new superior, the Consul would return to his normal non-political duties. The Chancellor was not satisfied; the peccant official must be dismissed altogether from the island. Lord Salisbury argued and refused: "Assistance to German policy in Zanzibar," he wrote to the British Chargé d'Affaires at Berlin, "was not in question, as H. would have no political influence or duties whatever. But to remove him from the island would be to censure him and I could not censure a man who, in my judgment, had done no wrong" (April 28). He telegraphed his refusal and the very next day came a despairing message from Sir Henry Wolff. His

1 The German ambassador at Constantinople.
negotiation had reached a critical and hopeful stage; the Turks had accepted most of what was required of them; the signature of a Convention was in sight; and now Count Radowitz had just been to tell him that he had received telegraphic orders to reverse his action and to withdraw all support from the British envoy. The result would be fatal.

The Foreign Office staff came to the rescue with a vacant post in another part of the world which would be promotion for the subject of contention, and Lord Salisbury yielded on condition that a sufficient interval should elapse to obscure any recognisable connection between cause and effect.

To Mr. Scott, 1 May 4, 1887.

"It is not worth quarrelling with Bismarck at this juncture for the sake of maintaining H. at Zanzibar where he is not a success . . ., so, on the understanding that I could do it without injury to him, I thought the balance of advantages was in favour of consent. But that circumstance does not affect the monstrousness of the demand or the danger we shall incur if we remain exposed to sallies of temper of this kind. It is only Egypt that puts us in this difficulty, for otherwise Bismarck's wrath would be of little moment to us. It is heartily to be wished we were delivered from this very inconvenient and somewhat humiliating relation."

The concession was honestly paid for and the next week he was able to report that the German Foreign Office had kept its promise and "had been of great use at Constantinople." The Italian and Austrian embassies were more spontaneously helpful. The Sultan hesitated, agreed, withdrew, procrastinated, after his habitual fashion, and outside opinion became

1 British Chargé d'Affaires at Berlin. Sir Edward Malet was away on leave.
impatient. Mr. Smith protested against the long delay in taking Parliament into confidence. “All negotiations,” replied his chief, “and Turkish ones especially, must be conducted on the principle of salmon-fishing. The length of time during which you must play your fish depends upon his choice, not on yours. Even the omnipotence of the House of Commons cannot prescribe that a fish shall be caught in a fixed number of minutes; and they will find that catching Turks is a more uncertain matter still. If they insist, the attempt to catch the fish must be dropped” (April 6).

Five years was the term which he had offered for the British evacuation if his conditions were satisfied. The Turks demanded that three years should be substituted. He was conscious how severely this final concession would try the loyalty of his followers, but, after a brief hesitation, agreed. M. Waddington was reassuring as to French consent on this basis. Like M. Herbette at Berlin, he appears to have been totally unacquainted with the views—if they had any fixed views—of the mob-ridden Government in Paris.¹

To Sir Henry Wolff, May 4, 1887.

“I had a little talk with Waddington to-day about your negotiations. I admitted you had asked for five years. He informed me his Government would be prepared to support three years, from which I in-

¹ Sir Henry Wolff, in his private letters to Lord Salisbury at this time, reported several conversations which he had had with the Comte de Florian, who appears to have been on a sort of unofficial mission at Constantinople. He was an intimate confidant of M. Waddington’s. He impressed on Sir Henry the anxiety felt by the latter, and by the whole “moderate” party in France, for the conclusion of the Convention. They saw in it a necessary preliminary to an understanding with England and Italy which they would much prefer to an alliance with Russia. If such an understanding could be achieved, their hope was that those Powers would be able to mediate a final reconciliation between France and Germany: it was only the “extremists” who wished for a continuance of the policy of the révanche.
ferred that four years was the right thing. I told him that people here would cry out terribly about three years—but I impressed upon him that the re-entry was the point on which we most insisted, and that we had no intention of leaving Egypt until that was conceded. He replied that in our conversations of last autumn that had been conceded in principle and that all that required to be settled were the conditions under which the right was to be exercised. I replied that this was one of the cases where the principle was easily cut away by unfavourable conditions.

"I think we may have less difficulty with the French than we anticipated—if we can agree with Turkey. I do not think the mass of politicians here will object to our leaving Egypt in three years, but I anticipate some considerable storm in our own party. There are a certain number of Jingoes who on all questions between foreign countries and us or our colonies, take the most extravagant view as a matter of course, and of late years they have gained greatly in strength and they may give us an evil quarter of an hour."

He had to appease other objections with which he had more sympathy. He frankly admitted to Sir Evelyn Baring that, on this occasion, Egypt's interests were being sacrificed to those of England's European relations.

To Sir Evelyn Baring, May 6, 1887.

"The change is strongly recommended by our allies at Constantinople and it is pretty clear that the Porte will not assent to any more. If we had had only Egyptian interests to consider, the interval is clearly not enough; it would be much better that we should remain for fifteen years. But the political position caused by our occupation of Egypt is one of great difficulty. It places us a good deal at the mercy of the German Powers, who have only to guarantee France from interference on their part in order to cause us a formidable amount of trouble, and we are
perpetually being reminded of this liability. Of course, if any territorial or other profit to England was the price of these embarrassments, it would be easy to push through them, but we are bound hand and foot by the pledges of retirement which our predecessors have given, and which we have impliedly confirmed. There is, therefore, no material compensation to England for the serious diplomatic disadvantage to which our present position exposes us."

The patience of the anglers was at length rewarded. Sir Henry’s skill in oriental diplomacy and the prospect of getting rid of at least one set of intrusive Christians from his steadily diminishing Empire, proved effective with the Sultan. An addition to the original draft had been provided against the event of France’s non-concurrence. A Declaration was appended to the instrument to the effect that, if one of the great Mediterranean Powers had failed to ratify the Convention when the date fixed for the evacuation arrived, the failure should be held to constitute an "appearance of danger from without," entitling Great Britain to postpone the withdrawal of her troops. Evacuation was, in fact, to be the price paid for a reconciled France, and was not to materialise unless the goods were delivered. "The Declaration is essential," telegraphed Lord Salisbury to Sir Henry, who had urged delay in publishing it; "the Convention without it cannot be defended."

The Convention was signed on May 22, and a month later was fixed as the limiting period for its ratification. The Whitsuntide holidays prevented any immediate parliamentary discussion of it, and before they were ended any occasion for patriotic alarm at its conclusion had vanished. Though the substance of the Convention was already well known in Constantinople, its publication became the signal
for an outburst of indignation on the part of the French and Russian representatives there.¹ They fell upon the luckless Sultan in a veritable onslaught of diplomatic fury. If he ratified this agreement he would be signing away the integrity of his Empire; he would be conniving at the abrogation of the Berlin Treaty; Russia would consider herself as at once entitled to occupy Armenia, France to send soldiers into Syria;—and they would do so. The three Central Powers loyally backed up England—but neither she nor they threatened voies de fait and the nervous epileptic on the throne succumbed to the more immediate menace. He appealed to Lord Salisbury for a withdrawal of the re-entry condition, which was refused; for a week’s postponement of ratification, which was accorded. But the week’s delay changed nothing; another postponement was asked for, and yet another, and finally Sir Henry was instructed to accept defeat, and on July 15 embarked on the man-of-war which had been for three weeks lying off the Golden Horn waiting on the Sultan’s humour.

In view of recent Bulgarian history, Russia’s championship of any resistance to England’s will at Constantinople was too inevitable to call for comment. France’s inveteracy on the other hand, her definite refusal to acquiesce in any settlement which did not altogether ignore the history of the last five years in Egypt, was new in its absoluteness, and was difficult to accommodate to any large conception of policy on her part. “The French are seeking a counter-irritant for their internal pains and we are performing the part of a blister,” was Lord Salisbury’s comment to Sir Henry Holland (June 3). Earlier in the year he had suggested a similar diagnosis of their state of mind

to Sir Evelyn Baring: "They are pouring out upon us the hatred which they dare not show to Germany" (February 11).

As regarded Egypt itself, the failure of the Convention was accepted with equanimity.

To the Queen, June 23, 1887.

"A Cabinet was held to-day. The only decision of general importance which was arrived at was that no concession could be made with respect to the right of re-entry in the Anglo-Turkish Convention, and that if we should fail in obtaining satisfaction in consequence, we should remain on in a better rather than in a worse position than before in Egypt."

To Mr. Alfred Austin, July 3, 1887.

"Wolff still hopes for ratification—I do not myself expect it, nor do I much care. I only fear that, if it fails, we may be forced into a more anti-Turk policy than we have hitherto pursued, for it will be evident that for all practical purposes, Turkey has become the 'Janitor' of Russia. France has acted very shiftily. She is an insupportable neighbour." 1

To Lord Lyons, July 20, 1887.

"We cannot leave the Khedive to take his chance of foreign attack or native riot, and the French refuse to let us exercise the necessary powers of defence, unless we do it by continuing our military occupation. I see nothing for it but to sit still and drift awhile; a little further on in the history of Europe the conditions may have changed and we may be able to get some agreement arrived at which will justify evacuation. Till then we must simply refuse to evacuate.

1 A year or two later, M. Waddington confessed that—with the best intentions—he had deliberately held back hostile messages which would probably have prepared Lord Salisbury for the event.
"Our relations with France are not pleasant at present. There are five or six different places where we are at odds:

(1) She has destroyed the Convention at Constantinople.
(2) She will allow no Press law to pass.\(^1\)
(3) She is trying to back out of the arrangement on the Somali coast.
(4) She still occupies the New Hebrides.
(5) She destroys our fishing tackle, etc.\(^2\)
(6) She is trying to elbow us out of at least two unpronounceable places on the West Coast of Africa.

"Can you wonder that there is, to my eyes, a silver lining even to the great black cloud of a Franco-German war?"

The conclusion come to in the first paragraph of this letter was logical and not unsatisfactory. For five years England had owned indeterminate rights and responsibilities in Egypt whose haziness of outline had given perpetual opportunity for international intrigue. They had now been defined. She had kept her pledge to offer terms of evacuation; the offer had been accepted by the only Power which had a legal *locus standi* in the matter, and the acceptance had been withdrawn under the pressure of threats which in themselves justified the conditions upon which she insisted. Until surrounding circumstances fundamentally changed, she could claim to refuse *ab initio* all further reopening of the controversy.

This regularising of the position deprived would-be blackmailers of their most dangerous weapon, while threats of assisting France in her obstruction on the international Debt Commission soon lost their efficacy in the presence of Egypt's rapidly advancing pros-

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\(^1\) In Egypt.  
\(^2\) In Newfoundland.
LORD SALISBURY

Neither Egypt nor England suffered directly from Lord Salisbury's failure; its importance lay in its indirect reactions upon the course of European history. Our Consul-General at Cairo was relieved; the Tory Minister's followers were delighted; and it was not long before the outstanding success of the British administration and the recrudescence of dervish attacks gave a wholly new aspect to the question in his own eyes.

Nor was the settlement of the other quarrels with France, as enumerated to Lord Lyons, injuriously affected. Rather the other way. A grievance has its bargaining value. The irritation expressed to the ambassador at Paris was more threateningly emphasised in a letter to Sir William White.

To Sir William White, August 10, 1887.

". . . For the present the enemy is France. Her conduct is hard to explain on any theory. She is trailing her coat to us almost as ostentatiously as she does it to Germany. We are meek—our internal divisions make us so. But, of course, she knows very well that in a popularly governed country, meekness is not a quality on which you can rely for lasting. Therefore, if there is any sense in Paris, they must know they are running the risk of war, and that war would end in a quarrel with Germany, whoever it began with.

"I cannot therefore get through my puzzle at the line France is taking, and everything really turns on her conduct."

If war were to break out between her and Germany, no matter how approached, the latter would probably try—assuming that Austria's interests could be safeguarded—to buy off France's partner in the recent adventure by the offer of Constantinople. In view of the behaviour both of Turkey and France on this
occasion, would this expedient meet with England’s traditional resistance?

“What would be our course in such a contingency? It would be a terrible blow to lose Constantinople. But have we not lost it already? With this sickly, sensual, terrified, fickle Sultan on the throne, have we really any arm with which we can meet Nelidoff’s threats of an invasion of Erzeroum? And would it be worth our while to save him, for the purpose of preventing Germany having free elbows to deal with France?

“I put these questions—not as meaning that the answer is a foregone conclusion, but to show what vast questions may be raised at any moment if the scarcely smouldering hatred between France and Germany should blaze up into a war.”

The purport of these menacing suggestions was no doubt duly conveyed, with all delicacy of dexterous hinting, by these two most trusted of his ambassadors to the French Foreign Office directly and through its Anglophobe representative in Constantinople. M. Flourens, who was now at its head, began to show a consciousness of risk. The growing anger in Australia and New Zealand at France’s continued occupation of the New Hebrides was re-echoed in London and towards the close of a session abnormally prolonged by Irish obstruction into September, the House of Commons leaders warned their chief that, unless the question were settled before the House met again in February, the situation would be serious. He passed the warning on in a private message to M. Flourens: if the warning were not attended to “he could not answer for the consequences.” M. Flourens protested not only understanding but sympathy. He was, he said, in exactly the same position as towards his own Parliament with respect to the Suez Canal. Lord Salisbury was quite ready for an interchange of mutual
protection against the irritated patriotism of their supporters. He had always favoured a concurrent negotiation of the two questions. Only, since the French Chambers were to meet within five or six weeks at the end of October, it would have to serve as a holiday task.

After finishing at Royât the interrupted cure of the previous summer, he returned to Puys, where Mr. Goschen transmitted to him some proposal with respect to international finance in Egypt, which he demurred to as ill-timed.

To Mr. Goschen, October 1, 1887.

“. . . There seems a fair prospect of bringing the Suez Canal and New Hebrides negotiations to a speedy and satisfactory conclusion—especially as Waddington has broken his arm. But we are going on upon the assumption that England is sore at the treatment she has received in respect to Egypt and declines to revive that question at present. If we were suddenly to throw down proposals about Egypt before them, they would turn away from the small game to the large, and the evil imagination might again cross their brains that it would be possible to keep their people quiet about Germany by winning some great triumph at our expense. At present they talk of settling the two questions—New Hebrides and Suez—before the Chambers meet at the end of the month. It would be certainly satisfactory if that could be done.

“As I see you do not close your mind to public business even in your brief holiday, I shall send you in a few days some thoughts about land purchase in Ireland for your consideration.”

The land purchase scheme was sent a week later—it had occupied, its author said, “some spare half-hours”—and the progress of the French negotiation
was commented upon. Mr. Goschen was warned that the Canal limb of them would not be well received by ardent patriots: “Do not be surprised if you see a good deal of bad language from the Jingoes.” They were being conducted with an informality that was after the Foreign Secretary’s own heart. M. Chaudordy, who had been a fellow-plenipotentiary at the Constantinople Conference ten years before and with whom Lord Salisbury had since maintained friendly social relations, was also a personal friend of M. Flourens. This unofficial intermediary paid an autumn visit to Dieppe, and in private talks on the secluded cliff heights of Chalet Cecil, with all secretaries and ambassadors at a safe distance in London or Paris, the terms of the two agreements were drawn up. There was no time for Cabinet consultation, and on the 14th Lord Salisbury sent apologetic notes to his principal colleagues to inform them of the conclusion of the business.

To Mr. Goschen, October 14, 1887.—Puys.

“My old friend Chaudordy has been down here negotiating unofficially about the New Hebrides and the Suez Canal. We have come to terms. If I was to get anything, it was necessary that I should agree before their Chambers met—for that is the whole object of the negotiation—and therefore I could not wait for a Cabinet in England. I think the terms about the Suez Canal are reasonable—the points at issue are microscopic. As to the New Hebrides, they bind themselves to evacuate within four months after the two Conventions are signed. I hope to let you have the papers before I commit myself officially.”

When the agreements were published, criticism, following the same lines as the Colonial protests in the spring, was concentrated upon their reciprocity. The
Foreign Minister had been lamentably weak; France, as a rebel against public law in the New Hebrides, should have been called upon for unrecompensed reparation and confession of wrong-doing. Lord Salisbury repudiated any national right to such self-righteous reprobation: "We were bound to our own pledged word to agree to a Convention for neutralising the Suez Canal," he wrote to Lord Cranbrook, "just as much as they were bound not to annex the New Hebrides. . . . We have paid them in their own coin. We have kept our word and they have kept theirs" (October 25). To Mr. Austin, who had written to dissociate himself from the support which the Standard was giving to the malcontents, he commented disdainfully: "Some people seem to think that no negotiation is worth having unless the other side is very sore" (October 27).

His correspondence with the Queen during this holiday suggests that its claim to the title was even more conventional than usual. Sprinkled among the French negotiations, and another, touching wider issues, which had been opened with Italy, were activities which must have sufficiently competed with Irish land-purchase for "spare half-hours" and given ample occupation to the old telegraphist at the semaphore station on the cliff. A lively incident in connection with that dispute over the boundaries of British Guiana, which was destined later to onerous developments, was reported to the Queen from Royât: "The Republic of Venezuela having seized an English ship and imprisoned the captain without the slightest justification, orders have been given to a portion of Your Majesty's West Indian Squadron to repair to that coast and demand satisfaction" (September 15). Then the Emperor of Morocco was announced to be at the point of death and the Spaniards were fearful of
a surprise attack by France upon his country: "The danger seems exaggerated but still there is a possibility which ought not to be neglected." So a ship had been despatched to Tangier and the step communicated to the interested Governments—French, Spanish, and Italian—with an expression of hope that they would go and do likewise. "This will prevent any surprise" (October 4). Ten days later a more permanent guarantee of peace in this coveted corner of Africa was being sought. "Lord Salisbury is attempting to make an arrangement among the Powers by which they shall undertake towards each other not to seize any portion of Morocco" (October 15).

The drastic procedure employed by a Consul in Nigeria towards Ja Ja, a recalcitrant native king, inspired a characteristic comment to Sir Henry Holland: "I don't know which are worse for a peacefully minded Foreign Office—Colonies or Consuls!" (October 4). A few days later he was replying to his colleague's explanatory complaint of the chief's oppressive treatment of tribes under British protection: "Of course you had no other choice but to defend your black subjects. I wish you had fewer of them. They have a faculty for getting killed in the wrong places" (October 12).

The following week he returned to London, where critical decisions had to be taken in view of the new international situation which had been created by recent happenings at Constantinople.

NOTE

THE "DIPLOMATICUS" LETTER IN THE Standard
LORD SALISBURY's relations with Mr. Alfred Austin and, through him, with the Standard newspaper excited during this period a good deal of curiosity and
gossiping comment, accurate and the reverse. One of the compositions generally credited to Mr. Austin—a letter signed "Diplomaticus" which was published in the *Standard* in the February of this year, 1887—has aroused a more lasting interest owing to the international controversy which has since surrounded its subject matter—"England and Belgian Neutrality." It is therefore desirable to say a few words both as to the relations which existed generally between the two men and also as to this letter, and, so far as the evidence goes—which is not very far—as to the nature and degree of Lord Salisbury's responsibility for it.

With more ambitious claims to literary distinction as a poet, Mr. Austin conjoined a gift for vigorous if rather ornate prose, which he employed in the writing of leading articles for the *Standard* newspaper. He was a whole-hearted supporter of Lord Salisbury's policy both at home and abroad, was personally attached to him, and a frequent visitor at Hatfield. Their intercourse enabled him to forward the Minister's policy by calling anonymous attention to aspects of it upon which Lord Salisbury could not himself dwell publicly, and this assistance was certainly welcomed, though there is no record of its ever having been directly invited. In their written correspondence Mr. Austin's interrogations generally take the form of allusive assertions, and Lord Salisbury's answers, though easy and unreserved, are not intimately confidential either in respect of facts or opinions. There are notes from time to time from Mr. Austin, calling attention to some article of his which has just appeared, and the Minister's acknowledgments, complimentary or approving, do not suggest previous consultation. The press relation was complicated by the fact that Mr. Mudford, the editor of the *Standard*, shared neither in the political principles nor personal friendship of
his leader-writer, and the line which the paper followed under his direction was at all times independent of the Tory Minister's policy, and often diametrically opposed to it.

The "Diplomaticus" letter appeared in the *Standard* on February 4, 1887, when the war-scare between France and Germany was at its height. The letter begins by calling attention to the difficulties which had been created for guarantors of Belgian neutrality since the 1870 war, by the defences which had been erected in the interval on the Rhine frontier. Belgium had become the only pathway along which a prompt invasion of the enemy's country was possible from either side. Her own frontier, on the other hand, was still as open and undefended as that of Luxembourg is in the present day. The constraining challenge of her heroic defiance in 1914 had no place in the anticipatory calculations of "Diplomaticus" and his contemporaries. What they visualised was a demand from one of her powerful neighbours for the passage of its army across her territory—a formal, and, of necessity, passive protest on her part; and a decision to be taken by the guaranteeing powers.

"Diplomaticus" asks whether, "if Germany were, or considered herself to be, provoked into a struggle of life and death with France," Lord Salisbury would act prudently in taking upon himself the same engagement of armed resistance to any breach of Belgium's neutrality which the English Government had taken in 1870. "It is for Englishmen to answer the question." He answers it himself by declaring that "such a course at the present moment would be unwise in the last degree." England, he says, "could not take part with France against Germany, . . . without vitiating and destroying the main purposes of English policy all over the world." To the contention that
such failure to intervene would dishonour her signature, he replies that “her Foreign Minister ought to be equal to the task of meeting this objection without committing her to war.” His own method of meeting it would be limited to requiring securities from Germany for the return of Belgian territory intact at the close of the conflict. He concludes with an appeal, typically individual in its literary style, for a general consideration of the problem: “It is for the English people to perpend and pronounce. But it is high time they reflected on it.”

Only one brief reference to this publication, and that an indirect one, is to be found in Lord Salisbury’s correspondence. Mr. Austin wrote to him on January 26, ten days before it was published, with the object apparently of explaining the non-appearance of an expected article in the Standard. He begins with information, presumably needed, as to the form in which the article had been submitted to the editor. “I yesterday wrote a letter signed ‘Diplomaticus’ and headed, ‘England and Belgian Neutrality,’ and on it based a leader; sending both to the Standard.” He encloses an acknowledgment from Mr. Mudford, demurring to the press value of the contribution offered: “The leader,” the editor wrote, “if put into leads, and without the letter, would make a hit. In its present form it won’t. It will be overlooked.” Mr. Austin reports himself to have replied that the article “must on no account” be treated as a communiqué. “The result is, as you see, he has not published it.”

The contributions referred to were evidently not those which were eventually printed. Mr. Austin’s original intention seems to have followed his normal practice of a leading article embodying the views which he believed would best forward the Foreign
Minister's policy. The letter with the "Diplomaticus" signature was at this stage too unimportant to be thought worth printing, and was probably some colourless reminder of the facts to serve as a peg on which to hang the argument of the article. The editor's insistence on a "hit" must have induced a change of plan, and the argument was transferred to the letter. The article, as actually printed, fulfils only the humble office of calling attention to the letter and emphasising its importance. The "hit" was secured at the cost of at least as great an impression of veiled authority as would have been conveyed by the "leaded" article to which Mr. Austin had demurred.

There is no evidence as to whether or how far Lord Salisbury was consulted in this rearrangement. What appears from Mr. Austin's note is, that he had not been consulted as to the composition of the original communication and the same therefore may be assumed for the amended one. It was the procedure which habitually characterised their relations, and this very tenuous piece of external evidence supports the conclusion as to Lord Salisbury's detachment from the argumentative content of the "Diplomaticus" letter to which internal evidence markedly points. It would be difficult, for instance, to accommodate the statement that England could not intervene against Germany "without utterly vitiating and destroying the main purposes of English policy all over the world," with the fact that Lord Salisbury was, at this very moment, entering upon a new departure in Egyptian policy, criticised both at the time and subsequently as reckless, whose sole inspiring purpose was to free England from dependence on German friendship and enable her to face the prospect of a quarrel with Prince Bismarck with equanimity.

There was, in fact, a much simpler reason, and one
eminently conclusive to Lord Salisbury's practical mentality, for deprecating the "taking part with France against Germany" in a war under actual conditions. It was not that it would have been "unwise," but that it would have been impossible. The attitude of antagonism to this country which France had adopted at this time was no secret of diplomacy. Among the series of her hostile demonstrations which Lord Salisbury enumerated in his letter to Lord Lyons 1—written in the course of this week—there were at least two which had roused a strong feeling of public indignation here: France's obstruction—inspired, as it was held to be, by pure spite—of Sir Evelyn Baring's proposal for the abolition of the Egyptian corvée with all its accompaniments of oppression and corruption; and her persistent continuance, in flagrant defiance of her most solemn pledges, in the occupation of the New Hebrides. Things had not yet reached the stage when Lord Salisbury, commenting on the popular temper in England, could say, as he did in the summer, that "if there is any sense in Paris, they must know they are running the risk of war," or when he had gravely to warn the French Ministers that, if they persisted in their present course, he could not answer for the consequences. But all through that year he was being reproached by the right wing of his followers for his too great complaisance to France and the passionate anger which her action had aroused in Australia and New Zealand was loudly re-echoed in the mother country. Had hostilities broken out on the Rhine that spring, this section of the community would in all probability have clamoured to make common cause with her opponents. It is certainly safe to say that—failing some blatantly provocative initiative on Prince

1 See above, p. 30.
Bismarck’s part—no British Government could have induced either Parliament or the country to intervene in such a war on her side, however clearly treaty obligations might have called upon them to do so.

Lord Salisbury was of course fully conscious of the problem which England’s guarantee of Belgian neutrality might thus present in the near future. Apart from all external evidence there is no difficulty in assuming that he would have discussed it with Mr. Austin and welcomed an offer of ventilating it in the press, both for the direct purpose of testing opinion in England and—more particularly, perhaps—of addressing, in this mildly indirect form, a warning advertisement to French statesmen. In the passion for needless provocation which then possessed them, it would be good to remind them of the peculiar perils which they might incur by quarrelling simultaneously with Germany and public opinion in England.

So far, one may fairly refer the genesis of the “Diplomaticus” letter to Hatfield. But to extend that responsibility to the arguments which it uses or to the view of international right which it expounds is, as has been already pointed out, quite a different matter. For Lord Salisbury’s attitude in those respects, we are provided with a much safer guide in his personal action at the time—or rather, in his notable inaction. More than one urgent request for information as to England’s intentions was addressed from Brussels to the British Foreign Office in the course of that spring. Lord Vivian, the British representative there, backed these requests in a private letter of his own to the Foreign Minister, which has been preserved. Careful search has failed to discover any answer to either the official or unofficial appeals. Lord Salisbury was not accustomed to leave letters unanswered from indolence or inattention. If he did not answer it was
presumably because he could not. In view of the considerations suggested in this note, he would not add the offence of an insecure personal engagement to that of which he might be compelled to be guilty in the repudiation of a national one. On the other hand, events might so work out, particularly if his suspicions as to Prince Bismarck's sinister intentions were to materialise and Germany were to show signs of deliberately forcing on a war, when the position as regarded public opinion in England would be materially altered. Had he concurred with Mr. Austin's contention that our responsibilities to Belgium would be satisfied by the safeguarding of her territorial integrity, it would have been easy for him to urge it, particularly in response to Lord Vivian's private letter, and so achieve a larger liberty of ultimate decision. He did not do so; and his silence was, in fact, as definite in its refusal to repudiate the guarantee of neutrality as it was in its tacit admission that circumstances might make it impossible for a parliamentary Minister to honour it.¹

¹ This account may appear inconsistent with the statement contained in an official communiqué which was issued by the Foreign Office on March 13, 1917, according to which, Lord Vivian, after having warned the Belgian Government that no importance should be attached to the newspaper articles, as they were not inspired by and did not represent the views of the British Government, added that, "If the Belgian Government thought that the British Government endorsed the views of the newspapers in question, it would cause the British Government most serious concern." I am, however, informed by the Foreign Office that this latter quotation is incorrect, being based on a mis-reading of a transcript of the original documents, which led to the observation being attributed in error to Lord Vivian, whereas it was, in fact, reported by him as having been made by a Belgian statesman and had reference to the concern which would have been caused to the Belgian, not the British, Government.
CHAPTER III

1887

THE TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT

The destruction of the Wolff Convention had wider repercussions upon British policy, and perhaps upon European history, than its immediate result in prolonging the English occupation of Egypt by more than a generation. People will regard it as having been a fortunate event or the reverse, according to the relative values which they attach to the calculable material benefits which it secured for Egypt and the Soudan, and the incalculable effects which an Anglo-French understanding, precedent to the emergence of colonial and naval ambitions in Germany, might have had upon European history. The recurrent revolt from Prince Bismarck's methods to which Lord Salisbury's correspondence bears witness and the distrust which they engendered in him, must have been potential of development. He had complained of the advantage which was taken of England's friendship at Berlin and of the price which it had already cost her in the difficulties created with France; he had emphasised his resolve not to be driven to a breach with that Power; he had avowedly looked to the possible healing of the Egyptian quarrel with her as the most desirable issue from his present vexations. His jealous guarding of his country's independence in his recent negotiations with Italy and Austria had left
him free from all exclusive commitments. There would not seem to have been very far for him to travel from the standpoint thus reached to a fundamental reconsideration of England's position as between the rivals on the Rhine frontier.

But France's outburst of irreconcilable hostility had closed the way to any such evolution. Her co-operation with Russia on the occasion had coincidently smoothed the road for him in the opposite direction. It had completed what his own reserve had begun in heightening the value of England's support in the eyes of the Central Powers. He could choose his own conditions for a closer co-operation with them: by watchfulness against needless provocation to their opponents he could still secure the national independence which he cherished; but, if complete isolation were to be avoided, he could not now refuse a more intimate approach to them if it was pressed for.

The pressure was not long in coming. His Italian and Austrian friends, though the quarrel was not theirs, had been quite as much annoyed as himself at the Sultan's recantation under duress—and a good deal more dismayed. A Turkey finally subservient to St. Petersburg would mean everything that Austria most dreaded, and Italy's Mediterranean aspirations were doubly challenged by the victorious partnership. Just at this time, Bulgaria gave a further display of her peculiar gift for the disturbance of European nerves. In the previous winter, Prince Ferdinand of Coburg had been invited by the Bulgarian Regents to become a candidate for the vacant throne and had refused. The only distinguishing facts which were then known about him were the ability and ambition with which his Bourbon mother was credited and the possession of a large private fortune. His reputed personal nullity, as being the most desirable equipment for a
PRINCE FERDINAND OF COBURG

constitutional figurehead, was probably his decisive attraction in M. Stambouloff’s eyes.

The candidature was unpopular and was opposed by the majority of Bulgarian political leaders, but M. Stambouloff persisted in pressing it and in July had succeeded in securing a vote of the Sobranje in its favour. Russia at once refused her consent to the election, and the other Powers, as in duty bound under the provisions of the Berlin Treaty, declined to recognise its validity. Nevertheless, Prince Ferdinand, on this second appeal, decided upon an acceptance of the adventure and appeared at Sofia on August 11. There he remained; ignoring, though with all deferential humility of deportment, his ostracism by the great Powers and, for the present, leaving the management of his recalcitrant subjects to his iron-handed sponsor. Lord Salisbury, discussing the prospect with his ambassador at Constantinople, could see no element of permanence in the illicit régime. But no preferable alternative suggested itself and he instructed Sir William to be “dilatory and negative” as towards any proposal for action: “Whatever happens will be for the worse and therefore it is our interest that as little should happen as possible” (August 23). Otherwise he seems to have shared in the assumption, universally entertained, that the “Coburger” would remain in Bulgaria only until it became worth somebody’s while to turn him out. It was a curious opening for a reign destined to have a vital influence upon more than peninsula politics, to blossom into an independent kingship, to endure for thirty years and to require the cataclysm of the great war to bring it to a close.

The Czar’s Government was roused once more by this act of positive defiance on Bulgaria’s part to an angrily active diplomacy at Constantinople, and anxiety at the Italian and Austrian embassies became
acute. The Italian ambassador, Signor Blanc, proposed that the Austrian and British representatives should join with him in devising some form of common action calculated to encourage the Sultan in resisting further pressure from the Franco-Russian partnership. Lord Salisbury agreed to such an informal discussion as was suggested and it proceeded between the embassies throughout the early autumn.

A change of Ministry in Rome gave fresh vigour to this Italian initiative. Signor Crispi came into power in the first week of August—an able, hot-headed, strong-willed man of the people, combining, paradoxically, extreme Radical opinions with an enthusiastic admiration for Prince Bismarck. He had also an unresting avidity for accretions in dignity and territory to his country and, being an ardent partisan of the British alliance, soon began to compete with "consuls and colonies" as a thorn in the flesh of the British Minister. The Italian Chargé d'Affaires in London, Signor Catalani, proceeded under his direction to bombard Royât and Puys with a series of private letters, conveying assurances of personal confidence on Signor Crispi's part; arguments to prove the urgent necessity of combined activity; wounded remonstrances at Lord Salisbury's separate negotiations with the common enemy over the Suez Canal; requests for a military convention and, when that was hastily declined, appeals for an informal interchange of military and naval information in preparation for what the Italian Government held to be an imminent emergency. This epistolary siege was not very successful. Lord Salisbury replied at courteous length, with sympathetically worded deprecations and postponements of decision. But when Mr. Barrington,¹ his

¹ The Hon. Sir Eric Barrington, 1847–1918: fourth son of 6th Viscount Barrington. Lord Salisbury's departmental private secretary throughout the
private secretary, intent as always upon guiding his chief along the path of official correctitude, suggested that the substance of the correspondence should be placed on record in the form of a confidential despatch to Rome, the only reply which he received was a “No—it is too foolish!” scrawled in red ink across his minute.

But, on his return to London, Lord Salisbury found that the subject was not to be so easily disposed of. Berlin had again taken a hand in the game. The secret treaty of Reinsurance which had been signed in June between Russia and Germany had had but a brief honeymoon. For a few weeks Prince Bismarck was reported as content and as being no longer in fear of an attack on his eastern frontier. But in September something happened. Sir William White reported that the support which Count Radowitz had hitherto been giving to various Russian proposals for getting rid of Prince Ferdinand, had been suddenly withdrawn; the press of St. Petersburg and Moscow resumed its denunciations of Germany with vigour; and the Czar, on his annual visit to the family party at Copenhagen, went pointedly out of his way to avoid going through Berlin.

The quarrel, whatever its cause and from whichever side it originated, continued. In October, Count Herbert Bismarck\(^1\) communicated to Sir Edward Malet a draft of the project for safeguarding the Sultan from Franco-Russian intimidation which had been evolved by the three ambassadors in Constantinople. It had been sent to him by Count Kalnoky\(^2\)

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\(^1\) Prince Bismarck’s eldest son, who had recently been appointed Foreign Minister under his father. He had been attached to the embassy in London, and was a well-known figure in London society.

\(^2\) The Austrian Foreign Minister.
with an entreaty for German good offices in securing Lord Salisbury’s adhesion to it. Count Herbert expended these with zeal, telling Sir Edward that his father was above all things anxious to detach the Sultan from subserviency to Russia. The Austrian Minister followed up this indirect appeal by a private letter addressed to his Chargé d’Affaires in London, who was instructed to show it to the British Prime Minister. Until recently, he wrote, he had all but despaired of being able to resist Russia’s domination in the Balkans. But he had continued to hope that Prince Bismarck “se lasserait de la tâche ingrate qu’il s’était imposée,”¹ in seeking her friendship. That moment had happily arrived. It was urgently necessary to take advantage of the Chancellor’s present irritation in order to fix Germany on the side of peace and the status quo. But without England’s support the whole project must fall to the ground; Austria and Italy alone were too weak to have any influence, minatory or heartening, upon Czar or Sultan.

There were eight bases in the document submitted. The first four were to the same effect as the notes exchanged in the spring and consisted of academic declarations in favour of a policy of peace and the maintenance of the status quo as established by European Treaty in the Balkans. The fifth dealt specifically with Bulgaria, denying the Sultan’s right to delegate his suzerainty over it or allow its Government to be coerced, overtly or virtually, by a foreign Power. The sixth and seventh bound the signatories to assist him in resisting any such illegal enterprise; and the eighth—which constituted the real heart of the project—pledged them further, in the event of his conniving at such an attempt, whether under pressure of intimidation or for other reasons, to take such

¹ “would tire of the ungrateful task which he had set himself.”
measures of precaution in the shape of naval action upon his coasts or a military occupation of his territory as circumstances should call for. The proposal was, in fact, a response in kind to the Russian and French threats against the Sultan in the summer—as it had owed its origin to them.

The commitments invited were not wider than those to which England was already bound by the Treaties of Paris and Berlin. Lord Salisbury admitted that that was so, but was nevertheless not enthusiastic:

To the Queen, October 27, 1887 (Thursday).

"Lord Salisbury with his humble duty respectfully encloses an important secret letter from Sir E. Malet. He proposes to bring it before the Cabinet on Thursday next. The proposition is in the right direction. But it is impossible not to notice that Prince Bismarck is urging the three Powers to lift a weight which he will not touch with one of his fingers, and also that the proposed agreement only touches Bulgaria and does not affect the Asiatic provinces of Turkey, in which we have a greater interest.

"Lord Salisbury doubts the wisdom of the step at this moment and is inclined to think it is rather for the advantage of Germany than of the three other Powers. But some adhesion on our part may be expedient as a lesser evil than breaking up the present understanding."

To Sir Saville Lumley, October 28, 1887.

"... The two Powers, Austria and Italy, have made a proposal for telling Turkey that, if she resists Russia, she will be supported, but that if she makes herself Russia's vassal she will be invaded. The language is more diplomatic but that is the drift. Germany is ostensibly no party to this project. In secret she patronises and presses it; in public she stands aloof,—and no doubt privately expresses her
horror of it at St. Petersburg. England may find it necessary to adhere rather than break up the alliance. But the step in the interests of peace is an unwise one, though very useful doubtless to Bismarck for taking the strain off his eastern frontier. But for us it commits the blunder of building on the Sultan’s fitful and feeble disposition. Any calculation having that foundation will certainly fail. We shall get no permanent or reliable advantage from practising on his hopes and fears, while, if the arrangement gets out, it will back up the Panslavic feeling at Moscow, which is a genuine force.

“We may not be able to prevent this project going on, but we must do what we can to put the drag on. But I wish Crispi would find another Foreign Minister. 1 I will let you know the decision of the Cabinet on this proposal, but it does not meet till Thursday.”

To Sir William White, November 2, 1887.

“The result of your meditations and consultations at Constantinople with your two colleagues has come to the birth. Germany, Austria and Italy have each communicated to us your eight bases with an earnest recommendation that we should accept them. They are all struck with the opportuneness of the moment for such an agreement, in view especially of the failings of their intended partners. Austria presses on us to take advantage of the Chancellor’s ill-temper with Russia, which Kalnoky says is an atout 2 in our game. Germany urges us not to let slip the happy moment when Italy promises active assistance and yet repudiates the idea of compensation. Italy is especially struck by the phenomenal courage and decision of Austria and I have no doubt some equally complimentary reason founded on England’s present condition has been a powerful argument for mutual cooperation among the trio. We submit the matter to the Cabinet tomorrow and on so difficult a question

1 Signor Crispi had followed Lord Salisbury’s example in combining the offices of Premier and Foreign Minister.
2 “Trump-card.”
I cannot forecast the result. My own impression is that we must join, but I say it with regret. I think the time inopportune and we are merely rescuing Bismarck's somewhat endangered chestnuts. If he can establish a South-Eastern raw, the Russian bear must perforce forget the Western raw on his huge carcase. If he can get up a nice little fight between Russia and the three Powers, he will have leisure to make France a harmless neighbour for some time to come. It goes against me to be one of the Powers in that unscrupulous game. But a thorough understanding with Austria and Italy is so important to us that I do not like the idea of breaking it up on account of risks which may turn out to be imaginary.

"The Suez Canal Convention has had the effect for the moment of improving our relations with France. After the experience I got of the Chancellor's pretty ways during Wolff's negotiations, I do not wish to depend upon his good will, and therefore shall keep friends with France as far as we can do it without paying too dear for it. The threat of making us uneasy in Egypt through the action of France is the only weapon he has against us, and we are free of him in proportion as we can blunt it."

The Cabinet met and came to the same conclusion as its chief, that the proposal could not be refused. But they decided to withhold final acceptance until some clearer assurances had been received as to the part which Germany proposed to play in the apprehended emergency. There was at the moment a special reason for their anxiety on this score. An unidentified affection of the throat from which the Crown Prince Frederick had for some months been suffering had just been declared in confidential medical reports to be malignant. His eldest son, Prince William, who was thus brought close to the succession, had the reputation of disliking England and of being a strong partisan of Russia.
In response to Lord Salisbury's request for more precise information as to the engagements already existing between Germany and Austria, the text of the Treaty of 1879—hitherto kept inviolably secret—was communicated to him, though only for his own and the Queen's personal benefit.

To Sir Edward Malet, November 16, 1887.

"I have just received your letter with its important enclosure. I shall of course treat it as absolutely confidential, not shewing the document to any human being, except of course, the Queen. Pray express to Count Bismarck my very hearty acknowledgments for the confidence which has dictated this communication. . . . The reason why we pressed for an official declaration of Germany's approbation for the proposed understanding between the three Powers is that, between us and Prince William's perhaps unchecked rule, there only stand now three lives—one of ninety-one, one of seventy-three, and one menaced by a disease 'that does not pardon.' Without such official declaration we should have no security whatever against his taking the side of Russia in the Eastern Question."

In sending the text of the secret Treaty to the Queen, he comments: "It sufficiently establishes that Germany must take the side of Austria in any war between Austria and Russia." That had not been the view expressed the year before by Prince Bismarck himself if the war were to be fought only on the issue of a Russian invasion of Bulgaria.1 Perhaps a recollection of that fact induced him to offer a wider and less technical security to the British Prime Minister. It took the form of a long private letter addressed primarily to the anxiety which Lord Salisbury had expressed with respect to the changed prospect of succession to the

1 Gr. Pol. der Europ.-Kab. vol. v. chap. xxxii.
German throne. It was dictated in French, but was enclosed in a brief postscript written in English in his own hand, whose purport suggests a doubt whether the labour of composition had been undertaken solely for the benefit of the English Minister: "I did not seal the enclosed letter without ascertaining Prince William's full approbation of it by reading out the whole content to His Royal Highness. The Prince has just left me, and I, to make assurance doubly sure, was anxious to add these few lines before starting for the country."

This letter has been already published. It is redundant in style, and covers twenty quarto pages in manuscript. The first half of it is devoted to demonstrating that the course of German foreign policy was beyond the power of any individual to modify. No sovereign in the present stage of civilisation could plunge his country into all the sufferings "which accompany and follow a great war, whether victorious or not," without the full support of public opinion. In Germany especially, a "nation in arms" had made a recurrence of the personal and dynastic wars of the eighteenth century impossible. Only if the nation as a whole was convinced that its unity and independence were at stake could so vast a machine be safely put in motion.

Such an issue was, in fact, involved in the maintenance of Austria. If Austria were destroyed, Germany—with her long open frontiers—would be left isolated in face of France and Russia. He dwells at some length on the national characteristics and political conditions in those two countries which must make them incurably warlike and a permanent menace to the security of their neighbours, and contrasts them

with the "satisfied" quality which Austria and England shared with Germany. His argument takes him further than the single question upon which Lord Salisbury had asked for reassurance, i.e. as to the extent of Germany’s engagements with Austria. “Our policy must necessarily aim at securing such alliances as may offer, in view of the possibility of having to fight our two powerful neighbours simultaneously.” If “les Puissances amies” were to fail her altogether it might be necessary for Germany to come to terms with Russia rather than fight the coalition single-handed. But, short of such abandonment, she must of necessity defend their independence as well as her own. War she would avoid if it were possible and as long as such avoidance was compatible with her honour and with the maintenance of Austria-Hungary as a great Power; but he postulates a further though secondary responsibility towards the “friendly Powers” which he finally defines:

“We wish that the friendly Powers who have interests in the East which are not ours, should make themselves strong enough by their union and their forces to keep the Russian sword in its sheath, or to hold their own against it should circumstances bring about a rupture. So long as no interest of Germany were involved we should remain neutral; but it is impossible to admit that any German Emperor could ever lend the support of his arms to Russia to help her to overthrow or weaken one of those Powers upon whose support we must reckon either to prevent a Russian war or help us to meet it. From this point of view German policy will always be obliged to take action [entrer en ligne de combat] if the independence of Austria-Hungary is threatened by Russian aggression, or if England or Italy were in danger of being attacked by the armies of France. Thus German policy follows a path which is necessarily prescribed
for it by the political situation in Europe and from which neither the antipathies nor the sympathies of a Monarch or directing Minister could make it deviate.”
(November 22, 1887.)

Lord Salisbury replied to this communication the following week, writing in English. There is a notable contrast between this interchange of personal letters and the last which had taken place between the same correspondents. In July 1885, the initiative had come from the English side. Lord Salisbury, taking up an inheritance of all but bankruptcy in continental friendship, had been deferentially desirous of the great man’s favour and grateful for the assurance of it—qualified though this had been in respect of Russia’s superior claims. Now, the whole suggestion conveyed in his answer—a suggestion justified by the history of the preceding negotiation—is that England is the obliging party, coming to her friends’ assistance at their solicitation and laying down the reasoned conditions for her compliance.

The letter is chiefly noticeable for its detachment from the—much longer—text to which it was a reply. There is a courteous acknowledgment of the Chancellor’s “unreserved confidence” and satisfactory conclusion. But the elaborate demonstration of the warlike proclivities of Germany’s two neighbours and of the relations looked for with “les Puissances amies” is passed over in silence. The possibility of England’s “being attacked by the armies of France” is not even distantly alluded to. The writer keeps himself rigidly to the business in hand—the considerations, as he says, which had led him to entertain the apprehensions which he had expressed to Count Hatzfeldt:

“If the lamentable event of a war between France and Germany should take place, Russia, if she was
well-advised, would not take any step hostile to Germany, but would at once, by occupying positions either in the Balkan Peninsula or in Asia Minor, compel the Sultan to assent to proposals which would make her mistress of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles. She would only abstain from this step if threatened by a formidable resistance—Italy and England alone would not be sufficient to deter her; and it is very doubtful whether English public opinion would consent to go to war for Turkey with only Italy for an ally. All would depend, therefore, upon the attitude of Austria. Unless she was certain of assistance from Germany, she might not feel strong enough to hazard a war with Russia, and a consequent invasion on her north eastern frontier where Italy and England could hardly help her. In that case she would sit still and accept compensation in Turkish territory. She has favoured that policy in former years; and even now it is reported, I know not with what truth, that the Emperor of Austria personally inclines to it. She could only take the opposite and bolder line, if she felt sure of the ultimate support of Germany.

"When, therefore, we were asked to join in an understanding upon the eight bases which were given to Sir E. Malet, it became on consideration very evident that the one vital question to us was one which was not even alluded to in those eight bases—namely—the probable attitude of Germany. If Austria could count on German support in such a struggle, it would be possible for her to carry out fully the policy indicated in the eight bases to which England was asked to adhere. In any other case, England, by giving this adhesion, might be committing herself to a policy predoomed to failure. We then asked ourselves what ground we had for assuming that Germany, engaged in a severe struggle with France, might not take a neutral line, or even a line favourable to Russia. Just at this time came the news that the succession to the German throne of a Prince who was believed to be more favourable to
Russia and more averse to England than the present Heir to that throne, was a contingency which might arise at an earlier date than was expected.

"Your Serene Highness has removed my apprehensions by the great frankness with which you have exposed the true situation to me. You have, in the first place, allowed me to see the Treaty between Austria and Germany which establishes that, under no circumstances, could the existence of Austria be imperilled by a resistance to Russian enterprises. In the second place, you have conveyed to Sir Edward Malet, on the part of the Emperor, his moral support of any agreement which may be come to by Austria, Italy and England on the eight bases submitted to us, and, in the third place, you have convincingly explained to me that the course of Germany must be dictated by the considerations of national interest felt by the nation at large, and not by the personal prepossessions of the reigning Sovereign.

"I believe that the understanding into which England and the other two Powers are now prepared to enter will be in complete accordance with her declared policy, and will be loyally observed by her. The grouping of States which has been the work of the last year will be an effective barrier against any possible aggression of Russia, and the construction of it will not be among the least services which your Serene Highness has rendered to the cause of European peace." (November 30, 1887.)

The Tripartite Agreement was signed in the first week of December after some amendments had been inserted at Lord Salisbury's instance. Only two of them were not merely trivial. The eighth basis was more cautiously worded so as to restrict its obligations patently within the four corners of existing treaties, and the northern coasts of Asia Minor were added to Bulgaria as territories in whose independence of foreign domination the contracting parties declared
themselves interested. He comments to Sir William White upon the conclusion of the negotiation:

_To Sir William White, December 14, 1887._

"Both Austria and Germany continue to express themselves as attaching special importance to this exchange of notes. I cannot understand their point of view. We have acknowledged or entered into no obligation that did not exist before. If an emergency should arise during the tenure of a Minister or a Parliament disposed to recognise the obligations of [the Treaties of] Paris and Berlin, the understanding to which we have just come with Austria and Italy will not be needed to make him act. But if we should be disposed not to recognise England's treaty obligations, the understanding of the other day uses language much vaguer than those treaties, and it is easier to slip out of it. It is like putting a coarse sieve under a fine one."

He suggested as a possible explanation that the real though unavowed purpose of his co-signatories was to use the eighth basis, not as a warning to Turkey, but "in order to cut her up," and he closed with the reminder which he had addressed more than once recently to this correspondent, that England's interest in and influence upon the destinies of the Turkish Empire had inevitably become a diminishing factor in her policy.

"I have preferred not to sign one of three identic notes, but a separate answer to their two identic notes. One of my objects in doing this has been to discourage the idea that our interest in the Turkish domination of their present Empire, and of the Straits, is on the same level as that of Austria and Italy. Though I fully admit the existence of our interest, it is not so imperative and vital as theirs. I think our bearing diplomatically should follow the same idea. You are
rather more interested than Radowitz, but not quite so much interested as Calice and Blanc.

"Of course, it may be said that this plan sacrifices the ideal we have pursued ever since Lord Stratford’s days of a leading influence at Constantinople. But is not that idea a chimera? Can any one have that leading influence for more than a month together? It would be a totally different matter if anything happened to cause a demise of the Kaliphat. But even then we could only gain a dominant influence by sheer threats. We have little to promise or to give."

Before the year ended, the animosities in which this negotiation had originated found cruder expression in the outbreak of a war-scare between Russia and Austria similar, though of a less acute character, to that which had agitated western Europe in the spring. Lord Salisbury’s speech at the Guildhall partook of the double inspiration which usually characterised his utterances on these occasions. There was the purpose of educating public opinion by some detached presentation of the underlying facts or general laws which determine international action. But there was also a special diplomatic object to be served in a delicate reminder to the Czar, Alexander III., of the peaceful reputation which he had acquired and which it was now so urgent for him to live up to. After referring to the competition in armaments which he had already begun to look upon as the gravest cause for anxiety in Europe, he offered consolation which, to the experience of a later generation, was pathetically futile as a general proposition. But in its individual application to the Russian Emperor, upon whose immediate intentions European anxiety was at that moment concentrated, it proved to be solidly founded.

1 The Austrian ambassador at Constantinople.
November 9, 1887. (At the Guildhall.)

"As long as great nations maintain enormous and increasing armies, and spend still greater sums every year in sharpening the weapons which, if the necessity should arise, they may use against each other, as long as that competition of armaments continues, it is idle to hope that perfect tranquillity can prevail over the world. But that very state of things has its compensations. The tremendous powers which modern science has given to weapons of destruction, the tremendous forces which lie in the hollow of the hand of a few powerful men, must make them pause. They feel that the power of destruction which lies at the mercy of one word from them is so tremendous, the responsibility which it imposes is so large, that I am not sure that the securities of peace are not more sensibly increased than they would be if we reverted to the old time when the weapons of war were weak and war was a pastime which could be easily and cheaply undertaken. . . . It used to be thought and said that there would be no wars in the world but for the rulers—that the people would always be for peace. I am convinced that, whatever else is true, the reverse of that fact is true at the present time. I believe that every ruler, that every prominent Minister in the world, that every sovereign . . . without exception, is intensely earnest in his desire to maintain peace. If there is any possible danger in the future, it rather arises from another cause—from possible gusts of passionate and often ill-informed feeling arising from great masses of population."

Towards the close of November the campaign of press denunciation which had already opened between Russia and her neighbours was fortified by a concentration of her troops on the Galician frontier—explained officially as an episode in their autumn manoeuvres. A burst of frenzied excitement in Hungary, accompanied by instant demands upon
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their Government for retaliatory preparations, gave point to the warning with which Lord Salisbury had closed his speech. Newspapers and chancelleries competed once more in prophecies of catastrophe. There came a week in December when the Foreign Secretary reported to the Queen that the ambassadors were pessimistic and that Count Hatzfeldt in particular had spoken of war between Russia and Austria as inevitable. But he stated his own belief nevertheless that the scare had been "artificially produced," and a week later expressed himself as sure of it.

To Mr. Alfred Austin, December 22, 1887.

"I have seen now several of the foreign ambassadors and some of our own, and I am convinced that my account of the 'scare' has been a correct one. There was some impulse from 'mighty personages'—Bismarck and the Czar—but the intensity of it was chiefly due to what I may call 'journalistic reverberation.' The only serious and lasting element is the massive forces on either side, and the nearer approach of them to each other.

"No one wants war—except the officers and the publicists. But the Czar is stupid—Prince Bismarck's nerve has become a little excitable—and there is a dark uncertain future, which creates a constant state of inchoate panic."

The next day, M. de Staal 1 told him that Count Kalnoky had informed the Russian ambassador at Vienna that his Government had no intention of adding to her garrisons in Galicia at this moment, and that the Czar had responded by an assurance that he was "fully resolved not to go to war, as far as he could prevent it." The panic died away as quickly as it had arisen, and in the following months Russia abandoned that menacing pressure upon the recalcitrant

1 The Russian ambassador in London.
Bulgarians, which for two and a half years had been the source of such constant trepidation to Europe. In February '88, the Czar made a last attempt to get rid of the intrusive "Coburger" and secure the Bulgarian throne for his own nominee. He invited the signatories of the Berlin Treaty to address a combined protest to the Sultan against the continued illegality of Prince Ferdinand's presence. Prince Bismarck overtly backed the invitation, but the British Foreign Minister demurred:

_To Sir Augustus Paget, February 22, 1888._

"I gather that Bismarck's pressure in favour of the Russian proposals is getting a little stronger and that the Austrians are hesitating. I shall of course give no final answer till I know Kalnoky's determination, and I believe Crispi is similarly waiting. But a mere admission of the Russian request seems to me to be so dangerous as to be quite impossible. As a device it is so exceedingly clumsy. If, as is probable, the Sultan accepts our united declaration that Ferdinand's position is irregular, and nothing further comes of it, we shall look intolerably ridiculous. And this seems to me the likeliest issue by far, and the consequences of the ridicule the Czar will incur will be that he will be angry and will want to take some further step in order to clear his honour. If, on the contrary, the Russian anticipation is correct, and Ferdinand falls as a result of the European demonstration, we shall get back to the old vicious circle—anarchy, provisional Government, vain efforts of Bulgarians to persuade the Powers to name a Prince, and at last again, a Prince named by themselves. It is hardly likely that we should travel again round this vicious circle without a mishap of some kind."

The Austrian and Italian Governments acquiesced in this view, and the three Powers refused the invita-
RUSSIA GIVES UP

tion. Lord Salisbury did not altogether take credit to himself for having induced this decision.

To the Queen, March 1, 1888.

"Lord Salisbury saw Count Bismarck in his passage through London on Tuesday. He had a long interview with him, in which Count Bismarck spoke the whole time. He was principally engaged in shewing that Prince Bismarck's policy of advising his allies to support the Russian proposals at Constantinople, while secretly encouraging them to take the opposite course, was not open to the charge of duplicity."

After the failure of this attempt, Russia gave up the struggle. Prince Ferdinand was thenceforth left at peace to consolidate his grip upon his unenthusiastic subjects, and Bulgaria, having for three successive years occupied the centre of the European stage, withdrew into the sinister privacy of her domestic politics. In August Lord Salisbury took the opportunity of a Mansion House dinner to stimulate the diplomatic truce which had now become possible between England and Russia. He dwelt so effusively upon the manifold virtues of the Czar, upon the splendid deeds of valour by which Russia had secured the liberties of the Bulgarian people, upon the high satisfaction which she must now feel in crowning her work by—in brief—leaving them to their own devices,—that Mr. Austin wrote to ask what he was to understand from such civility to the traditional enemy.

To Mr. Alfred Austin, August 12, 1888.

"... As to my Mansion House speech—take it as it was spoken—don't read anything into it that was not there—and you will find it a string of truths, which verge on truisms.

"I believe that civility has a slight influence on
the Czar—and it is worth exercising that influence if it contributes even in the most feeble degree to prevent him from taking the plunge which (perhaps) he is being tempted to take."

He suggests the possibility of a free hand being offered to Russia on the Bosphorus—Austria being placated with the grant of Salonica, and Italy with that of Albania—on consideration of Germany being given a free hand on the Seine—"I have no knowledge of any such arrangement being thought of by anyone—but it is horribly natural." He goes on:

"Supposing that this arrangement had been offered to the Czar. He would be debating whether the possession of the Bosphorus would not be too dearly bought by permitting such an aggrandisement of Germany as would result from the effacement of France. In the crisis of that self-debate, a provocation from England might push him in one way, and civility from England would have the opposite tendency."

Sir Robert Morier, the British ambassador at St. Petersburg, emphatically took the same view. He was on leave in England and sent his chief an enthusiastic note of appreciation: "I cannot sufficiently thank you for your last night's speech. . . . I am speaking sober sense when I say that that speech will do more in the direction of peace than all Bismarck's inflated Peace armaments put together" (August 9, 1888).
CHAPTER IV

1888

THE POLICY OF NEIGHBOURLINESS

ACCESSION OF THE EMPEROR WILLIAM II

Lord Salisbury's decision, after the failure of his efforts at reconciliation with France, to draw closer to the Central Powers, and the limits which he fixed to that approach, determined the direction and degree of his commitments with other Governments during the period of this Ministry. The quality of his relations with them was more peculiarly characterised.

The tradition which ascribes to him an acquiescence, and even pride, in isolation, is wholly negativated by his correspondence. The theories as to his policy which have been built up upon that oft-quoted phrase of "splendid isolation" are a warning as to the dangers of unverified quotation. The words occur in a speech delivered by him at the Guildhall in November 1896. He was demurring to the moral denunciations which people in England were, at that time, heaping upon Russia and Austria for their refusal to support the penal action against the Turks which he had proposed to them in connection with the Armenian massacres. He reminded his audience that, placed geographically as these Powers were, their most vital interests, even to the point of national survival, might be imperilled by a catastrophe in the south-east of Europe. It was
not fair to expect in them "the same emotional and philanthropic spirit with which you, in your splendid isolation, are able to examine all the circumstances." The phrase was used in a purely geographical sense, the adjective adding a characteristic touch of ironic rebuke to the self-righteousness of his compatriots. And yet, divorced from their context and applied to a political idea with which they had no connection, the words have been used again and again as proof and embodiment in boastful form of a principle in his policy for which no other evidence exists. Isolation, in fact, is always referred to in these letters as an ultimate disaster, and his predecessors' record in having incurred it as an indisputable text for their condemnation.

But, on the other hand, as has been seen, he refused to pursue his avoidance of it to what his continental friends looked upon as a logical conclusion. He was willing to rank England overtly in their "group"; to render to its members all services of national friendship; to engage, though somewhat reluctantly, for material co-operation with them in defence of certain already incurred obligations. But so far and no further. That weakness in his character which was a fundamental article in the creed of the two Bismarcks and on which Count Herbert dwelt in his official correspondence, had operated this year in a disturbingly one-sided fashion. If his decisions were, as they maintained, at the mercy of parochially-minded colleagues and ignorant parliamentary majorities, it was the more exasperating that they should prove immovable to their own continuous assault. Since the beginning of this Ministry his formal adherence to the Triple Alliance had been repeatedly hinted at, invited or demanded. The exultation displayed at the signature of the Tripartite Agreement—was it really
so puzzling to the British Minister as he declared — had undoubtedly been inspired by the promise which it held out of a more decisive election. It was to be the first step in England’s advance to full partnership.

But the exultation was short-lived. A feeler thrown out from Berlin early in the new year found the English Minister as obtuse as ever to the programme prepared for him. On January 22, 1888, he reported to the Queen that Count Hatzfeldt had shown him a note, very coolly worded, which Prince Bismarck had just addressed to the Russian Government on the subject of Bulgaria, and had at the same time informed him, by instruction from his chief, that it would have been even less encouraging “if they had known with precision what would be the attitude of England in the case of a war.” Lord Salisbury had replied that, had he been in a position of absolute authority, his statement of intentions “would not be wanting in fulness or precision.” “But the Chancellor, I said, knew the parliamentary position as well as I did, and if I made any definite statement of policy on our conduct in the case of a war between Germany and Russia, I might give him a false impression.”

Matters had evidently not advanced an inch since the Italians had first belled the cat in the preceding February.

His rejection of such appeals was generally, as on this occasion, referred to the exigencies of a parliamentary constitution. How far that did in fact cover its inspiration it is difficult to say. He certainly held it to be constitutionally impossible for a British Government to undertake engagements involving war on an unarrived issue, and it was not his manner to give his mind seriously to the merits of any course which he had once decided to be impossible. Even in private conversation he would resist attempts to get
a verdict from him upon any hypothetical issue: "I will wait till I am a tiger!" Therefore any attempt to apportion the parts played in these recurrent expressions of regret by diplomatic courtesy or by actual opinion, must of necessity be unsatisfying. There is no reason to doubt his real uneasiness at the prospect of being a priori debarred by the uncertainties of a popular vote from engagements which might at any moment become indispensable for the country's safety or the preservation of European peace. But, as matters stood, the restriction did not seem to weigh heavily upon him. Both his caution and his dislike of dependence made for contented acquiescence. He reminds the Queen from time to time of the limitations imposed by "England's traditional policy" in this matter—but without protest, and their hamper makes no feature in his letters to his colleagues or his own diplomatic agents. His recorded complaints on this score were reserved exclusively for his disappointed foreign suitors.

The narrow path thus engaged upon, whether of choice or of necessity, between isolation on the one hand and the sacrifice of independence on the other, could hardly be expected to lead to international good feeling. Rendered possible of pursuit only by England's freedom from frontier anxieties, one would have said that it could not fail to irritate neighbours less fortunately circumstanced. Yet these years, when Lord Salisbury's adherence to it was most emphatically insisted on, were years in which England's reputation and authority stood as high in Europe as they have ever done before or since; when her friendship was universally sought after and her voice was in fact predominant in European counsels. This result must be mainly attributed to another feature in Lord Salisbury's policy which earned for him at the time
plentiful criticism from the more zealous patriots of his party. His instinct for initiative was not confined to the service of his own country. His primary inspiration was national. The supremacy of the "interests of England" over all other objects of policy is recurrent in his letters: it was accepted without question as obligatory upon a trustee's loyalty. But in his methods he was essentially European. He did not always agree with their own Governments as to what the interests of his neighbours were, particularly when the more emotional aspirations of the two Latin races were concerned. But where the result desired by a foreign Power appeared to him of a solid quality in respect of national advantage or security it became, where it was not in direct conflict with the necessities of his own country, an object not only to be sympathised with but to be actively worked for. This disposition in him showed itself notably in that disentangling of cosmopolitan confusion in Africa which was the most important achievement of his diplomacy in this Ministry.¹ But its operation was apparent also in more fugitive connections. England's independence was thus presented time and again in a guise attractive to the ambitions or anxieties of other Powers.

This feature in his policy was urged upon popular acceptance in the course of a speech delivered this spring at Carnarvon. The appeal with which the passage closes shows that certain modern conceptions of international obligations are not exclusively post-war in origin.

"We think that a nation like ours should behave to other nations just as a man should behave to neighbours and equals among whom he may chance to be dwelling. If you wish to get on with the people with

¹ See Chapters VIII. to XI.
whom you are living, you must not be looking for perpetual opportunities of getting a little advantage over them; you must view your own claims and theirs in a just and neighbourly spirit,—on the one hand never sacrificing any important and genuine right in respect to which you think that oppression or encroachment is being attempted,—and, on the other hand, abstaining from erecting small controversies into envenomed disputes and treating every difference as a matter of vital principle. The people who do these things, either in private life or in diplomacy, may secure an advantage or two at first, but directly their temper is discovered by their neighbours, they will find that they are opposed by a combination of those neighbours which places them in a worse position than if they had never insisted on their rights.

"I must add that what I call my neighbourly view of foreign politics extends beyond the mere controversies or disputes we may have with our neighbours. We must not only deal with them in a spirit of goodwill, recognising the necessity of concessions on the one side or the other, but we must also recognise that the members of every community have duties towards each other. We are part of what has been well called the 'federation of mankind.' We belong to a great community of nations and we have no right to shrink from the duties which the interests of the community impose upon us. There is all the difference in the world between good natured, good humoured effort to keep well with your neighbours, and that spirit of haughty and sullen isolation which has been dignified by the name of 'non-intervention.' We are part of the community of Europe and we must do our duty as such." (April 11, 1888.)

There had been a change of ambassadors in Paris. Lord Lyons had been forced by failing health to bring his long diplomatic career to a close and in October '87 Lord Salisbury had chosen Lord Lytton as his successor. The Queen wrote hesitatingly: the Prince
THE FIRST EARL OF LYTTON

From a portrait by G. F. Watts painted 1884
in the National Portrait Gallery
of Wales, voicing Liberal criticisms, had urged upon her the alleged recklessness of the Viceroy’s character. But Lord Salisbury stuck to his guns: “Lord Lytton’s talents,” he wrote, “were of the highest order,” and he had further special qualifications for this post: “He possesses in a very eminent degree the gift of captivating individuals, and this gift in France, where so much depends on impressions, will be eminently useful to him, and to Your Majesty’s service. What we most want in Paris is good information, and this is precisely what a man who has formed many friendly relations will be able to obtain” (October 22, 1887).¹ The event justified this forecast. Lord Lytton’s previous record of public service in diplomacy and in India, his literary distinction, the actual brilliancy of his powers, proved immediately attractive to the Frenchman’s innate respect for superiorities; his conversational gifts, his delicate and audacious wit and his total lack of insular stiffness, put him into social touch with them, and that touch was made intimate and personal by a capacity for sympathy which was large enough to embrace every spontaneous variety of character or opinion. He passed at once and automatically across the barriers of official formality and those, still higher, by which the Paris society of that day was internally divided. His house became a centre open to all its warring groups and he established a position in it such as few Englishmen have attained in any foreign capital. His personality stood for a great deal in mitigating the tension of those difficult years.

Most of the minor irritations catalogued in Lord Salisbury’s letters of the year before were soothed in the course of this winter. The imposition of a modus

¹ Letters of Queen Victoria, 3rd series, vol. i. p. 356.
vivendi upon the reluctant combatants in Newfoundland had allayed disorder there for the time. The French evacuated the New Hebrides in February, and in the same month the prolonged delimitation of the British and French protectorates in Somaliland was completed. It was a part of the world which failed to satisfy Lord Salisbury’s very practical measurement of values, and he wrote to Sir Evelyn Baring almost as disdainfully about Zeyla, its principal station, as he had done the year before to Lord Lyons about the “utterly desert” Dongarita.

To Sir Evelyn Baring, January 20, 1888.

“The Somali coast has become the nightmare of the Foreign Office. The covetousness of the whole civilised world seems to centre upon Zeyla. The French keep trying to edge their frontier eastward; the Turks are demanding to be allowed to occupy Zeyla again with their troops, and the Italians are entreat ing us, if we do mean to evacuate it, to let them step in and leave Crispi to settle the claims of the Turks. Meantime, it is impossible to ascertain the precise nature of the English interests—Hunter, Gibbs, yourself and the Indian Government have all different theories on the subject,—and unassisted contemplation will do very little for us. In my eyes, it seems to be a coast without harbours, trade, produce, or strategic advantage. But as everybody else is fighting for it, I suppose we are bound to think it valuable. . . .”

A postscript to this letter refers to a hitherto little known officer in the Egyptian army, who had been wounded in the frontier fighting with the dervishes. It is not recorded which of his precedent activities in Asia Minor or the deserts of the Soudan had won him this mixed reputation at the Foreign Office:
"I was very much grieved to hear of Kitchener's wound. Though I do not think I have ever met him, I have been familiar with his name for many years, and feel as if I knew him well. He is a very gallant and efficient officer, though a headstrong subordinate."

A Conference on Sugar Bounties had been called at Paris, which, after some evanescent hopes of success, proved as abortive as Lord Salisbury anticipated. The interests of "big business" were involved.

To Lord Lytton, January 21, 1888.

"Baron de Worms is very ardent in the pursuit of his sugar negotiations, and it requires a large fund of natural ardour to take up such a subject with enthusiasm. But I do not share his confidence. In democracies the capitalist seems to have a crushing power—so long as he is content to leave political distinctions to other people. I am afraid Léon Say will have the best of us; yet a yearly payment of £3,000,000 out of the taxes simply to make his future and that of a few others is a large order. . . . I congratulate you on the brilliant success of your first reception. I imagine the people you brought together have not met under the same roof for years."

Colonel Euan Smith, the newly appointed successor to Sir John Kirk at Zanzibar, was to call at Paris on his way out to take up his new duties, and Lord Salisbury wrote to introduce him and his business to the ambassador:

To Lord Lytton, January 25, 1888.

"I am anxious that he should see Flourens to talk over the question of a commercial treaty with Zanzibar, to which I think your attention has already been drawn. The burning question, I am told, is Cloves—though I am puzzled to understand how there can be a sufficiently large illicit traffic in that article to
jeopardise the solvency of the exchequer of Zanzibar. Anyway, the French have an opportunity of being disagreeable to us on this point, and I should like to convey to them, quite incidentally, the hint that complaisance in Madagascar can only be purchased by complaisance at Zanzibar. But this, of course, can only be done with a very light hand."

The interchange of this small money of diplomacy was being carried on under the menace of agitations which destroyed for the time all hope of those good relations with France which Lord Salisbury had told Sir William White he was so anxious to cultivate. Though French statesmen had withdrawn support from General Boulanger, the popular passion for him was still growing in violence. He had been dismissed from his commands and in civilian liberty had plunged into an agitation whose almost avowed object was the destruction of the Republic, its replacement by a "Caesarism" of which he would be the head, and the restoration of France's glory before the world. At a series of bye-elections in widely separated districts he or his nominees were placed at the head of the poll with majorities of thousands; crowds attended him wherever he appeared, and the sentiments uttered left it doubtful as to which of France's three neighbours would be the first against whom her pre-eminence was to be vindicated.

In England, nervousness expressed itself that spring and summer in a widespread panic as to the possibilities of French invasion—a panic which became a contributory cause of the introduction of the Naval Defence Act in the following year.¹ Lord Salisbury's own anxieties are witnessed to in a letter written in February to Sir Evelyn Baring—its immediate object being to dissuade him from prosecuting a quarrel

¹ See Chapter VII.
which Nubar Pasha, the Khedive's Armenian Minister, had opened with him.

To Sir Evelyn Baring, February 17, 1888.

"I have asked you by telegraph to try and manage to postpone any breach with him to a more convenient season. We are at this moment on the sharp ridge that separates the slopes towards war and peace. It is a matter of great uncertainty down which we shall slide, but a very slight push either way will decide the issue, and the slide will be a tremendous one if we go towards war. It is a matter, therefore, of no common importance to avoid any unnecessary cause of conflict. If you were to have a row in Egypt, the excited opinion of the French might turn that way. They already, I am told, look upon a war with England as the cheapest of the three alternatives open to them. They are so unreasonable, and have so much incurable hatred of England, that I should dread any very glaring exhibition of our sovereignty in Egypt at this moment. . . .

"It is not from any doubt about supporting you that I urge you to keep the peace for the present, but because I do not wish our administration in Egypt to be the cause to which the long European war is to be ascribed by the future historian."

On March 9, the German Emperor William I. died at the age of 91. For more than a decade his death and the results to be expected from it had been a constant subject of speculation throughout Europe. Now that it had come, it was in the presence of a personal tragedy whose outcome must vitiate all these long-discussed forecasts. The gentle, sober-tempered heir, who was reputed as representative of all the old
German ideals of culture, Liberalism and peace, was a
dying man, and behind him stood a son who, if the
family tradition of the Hohenzollerns was to prevail,
was bound to the repudiation of his father’s standards.
“The ship is leaving harbour,” said Lord Salisbury
when the news of the old man’s death arrived; “this
is the crossing of the bar.” “And you are wondering
what weather you will find outside?” commented a
companion. “Not wondering,” he answered, gravely;
“I can see the sea covered with white horses.”

The difficulties immediately met with were, how-
ever, only of a personal character and connected with
the family relationship of the two royal houses. The
Empress Frederick’s devotion to the constitutional
traditions of her mother’s kingdom and the philosophy
of her father’s mid-century Liberalism, as constituting
between them the embodiment of political wisdom,
had placed her in direct antagonism to her son’s ideals
and had made her very unpopular in Germany. Her
husband’s helpless condition must lay heavy respon-
sibilities upon her during the brief interval which could
alone be anticipated for his reign. Sir Edward Malet
feared that, as “family” ambassador, she might come
to him for counsel, and immediately after the Emperor
William’s death he wrote to consult his chief as to the
attitude which he should adopt in such an event. Lord
Salisbury hoped that it might not take place.

To Sir Edward Malet, March 14, 1888.

“But if perchance you should be forced to give
advice, or express opinions, your wisest course will be
to discourage any leaning to English notions of policy.
Apart altogether from the question whether they are
or are not applicable to a country like Germany, they
are certainly unsuitable to the Empress’s mouth. She
must not be detected trying to shape Germany to an
English pattern. Otherwise she will incur most serious risk. If I had the misfortune, from which I trust you may be spared, of having to advise her now, I should frame all my advice on the principle that it is her rôle to be mildly Bismarckian and intensely German. Prediction is a very idle pastime just now—but the information that reaches me makes me think that an effort on her part to make hay while the sun shines, and to utilise the next two or three (?) months to give a permanent direction to German policy in an anti-Bismarckian sense, is not wholly impossible. I earnestly hope that it may not be so, but I am still more anxious that it should not be possible to suggest that England had meddled in the matter."

In fact, the only invitation to interfere in the troubled family life at Potsdam came from the opposite quarter. The new Emperor and Empress invited Prince Alexander of Battenberg, the dethroned ruler of Bulgaria, to pay them a private visit at Potsdam, and Prince Bismarck, either genuinely or with some ulterior object in view, assumed a purpose of hurrying on that marriage with one of the young princesses whose proposal had moved his own and Prince William’s wrath three years before. The Berlin press suddenly, and with remarkable unanimity, averred the certainty of his immediate resignation if the marriage, which they declared to be in active contemplation, was persisted in. A "Chancellor crisis" of an acute character was proclaimed, and, in discussing it, some of the papers indulged in attacks upon the Empress and upon her mother, Queen Victoria, who was accused of being the prime inciter to the disastrous project. Prince Bismarck followed up this press outbreak by sending for Sir Edward Malet and demanding that Lord Salisbury should intervene. The Queen was out of England at the time, taking a holiday in Florence, and Lord Salisbury knew of no reason for doubting
the accuracy of the Chancellor's information. But he declined to interfere in what he declared to be a matter of purely private and family interest. Prince Bismarck reiterated his demand, said that the marriage would be an insult to the Russian Emperor, and—according to his habit—threatened political consequences to follow if the British Minister should fail to restrain his royal mistress. Lord Salisbury supplemented his first refusal by an uncompromising telegram:

To Sir Edward Malet, April 8, 1888.

"I am very sorry not to be able to comply with Prince Bismarck's wishes, but he is asking me to assist him in thwarting the wishes of his Emperor and my Queen in order to gratify the malignant feelings of the Russian Emperor. This would certainly be inconsistent with my duty and, if German co-operation can only be had at this price, we must do without it."

This telegram was accompanied by one of warning to the Queen, who had announced her intention of visiting her dying son-in-law at Potsdam on her way home.

Telegram to the Queen, April 8, 1888.¹

"I have received several private telegrams from Sir E. Malet, showing that Prince Bismarck is in one of his raging moods about the proposed marriage. "He shows temper against Your Majesty and as at such times he is quite unscrupulous, he will probably try to give currency to statements which are designed to make Your Majesty personally responsible for any evil results of his own violent passion. He has a vast corrupt influence over the Press and can give enormous circulation to .² I would humbly advise

¹ Letters of the Empress Frederick, by Sir F. Ponsonby, p. 295.
² Blank in the decoded telegram.
Your Majesty to avoid any action which could operate with the controversy which is going on. The newspapers say that Your Majesty is going to Potsdam or Berlin. I would humbly submit that this visit at this time would expose You to great misconstruction and possibly to some disrespectful demonstration.

"German Chancellor is reported by his son to be in a state of intense exasperation, drinking stimulants all day and narcotics by night."

When communication on the subject became established with Florence, a series of indignant telegrams and letters revealed the whole occasion of the much advertised "Chancellor crisis" to have been a delusion—or an invention. There had been no question of the marriage; from the great man's cordial behaviour to her throughout the whole crisis, the unlucky Empress had believed herself to be on the best of terms with him; as to the Queen herself, so far from inciting to romance, she had some time before advised her daughter against making needless bad blood with her son over the marriage, but otherwise had declined to take any part in the discussion: "She would not be mixed up in it, one way or the other." She was contemptuous as well as angry, observing, with sound sense, that it was "most foolish and small... to make such a dangerous and all important person out of Prince Alexander." The conduct of the Chancellor was inconceivable, especially—a touch worthy of Louis XIV.—"in his sending what almost amounted to a message ¹ to the Queen." "It is disgraceful double-dealing and altogether a dreadful business and state of affairs" (April 10 and 21).

Lord Salisbury, in his irate championship, could almost have wished that his royal mistress's discretion had been less impeccable. He repeated her repudia-

¹ Letters of the Empress Frederick, p. 301.
tion to Sir Edward but "with regret" lest the Chancellor should conceive the notion that he had extorted it by his threats.

*To Sir Edward Malet, April 11, 1888.*

"This incident, joined to the incident of last year about the Zanzibar consulate, shows that friendship with Germany is a more uncertain staff to lean upon than friendship with France. The Chancellor's humours are as changeable as those of the French Assembly, and you never can be certain that he will not try to levy a sort of diplomatic blackmail by putting himself against you on some matter in which you are interested, unless you will do something to gratify some one of his unreasonable personal antipathies. . . . Happily, he has not much hold on us now, and while the present Emperor lives, he will not have. What will come after, nobody knows!"

The Queen went to Berlin—treating with significant silence her Minister's audacious suggestion that her plans of travel could be for an instant deflected by abusive newspapers or a Chancellor's ill-temper. Her confidence in her inviolability from personal disrespect proved justified. She was warmly received by the populace, and if Lord Salisbury had entertained any fears lest righteous indignation on her own or her daughter's account should outweigh her sense of public duty, he stood rebuked. She saw Prince Bismarck, talked public affairs with him, and reported briefly that the interview had been satisfactory; that his manner had been most amiable, and that "he had avoided all unpleasant topics." By his own account, as given to the Duke of Rutland,¹ who accompanied her to Berlin as minister in attendance, she added

¹ Hitherto known as Lord John Manners. His eldest brother, the fifth Duke, had died on March 3 of this year.
him on this occasion to her long list of conquests among statesmen. He had been "charmed with his interview with the Queen, who had spoken to him with the utmost frankness and fulness." He added that, if her views were universally entertained in the Parliament and press of England, all would be well and the peace of Europe secured. (From the Duke of Rutland, April 25.) Sir Edward Malet, with less detail, wrote that he understood the meeting with the Crown Prince William to have also gone off well. Perhaps in this instance his grandmother's self-restraint was assisted by a warning which, in deference to Count Hatzfeldt's anxious pressure, Lord Salisbury had addressed to her at the last moment.

To the Queen, April 21, 1888.¹

"It appears that his head is turned by his position: and the hope evidently was that Your Majesty might be induced to have a special consideration for his position. Evidently, though Count Hatzfeldt's language was exceedingly guarded, they are afraid that if any thorny subject came up in conversation, the Prince might say something that would not reflect credit on him, and that if he acted so as to draw any reproof from Your Majesty, he might take it ill, and a feeling would rankle in his mind which might hinder the good relations between the two nations. Lord Salisbury strongly discouraged the idea that he could be made the channel for any representations on such a subject. But it is nevertheless true—most unhappily—that all Prince William's impulses, however blamable or unreasonable, will henceforth be political causes of enormous potency; and the two nations are so necessary to each other that everything that is said to him must be very carefully weighed. It is to be hoped that natural grief and a feeling of decency will,

¹ Letters of Queen Victoria, 3rd series, vol. i. p. 398.
at such a moment, dominate him and exclude all lower impulses."

The painful interval of transition—for the reign amounted to no more—lasted only for three months. On June 15 the Emperor Frederick died and the Emperor William II. reigned in his stead. But for the present Prince Bismarck still governed. In spite of the exasperated state of his nerves, this latest stage of Lord Salisbury's relations with him proved also the easiest. A belief in his fundamental purpose of peace, though shaken at times by a tortuousness of method which made all beliefs about him subject to doubt, had been a determining factor in the British Minister's will for co-operation with him. "I still decline to believe," he wrote to Mr. Austin just before the old Emperor's death, "that Prince Bismarck will be so superior to all ordinary motives as to risk, if he can help it, the edifice which he has had the glory of constructing, and all the fame he has gained, on a venture where he cannot gain more than he has already. I believe he means to end his days in peace if he can" (March 7).

Opportunities for the blackmailing and intrigue of the previous year had largely disappeared. The progress of events, both in Egypt and Bulgaria, had removed temptation from his path. Egyptian finance was steadily advancing to independence of international consents, and the probability of an Anglo-Russian quarrel had become remote. Though still intent upon securing England as a pledged ally, he confined himself in these last years to more direct methods of persuasion. Lord Salisbury, on his side, was impelled to a more persistent effort for the maintenance of good relations between the two countries by his anxiety lest they should be finally imperilled by
the bitter feeling which had arisen between the two Courts as an outcome of the painful circumstances that accompanied and immediately followed the Emperor Frederick’s death.

A closer understanding between the two statesmen was further assisted by what is a very frequent encouragement to intimacy—a common consciousness of a friend’s failings. Though Signor Crispi’s bellicose tendencies were looked upon more tolerantly in Berlin than in London, they were found inconvenient even there. Relations between France and Italy were becoming strained almost to breaking point. There was hardly a locality on the northern coast of Africa, from Morocco eastwards to Suez, whose name had not become associated with a “question” more or less acutely in dispute between the two Governments. In February, negotiations for the renewal of a commercial treaty between them had broken down and a tariff war of an internecine character had been added to other causes of hostility. “I think,” commented Lord Salisbury to Mr. Austin in July, “the fault is mainly on the side of Italy, which assumes an unfriendly attitude on one petty question after another. But whether that is in pursuance of a fixed design or only represents Crispi’s liability to lumbago, I am not at present in a condition to say. I incline to the latter hypothesis” (July 27, 1888).

A few weeks later one of the “petty questions” reached a critical stage. France had issued a decree in her Tunis protectorate, which was held to affect injuriously a number of schools established there by Italy for the benefit of her nationals. Though the question was not one with which England had any direct concern, the representatives of both Governments brought it before the British Foreign Minister, whether for counsel or in self-justification. Lord
Salisbury, with something of weary protest against continental quarrelsomeness, reported to Lord Lytton his efforts to induce common-sense in the disputants.

_to Lord Lytton, October 25, 1888._

"... As to Tunis, I am afraid matters are not mending. Catalani shewed me some telegrams which seemed to lead up to a breach. I have declined to express any opinion upon the strict legality of the Tunis decrees—in the first place, because such an opinion is very difficult to form, and in the second, because we have not been appealed to by H.M.'s own subjects, and we really are very little interested in the matter. But I told the French Chargé d'Affaires that I thought the issue of the decree was both unwise and inopportune, and I have told the Italians that it was a matter of very little importance and that they were foolish to stir. It seems as though Crispi was bent on getting up a quarrel, and that Goblet,¹ or rather, I suppose, Charmes,² out of sheer irritability and 'cussedness' would give them every opportunity for it. . . ."

Lord Lytton commented to a family friend: "No one in England has any idea of the extent to which both the peace of Europe and our own immunity from serious foreign pressure have all this while been depending on Salisbury's personal influence. He is out and away the greatest Foreign Minister we have had in my time."³

Lord Salisbury this year repeated his Paris experiment by appointing Lord Dufferin, who had just vacated the Viceroyalty of India, to the Embassy at Rome. Lord Dufferin arrived there in December, and the Foreign Secretary prepared him for some of the

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¹ The French Foreign Minister. He had succeeded M. Flourens on the defeat of the Tirard Government in the previous March.
² Departmental Chief of the French Foreign Office.
more personal aspects of his work in a long private letter. He warned him against Signor Crispi's restlessly acquisitive tendencies—quoting Horace,¹ "rem, quocumque modo rem"—his passion for getting "something, in whatever way, something"—and its consequence in driving him into one quarrel after another with the French.

_To Lord Dufferin, December 28, 1888._

"... My impression is that if France attacked Italy gratuitously by sea, the English feeling would be in favour of going to her assistance, but that if a war were to arise out of one of Crispi's trumpery quarrels, England would certainly stand aloof. I confess I should be very glad to see Crispi disappear—spite of the German fondness for him. His conspirator's temper (he was one of Garibaldi's hundred) leads him to political gambling, which, in the present state of men's feelings, is full of danger to the world's peace. I am glad to think that the financial mess into which he has got will help to bring about that consummation. The Germans indeed tell me now that it is Damiani² who is the firebrand and that he pushes Crispi. This suggestion, even if it were true, makes little difference, because no one else but Crispi would be pushed by Damiani."

There had been a passing breeze between Lord Salisbury and his royal mistress during the holidays. He was at Royat in August, and the Queen telegraphed to him there to urge that, before returning to England, he should take his part in the series of personal interviews upon which, according to their usual autumnal practice, the three Ministers of the Triple Alliance were engaged. "It is most important." "We might find ourselves isolated."³ Lord Salisbury replied by mes-

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¹ First Epistle, 1st Book.  
² Chief of the Foreign Office in Rome.  
³ Letters of Queen Victoria, 3rd series, vol. i. p. 436.
senger—and after a forty-eight hours' interval—to say that Signor Crispi had by now already begun his homeward journey and would be out of reach, and that Prince Bismarck and Count Kalnoky were at home in their country houses where it would be most improper to intrude upon them, unless he had some definite propositions to convey to them—which was not the case. There was no cause for anxiety; nothing to fear from the policy of any of the Powers, with the single exception of France.

"France is, and must always remain, England's greatest danger. But that danger is dormant, so long as the present strained relations exist between France and her two Eastern neighbours. If ever France should be on friendly terms with them, the army and navy estimates would rise very rapidly." (August 25, 1888.)

It may be an over-subtle criticism to suggest that the emphatic hopelessness of this estimate, for which no current happening in international affairs would altogether account, was not unconnected with its value as a debating point in the present dispute. It was the country from which he was actually now writing—in which he normally spent his holidays—with whose people he was and always had been the most socially and intellectually intimate—whose political hostility remained the most permanent and irreconcilable. So much for the value of personal intercourse!

Her Majesty was not deceived by the excuses offered.

From the Queen, August 27, 1888.

"The Queen is, she cannot deny, vexed at Lord Salisbury's not trying to meet Signor Crispi and other Foreign Ministers, if possible. She thinks that on his
way back to Italy a meeting might so easily have been effected; and Lord Salisbury stands so high, his name is so much respected in Europe, that a short conversation and mutual Verständniss, as they say in German, would be of immense use. The character of the Queen’s grandson, the young Emperor, is one on which—from his being entirely in the hands of two bad and unscrupulous men, like the two Bismarcks, and so inexperienced and narrow-minded—one can place little reliance, and renders the state of Europe one of extreme uncertainty, and the Queen thinks we do not take sufficient pains in taking advantage of opportunities which could enable our relations with Foreign Governments to become more intimate and more understood.”

Lord Salisbury did not continue the argument. Its conclusion, so far as he was concerned, was foregone. Appeals for the exertion of his influence in person, whether in small things or in great, always found him immovably resistant and sceptical.

Another holiday letter to the Queen was in response to her protest against the practice of transferring diplomatists from places with whose politics and personalities they were familiar, to take charge of legations in parts of the world of which they knew nothing. Lord Salisbury admitted that the system was theoretically indefensible—but it was inevitable.

To the Queen, September 19, 1888.

“... It is impossible to keep a service in any heart unless men are promoted when their turn comes, or at least have a fair general chance of being so. When a vacancy occurs, the service expect there shall be a general move upwards. They are not always gratified. Lord Salisbury has been guilty in their views, on three occasions, of deferring this general advance, by introducing men of distinction at the top;
—Lord Lytton to Paris, Lord Dufferin to Rome, and Sir H. Wolff to Teheran. This has had the effect of preventing the general move up for which the service looks. But this ‘move up’ necessarily involves a change of post. When other vacancies came, Lord Salisbury felt bound to recommend that promotions should take place; otherwise the service would have been disheartened. . . . It would be dangerous to act upon the principle that when a man has done well and become useful at a place, he should on that account not be promoted, for such a practice would discourage them from trying to do well. At the same time, Lord Salisbury thinks that the practice goes too far, as at present observed, and that when the promotion is merely for the sake of an increase of salary, the salary might just as well be made to move, instead of the diplomatist. Lord Salisbury will consult the Treasury upon this point when he gets home. . . .

“... It is right to add that, within certain limits, an occasional change of post increases the usefulness of a diplomatist. If he remains too long at one post, he falls under special personal influences or gets mixed up in local quarrels, and then a change of post is the only remedy.”

The Guildhall speech of this year was, in its main outlines, suggestively repetitive. The shadow of possible catastrophe still lay across it. There was the same grave reference to growing armaments that there had been the year before; the same dwelling upon the appalling nature of a European war under these new conditions—emphasising this time the stupendous risk run—“it must end in the national annihilation of those who are defeated”; the same expression of trust that a realisation of these things would perpetuate the present peaceful purpose of continental rulers; the same warning as to the dangers to be apprehended from uninformed movements of popular feeling. There was one new feature: an admission of compelled
national participation in the policy which he deplored. England’s action could not remain unaffected by that of other countries: a programme of increased naval construction was announced for the coming session. The alarms of the previous summer were no doubt still prominent in the thought of both speaker and audience.

“You must remember that preparation is a relative term; that you may be fully prepared at one moment and yet, by the action of others and not your own, that preparation may become suddenly insufficient, . . . and in proportion as the forces which might be brought against you increase in volume and in power, in that proportion is laid upon you the stern and inevitable necessity of increasing your preparations also. And it is not only as protection against danger; we have another consideration which we must bear in mind. In a sensitive commercial community like ours, alarm is almost as destructive as danger; and what we have to provide is not only safety for our citizens, but a sense that that safety exists.” (November 9, 1888.)
CHAPTER V
1889
PRINCE BISMARCK'S INVITATION
THE NILE VALLEY

The spring months of 1889 saw the culmination of Prince Bismarck's effort to enrol England fully in the ranks of the Triple Alliance. The time was not happily chosen. Lord Salisbury's policy of co-operation with them, never very positively popular in this country, was being pursued now under special difficulties. In the autumn of 1888, an outbreak of arrogant temper on the part of the young Emperor, trifling though it was in its occasion and circumstance, had not been of comfortable augury for the future and had intensified the strain already existing in the relations of the two Courts. Somewhat to the scandal of Queen Victoria's rigid ideas as to family mourning, her grandson had started within a month of his father's death upon a series of state visits to the continental capitals. He was due at Vienna at the end of September. The Prince of Wales had gone there on a private visit and proposed to stay on and join in the festivities of his nephew's welcome. But, while in Berlin at the time of the Emperor Frederick's funeral, his behaviour had unwittingly given offence to the new sovereign. The offence had rankled, and a message was received in Vienna to say that, if the
Prince remained there, the already publicly announced visit of the German Emperor would not take place. The message was reported to the Prince, who took the only course possible under the circumstances and left Vienna. The British ambassador, Sir Augustus Paget, was one of the intermediaries through whom the Austrian Minister had conveyed this embarrassing communication, and on receiving his report, Lord Salisbury telegraphed to him to keep out of the German Emperor's way as much as possible during the approaching functions, and in any case, if he had to speak to him, to avoid all reference to this subject. A fortnight later he reported to the ambassador the sequel of the incident so far as official occupation with it was concerned.

To Sir Augustus Paget, October 16, 1888.

"I am afraid from what I hear that you will have been strongly blamed by the Prince of Wales for not having opened the question up in your audience of the Emperor. I hope you made him fully understand that I alone was to blame—if blame there was—for that decision. I had, of course, to consider the question from a political as well as a personal point of view; and my chief anxiety was that there should be no danger of anything like an insult to H.M.'s ambassador.

"I have seen Hatzfeldt since I came back to England. I did not touch on the subject; but he began it and produced a very long *pro memoria* from Prince Bismarck on the subject. He read, or rather translated it to me, and a very curious document it was. The greater part of it was occupied with an argument to explain why, in the present state of politics, the appearance of the Prince of Wales at Vienna between the two Emperors would have worn the appearance of a demonstration directed against Russia, and would have made the position of Germany towards Russia more delicate and difficult than it is now. This thesis
he worked out at some length. He added a curious thrust by the way. He said that, if there had been that real defensive alliance between England and the two Empires which the presence of the Prince of Wales on such an occasion between the two Emperors would have seemed to announce to the world, Germany would willingly have accepted any risk of displeasing Russia which such a spectacle might have caused. But no such alliance exists. Germany has no security that, in case of a war, the English fleet would be employed upon their side. Germany did not therefore wish to incur all the disadvantages which the ostentatious proclamation of such an alliance would bring with it, without having any of its solid fruit as a compensation."

The Chancellor’s memorandum went on to refer, "in guarded and obscure terms," to the causes of personal estrangement between the two royal relatives. Remarks of a dubious discretion had been repeated to the Emperor as having been made by the Prince in private conversation with third parties during his visit at Berlin. The Prince afterwards attributed this mischief-making and, as he believed, inaccurate repetition to Count Herbert Bismarck, to whom he had talked with the freedom of a close social intimacy, dating from the time when Count Herbert was attached to the German Embassy in London.\(^1\) The memorandum also commented upon his behaviour generally on this visit as having shown too great a consciousness of his host as a nephew and too little recognition of him as an Emperor. Lord Salisbury concluded his account of the conversation:

"I gathered from hints that he, Count Hatzfeldt, dropped, that the Emperor William is in a very Rehoboam-like frame of mind; that the Chancellor has his hands full and that his—the Chancellor’s—temper is consequently unbearable. I think that the

\(^1\) King Edward VII., by Sir Sidney Lee, vol. i. p. 647.
Emperor William must be a little off his head. Nothing that has been alleged gives any kind of explanation of this extraordinary freak of temper."

Formal publicity for the incident had fortunately been avoided. Having successfully relegated it to the domain of family relations, Lord Salisbury took no further direct part in its discussion, though a prolonged correspondence was carried on through the following months by royal and diplomatic mediators with the object of inducing an expression of regret from the Emperor. But a certain political reaction was inevitable. The Queen was deeply incensed, and her indignation was made practically operative through a characteristically sudden change of attitude on her grandson’s part. At the outset, he had pointedly omitted to include England among the Courts which he proposed to visit, and the Queen, though not exactly lamenting the result, had noted the omission as an intended discourtesy to his mother’s family and country. But as the winter approached he completely changed round and, through his representatives both in Berlin and in London, intimated his strong wish for an invitation to the English Court. The Queen declared that nothing on earth should induce her to give him one, and Lord Salisbury urged Count Hatzfeldt to prevent any proposal for a visit. He was not only moved by sympathy with his sovereign’s just indignation; there were other reasons for preferring the young monarch’s absence. There had been a serious Arab rising in German East Africa, which will be dealt with in detail in its connection with African affairs in a later chapter.¹ But it had incidental reactions on public opinion in England. By general admission, it owed its origin to the provocative and arbitrary methods of the officials of the German

¹ See below, Chapter VIII.
East African Company. British opinion was shocked and also scornfully angry with an incompetence which had shaken the security of all white enterprise on the coast. Germany and Germans became very unpopular in this country that winter, and the Emperor William’s addiction to spectacular gesture in his parade through the Continental capitals and the pity felt for his English mother’s contrasting desolation and grief, did nothing to deflect that unpopularity from his person. It was impossible to guarantee a civil reception for him by the public, and in the interests of friendly relations between the two countries, Lord Salisbury urged that the longer that he stayed away the better.

But the pressure from Berlin increased. The visit to England had become an Imperial obsession. Message after message was received as to the ardour of the Emperor’s desire and the nascent bitterness of his disappointment at its postponement. Sir Edward Malet became solemn in his warnings of possibly irremediable alienation; Count Hatzfeldt was almost tearful in the urgency of his appeals. At length Lord Salisbury began to exercise his diplomatic talents for the persuasion of Her Majesty to a compromise. A formal letter, submitted to the Queen’s approval before sending, was written to Sir Edward on February 20, which shows the degree to which his efforts had proved successful up to that time. Her Majesty’s objections were not, she wished him to say, merely personal—she doubted the political advantage of the visit. It would be impossible for her to banish from her manner all traces of her recollections of the last twelve months and she feared that her grandson could not fail to be disturbed at the very different state of feeling about his father’s death which he would find among his relations in England to that which he had himself
DEFENSIVE ALLIANCE AGAINST FRANCE 115

displayed: some male member of the royal family should be present and neither the Prince of Wales nor Prince Henry of Battenberg could meet him; there were domestic reasons which would make the visit singularly inconvenient to herself: "Her Majesty would not, however, let her personal feelings stand in the way if there was a political exigency of importance to be met." Speaking for himself, Lord Salisbury went on to insist that in no case must a state visit to London be contemplated. The Radicals and Irish were very pro-French; Germany was generally unpopular on account of events in Zanzibar; the Emperor would certainly be badly received in London and might be insulted. A naval visit to the Solent while the Queen was at Osborne would be safer: "But, it will be much better if, in all friendship, the visit can be postponed."

Such was the moral atmosphere in court and country, in which Prince Bismarck elected to make his final and most direct appeal for a binding alliance with England. Unfortunately, Lord Salisbury's personal attitude towards this appeal can only be deduced from third-party reports. No allusion to it is to be found in his own correspondence, whether private or official—a silence which is fully accounted for in the circumstances as they are related in the confidential documents of the German Foreign Office. These contain the only known record of the incident.

The appeal did not err on the side of vagueness. In a long letter addressed to Count Hatzfeldt on January 11, 1889, the Chancellor instructed him to ask for the immediate conclusion of a defensive alliance, directed avowedly and specifically against France. No limiting condition of her being supported in attack by a second Power was suggested; both

parties to the treaty were to fight if either were attacked by France alone. Unlike other similar engagements entered into by Prince Bismarck, this one was to be public—its ratification by the German Reichstag and the British Parliament was a condition postulated. It was to be of limited duration, and he declared himself ready to accept any period for it which might meet with Lord Salisbury’s approval—three years, two years, or even one year only.

The publicity was insisted on as essential to the object primarily aimed at. This was not to secure support in the event of war, but to prevent the outbreak of war. Much argument was devoted to proving that such was the reward that might be looked for. The two premisses on which the argument rested were France’s unchangeably warlike proclivities, and the decisive influence which her central position gave her as against both England and Germany. England, the Chancellor pointed out, had at this moment two potential enemies—Russia and America. His inclusion of the latter country was due to an acute outbreak of anti-British sentiment of which it had been the scene during the previous summer and autumn. In June '88, the United States Senate had rejected an arbitrated agreement on a Fisheries dispute with Canada which Mr. Chamberlain had negotiated the year before. In November, its Government had dismissed Sir Lionel Sackville West, the British Minister, from Washington with the most summary brutality and without any consultation with his own Government, on the ground of his having interfered in American domestic politics. He had been betrayed into undoubted indiscretion by the sharp practice of some electioneering politicians, and Lord Salisbury had therefore made no protest against this act of discourtesy except by delaying to fill the vacated post for
six months. But under the stress of a presidential election these official manifestations of unfriendliness had been followed in the press and on the platform by an intensive indulgence in the traditional exercise of twisting the lion’s tail, which in any other country would have justified Prince Bismarck’s assumption.

But, argued the Chancellor, an attack from either Russia or America could only be dangerous to England’s life if France assisted in it; nor, without prospect of such assistance, would they risk the adventure. That assistance could never be given if, under the guarantee of a published pledge, it were to entail the immediate entry across France’s eastern frontier of a million German soldiers. In the same way, she would never venture that feared assault upon Germany without the prospect of which Russia would not take the field if, under the same public engagement, she had to reckon with a simultaneous attack of England on her flank. Thus, all the immediate dangers to European peace would be eliminated and the British Government would occupy in the eyes of Europe the proud position of protector of the world’s peace.

The manner in which this proposal was urged was as unusual as its substance. There was a discreetly worded reminder that, if England persisted in her abstention from all commitments, her neighbours—Germany among the rest—might be forced ultimately to seek salvation in other friendships. But, except for this suggestion, made with a careful avoidance of menace, Count Hatzfeldt was specifically instructed to avoid all forms of pressure. The Chancellor set the highest value upon Lord Salisbury’s continuance in office; he had, he declared, the fullest confidence in his judgment; if he should decide the scheme to be impracticable, the Prince’s confidence in his policy and friendliness for his person would be in no way
shaken. He asked for no immediate reply; he was content to wait for it for as long an interval as Lord Salisbury might require for thought and consultation. All that he asked was that he should take the idea into his consideration and sound the leading men among his political friends as to its possibility. These considerate civilities may have been experimentally employed as offering a chance of success where the opposite tactics had previously failed. But, if the word did not seem absurd in connection with the man, the tone of the whole message might be described as diffident in its anxious earnestness.

The answer to it could not be in question. The proposal only differed from that which Lord Salisbury had summarily rejected when coming from Italy two years before, in its provision for parliamentary ratification. That was a gain in respect of constitutional ethics, but it only served to make its impossibility more vividly apparent. Parliament was to be invited to sanction an engagement which was unprecedented in English history in times of peace; an engagement to make war upon a neighbouring country upon an issue not only unarrived but undefined, and in which, when it did arrive, England might prove to have no concern. And it was to be invited to incur this responsibility against a nation which, however disturbingly hostile in its sentiments, was giving no present cause of offence, except by an impotent obstruction of Egyptian administration; and in favour of one so little popular in England at the moment that the Prime Minister was compelled to warn its sovereign that he could not insure him against insult in the streets of London.

All these things Prince Bismarck must have known as well as his English colleague, and what the constraining force was which made him, at the cost of
such unwonted humility of approach, risk an almost certain rebuff must remain a matter for speculation. Presumably, the invasion "scare" of the previous summer in England and her Government's proclaimed purpose of enlarging her fleet, coupled with a further inflation of enthusiasm for General Boulanger in Paris that winter, had persuaded him of a favourable opportunity. The panic in this country had, in fact, subsided — reassured to confidence by the Government's precautionary activities — and in no case would the self-dependence of Englishmen have tolerated it as a plea for seeking support from outside. General Boulanger had throughout been taken too seriously by European opinion, as the event of the next few weeks showed. A sensational success which he obtained at a bye-election in Paris later on in this month of January, proved to be the final expansion of the bubble before bursting. Reinforced by the police discovery of a Royalist conspiracy, actually in being, it stirred the French Government and Chamber to rapid action. A Bill was rushed through Parliament constituting the Senate a High Court of Justice for the summary trial of treasonable conspiracy; General Boulanger's nerve failed him and, on April 1, under fear of arrest, he fled the country never to return to it. By that act of timidity he destroyed at once and for ever his hold on the French people, and from that day the Republic enjoyed unchallenged peace within its borders, and, in its regained security, ceased to be a menace to that of Europe.

Count Hatzfeldt's report to Berlin ¹ of Lord Salisbury's reception of the Chancellor's message was not expansive and, in view of the length and intimacy which usually characterised their conversations, suggests a good deal left out. Though at times this

ambassador displayed to the full the normal incapacity of foreigners to gauge opinion in England, he must have discussed this issue too often with the Foreign Secretary to have had any doubts as to the unwelcome character of the reply which he would have to transmit. Both men would be moved by the same anxiety to avert one of those irrational outbreaks of temper to which at any crossing of his will the great man had of recent years become subject, and we should probably not be far wrong in assuming an agreed report. The Prime Minister, wrote Count Hatzfeldt, had expressed himself as impressed with the high importance of the ideas suggested, and gratefully sensible of the value which Prince Bismarck attached to Anglo-German friendship in the interests of European peace. He had asked for time for full consideration of a matter so far-reaching and so vital for England, and he promised to discuss it, as wished, with his political friends. The ambassador comments in language of model diplomatic no-meaning that it is "not impossible that a counter proposal may arise out of these discussions which may suggest some modification of the idea without declining it in principle." He says, in conclusion, that Lord Salisbury wishes the whole matter to be treated as strictly confidential "and that he means, therefore, for the moment, to communicate it neither to the Foreign Office nor even to Her Majesty the Queen." This sentence is marked with an emphatic marginal "Gut!" in Prince Bismarck's handwriting. We have already noted how effectually the purpose of silence was carried out. The consultation with the Commons colleagues was no doubt verbal—and probably of the briefest—and their chief so successfully impressed them with its confidential character that their private correspondence, as hitherto published, is as free from allusion to it as his own.
No report as to any outcome of these consultations appears in the German documents. No definite reply was presumably volunteered, and the ambassador and his chief acquiesced in the silent negative. But two months later another approach was made, less crudely definite in character. In March, Count Herbert Bismarck paid a private visit to London. In the course of a friendly conversation with the Prime Minister upon various topics, the question of an Anglo-German alliance was again brought up, though in his report of the interview to his father he does not speak of having made any specific proposal with regard to it. "Lord Salisbury," he says, "agreed with me throughout that an Anglo-German alliance would be the best tonic for both countries and for European peace. He had spoken about it to Lord Hartington and his colleagues, all of whom had shared his opinion but considered it inopportune to act upon the suggestion, since it would cause the parliamentary majority to collapse, carrying the Ministry with it."

In this augury, Count Herbert, speaking from a personal acquaintance with the political world of London and more greatly daring than the merely official subordinate, regretfully concurs. There follows an unexpected excursion on Lord Salisbury's part into early nineteenth-century history; presumably in response to some challenge to remember the brave days of old, when England had headed a European coalition against French militarism. It includes some quite credible political reflections upon the superiority of aristocratic over democratic institutions and some less credible historical ones in which Pitt's "active policy" is mixed confusingly with the issues of the Congress of Vienna. Verbal accuracy as to his interlocutor's conversational embroideries was not to be expected.

from a man of Count Herbert's superabundant loquacity. But there is no reason to doubt the authenticity of the two features of outstanding practical importance in this summary—Lord Salisbury’s rejection of the proposed alliance as impossible, and the expression of his personal regret at that conclusion.

The frequency with which this combination appears in the presence of similar advances has been discussed in an earlier chapter.1 Towards the close of the interview Count Herbert dwelt on the danger which, in certain conjunctures, England might incur if Germany were to become reluctantly convinced that no solid reliance was to be placed on her support. The argument met with immediate response. Lord Salisbury replied that he had already long said this to himself: “It was all the more troubling to him that parliamentary considerations reduced his Government to such impotence.” That he was troubled is easy of belief. The unqualified rejection of so spontaneous and cordial an advance from the leading Power in Europe was not a matter to be lightly faced. Always before his eyes was that abyss of contemned isolation upon the brink of which he had found England hanging in the summer of 1885. He was able to soften the blow. Count Herbert had made no secret of the fact that, especially as a safeguard against Italian fickleness, the reputation of an English alliance was only less valuable to him than the reality,2 and a promise on the British Minister's part of demonstrative cooperation for the benefit of lookers-on, closes this account of the conversation.

It is quite probable that Lord Salisbury believed that, had he not been hampered by constitutional fetters, he could have devised some carefully con-

1 See Chapter IV.  
2 See below, letter to the Duke of Rutland.
ditioned engagement which would have freed England from the danger of isolation without pledging her to impossible compliances. But it would scarcely be safe to go beyond that in interpreting his civilities to the German Minister. Even if all invidious direction against France were eliminated—and it is to be noted as a curious comment on the earlier approach, that Count Herbert makes no reference to the argument which had been his father's sole reliance—it is difficult to believe that the Prime Minister could ever have consented to the full and formal alliance which was what both father and son wished for. Beyond the impassable barrier of parliamentary opposition there were impediments to which, since that existed, it was needless and would have been discourteous to allude. Notably, one of temperament—both national and personal. The grotesque image suggested by that digression into Napoleonic history, of Prince Bismarck's playing the part of Frederick William to Lord Salisbury's Pitt, is hardly more unthinkable than that of Lord Salisbury content with the rôle presently acquiesced in by Count Kalnoky and Signor Crispi. "Germany thinks her humble allies exceedingly insubordinate," he wrote mockingly to Lord Dufferin a few months after the date of this interview, in referring to some passing cloud in the mutual relations of the Triple Alliance. The German Chancellor's conception of the whole duty of an ally—a conception which continued to prevail implicitly with his successors—was fundamentally incompatible with the consciously self-dependent and self-sufficient temper of the British nation and its rulers. Under its influence the loose bond which Lord Salisbury established between the two countries gradually slackened and fell apart: a tighter bond would have snapped.

To this interview, unlike the earlier approach, there
are two references in his correspondence, though neither of them is illuminating. To Sir Edward Malet he wrote: "The visit of your Foreign Minister passed off very well. . . . In his expressions upon politics he was very amiable, but nothing was said sufficiently definite to be worth recording" (April 3). To his colleague, the Duke of Rutland, he was slightly more communicative:

To the Duke of Rutland, March 29, 1888.

"Our political news is very scanty and indeed is confined to the sayings and doings of the hateful Herbert¹ who has been going about London for the past week. He is effusively desirous of an English alliance, especially of the appearance of it—as Italy's steadfastness depends on it to a great extent. He is anxious to defer war, at all events for eighteen months, as their rifle will not be ready before that time. He has seen a good deal of Rosebery and of Dilke. The most interesting part of what he told me is that, according to him, Rosebery is a very outspoken supporter of the foreign policy of H.M.G., and that according to Dilke, the Liberal leaders are quite certain to make Rosebery their leader whenever Gladstone disappears."

In the first week of March, the Queen had at last consented to send her grandson the clamoured-for invitation to Osborne for the following August, and the Emperor had telegraphed to his ambassador that he was "beside himself with joy" at its reception (March 7). No apology had yet been received from him for the insult offered to the Prince, but after the failure of various formulae of reconciliation suggested by zealous mediators, the difficulty was solved by his

¹ The epithet is no doubt in allusion to the Queen's sentiments. She shared her son's view as to the part which Count Bismarck had played in making mischief between him and his nephew and was proportionately indignant with him.
categorically asserting that the incriminated message had never been sent. It was a figment either of the Austrian Court or his uncle's imagination. It would be illogical, observed Count Hatzfeldt suavely, to expect an apology for a thing which had never happened—and the Prince, with great good sense, agreed to leave it at that.

Whatever may have been his failure towards other relatives, the Emperor now spared no pains to convince his grandmother of the genuineness of his respect and affection for herself, of which indeed there appears to have been no doubt. He besieged her with letters, politically confidential and personally devoted, of which she transcribed extracts for Lord Salisbury's benefit, receiving in reply encouraging congratulations on the improved judgment or amiability of feeling to which they witnessed. The friendship of England was being pursued as ardently from Potsdam as from Friedrichsruhe. From which of the two came the original inspiration? Was the old statesman, with far-reaching political purpose, teaching his as yet unrevolted pupil to restrain his youthful antagonism to his mother's country? Or was it that, conscious of a weakening hold on power, he was striving to strengthen it by a zealous support of the latest of his master's unstable emotional phases?

The support, if such it were, showed itself in his public as well as in his private utterances. On January 15, in a debate in the Reichstag on his acceptance of the policy of Colonial advance—as to which he affirmed in this, almost his last public utterance on the subject, he "still entertained the gravest apprehensions"—he was challenged as to its reactions upon Germany's international relations. "I can only say," he replied, "that we have proceeded, and shall ever proceed, solely with and in agreement with, the
greatest Colonial Power in the world—England. . . . In Zanzibar and also in Samoa, we are in the fullest accord with England and advance hand in hand with her. We are absolutely resolved to be at one with the English Government and to uphold that unity. We have shared with the English in Africa, and the only unpleasantnesses which have arisen have been with subordinate officials for whom the Government neither can nor will be responsible.”

These emphatic reiterations were no doubt elicited by the very opposite inspiration under which the “subordinate officials” had been acting in both the localities referred to. Dr. Knappe’s attitude in Apia had close affinities with that of Herr Karl Peters in East Africa. Prince Bismarck’s programme of going “hand in hand with”—and therefore of necessity playing second fiddle to—the “greatest Colonial Power in the world,” was a hard saying for a generation already inspired by the conviction of Germany’s divinely appointed hegemony. Their feelings were not soothed by their actual failure as against their rivals in the matter of native administration. Their incompetence—or inexperience—had resulted in tumultuous outbreaks both in Africa and the Pacific. “Prince Bismarck’s Colonial undertakings,” commented Lord Salisbury to Sir Edward Malet, “are a great nuisance. . . . If they did Germany any good I should mind it less—as we are sure to get some slice of any commercial opening anywhere. But he has ruined everybody else’s trade at Samoa and Zanzibar, without in the least benefiting his own” (February 12, 1889). In Samoa the virtual civil war of two years before had become an actual one. The experi-

1 German Consul-General in Samoa.
2 Chairman of the German East African Company and famous as an African explorer and adventurer.
ment of a multiple white control over a childishly immature race had completely broken down under the mutual jealousies of the German and Anglo-Saxon representatives. The German had led the way in aggressiveness. He had got rid of Malietoa, the Anglo-phil chieftain, who was also, unfortunately for Dr. Knappe, the popular one, and when the island rose in revolt against his own nominee, he, with several of his fellow-countrymen, had taken the field with the forces of this "usurper." They had been defeated and several of the Germans had been killed in two pitched battles that autumn. Dr. Knappe had thereupon arrogated sovereign rights to himself and had placed the island, including its foreign white residents, under martial law.

The Berlin Government disowned these proceedings, ordered the suspension of operations against the Malietoans, and, in March, recalled Dr. Knappe. Prince Bismarck then invited the Governments of Washington and London to a Conference at Berlin for the settlement of Samoan affairs. Lord Salisbury had for two years been urging that the present system should be abolished, either by making one of the white Powers a mandatory for the other two, or by the establishment of separate "spheres of influence" for each of them among the Samoan and neighbouring groups of islands. The Germans agreed, but when Washington adhered immovably to the principle of equality of status for the three interested nations, declined to carry on the contest. Lord Salisbury submitted, but with a scepticism of success which was justified in the event.

To Sir Edward Malet, April 24, 1889.

"I hope to send you out your instructions in good time before the opening of the Samoa Conference. I
have seen one of the American Plenipotentiaries and gather that your deliberations will not be long or difficult and will result in a victory for the Americans. But as a settlement of the question, this issue will be quite valueless. The fundamental difference between their view and that which we and the Germans have supported is that we think some one European power must lead in the Government of the islands, whilst the Americans think that all three Governments must be on a precisely equal footing. I understand that on this point the Germans mean to give in. We cannot fight it alone but the Government by three equal Consuls will not work smoothly for three years together.

"They are talking of having a majority arrangement by which two of the Consuls shall outvote the other. To this I have a strong objection. Samoa matters very little to us and I strongly demur to an arrangement under which, for Samoa's sake, we shall quarrel either with the Germans or the Americans once a month. . . .

"The greatest reform of all would be to lay a cable from Auckland to Apia. So, and so only, we should get rid of the furor consularis."

In the spring, relief was offered from the more serious issues of diplomacy in connection with a Universal Exhibition by which President Carnot had decided to celebrate the centenary of the outbreak of the French Revolution. The Empires of Germany and Austria and the Kingdom of Italy had declared openly from the outset that their representatives could not participate officially in the glorification of that catastrophe to the monarchical principle; and the minor Powers, equally pledged to its defence, acquiesced in this view. Since the challenge had been
thrown down, Lord Salisbury felt that both considera-
tion for his allies and respect for Her Majesty required
that Lord Lytton should not separate himself from
his colleagues. All the more because the precedent
opened an embarrassing vista of historical annivers-
aries in the immediate future. “In the next ten
years,” he wrote to Lord Lytton when the question
was first mooted, “if France wishes to go into ecstacies
over her own centenary history, she will hardly induce
any large portion of the world to go with her”
(January 31, 1888).
President Carnot, however, had set his heart upon
securing all the splendour possible for his opening
function, which was fixed for May 6, the centenary of
the meeting of the States-General, and it was an-
nounced that the corps diplomatique would be invited
to attend it. Simply to refuse the invitation and stay
at home would be an impossible rudeness and it
was settled that the ambassadors should resort to the
time-honoured expedient of a fortuitously convenient
holiday for the occasion. Then it was unfortunately
discovered by an expert in international etiquette
that, since, in an ambassador’s absence, his functions
devolve unimpaired upon his representative, the
Chargés d’Affaires would still be in the position of
having either to insult the President or commit their
Governments to approval of revolution. Lord Lytton
reported the difficulty to his chief. The response was
not very helpful:

To Lord Lytton, April 16, 1889.

“The problem you have set me is a tough one.
We cannot appear at the Exhibition opening without
parting company with our allies—Germany, Austria,
Italy; so that it is not to be thought of. But what
excuse is to be found for the simultaneous inability,
not only of the Ambassador, but of the whole staff he leaves behind him,—the whole Chancellerie? Influenza is not in season in May; and neither the plague cholera, nor small-pox are prevalent in Paris just now. I give it up. You had better have a maiden aunt seriously ill somewhere or other,—but what is to be done with the Chargé d’Affaires, I cannot think. Could not your maiden aunt fall ill at Nice?—then there would be no Chargé d’Affaires! I must leave the solution of the problem to your and Egerton’s ingenuity. But it will not do for you and the American to appear as the supporters of the rights of man and the principles of ’89. . . .”

The finality of the dilemma compelled its solution. The Russian alone remained immovable. He had already got his orders. Not even respect for the feelings of his only friend in Europe could deflect the rigidity of the Czar’s autocratic orthodoxy. Baron Mohrenheim ¹ was instructed to shut up his embassy, withdraw with his whole staff across the frontier to Aix-la-Chapelle, and remain there for the rest of the summer. Thus only could all risk be avoided of a contaminating share in the celebration of the abominable anniversary. The other Governments, royal and imperial, took a less severe view of their monarchical obligations and the ambassadors in conference decided to compromise by formally suspending, for this occasion only, the representative rights of their Chargés d’Affaires. The minor Powers came into line without demur; all the “chiefs of mission” took a ten days’ holiday and, with the single exception of the Russians, the combined though decapitated staffs of the foreign legations lent the decorative support of their uniforms to the President’s celebration. Chastened, perhaps, by the Russian defection, the French

¹ The Russian ambassador in Paris.
Foreign Minister expressed himself to Lord Lytton as entirely satisfied with this arrangement.

In August a breach threatened between Greece and Turkey. It came to nothing and would not call for mention here except as having been the only recorded occasion in this Ministry of a final difference of decision between Lord Salisbury and his colleagues as to the action of his own department.

A revolt had broken out in Crete—or rather, a civil war between its Christian and Moslem inhabitants. All authorities were agreed as to the crass failure of the Turkish Government to maintain order in the island, though they differed diametrically as to the degree of partiality which it had or had not displayed towards its co-religionists in its futile efforts to restore it. But hundreds of refugees from Christian villages had fled to Greece; feeling there had become violently excited; and on August 5, the Greek Prime Minister, M. Tricoupis, addressed a telegraphic circular to the Powers announcing that if they did not interfere, Greece would; and that the Greek fleet was being put in readiness to land troops in Crete without further delay. Such action would of course have meant war with Turkey.

Prevention to be effective must be immediate and Lord Salisbury telegraphed in reply to say that, while recognising the seriousness of the situation, Her Majesty's Government could not admit that Greece had any valid ground for material intervention. On such an issue and to a country placed geographically as Greece was, England spoke with the voice of authority and the message suggested the purpose—which, in fact, Lord Salisbury entertained—of proceeding in case of resistance to such coercive naval action as had already been effective in preventing a
Greco-Turkish war in the winter of '85-'86. But when the Cabinet met on the 7th, the majority of its members, dreading the offence which might be given to the Government's composite support in the House of Commons, demurred to any such forcible inter-
vention. Mr. Smith seems to have reported afterwards to the Chancellor of the Exchequer that the Prime Minister had been wounded by his colleagues' revolt. Mr. Goschen wrote to express his sorrow.

To Mr. Goschen, August 11, 1889.

"I am very much obliged to you for your kind letter. Smith mistook me in saying that I was hurt at the decision of the Cabinet. What I tried to ex-
plain to him was the perplexity in which it left me. My recollections of the years 1875-1878 have impressed very deeply on my mind the dangers of a composite policy. In that case it was produced because the Foreign Minister would not act, and the Cabinet tried to make him act. But it can quite as easily be pro-
duced if the Foreign Minister and the Cabinet have different views of action. If considerations connected with home politics compel the Cabinet to take and adhere to the view which commends itself to them, and the Foreign Minister is not convinced, the only chance for both is a policy of the utmost possible quiescence. The attempt to weave a policy out of the different threads of their various opinions will certainly be fatal. It would be like two or three persons attempting to fence with the same rapier at the same time. Against so excellent a swordsman as Tricoupis the attempt would be specially perilous. I have therefore abstained from any further action—except sending to White a 'Blue-book' telegram of advice to the Turks.

"I hope that the danger will pass off this time. Tricoupis has attached a meaning to the message which I sent before I consulted the Cabinet, which the words will not bear, but which is agreeable to the
policy I recommended. And as he has got no encouragement from anybody else, it is just possible that he will shrink from overt action, and the Cretan movement will burn itself out. But its effect in Bulgaria has already been bad, and it is possible that either there or in Servia the violent party may break away from all restraint.

"But I hope that we may be spared difficulties, for I do not at all see my way since the revelation of the mind of the Cabinet disclosed on Wednesday."

The event bore out his hopes. The other Powers concurred, some reluctantly, some emphatically, in deprecating Greek action, and M. Tricoupis, knowing nothing of Cabinet obstruction and interpreting the Prime Minister's message by previous experience, thought it wiser to abandon his purpose. The decision taken on the unshared authority of a single individual which, as Mr. Gladstone had pointed out, must be the result of a Prime Minister at the Foreign Office whenever immediate action was called for, had acted on this occasion as a successful though unintended bluff.

Lord Salisbury did not avail himself of the ardent championship which would certainly have been at his disposal if the Queen had been made cognisant of the dispute. He stood loyally by his colleagues, not only reporting the Cabinet decision without any suggestion of having himself disapproved of it, but referring it to a precedent which he knew would historically plead its cause: "The Cabinet were opposed to the present intervention of Great Britain, fearing a renewal of the disgraceful 'atrocity' agitation thirteen years ago" (August 8).

The episode presents a friendly picture of personal relations, while Mr. Goschen's distress at the idea of having displeased his chief and the vexed surprise
which pierces through the latter’s disclaimer, suggest that such final differences must have been rare.

Inter-European politics as a whole had entered on a placid phase. It was still a commonplace in the gossip of the Chancelleries to treat a continental war as normally to be anticipated and rumours as to the period of its advent were still recurrently reported in Lord Salisbury’s correspondence. But the commonplace had become largely conventional. The share which the threat of internal convulsion in France had had in the tension of the last three years was witnessed to by the relaxation which followed its removal, and now in their immediate freedom from frontier anxieties Frenchmen, Germans, and Italians were throwing themselves with as much zest as Englishmen into African adventure.

About Egypt, France still remained unappeasable. Her Government continued to employ its international right of financial interference for the obstruction of reform in that country and openly declared its purpose of persisting in that course until England fixed a date for evacuation, while her ambassador presented periodic demands at the Foreign Office for a pronouncement in that sense. But under the pressure of a two-fold influence, Lord Salisbury’s own attitude on the question had become noticeably modified in the course of the last two years.

Speaking at the Mansion House twelve months after the failure of the Wolff Convention, he had still referred to the occupation as a burden, though re-asserting emphatically the conditions required for its abandonment.

“To us it is not an annexation of territory that is desirable; all we wish is that there shall be an Egypt, self-sustaining, strong enough to master internal dis-
order or to repel an external foe. Until we can be satisfied that that state of things exists, we shall remain to assist Egypt; the moment we are satisfied that it does exist, we shall gladly relieve ourselves of an unnecessary burden.” (August 6, 1888.)

Even while this speech was being delivered, the task of protection from an “external foe” was losing its hypothetical quality. For two or three years after their conquest of Khartoum the Khalifa’s forces had been occupied in securing their position in the equatorial Soudan; but they had now again turned their faces northwards and were engaged this year upon a series of attacks upon the southern frontier of Egypt and upon Suakin, which, still defensible on its sea base, had remained since 1884 her sole possession in the Eastern Soudan. “My impression,” wrote Lord Salisbury to his pro-Consul at Cairo in November ’88, “is that both Turks and Frenchmen will attempt at an early date to renew the evacuation question, but these events at Wadi Halfa and Suakin have deferred it still further. It would have been better for them if they had accepted Wolff’s Convention” (November 2, 1888).

The fighting round Suakin, where the Arabs were led by Osman Digna, a lieutenant of the Khalifa’s of notable military ability, was so severe that its Egyptian garrison had had to be reinforced by British battalions under the command of General Grenfell. This “small war” in conjunction with the Arab outbreak in East Africa, to which reference has already been made, and two defensive expeditions on the North-West frontier of India, inspired Lord Salisbury that year at the Guildhall to a rare excursion into poetic imagery. He had been congratulating his audience upon the generally peaceful outlook: these interruptions to it, he said, did not indicate any tempest or disturbance—“they are merely the surf that
marks the edge of the advancing waves of civilisation” (November 9, 1888).

The dervishes were defeated, with loss, by the British and Egyptian troops in a pitched battle outside Suakin on December 21, only, however, to retire into the surrounding deserts and recruit their strength for further raids. The financial fiat against “pacifying” expeditions remained absolute at the Cairo Agency and in Downing Street. The continued garrisoning of Suakin under such conditions was burdensome both in money and health, and Sir Evelyn Baring’s advisers in Cairo suggested that the victory offered a dignified opportunity for getting rid of it by handing it over to the suzerain Power at Constantinople.

In rejecting this proposal, Lord Salisbury was moved to indulge at some length, for the benefit of his non-political subordinate, in a dissertation upon the appropriate features of parliamentary psychology, delivering thrusts in passing as he went at all parties indifferently. He pointed out in detail how, on such a minor issue, the Government would be at the mercy of “any fortuitous concurrence of fanaticism and fads that chance might direct against them.” There would be the Turcophobes who objected, *per se*, to every concession made to Turks; the Jingoes of an even less complex inspiration, “who simply desire to annex and object to evacuating in all cases”; the “fanatics who believe that by some magic wave of the diplomatic wand the Soudan can be turned into a second India”; the more retiring group of shady company-promoters, who were anxious to take advantage of this delusion. He passed on to the probable results of the transfer and their political reactions: “The Turks would commit every possible blunder: they would oppress the Arabs, destroy all possibility of trade except the Slave Trade, to which they would
give every facility,” and, through their incompetence, would so weaken the defences of Suakin that some fine day a lieutenant of the Khalifa’s would rush the fortress—“Then the political air would be rent with tales of the inefficiency and brutality of the Turks and with praises of the virtues of the Soudanese, only requiring Home Rule under the aegis of Great Britain to develop their country into an equatorial Arcadia. The whole evil would be attributed to the evacuation which must be immediately reversed. I need go no further” (December 28, 1888).

Sir Evelyn responded sympathetically and with an assurance that he was not insensible to the difficulty of transacting affairs in the presence of “our unwieldy democracy”: “Your account of the elements which go to make up English public opinion is not encouraging. We are suffering—grievously suffering—for that leap in the dark some twenty years ago, as to which, unless my memory fails me, your conscience must be more clear than the consciences of many others” (January 5, 1889).

The dervishes, undeterred by the Suakin defeat, united the following summer for an attack down the Nile in force. Their defeat at Toski (August 3, 1889) was a foregone conclusion; but so was the certainty that it would prove no permanent deterrent to them or to the fierce resolve of their ruler. There could be at present no serious question of Egypt’s evacuation by her white garrison and Lord Salisbury met the annual protest of the French that summer with a very definite refusal of its consideration. At the Guildhall, after referring to the successful repulse of “that organisation of fanaticism and slave-hunting which has already carried so much misery throughout vast portions of what belonged to Egypt,” he emphasised, amid loud cheers, the Government’s resolve, “whether it were
assisted or obstructed by other Powers," to pursue to the end the task which it had undertaken (November 9, 1889).

The other pre-requisite of evacuation—the security of Egypt against internal disorder—attained also this year a greater definition of outline. In 1887, Sir Evelyn, though admittedly reluctant, does not appear to have urged any veto against the proposed withdrawal. It would have closed an experiment which, though hopeful, could not yet claim to be more than an experiment. The experience of the two intervening years had strengthened his confidence in the ultimate success of the British administration and had still more completely established his conviction of the disaster which must follow its interruption. In June '89, he wrote briefly and hurriedly to deprecate a rumour as to evacuation which had reached him, and a week later, at greater length, to congratulate Lord Salisbury on the "excellent answer" which he had given to M. Waddington's reclamation:

From Sir Evelyn Baring, June 15, 1889.

"The argument based on danger from the dervishes is true, and it is an excellent working argument; but it does not in reality constitute the real reason why the evacuation policy is well nigh impossible of execution. The main argument—which it is difficult to use—is based on the utter incapacity of the ruling classes in this country. I am more and more struck with this the longer I remain here. I have not yet come across a single man among the Pasha class who appears to me really to understand the main elements of the local political problem with which the Egyptian Government has to deal. It should never be forgotten that the ruling classes here are almost exclusively foreigners—that is to say, principally Turks, with a mixture of Armenians, Syrians, Algerians, etc.; and
further, that the Arabi movement, though in a degree anti-European, was principally anti-Turk. Now, all this class are detested by the people, and they are more disliked now than they ever were before. I cannot say whether our good government has made us popular, but I am quite sure that it has made the Pasha class more unpopular than they ever were before. . . .

"Riaz Pasha, who is the only man they have, is deplorably wanting in judgment. I think that if he were left to himself he would go far to produce a revolution in six months. The argument that, if we had a right to come back, we should probably never have to execute the right is, I think, based on a fallacy. The interests, both European and native, involved in bringing us back would be stronger than those involved in getting us to stay away. Really, the more I look at it, the more does the evacuation policy appear to me to be impossible under any conditions."

This considered judgment chimed in with the external menace to compel an unanswerable conclusion as to present action. But the dervish attacks did more. They brought the reconquest of the Nile provinces into the foreground of Lord Salisbury's thought. He had recognised it from the first as an issue to be ultimately faced in the interests alike of humanity and of Egyptian security. But it now became a central episode in his calculated prevision of events. It would have to be deferred until Egypt's economic and social revival should make her able to bear her part in the strain involved. But, in the meantime, she—and England—must not be forestalled in its achievement. Where it was possible, he always preferred a long preparatory interval between conception and action. Thus we find that, from this date, the necessity of safeguarding the Nile valley

1 The Khedive's actual Prime Minister.
from the intrusion of other white powers begins to appear in his correspondence as a separate and dominating factor in his policy.

It reacted on his general diplomacy only to intensify one of its already accepted aspects. He adhered to the formula which he had written to Sir Edward Malet in the spring of 1887: he did not mean to allow France either to force England out of Egypt or to force her into a quarrel over Egypt. The first clause of that formula had now, in his purpose, been extended indefinitely in time and made to include virtually the whole of the Nile basin; the demands of the second clause, while they remained as imperative as ever, had become correspondingly more difficult of fulfilment. During the nine years that were still to intervene before the reconquest of Khartoum, his resolve to eliminate all auxiliary occasions of difference with France affected his action consciously in every quarter of the globe.

The disturbances in Samoa and Crete, the perennial difficulties arising with France over Egypt, and the delicate fencing called for by Germany’s too impor-
tunate friendliness, were the only noticeable features in what may be described as the normal business of the Foreign Office this year. They counted, it is true, only as supplemental bye-play; the main action of the diplomatic drama was already shifting to the African “scramble.” But, even so, it is difficult to account for one or two unusual complaints of work-weariness which appear in Lord Salisbury’s letters at this time. “It is of no use wishing me anything in concrete form,” he wrote to Mr. Austin in answer to his New Year’s wishes; “I have become too much a mere machine to know what I wish for. . . . When

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1 See Chapter II, p. 41.
I was put together, my brain and my stomach were procured at different establishments and they do not match. The result is that, intellectually, I am dead tired and longing for repose—but work certainly keeps one in health. But it's dreary work!” (January 1, ’89). He made the same report to the Queen in October. “Having now served your Majesty as Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary for three and a half, close upon four years, he is feeling the inevitable fatigue; but it has in no way affected his health” (October 24).¹

His groanings over the social side of his labours were also specially articulate this year.

To the Duchess of Rutland, June 30, 1889.

“I have long desired to write to you—first to thank you for your very kind letters—and secondly to protest against sundry unfounded assertions which they contain,—as that I am in the habit of going to Mrs. Smith’s, or Lady Wimborne’s, or Lady Stanhope’s. I have to go to a certain number of parties of my own, and a few of other people’s,—as I have to go to Court. It is part of my dreary vocation. In our modern Church we have abolished fasts and penances, and we are quite right in doing so, because they would be quite superfluous and excessive, now that we have invented evening parties and Court ceremonies.

“But I hope that you will not impute to any hopeless criminality of intention my omission to thank you for your letters or to defend my character. At night—towards 1.30—when my business work is over, there always remains a certain residue of letters from my friends, and the question always arises for decision—Shall I go to bed, or shall I write to my friends? And I am ashamed to say—degraded voluptuary that I am—that my fallen nature always decides in favour of going to bed.”

¹ Letters of Queen Victoria, 3rd series, vol. i. p. 532.
The value, as an incentive to parliamentary loyalty, of crowds of well-dressed humanity recurrently elbowing one another from 10 o'clock till midnight in the big rooms in Arlington Street or the Foreign Office was still insisted on by whips and wire-pullers, though its tradition was probably already becoming antiquated. But there was no disputing the claims to a social welcome of distinguished foreigners on their travels. "We are in the middle of all the horrors of preparation for the Shah: with the Emperor William in the background," wrote Lord Salisbury to Sir Julian Pauncefote, who—the interval prescribed in deprecation of American discourtesy having elapsed—had just been promoted from the Secretaryship of the Foreign Office to the Washington Legation. The tax which the Emperor's visit at Osborne imposed on him did not extend beyond an extra and rather prolonged stay there, but the Shah's visit was a more intimate burden. Competition with Russia for influence at Teheran was keen and, when it was urged by "those who knew," that a night's stay at Hatfield, to be followed by a monster garden party in his honour would be an effective item in the programme of His Majesty's entertainment, the verdict was ruefully acquiesced in. He came on the night of July 8 to 9. The customs of western society had not as yet penetrated far into Persia and preparations for the visit had to be of an unusual character. The Shah's retinue of all ranks was multitudinous and Lady Salisbury filled the bedrooms on two floors of the house, as well as those in the Agent's house nearby, borrowed for the occasion, with extemporised oriental furniture for their benefit. The labour and expense proved needless, as the greater part of the suite insisted upon passing the night, curled up in ascending tiers of humanity, upon the staircase outside their sovereign's door.
1. The Prince of Wales (King Edward VII)
2. Lady Salisbury
3. S. Casa Laiglesia, Spanish Ambassador
4. Lord Salisbury
5. M. de Staal, Russian Ambassador
6. The Shah of Persia
7. Count Hatzfeldt, German Ambassador
8. Malcom Khan, Persian Minister
9. Rustem Pasha, Turkish Ambassador
10. The Princess of Wales (Queen Alexandra)
11. In attendance on the Shah
12. Sir Henry Wolff, Minister at Tehran
13. In attendance on the Shah
14. Sir Henry Rawlinson, G.C.B.
15. Lord Eustace Cecil
16. Lord Lothian
17. The Duc d'Aumale
18. Lord Halsbury, the Lord Chancellor
19. M. Waddington, French Ambassador

GROUP OF GUESTS AT THE GARDEN PARTY AT HATFIELD HOUSE, JULY 9, 1889
He himself accepted with apparent equanimity the social conditions in which he found himself—except for one small incident. The Prince and Princess of Wales \(^1\) were among the guests who had been asked to assist in welcoming him. Lady Salisbury had ordered a procession of carriages to take the whole party in due state for a morning’s drive through the park. The Princess was a few minutes late in coming down to the door at the time appointed, and to be kept waiting by one of the inferior sex proved to be beyond the Mahomedan monarch’s capacity for condescension. He stepped into the foremost carriage, beckoning imperatively to the Prince and Lord Salisbury to follow him; and his gesture of command to the coachman to start was so forcible, and the alarm of his followers lest it should be disregarded was so evident, that the procession had to drive off, leaving Lady Salisbury on the doorstep to await the Princess and apologise for what was probably a unique experience in Her Royal Highness’s life.

\(^1\) Afterwards King Edward VII. and Queen Alexandra.
CHAPTER VI

THE PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT

1887-1892 [I]

(1) Legislation (3) House of Lords Reform
(2) The Electorate (4) Treasury and Tariffs

(1) LEGISLATION

For the first four years of this Ministry the atmosphere of Home affairs was constrained by Irish politics to a continuous sensationalism. In '87, the parliamentary struggle over the Crimes Act kept the House of Commons in stormy session punctuated by "scenes", from February to September. It was followed by Mr. Balfour's campaign against disorder in Ireland, whose incidents, however trivial in themselves, shone luridly in the flames of controversial violence with which they were denounced or defended. Treading on the heel of these agitations came the charges of personal complicity with crime brought against the Irish leaders by The Times newspaper in the summer of '88. They included, with a mass of duller material culled from Nationalist speeches, two or three letters alleged to have been written by Mr. Parnell, which would have connected him directly with the Phœnix Park murders. The long-drawn-out excitement caused by this accusation reached its peak of sensation on the day when it was disproved before the special Commission which had been appointed to investigate The Times charges.
In a notable cross-examination, Sir Charles Russell extracted a confession of forgery from the adventurer who had imposed the letters on The Times, and the confession was followed congruously by the flight and suicide of the criminal.

A few short months of comparative placidity supervened, during which, however, by the apotheosis of Mr. Parnell on Gladstonian platforms as a rehabilitated saint, fatal preparation was made for the succeeding crisis. In the autumn of 1890, divorce-court revelations, which, to the outside public, were wholly unexpected, hurled the idealised image to the ground, and were followed by a final episode which had in it something of the poignancy of a Greek tragedy. Under impulsion from the leaders of Nonconformity, Mr. Gladstone called upon the Irish chief to abdicate; after brief hesitation the majority of his own followers in Parliament yielded to Liberal pressure and reinforced the demand. He fiercely refused, and in a series of savage meetings in one of the Committee rooms of the House of Commons, insisted on the submission to which he had become accustomed. When it failed him, he passed over to Ireland and there embarked upon a pilgrimage of passion, reckless in its self-destructive violence, which ended only with his death ten months later.

The atmosphere induced by these successive appeals to militant emotion, with the flow of denunciatory oratory which they inspired on either side, was deterrent to interest in the prosaic work of legislation. This was fortunate for Ministers, since a separate and coincident activity of the Home Rule party made legislation almost impossible. The Irishmen's unrivalled gift for parliamentary obstruction, supported for the first time by the whole strength of the official Opposition, and acting against the loose cohesion of
a coalition majority, proved practically invincible. During the four years which preceded the O'Shea divorce case,\(^1\) though every Queen's Speech was duly furnished with legislative intentions, only one British measure of importance—the Act of 1888 establishing County Councils—succeeded in reaching the Statute Book. There was a measure for transferring the liability for Tithe from tenants to landlords, made urgent by a persistent strike of Welsh Nonconformist farmers against its payment, which the Government introduced and vainly pressed through four successive sessions, and which was only finally passed into law in '91 as a sequence of the Parnellite collapse. The proposal for Free—or "Assisted"—Education, which had been prominent in the Tory programme for six years, had to wait for the same occasion of relief to materialise, and the strain of getting even the necessary financial business through the House was believed to have shortened the life of its devoted leader, Mr. W. H. Smith.

It was a parliamentary paralysis, humiliating to Ministers and exasperating to them as practical legislators. But from a party point of view they had no reason to complain. The Opposition tactics prevented questions upon which at that stage it might have been difficult to induce Liberal Unionists and Conservatives to vote together from being ever brought to the test of a division, while the perpetual harping upon Irish grievances concentrated attention exclusively upon the one subject on which their co-operation was certain. The solidarity of the Unionist alliance was notably advanced and, during this period, valuable elements in the Liberal party achieved an enduring habit of alienation from it.

Incidentally, the anticipated liberalising of Tory

\(^1\) The case in which Mr. Parnell was co-respondent.
legislation under the pressure of these allies had little opportunity for its display. The only two English measures of first importance which got through the barrier of obstruction had been accepted by the Tory chief long before the Unionist alliance was dreamt of. County Councils may owe some details in their constitution to the special parliamentary conditions under which they were created. In the earlier discussions in Cabinet a plan had been ventilated for softening the deposition of Quarter-Sessions from county government. It had been proposed to make the owners of land share with the occupiers in the payment of rates, and thus justify a separate representation for them on the new Councils. It is doubtful whether further discussion would have shown this expedient to be practicable; but in any case, it was renounced, and before the session of '88 opened, Lord Salisbury addressed a deprecatory appeal to his right wing:

"There is always a tendency in mankind to desire to eat their cake and have it. But it is a desire which events uniformly frustrate. . . . If, for the sake of an object transcending all others in importance, you are maintaining a Government in power on the support of what is not a coalition but is an alliance, you must not wonder if, to a certain extent, the colour of the convictions of the Unionist Liberals joins with the colour of the convictions of the Conservative party in determining the hue of the measures that are presented to Parliament." (Liverpool, January 12, 1888.)

The introduction of the Bill found him nervous as to the country gentlemen's attitude:
To Lord Granby, April 1, 1888.

"... I am curious to know how the squires are taking Ritchie's \(^1\) Bill. What I read in some Tory papers does not ring true to my ear. It looks more like what a cockney sympathiser would imagine a squire ought to feel than the expression of an actual squire's feeling. I am afraid that the squires are feeling nothing at all about it just at present, and that very few of them will be conscious of any feeling on the subject at all for the next two or three months; and then a sense of their unutterable wrongs will suddenly burst upon them, to our great embarrassment. I have received nothing to give me any clue to their feelings."

But these anxieties were purely vicarious. A speech made ten days later is illuminating as to his own spontaneous attitude towards the Bill. He derided the exaggerated language which was being used about it. "It has been called revolutionary: it is said that it dethrones the squirearchy, that it deposes the feudal classes from the position which they have held for centuries." As contrasted with these grand phrases, he pointed to the simple fact that, through a series of Acts of Parliament covering a long period of years, Parliament had already transferred nearly all the powers of the magistracy to the central government: "To say you have dethroned the squirearchy when they have in fact no throne left to sit upon is hard upon the squirearchy. . . . The only bit of genuine independent power which the magistrates still retain is the liberty of repairing county bridges or not, as they like." Preparation was made in this Bill, it was true, for the future endow-

\(^1\) The Rt. Hon. C. T. Ritchie, 1838–1906. As President of the Local Government Board, 1880–1892, he was in charge of the Bill. Created a peer as Lord Ritchie, 1905.
ment of the new Councils with manifold authority—but it would be at the expense of London officials and not of county magistrates. (Carnarvon, April 11, 1888.)

This juxtaposition of “grand phrases” and “simple facts” sufficiently accounts for the equanimity with which the speaker had from the outset accepted the change involved in this far-reaching measure of local self-government. The tradition which it destroyed had become merely a sentimental one, and with such his sympathies were always of the slightest. Very different was his tone as towards another much less important piece of legislation to which the Unionist alliance had compelled him in the summer of 1887.

One or two Irish landlords, among whom Lord Clanricarde attained a proverbial notoriety, embittered at the way in which Parliament had treated them, appeared intent upon adding to the already sufficient difficulty of maintaining order in Ireland by taking every opportunity that offered for the forcible eviction of their tenants. Certain small classes of holdings which were not protected under Mr. Gladstone’s Land Act of ’81, presented possibilities in this direction, and, appealed to by the Dublin Executive, Lord Salisbury consented that his Government should meet the emergency by an extension of that Act’s pernicious principles to cover these exceptions. “The Irish Land Bill”, he wrote to Sir Michael Hicks-Beach on July 3, when the Bill had just passed through the House of Lords, “has been pain and grief to me, though I admit its necessity.”

But, a few days later, when it reached the Commons, a more objectionable sacrifice of principle was demanded. There had been a fall of prices since the passing of the ’81 Act and tenants were failing to pay even the rents which had been fixed for them at their
own demand by the new Land Courts. It was urged that, under certain conditions, these judicial decisions should be reopened and the rents reduced still further. Statutory finality had been the one return offered in '81 for the destruction of all freedom of contract and management, and Lord Salisbury, when first applied to, refused to look at this proposal. But the mental vision of Lord Clanricarde's evictions, carried out under the protecting bayonets of English soldiers, obscured all sense of economic principle among his followers. The Chamberlain group insisted on concession; Lord Randolph Churchill supported them; and, most ominous of all, so did the loyalists of Ulster. The Commons' Ministers declared themselves beaten, and their chief had to give way. He surrendered with characteristic outspokenness. He called a meeting of his followers at the Carlton Club, to which reporters were admitted, and having reasserted his objections to the provision demanded, told them that he must nevertheless advise its concession as the only course which would keep the Unionist party together (July 19, 1887). "It is the price which we have to pay for the Union and it is a heavy one", was his growling comment at home.

There is no record of further crises of difference on any similar issue. The Prime Minister's views on economic justice and the sanctity of contracts appear thenceforward to have been accepted as an immovable limitation by allies as well as by followers. As regarded the Cabinet, after Lord Randolph's departure, its friendly intimaey was troubled by no divergences of principle. The only ripples which disturbed its even surface were due, directly or indirectly, to the parliamentary difficulties created by that tyranny of obstruction which has been spoken of. These bore an inevitably different aspect to the men struggling
with them on the spot in the desperate effort to get necessary business through, and to their chief, able, from the serene detachment of the Upper Chamber, to contemplate the questions at issue on their merits alone. Sometimes obstinate resistance would be bought off at the last moment by bargains effected across the floor of the House which traversed decisions already come to in Cabinet, and the Prime Minister would remonstrate in vigorously worded messages. In the summer of 1891, Mr. Goschen demurred to the asperity of some such criticism on a minor concession connected with the time-table of the Education Bill and Lord Salisbury admitted that he had perhaps been too emphatic in his remarks. Analysing the impulse which had moved him, he confessed to an abiding sense of irritation induced by previous experiences.

_to Mr. Goschen, June 7, 1891._

"... It has seemed to me several times that the Cabinet does not quite get fair play from the leaders of the Government in the House of Commons, and this was a case in point. The course on which the Cabinet resolved is sometimes, as in this case, manifestly departed from, or else things are done or promised which in effect lead up to the same result. The practice is hardly fair on the rest of the Cabinet, and I always protest against it when I can. Of course it is done in perfect good faith, on the plea—the sincere plea—that it is necessary to defer to the opinion of the House of Commons. Of course, it is necessary—it is a truism to say so; if by House of Commons you mean the votes of a majority. But I think resolutions which have been approved in Cabinet are often modified in the House of Commons on account of 'the feeling of the House', which means, not the votes of a majority, but the outcry of a small number who are generally almost entirely your opponents. ..."
"Defer to the will of the majority of the House as much as you please—we must all do that. But it is humiliating to be pushed aside on account of 'strong pressure' from Harcourt, Fowler and Trevelyan."

"The occasion on which I felt this supersession the most acutely was on the occasion of the Royal Grants—but it has happened several times.

"I am afraid that under Dyke's guidance we are allowing the same fallacy to conduct us into an impasse. He is penetrated with the fallacy through and through. He is not thinking of the ultimate effect of the measure, or of his chances of obtaining a majority—but of what the people on the other side will say—which is a matter of no importance whatever. . . ."

The question of Royal Grants, which is here spoken of, refers to a settlement of permanent provision for the Queen's grandchildren which had been effected with the House of Commons in the session of 1889. Mr. Gladstone had declared that the scheme as presented by the Cabinet was impossible of acceptance, and, to secure his support in debate and division, the Commons' leaders had agreed to modifications which Lord Salisbury, recalling the engagements entered into by Parliament at the time of the Queen's Accession, characterised, curtly, as "a robbery" of the Crown. A passage in a letter to the Queen, written after the incident was closed, hardly suggests the annoyance which two years later was still remembered as "acute." He was always watchful to shield his colleagues from her criticism, and the words should probably be taken as representative rather of his reasoned self-persuasion than of his spontaneous sentiments.

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1 Sir William Harcourt, Mr. Henry Fowler, afterwards Lord Wolverhampton, and Sir George Trevelyan—Mr. Gladstone's lieutenants on the front Opposition bench.

2 Sir William Hart Dyke. As Vice-President of the Council, he was in charge of the Free Education Bill.
"About the Royal Grants Lord Salisbury has great difficulty in speaking. The natural impulse is to think that if he had been in the House of Commons that he could have procured a better result; but it is very difficult for an outsider to judge, and the Scottish proverb, 'Maids' bairns are aye weel guided,' has an application in this case. It is probable that no one who has not been a leader of the House of Commons can realise the difficulties of the position. . . ."

These reactions of a composite majority to the disintegrating influence of an implacable Opposition culminated in the session of 1890. It was one of those sessions, familiar to the experience of most Governments, when all fortuitous circumstance seemed to combine for the despair of Ministers. Mr. Smith's health was failing; the introduction of an Irish Land Purchase Bill, which it would have been difficult to oppose directly, had spurred the ingenuity of Irish members to an increasingly voluble interest in all other departments of parliamentary business; three years' recurrent contemplation of the Tithes Bill had impressed county members with a growing sense of its distasteful qualities; while some eminently reasonable licensing clauses which Mr. Goschen had tacked on to his Budget had roused Temperance fanatics to a supreme exertion of their genius for organised postal intimidation. The Unionist party was still suffering from the depression which had followed The Times fiasco; bye-elections were "going wrong," and members saw themselves doomed to weeks of helpless submergence beneath the flow of Irish eloquence for the sake of measures which they rather disliked than not, and the support of which—so every post assured them—would entail their individual defeat at the polls.
On the top of these things came an open quarrel between Mr. Matthews, the Home Secretary, and an insubordinate Chief Commissioner, accompanied by manifestations of imminent mutiny in the Metropolitan Police Force. By June the party was in almost open revolt—objurgating in the lobbies, threatening the Whips with abstention from the divisions, and successively invoking the doom of Jonah upon whichever of their leaders happened, at the moment, to be most prominently associated with their troubles.

The Prime Minister was summoned to the rescue of his indignant colleagues. On June 12 the party met under his presidency at the Carlton Club and, either by means of reasoned exhortations or the moral appeal of his authority, he appears to have induced reconciliation. One of his recurrent notes of excuse to his pertinacious lady correspondent for his neglect in replying to her letters is dated three days after this meeting. His Foreign Office work this summer had been among the heaviest and most important of this Ministry—including the culminating stages of his African negotiations and the avoidance of an acute crisis between America and the Dominion of Canada.¹

To the Duchess of Rutland, June 15, 1890.

"... My week has been a singularly hard one, which must be my apology—as perhaps the Duke may have told you. We have had two very important foreign negotiations in hand—a revolt of the party at home,—a threatened mutiny in the police,—three colleagues talking of resigning ²—in short, a peck of

¹ See Chapters X. and XII.

² Lord Hartington, in appealing to Liberal Unionist malcontents on this same occasion, told them that Mr. Goschen and Mr. Ritchie had threatened to resign if the Licensing clauses were given up. (See Life of Lord Goschen, vol. ii. p. 167.)

The third of the aggrieved Ministers was probably Mr. Matthews, who had
troubles—and, on the top of it, a Foreign Office party and a dinner at the Trinity House. 'Pity the sorrows of a poor old man'—whose trembling limbs have got down to Hatfield with difficulty.'

The insurrection on the Unionist back benches was pacified, but, as regarded the business of the session, the disaster proved irretrievable. On July 5, the Cabinet, at the unanimous insistence of its Commons members, decided to abandon all that remained of its legislative programme. Lord Salisbury told the Queen that he had resisted the "discredit" which this decision must bring upon the Government "to the utmost of his power." He was particularly afflicted by the withdrawal of the Tithes Bill, to whose passage this year, after the repeated disasters which had beset it, he had personally pledged his faith to the Church authorities. He spoke to her of dissolution as being the only correct constitutional issue from such a difference between chief and colleagues, and the whole letter in its note of irritable gloom, reads like an outburst of overstrained nerves [July 5].\(^1\) As such the Queen evidently regarded it. She replied with tactful femininity—sympathising with his vexation, admitting the humiliating failure, but suggesting that the decision come to might perhaps prove the wisest in the end. The week before she had urged that he should have more assistance: "He worked too hard."

It is noteworthy that in his contemporaneous occupation with the affairs of his own department, no signs of this oppression appear. Only five days after the date of this letter he was expounding the

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\(^1\) *Letters of Queen Victoria*, 3rd series, vol. i. p. 618.
Anglo-German Convention to the House of Lords in a speech—made as usual without notes—which was among the most brilliant of his oratorical efforts in its lucid synthesis of complicated detail and the gay detachment or meditative philosophy of its passing comments. As soon as he got back to the large conceptions and free expansion of effort which world politics meant for him, he seems to have been able to clear not only his thoughts but his nervous reactions from the worrying pettinesses of parliamentary Premiership.

The Queen’s plea proved justified. A dawn of incongruous origin followed quickly upon the gloom of this summer’s failure. The opening of the new session in November synchronised with the trial of Captain O’Shea’s petition in divorce, and in a few days the Irish benches were vacated while their normal occupants raged elsewhere in passionate conflict round their leader. No more was heard, it is true, of Mr. Goschen’s Licensing clauses; but the Tithes and Land Purchase Bills were reintroduced and ran through their successive stages with bewildering rapidity.

In the course of the next session, of 1891, the Free Education Bill was passed through Parliament under the same favourable auspices. It was looked at askance by some of the older Tories and the more rigidly individualist Liberals—of whom Mr. Goschen was one—but Lord Salisbury never appears to have shared in their hesitations. The danger of over-burdening the public finances which constituted to him the immovable limit of social expenditure, was not apparent on this occasion. Taxation was not heavy and the Exchequer was so well filled that Mr. Goschen was able to find the necessary funds out of surplus revenue. Two millions were required for fee grants to replace the existing average of threepence a week charged as school fees for each child. In 1885,
Lord Salisbury had argued his approval of the proposal as a matter of justice and in 1889 he restated that argument in detail in a letter to Lord Cranbrook, who had demurred to a renewed pledge which he had given on the subject at Nottingham on November 26.

To Lord Cranbrook, December 10, 1889.

"There was nothing new in my speech at Nottingham. I said the same thing with the full assent of the Cabinet of the day at Newport in October, 1885.

"The amount of assistance we should give is of course a question of degree and depends on our resources. But, since the compulsory law of 1876, I hold that the poor have suffered a great grievance. The duty of sending your children to school is not a natural duty like that of feeding them—it is an artificial duty invented within the last sixty years. If we choose to impose it upon the poor we are bound to help them to bear it. At present, a parent living in a threepenny school parish (which is the average) and having three children of school age, pays 30s. a year on an income of about £60—an income-tax of sixpence in the pound over and above what his neighbours have to pay. Of course, the extent of assistance given must, as you say, depend upon the Chancellor of the Exchequer's balance. I think it ought to be strictly limited to those who are liable to compulsion, namely, those who have not passed standard four; and it must be extended to denominational schools as much as to any others. I should like to see it connected in some form with the proficiency of the child—but I do not know whether that can be done."

A recognition of the use which might be made of the change to injure denominational schools had, in fact, by now transformed his earlier tolerant acceptance into an active pressure for its enactment. In this autumn of '89 he was writing to urge its immediate introduc-
tion upon Mr. Smith. In the general discussion of the subject which had been going on since the elections of '85, the champions of Nonconformity had entered the lists with militant protests against any further grant of public money to the voluntary schools. If the Bill were left over for a Liberal Government to pass, it was certain that the fee grant would be made conditional upon the abandonment of "sectarian" teaching. At a Carlton Club meeting in March 1890, Lord Salisbury pressed this danger upon the reluctant right wing of his party: "If you choose to deal with 'assisted' education yourselves, you may put the voluntary schools into a position from which no future hostile majority can dislodge them; if you choose to pass the question by, you may be pronouncing their doom" (March 20, 1890).

As was thus anticipated, the Liberal attack upon the Bill in the House of Commons was concentrated exclusively upon this point. A series of amendments were moved to secure the restriction of the fee grant to schools under public control. The Government had no difficulty in defeating them as it had the full support of Mr. Chamberlain; the Radical Unionist leader declaring that, to secure the passage of a Free Education Bill, he would unhesitatingly suspend his lifelong adherence to one of the most cherished articles of the Nonconformist creed. Still, it was irritating for Ministers whose only parliamentary difficulty had been incurred by their championship of voluntary schools to find that the loudest critics of their measure in the country were certain managers of Church and Wesleyan schools in some of the large northern towns. They were keen educationalists who, by charging high fees, had been able to provide an education for children of the skilled artisan and small tradesman class which was definitely superior to that given in the Board
PROTESTS OF EDUCATIONALISTS

Schools. These scholastic enthusiasts believed—with justification—that the Bill must ultimately be the ruin of their cherished enterprises and they, not unnaturally, cried out. But they got no sympathy from the Prime Minister.

To Mr. Smith, October 27, 1890.

"Many thanks for Rigg's 1 memorandum which I return. He is very angry and his anger may mean the loss of some Wesleyan clerical votes. But that prospect would not justify us in leaving the matter to be dealt with by our opponents, and even electorally, the agricultural labourers are worth more than the Wesleyan clericals.

"The Bishop of Exeter's 2 twaddle about parental responsibility is too foolish. Does he ever object to a young man getting an exhibition at the University, because it will lessen his father's sense of parental responsibility?"

While the Bill was passing through Parliament Lord Harrowby wrote to him in connection with some minor amendments which it was desirable to introduce from the point of view of the Church schools as a whole:

To Lord Harrowby, July 9, 1891.

"We are badly assisted by those who want our help. The agitation and outcry has been left to one scanty though very stentorian section—namely, the clergymen in towns who, with little aid from subscriptions, have by dint of high fees and high teaching, pushed their schools to a condition scholastically of considerable excellence. These men will suffer, but they will suffer not in consequence of their denomi-

2 The Rt. Rev. E. H. Bickersteth—nominated to the diocese of Exeter by Mr. Gladstone in 1885.
national teaching, which could be done cheaply, but of their ultra-education, which requires money; and I don’t feel that the denominational cause is seriously affected, whether they sink or swim. In appealing to the forces of religious education, they are hardly candid; they are culture-people, and little else; the religious education stands in the second rank.

“ I am very much afraid that the noise these people are making prevents us from hearing the more modest complaints of the managers we really wish to help.”

(2) The Electorate

The disabilities of a peer Prime Minister were patent when it came to the parliamentary shaping of rough hewn Cabinet decisions or the modifying of House of Commons time tables. That they must also entail ignorance of the “mind of the electorate” was an axiom frequently assumed but which experience did not corroborate. Taken as a whole—though he made some mistakes—Lord Salisbury’s predictions as to what would or would not prove popular among his supporters in the country were generally borne out by the event. It might be argued, indeed, that the compelled absorption of Commons’ Ministers in the immediate task of getting their measures through the House is actually deleterious to the larger outlook required for diagnosing democratic opinion. The 600 odd members of Parliament represent in rough proportion the country’s views on certain large questions of policy, but, on specific issues, the images they transmit to their respective leaders are confused to the point of falsification by the interaction of the innumerable cross-currents—local, sectional, and individual—which constitute the problem of House of Commons “management”.

His exclusion from this complex atmosphere left
Lord Salisbury free to concentrate all his faculties, whether of comprehension or leadership, directly upon the constituencies. Besides the big speech and a bunch of minor addresses to clubs or workers' associations, his "stumping" visits to great towns would include divers opportunities for intercourse with local leaders. The purpose of observation or guidance was further forwarded at the two great annual functions of the National Union and Primrose League, as well as in speeches delivered on sporadic occasions in London and its neighbourhood, and to—nominally—non-party audiences at City Banquets. Though meetings were frequently held at the Carlton as a means of keeping his Commons supporters in touch with him, neither they nor the massed social functions in Arlington Street and at the Foreign Office could replace the intimacy of daily intercourse between front and back benches in the precincts of the House itself. In his case, the perennial complaint of parliamentary followers that their chiefs are "inaccessible" had undoubted justification. But in the constituencies it was otherwise. There his personality was familiar and vividly realised, and it must be reckoned as one of his party's most solid assets during the long period of electoral success which synchronised with his leadership.

Only at the City functions did the work of his own department fill any prominent place in his speeches. Those spoken at the Guildhall were a thing apart. Though they contained several passages intended for the guidance of opinion at home, they were for the most part addressed consciously to a wider audience. Indeed, they acquired at this time something of the quality of a diplomatic instrument. Continental papers hailed their telegraphed reports as a political event calling for immediate discussion and foreign
statesmen, in confidential despatches, commented upon their utterances or deduced conclusions from their silences. Foreign politics were also usually touched upon in his less formal speeches at the Mansion House sessional banquets, and they constituted from time to time the subject of official statements in the House of Lords. But, among the 60 or 70 platform speeches which he made during the six years' course of this Parliament, there were certainly not six in which more than a passing allusion to them appeared. “It is a subject about which we must all think a great deal and speak very little,” was his repressive response on one occasion to the interruptions of an enthusiastic audience, anxious for the opportunity of cheering some recent diplomatic achievement.

This reticence, which was a perpetual source of grievance to the wire-pullers of his party, was partly due to a deliberate resolve not to allow the fruits of his diplomacy to be imperilled by unwary popular comment. A morning scene in Arlington Street is recalled. The conclusion of some settlement, upon which he had in fact prided himself for the balance of advantage which it secured for England, had been communicated to the press and, on entering the breakfast room he was greeted, rather exultantly, with the information that “the papers were full of it.” He snatched at once at a copy of a friendly newspaper, exclaiming anxiously, “I hope to goodness there’s no trumpeting! I have done my best to prevent it.” That was not the spirit in which the subject could be usefully dealt with at meetings organised for the purpose of stimulating the party zeal of working-class supporters. But it is impossible not to regret that he did not find opportunity for a larger number of the more generalising and philosophic type of utterance to which the rare examples referred to belong. He
probably shrank from the effort; the penalty of ubiquitous international criticism under which all his views on foreign affairs were published added materially to the strain of giving them expression.

There were speeches dealing with current legislative and fiscal topics from which quotations are made in this chapter. Occasional disquisitions on wider issues of political principle followed lines which he had already made familiar—presenting the ideals of class unity, economic justice, and individual liberty as the bases of national well-being. A Primrose League audience was warned to be watchful against the spirit of tyranny that was abroad, draped too often in the disguise of an angel of light: "It may wear the appearance of some religious movement or pretend to the authority of some great moral effort. But underneath that cloak there is concealed that steady enemy of human liberty—the desire of men, wherever they may grasp a bit of power, to force others to conform their ideas to their own" (May 21, 1889). He spoke, and with strong sympathy, of the movement already in being for securing an eight hours' working day: "I know very well by my own experience that, if you work more than a certain time in a day, you may add to your own discomfort but you add nothing to the value of the work which you do." He should be very glad to see that truth more widely appreciated by employers as well as by workmen: "But from that position to an Act of Parliament telling a man that if he wishes to work ten hours a day he should not do so, is a difference as far as from the North Pole to the South" (Nottingham, November 26, 1889).

At this same meeting he dwelt at length on the perennial housing problem; on its vital importance—recalling, in parenthesis, the story of his own attempted raid upon the prison sites in 1885—and protested
with serious earnestness against the hamper which Liberal speakers introduced into its solution by making it a perpetual stalking-horse for provocative attacks upon owners of property: "We shall only arrive at a healthy and permanent result if we can carry all classes together." He set an example of sweet reasonableness in this connection by declaring that he should have no objection to the rating of property on its capital instead of its occupational value if the principle were fully carried out and the burdens on land brought honestly into account. But the one essential condition for promoting that larger investment of capital in house-building which promised the only satisfying issue from scarcity was a "scrupulous respect for existing contracts."

"All kinds of depredations are pleasant at the moment; you get all you want and nobody is much hurt except the man who is robbed—and he, of course, doesn't matter. But depredation becomes unpleasant when you come to want the assistance of the person robbed and find that you are unable to obtain it, and that you have lost ten times more by losing your character for legislative honour than you could possibly secure out of your ill-gotten gains." On confidence the whole fabric of our civilisation was built: "Tamper with it and your prosperity will melt away; you will be left to such support as can be obtained from the efforts of the hour and lose all the advantages that you have gained from the combined efforts of a great society. . . . If I were asked to define Conservative policy, I should say that it was the upholding of confidence" (November 26, 1889).

But the subject which occupied the greater part of his platform oratory—as it did that of all his contemporaries—was the Irish controversy in its least fruitful aspects. An unceasing flow of happenings, of no
heroic proportion, incidental to Mr. Balfour’s vindication of law and order—boycotting outrages, suspended newspapers, threats of assassination, proclaimed meetings, assaults on policemen, Members of Parliament sent to prison—provided an unlimited supply of retaliatory ammunition for oratorical warfare. The protagonists in this prolonged battle of the platforms—Gladstone, Harcourt, and Morley—Salisbury, Balfour, Goschen, and Chamberlain—were notable for the vigour of their denunciatory dialectic. Each speech met a challenge of the week before and became itself the challenge to a retort in the week that followed: the clash of sword upon shield never ceased in the land throughout the months of each recurrent recess. The content is unreadable now; but audiences, to be numbered by thousands on both sides, acclaimed it throughout those years with unflagging enthusiasm. One surmises that they were moved more by the joy of applauding thrust and parry in the hands of these masters of swordsmanship than by interest in the monotonous minutiae of the matters in dispute.

A contributory cause of the predominance of this gladiatorial element in the Irish controversy was the staleness which had overtaken its more solid constitutional arguments. One new feature had been introduced by the decisive verdict for the maintenance of the Union which the country had given in the recent elections. The certainty of its early reversal was naturally insisted on by Opposition speakers and their forecasts roused Lord Salisbury to replies inspired by the wider Imperial outlook to which his thought easily returned.

"I entreat you to give the lie to those who say that there can be no consistency of purpose, no tenacity of resolution in a democratic Government. No Government can succeed, no Government can last, I do not
care by what theories it is sustained, unless it shows that it can govern. . . . You are now on your trial to see whether you have that tenacity and resolution. If you have it not, you will be announcing to the world that the qualities by which your Empire has been built up are no longer there to maintain it, and that it is at the mercy of the first accident that will throw it down.” (Liverpool, January 12, 1888.)

A year later he retorted in a similar fashion upon a contention of Lord Rosebery’s that the inevitable instability of the electorate must make the final success of a “resolute” policy in Ireland impossible. If that were indeed the condition to which Englishmen had sunk, Lord Salisbury replied, it would not be only Ireland that they would lose: “Directly it is known that we yield to resistance, not because we believe it to be right, but because we are too feeble, too changeful and too uncertain to fight against it, in that day the knell of our Empire is sounded” (Bristol, April 23, 1889).

(3) House of Lords Reform

On March 19, 1888, Lord Rosebery in the House of Lords, moved the appointment of a Committee to enquire into and report on the question of its reform. His objection to its present constitution rested partly on its unmitigated Toryism and the presence of certain notoriously bad characters among its members, but also—more fundamentally—upon the indifference to their political opportunities and duties which the large majority of peers displayed. His proposals for the amendment of these defects were only vaguely adumbrated but, generally speaking, he favoured a large substitution of the elective for the hereditary principle.

Lord Salisbury in reply was in a critical mood. He protested against the haziness of Lord Rosebery’s
positive suggestions: it was of no use, he declared, to throw shadowy ideas of this kind before a Committee of Enquiry, trusting to Providence that something tangible would emerge from them. The Toryism of the House was a quite modern phenomenon; it had come into existence with Mr. Gladstone's pre-eminence in politics, and—he added, with a reckless audacity of prediction—would probably vanish when he left the scene. The Government were prepared to introduce proposals for the periodic creation of a limited number of life-peers and for the elimination—if it were possible, which he doubted—of occasional black sheep. A measure to that effect was, in fact, introduced that summer and shared the fate of most of the minor Government legislation of the period in failing to achieve enactment. But on the larger issue of transforming the House of Lords from a hereditary to an elective body, he was definitely hostile. He founded his opposition not on any reverence for hereditary rank as such, or even for historical tradition, but on the very ground which Lord Rosebery had adduced in support of a change. Without expressing approval of our existing system of Government, he declared that, being what it was, its only chance of successful working was with a second Chamber based on the hereditary principle—that is, composed of members who had not themselves selected the profession of politics, but had come to it by the operation of external causes:

"If you should set up another Chamber, with all the titles to power, according to existing ideas, that an elective foundation would give, and consisting of men who had taken to politics because it was the profession they preferred and to political subjects because they were those in which they took deepest interest,—do you suppose ... that they would tolerate the posi-
tion which this House occupies now with respect to the House of Commons? Would they consent to be excluded from the consideration of all financial measures in respect both of taxation and expenditure? Would they tolerate the House of Commons monopolising the choice of Ministers of the Crown? Would they not insist on sharing equally all the powers of the House of Commons? They would have the power to do so; and they would exercise that power just as the House of Commons did in its earliest days. They would decline to co-operate with the House of Commons unless what they considered their fair claims to a fair share of power were satisfied.

You do not have that difficulty now. You have a body of men who have other interests, other thoughts. Only a small fraction of us are devoted politicians. We are over-ruled,—I have been constantly over-ruled—by the—what shall I say—the less zealous, less intense feeling of those who constitute the majority of the House." (Hansard, March 19, 1888.)

It was in fact an apotheosis of the "backwoodsman" as an integral element in the constitution. He admitted that he himself might have complained at times at certain manifestations of this temper, but he affirmed his belief that, taken as a whole, it was essential to the smooth transaction of the country's business so long as the power and position of the House of Commons remained what they now were. "Depend upon it, if you ever succeed in so altering the character of this House that it consists entirely of determined politicians who always attend all the debates and attach the same weight and importance to their own opinions as do those who sit in the House of Commons, you will have pronounced the doom of our present system of government."

There was a certain piquancy in the apparent contrast between this line of argument and the defiance
which the speaker had so often launched against the House of Commons—and was destined to launch again—when urging the peers to the rejection of its decisions, and Lord Granville, who followed him in debate, did not fail to point it out. But the two appreciations of constitutional requirements were really complementary. It was the supremacy of exclusive control which the House of Commons wielded in the Executive and financial departments—a supremacy peculiar to the British among all other two-Chamber constitutions—which required for the normal work of legislative administration a certain languor of detachment in its partner; it was the same supremacy which, if democratic stability were to be preserved, made imperative the residuary power of the Lords to compel an appeal to the country.

Lord Salisbury’s assertion of this power as a necessary counter-weight in legislation, apart from the conditions of any immediate controversy, is expressed briefly in a correspondence with the Queen which took place towards the close of the elections in 1892. She had imparted to him a communication which she had received from Mr. Gladstone deprecating generally House of Lords’ opposition to the majority in the lower House. Lord Salisbury, in reply, reaffirmed the Peers’ privilege of appeal to the constituencies and maintained their duty to exercise it—even though in doing so, as he said, they might occasionally frustrate Mr. Gladstone’s intentions.

“The object of their existence is to be a check upon hasty legislation, and the action of a check is necessarily displeasing to the persons checked. Of course, this would not justify them in setting themselves against the clear and deliberate judgment of the country: but this mistake they have never committed.” (July 18, 1892.)
As regarded the vexed question of what should be the qualifications for admission to the House of Lords, Lord Salisbury would affirm that it was manifestly good public policy to include among them gifts of large sums for national or philanthropic purposes. There is no record of a similar recognition of generosity for party purposes having ever been suggested to him. But one rule of universal application, upon which he insisted, would certainly have made any such investment of ambition a risky speculation. Under no circumstances must a peerage be made a subject for preliminary bargaining. Patriotic supporters, for instance, who had sacrificed time and money in the contest of hopeless seats might be finally rewarded by promotion to the Upper House. But the unlucky man who ventured to stipulate for such a reward or assume a title to it beforehand was summarily undeceived. A note written to one of his colleagues at this period shows that he did not confine this restriction to party services. A difference with the Home Government on a question of policy had led to the resignation of a high official in one of the Colonies, and it was feared that an emphasis laid too publicly upon the cause of quarrel might be productive of disaffection in the Colony. It was suggested that a prospective peerage—of which he would have been on other grounds a quite suitable recipient—might influence the official in question to a discreet reticence. The suggestion was repudiated with picturesque vigour: "Quite impossible to make such a bargain! We had better hang up a tariff of prices at the Herald's College—as they do in the bedrooms of a hotel."

He would maintain, in fact, for the political world the limitation which is accepted without question in the official one. Soldiers and civil servants are decorated for services performed—but any suggestion
that the services should be considered as conditional on the decoration being promised would be resented as an insult on both sides. The fountain of honour must flow freely.

(4) TREASURY AND TARIFFS

The correspondence which has been preserved between Lord Salisbury and his colleagues is exiguous as regards the greater number of them. While the House was sitting business was carried on largely in personal interviews. During the session he saw Mr. Smith, his second in command, almost daily. With Mr. Balfour an equally continuous personal intercourse and an intimate recognition of their common dislike of letter-writing reduced it to a minimum. There are occasional notes to other colleagues—those to the Colonial Secretary, Lord Knutsford, being the most attractive to quotation—but, after Lord Randolph's departure, the only full Cabinet correspondence was that maintained with Mr. Goschen.

It did not present the agitating features which had characterised intercourse with his predecessor at the Exchequer, and, in spite of his late enlistment in the Ministry, quickly achieved a quality of easy intimacy. There is a quaintly deliberate purpose of approach in a note of Mr. Goschen's, written within a week of his joining the Cabinet, to suggest that as colleagues they should now drop prefixes in their letters: "My dear Salisbury" and "My dear Goschen" duly replace, thenceforward, the formal address of the preliminary negotiations. But, in fact, they were not strangers to start with. They had been contemporaries for years in the House of Commons, though sitting on opposite sides of it, and there were bonds of sympathy in a common churchmanship,
common Oxford and cultural traditions and—as one must assume from the equanimity with which the new Finance Minister accepted his chief's recurrent chaff—a common sense of humour. Their friendly relations were assisted by a great reciprocal confidence in each other's expert authority. Mr. Goschen was a warm, though not always uncritical, admirer of his chief's foreign policy, to a judgment of which he brought at that time a more instructed experience than any other of their colleagues; and Lord Salisbury was unquestioningly respectful of his eminence in finance. Even his orthodoxy, though his chief poked incessant fun at it, was recognised as a valuable asset. Conscious of his own liability to shock correct opinion, there was repose to the Prime Minister in the consciousness that no one could cavil at any course which his Chancellor had passed as permissible: Mr. Goschen's financial conscience did duty for both. When he appealed to his chief for decision upon some proposed dealing with the conversion of the Egyptian debt, the latter at once repudiated intervention: "You know that in these matters I am a man wholly without principle—and I could not honestly recommend myself to you as an adviser—from your point of view" (May 27, 1890). Two years later, when beset by monetary enthusiasts: "What am I," protested Lord Salisbury, "that I should receive a Bimetallist deputation? My opinions are unorthodox and my ignorance is profound. As the Government will practically go as far as you go and no further, you had much better receive the deputation. I should certainly commit myself" (March 4, 1892).

But the cordiality of his sentiments towards the Chancellor of the Exchequer did not extend to his department. There is an amusing series of notes, written in the spring and summer of 1888, in denuncia-
tion of the Treasury and its methods. That the output is not continued in subsequent years may show either that the struggle was abandoned in despair or that Sir Reginald Welby—the then permanent head of the Treasury—had learnt to defer to—or at all events to avoid overtly arousing—the Prime Minister's wrath. The first note is more derisive than indignant. A form of voucher had to be drawn up for the signature of Ministers when applying for grants from the Secret Service Fund. Lord Salisbury had prepared a simply direct declaration: “that the interests of the Public Service required that the above payments should be made out of the Secret Service Fund, and that they were properly so made.” But the Treasury had submitted through Mr. Smith, the First Lord, a series of alternative forms, elaborately paragraphed under letters of the alphabet, such as the official soul loves.

To Mr. Smith, February 9, 1888.

“I object to the Treasury suggestions as mere traps to conscience. In A. and D.E. I am required to say what is 'the intention of Parliament.' I don't believe it has got an intention. At the moment the vote is put, the House possibly consists of fifty sleepy men who are talking of something else. How am I to attribute an aggregate intention to them? It is a mere fiction.

“B. requires in me a knowledge of what is 'usual to make provision for in ordinary votes.' What does 'usual' mean? Does it mean annual use? or use when occasion requires? and how am I to have a sufficient knowledge of estimates for a past number of years to be able to say that it has not been 'usual' to vote, on the rare occasions when it was required, some exceptional expenditure?

“C. is ridiculous!

“I cannot accept any of these forms. But my
words satisfy the requirements of the Public Accounts Committee."

The next protest, addressed to Mr. Goschen, opens with exclamatory vigour: "Oh, the Treasury!" The Cabinet, at the Foreign Secretary's suggestion, had empowered South Kensington to lend some of its treasures to a Danish Exhibition to be held in London. The Danish Legation had been apprised and the Museum authorities had made all preparation.

"But the Danish Minister comes to me to-day to say that there is an insuperable bar in the shape of the objection of the Treasury which declines the expense. And the expense is under £100!
"Has the Cabinet no authority?
"Have these gentlemen no perspective in their mental vision?
"Can you help us?" (April 20, 1888.)

A more drastic remonstrance followed in August. The Special Commission to investigate the charges of "Parnellism and Crime" had just been set up by Parliament, and Sir James Hannen, a judge of the High Court, had been invited to preside over it and, incidentally, to devote his long vacation to a study of the voluminous documentary evidence submitted. At the last moment, when most people, including the Chancellor of the Exchequer, had left London for their holidays, all preparation was arrested by a Treasury scruple. On this occasion the Prime Minister cannot be said to have failed from lack of self-assertion:

To Mr. Smith, August 17, 1888.

"Please write to Sir R. Welby, as First Lord, and say that Hannen's Secretary must have his salary (£400) without any further trouble or demur. I write to you as I believe Mr. Goschen has gone. These
Treasury officials are enough to drive one mad. In spite of Goschen's assurance to Halsbury that there should be no difficulty, they do what might very well drive Hannen into resigning by refusing the most necessary accommodation. It is quite intolerable that they should be allowed to thwart a policy which has been adopted at so much trouble, and with so much deliberation, by these imbecile punctilios. I enclose Halsbury's note. Please put your foot down in the matter."

Mr. Goschen appears as a rule to have accepted his chief's girdings at his department in a spirit of meekness—or perhaps of sympathy. But on one occasion an ironic comment in a note enclosing some departmental appeal for financial assistance stirred him to a reproachful reply charging the Prime Minister with incitement to extravagance. This touched Lord Salisbury in a sensitive spot. The acute anxiety which was aroused in him during the last years of his life by the rapid growth of national expenditure both in armaments and social services did not yet oppress him. But the every-day economy which cuts its coat according to its cloth had always been accepted by him as a basic element in statesmanship, and he defended himself at reasoned length against his colleague's accusation:

_To Mr. Goschen, May 27, 1888._

"... You do me injustice in thinking that I lean to expenditure. On most of the questions of that sort that have come up—where the expenditure has been large—I have been the other way. I have thrown all the cold water I could on the subsidy to the Pacific Railway—on the fancy military expenditure—on the drainage scheme for Ireland—on the Technical Education proposal. But I am very much

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1 The Earl of Halsbury—then Lord Chancellor.
opposed to the traditional Treasury policy as to small expenditures, and still more, small risks. I have worked with five Chancellors of the Exchequer—and as I have seen the same peculiar system under all of them, I am led to the conclusion that it is due to a departmental tradition, and not to the action of any one man. If I did not fear to bore you and to seem meddlesome, I could be very diffuse upon this subject.

"But, briefly, I believe that in public, as in private affairs, parsimony is a symptom of mismanagement. When there is sufficient scraping to make people uncomfortable—I am speaking of course of well-to-do people—it means that they are trying to live a degree too highly; and that retrenchment is wanted not in the details but in the heads of expenditure. This is the fault I find with the traditional Treasury system. They do not interpose their veto at the beginning of a policy, when they might prevent it; but at the tail of the policy, when they can only spoil it."

He adduces an instance connected with the establishment of the Scotch Office and then one within his own personal experience in the Consular department:

"Take another matter which I have had to fight for F.O. It is reasonable to say that Consuls are an expensive luxury, and to say that no more than a certain number shall be created. But it is not reasonable to allow them to be created and then to ignore the fact that they must be liable to the casual expenses to which all agents are liable, especially legal expenses; and to try and diminish their costliness by throwing these burdens on the unlucky Consuls themselves. I have had two if not three cases where the Consul, having incurred legal expenses in the course of his duties, the Treasury has thrown the expense on the Consul himself, though there was no proof of either bad faith or crass negligence. I hold the sound practice to be, to assume that a margin for these casual expenses will be required, and then to appoint
THE FIRST VISCOUNT GOSCHEN

From a photograph by Elliot & Fry
no more Consuls than, on that assumption, you consider yourself able to pay for.

"These are mere illustrations. My objection to the traditional policy of the Treasury is that it tries to economise by sweating the public service; that that plan really saves very little money; that it produces in the departments a feeling towards the Treasury analogous to that which grows up in a family towards a miserly grandfather; and that the result is rather a desire to outwit the Treasury, and spend in spite of it, than to co-operate in saving.

"But I said I would not be diffuse and you will be wondering, if this is my conciseness, what my diffuse-ness will be like. Only, understand that I am not pleading against saving—but against ineffective and irritating saving. Saving should be wholesale and on a plan, not retail and indiscriminate. And please understand that I am only giving vent to long cherished feelings of indignation against the Treasury and that I am not saying a word about your individual administration."

Lord Salisbury belonged to a free-trade generation and, though sceptical of all fiscal creeds as such, found it easy to accommodate himself to the stiffer Liberal Unionist tradition in that respect. But this was not the case with an influential body of opinion in his own party, and, towards the close of 1887, there was, in consequence, a notable trial of strength between him and this section of his followers. With a singular want of tact, the National Union of Conservative Associations, meeting at Oxford in November 1887—within ten months of Mr. Goschen’s accession to the Cabinet—placed in the forefront of its programme, and passed with practical unanimity, a resolution in favour of what would now be called protection—though as "Fair-Traders" they were meticulous in repudiating a title which was still looked upon as invidious. Lord Salisbury, according to custom, was
to address them in public meeting the following day and lookers-on were outspokenly curious—either anxiously or maliciously—as to how he would deal with this demonstration. He did so, as far as any direct reference to it went, by simply ignoring it without comment or apology. By means, however, of an indirect allusion, he tried to bring the delegates to a sense of sin for their unseasonable action and at the same time, without brutality, dismiss their demand from the field of present politics. He was congratulating the Unionist cause upon the absence of any difference of opinion between the two sections of its supporters, and added the proviso—"on all present questions." Then he went on: "I lay enormous emphasis on that adjective. If you go to the questions which are in the far past or to the questions which are in the far future, you may find grave differences of opinion." Therefore, he concluded, he should deprecate all discussion of such purely academic issues. (November 21, 1887.)

The decision thus conveyed was accepted without protest, and during the fourteen years that he remained at the head of the Unionist party he was never again publicly challenged on the subject—a submissiveness which was no doubt assisted by the cycle of prosperity which followed the period of depression from which trade was just emerging at the time of these proceedings.

But he was not content to leave his fiscal gospel altogether in the negative position in which this assertion of authority had placed it. A question which he had addressed to Mr. Goschen three days before the date of the Oxford meeting suggests that he had considered the possibility even then of softening the blow of his non possumus by the offer of a minor concession for which he had himself always been
anxious. He was constantly resentful of the impotence imposed on him in commercial negotiations with foreign powers by the absolutism of British Free Trade dogmatists. The question was added at the close of a letter dealing with foreign affairs:

To Mr. Goschen, November 18, 1887.

"I don't think you have ever told me what is the precise position of your mind as regards fiscal retaliation. The question—in view of the growing protection of the world—will force itself on us. I have never been able to see how it was inconsistent with the free trade theory in its most absolute form; unless it can be said that self-defence is inconsistent with a peaceful policy. In every other department of life wrong is averted by the danger of retaliation. Nations have to inflict the retaliation for themselves; individuals get Courts of Justice to do it for them. But to retaliation in the end the whole mechanism of self-defence or common-defence must come. If your situation is such that you are known to be unable to invoke it, you are powerless; you must submit to be robbed and murdered.

"Why is this true as to every other evil man can inflict—and not true as to hostile tariffs?"

Presumably Mr. Goschen's interest was absorbed by the first half of this letter, which dealt with the Tripartite Agreement with Austria and Italy, then on the point of consummation. His answer to the fiscal passage was disappointingly beside the point. He assumed the enquiry to be inspired wholly by some negotiations which were then in progress to obtain an international repudiation of sugar bounties, and said that, since the bounties were of actual benefit to the British consumer, threats of retaliation to secure their abandonment would certainly be tainted with the
evils of protection in the eyes of "absolute free-traders"—from whom, since he was a party to the negotiations in question, he apparently dissociated himself.

Such a contention fittingly represented the dogmatic pedantry from which Lord Salisbury's soul revolted. Having first, at Derby on December 19, differentiated his position, unambiguously, from that of his fair-trade followers, he protested, three weeks later at Liverpool, with equal decisiveness, against their doctrinaire opponents. At Derby he began by chaffing his protectionist friends: "I have listened to and read carefully what has been said about fair trade, and I have observed this—that in respect to many points they are agreed and upon many points they are precise; but upon those points upon which they are precise they are not agreed, and upon those points upon which they are agreed they are not precise." Then, with his habitual vigour of diction, he reaffirmed his refusal to commit the Government to a policy of corn protection.

"We have always and on all occasions frankly expressed our opinion that the protection of corn—that the advocacy of such a doctrine—is very unwise, and that the prospect of such a change being carried into effect, even if it were expedient, which I do not think it is, is absolutely out of the bounds of political possibility." England was a country peculiarly situated in that respect. It was impossible to raise the price of food for the whole nation in the interests of a single industry which was itself incapable of providing more than a third of what was required: "Though I quite understand the feeling of our farmers and deeply sympathise with their sufferings, ... I am yet obliged to say that they will not find—they cannot find—in the doctrines of protection any alleviation
from the ruin which in too many instances threatens them."

But while repudiating this particular course, he said he should refuse to take any further pledge against fiscal change. The advocates of free trade had used "its broad mantle" to cover many things which in no way belonged to it. "I am by no means an enthusiast for the extreme simplicity of fiscal arrangements which is due to Mr. Gladstone's introduction." (Derby, December 19, 1887.)

This statement, with some applications which accompanied it, brought Mr. Gladstone down upon him with a challenge to clear himself from grave suspicion of economic heresy. Lord Salisbury replied defiantly at Liverpool (January 11, 1888). He maintained that there were several classes of foreign imports upon which duties might be levied which were entirely permissible according to the original doctrines of free trade. Duties levied upon articles which were not necessities did no appreciable harm to anyone and might easily be desirable on other grounds. Duties levied as a defence against unfair competition—the word "dumping" had not yet made its appearance in the vocabulary of politics—would be positively favourable to world free trade. He had been told that foreign bounties or subsidies were hailed by the "absolute free-traders" as beneficial, because they cheapened goods to the British consumer. "They do not see that advantages to the consumer secured by illegitimate means are only transitory in their character, and that when they have served the purpose of destroying the industry against which they have been levelled, the advantage to the consumer will cease. . . . If industry were destroyed, we should find that consumer and producer on English soil were bound up in a common loss."
By way of analogy he adduced some recent instances of speculative commerce, within his audience’s knowledge, which had cheapened goods for a while at the cost of ultimate disaster. Immediate cheapness was not a true test of sound finance.

“It is another case to warn you that you should not be deluded by the mere fact that the consumer is advantaged into thinking that, simply because he gains, therefore the arrangement under which he gains must be sound. You must look beyond it and ask, first, what sort of consumer he is; whether he is a luxury consumer or a consumer of necessaries; and then, whether the arrangement under which he gains is one which, under sound principle, can be approved, and which is therefore likely to endure.” (Liverpool, January 11, 1888.)

The arriving era of prosperity prevented any demand for the practical application of these reservations. Expenditure, though by no means stationary, remained cautious, and the normal expansion of revenue, in those halycon days, sufficed to meet such special demands as those made by the County Council, the Naval Defence, or the Free Education Acts with little or no imposition of new taxes. Under such conditions, even ardent theoretical reformers were content to leave their panaceas untested. Except in the continuous complaints of farmers, no more was heard of the fiscal question until, in the new century, the return of bad times which followed the South African War and the emergence of a fascinating ideal in Colonial Preference combined to restore to it a vivid actuality.
CHAPTER VII

THE PRIME MINISTER’S DEPARTMENT

1887–1892 [II]

(5) National Defence (7) Non-Political
(6) Indian Councils (8) The Commons Leadership

(5) NATIONAL DEFENCE

There were two occasions in this Ministry where Lord Salisbury’s share in the administrative activities of his Cabinet calls for special notice. One was altogether outside the field of his experience. The feverish increase of armaments upon the Continent which had accompanied and followed the war-scares of ’86–’87, with the sinister colour given to it by France’s advertised and apparently growing hostility of feeling to this country, roused the British public in the spring and summer of ’88 to an acute sense of its own deficiencies in this respect. Anxiety was intensified by the overt pronouncements of distinguished officers. At a City banquet in May, Lord Wolseley, who was then Adjutant-General, gave sensational support to the vision of dread which particularly preoccupied the public imagination—the possibility of a sudden descent of a French army corps upon our southern coasts holding an undefended London at its mercy. Lord Salisbury challenged him reproachfully to repeat his warnings in the House of Lords. He replied—speaking, he said, with a full sense of his responsibility—that, so long as
the Navy was as weak as it was at that moment and
the condition of our coast defences as unsatisfactory,
he dared not affirm that the Army was sufficiently
equipped or organised to guarantee the safety of the
metropolis. (Hansard, May 11, 1888.)

Lord Salisbury, in his comments, deprecated
alarmist outcries but reassured his anxious fellow-
countrymen as to the Government’s full sense of the
gravity of the question. In the actual insecurity of
European peace, there were in fact solid grounds for
anxiety as to the state of the country’s preparedness.
Port defences, barracks, munitions, were all notoriously
inadequate; War Office organisation was chronically
suspect; the relations between the two Service depart-
ments, especially as regarded the supply of ordnance
to either, were in a state of chaotic confusion; and
though the Admiralty, speaking through its First Lord
in the opening months of the session, made rosy report
as to the fleet, there were growing reasons for doubt as
to the worth of the testimony offered.

In May, Mr. Smith announced the appointment of
an outside Committee, of which Lord Hartington had
agreed to be chairman, to enquire into the organisation
and mutual relations of the War Office and Admiralty.
But he repudiated any suggestion that the Government
intended by this expedient to delegate a responsibility
which they recognised as wholly theirs, and for the rest
of that year National Defence became a subject of
primary ministerial preoccupation.

A “Cabinet Committee of National Defence” was
formed under the presidency of the Prime Minister,
and the presidency was not a nominal one. When a
Member of Parliament became inquisitive that session
as to the Government’s policy on some question of
Army organisation, he was quieted by the assurance
that “the Prime Minister was himself giving attention
to the matter.” The following spring, Mr. Stanhope, the Secretary for War, in replying to congratulations upon certain reforms which had been adopted, told his audience that praise was primarily due to “the man who had inspired them”: “In all our deliberations on the subject, Lord Salisbury has taken a leading and conspicuous part, and I hope that whatever may be accomplished will hereafter be always connected with his name.” (May 17, 1889.)

More direct witness to his activities is borne by an elaborate, “most confidential” minute which he circulated to the Cabinet on June 29, 1888. He had spoken that day in the House of Lords in response to a minatory motion of Lord Wemyss’s again calling attention to that possibility of invasion which had been discussed there six weeks before. Lord Salisbury was reassuring as to any immediate danger. He was unable to believe, he said, that 100,000 men, with the boats needed for their transport, could be collected in the northern ports of France without our being conscious of the fact: “England must lose the command of the Channel to make an invasion possible.” (Hansard, June 29, 1888.)

It was to the further question as to what would happen if that command were lost, or even suspended for a brief interval, that his confidential minute to his colleagues was devoted. He has been making enquiry, he tells them, from various authorities as to the measurable degree of catastrophe which might be apprehended in such an event. He quotes statements made by Lord Wolseley and reports submitted to him by intelligence officers on the staffs of the War Office and Admiralty, and compares with these an independent report of Count Moltke’s opinion on the question, whose accuracy, he says, he has verified through the German Embassy.
Minute addressed to the Cabinet, June 29, 1888.

"... The effect of these papers is to show that the two departments and Count Moltke agree in thinking that there are circumstances under which a French invasion may be possible, though the War Office think that the occurrence of the requisite conditions is far more within the range of probability than the Admiralty are disposed to admit. But it seems to me sufficient for the Government that they agree to think it possible. Our stake is so great that full precautions must be taken against even a distant possibility.

"It is our duty to see that the subject has been carefully considered in all its details, and that plans for resisting the invasion have been thoroughly worked out by the two departments. Of course, the adequacy of those plans in a professional sense must be accepted on their authority. But the plans must be ready, and ready in time of peace. On either theory of an invasion—whether it comes as a surprise, or after a great naval disaster—there will be no time then to work out the necessary dispositions."

He goes into the question in detail; compares and criticises his documents, notes the gaps that have been left in the information supplied in them, and concludes with a brief questionnaire which he proposes to address to both Service departments for the purpose of filling those gaps and learning what plans of mobilisation—if any—have been worked out for meeting the hypothetical emergency. The preparation and composition of the minute, which contains between three and four thousand words, must have occupied a substantial slice of the Foreign Secretary's leisure.

It was with regard to the fleet that the Cabinet Committee's labours that summer and autumn proved most fruitful in immediate results. Admiralty officials were averse from admitting any deficiency, but their
satisfied estimate did not survive the test of civilian investigation. There were found to be ships on the active list too old for service, and others, newly completed, which were without guns and had no early prospect of getting them. But the defect recognised as fundamental in that Europe of war-ridden anticipations, was that, even with the addition of such non-effectives, the size of the fleet had become politically out-dated. A Franco-Russian combination was the emergency against which preparation had to be made if forecasts were based on existing conditions. The Channel could not be left defenceless—especially in view of the fears recently excited—and, as things stood, the Mediterranean fleet was too weak to deal with the French ships now assembled at Toulon, apart from any detachable margin for operations at the Straits or in the Black Sea. France had been grudging no expenditure for the maintenance of her maritime strength and Russia was laying down three new battleships that year. The inevitable had happened. Lord Salisbury, as he sadly admitted at the Guildhall in November, found himself now compelled to enter England in that race whose progress on the Continent had called from him such earnest warnings of danger. At the close of his speech he hinted that, apart from the actuality of strategical calculation, the panic of that summer had been an evil whose recurrence could not be risked.\footnote{See Chapter IV. p. 109.}

The issue appeared in the Naval Defence Act of 1889, which was introduced to Parliament in the following March. It provided for the construction of ten new battleships and sixty cruisers, to be completed within the next four and a half years—which came to an average of sixteen vessels of new construction per annum. The Opposition offered no serious resistance to
this programme, demurring only to the unprecedented arrangement under which its whole cost was embodied in the Act, and its further progress and completion thus placed outside the administrative control of Parliament. But they protested, not unnaturally, against the contrast offered between this spectacular demand and the First Lord's optimist assurances of twelve months previously. The Secretary to the Admiralty could only reply that the difference was a result of the more accurate knowledge which had been acquired in the interval.

The attitude of the Board of Admiralty on this occasion—its failure to appreciate deficiencies until their existence was driven home to it by Cabinet cross-examination—presents a curious inversion of the parts ordinarily played by Service officials and their political masters. A letter written by the Prime Minister, three years later, to Mr. Goschen, in response to some exasperated complaint of Admiralty inefficiency at that date, emphasises this aspect of the episode just recorded. The politicians, approaching the question from the standpoint of international requirements, had evidently held themselves to have been obstructed by the same spirit of professionalism which they more normally resented for its indifference to the national finances.

To Mr. Goschen, February 10, 1892.

"I am really puzzled to know what to do with the Admiralty. I see that it is given up to pedantry of the worst kind—but how is it to be rescued? As to the mere question of enlarging the fleet, we were able to do some good by making a sort of raid upon it and carrying back the Naval Defence Act as the spoils of victory. But we cannot govern the Admiralty from day to day by raids of this kind."
"I do not think that the First Lord himself could do much unless he was a man of very exceptional mould. The fault is in the constitution of the Admiralty. The experts—the pedants—have too much power. They ought to be advisers and subordinates. They are checks and colleagues. They claim an undefined power and responsibility and their consciences bear them out in resisting, each man for himself, whatever he does not entirely approve. The result is that everything which is done by the First Lord of his own initiative has to be carried out in the teeth of a stiff, silent resistance, which is offered to every detail by persons who know much better than he can the points at which resistance is likely to be effective. The only remedy is to convert the First Lord into a Secretary of State....

"But such a change can hardly be thought of by a Government whose tenure of power may quite possibly be only a matter of months. If ever we form part of a Government again, this is a grave change which should be made.

"I should like to make three great administrative changes:

(1) Make the First Lord of the Admiralty a Secretary of State.
(2) Give the Departments lump sums instead of estimates.
(3) Set up a tribunal of three or five Cabinet Ministers to determine all questions at issue between the Departments.

And perhaps I would add a fourth:

(4) Establish a fixed promotion Committee for all Army and Navy promotions—which should vote by ballot, and the members of which should serve for five or ten years.

"This, of course, would be subject to Cabinet control for the biggest posts....

"But the mainspring of your machine is too weak."
All power is nominally centred in the Cabinet: but it is all but powerless by reason of the rustiness and friction of the instrument it has to work."

A private letter casually indited for the consolation of a depressed colleague is not to be read as the promulgation of a thought-out policy. Nothing more was heard of the suggestion for breaking down the Admiralty's self-confident isolation by raising the status of its political chief. The second of the three "administrative changes" remains still an unfulfilled dream of the economic reformer. The third alone was destined to effectual development in the near future. The germ of the Imperial Defence Committee had already been planted. One of the recommendations contained in the report of the Hartington Commission in 1890 was for the establishment of a naval and military Council for the settlement of matters in which both departments were concerned. Mr. Stanhope announced that the Government accepted this recommendation in an amended form. It proposed to constitute a Committee of Cabinet which would be presided over by the Prime Minister and be attended by officials from outside, and whose proceedings and decisions—unlike those of any other Cabinet body at that date—would be recorded. (Hansard, July 3, 1890.)

Under the terms of the Naval Defence Act the cost of its programme of construction was to be spread over a fixed number of years, and certain items of revenue were earmarked for its supply. A large part of this annual contribution was estimated for out of existing taxes. These were years of prosperity, of elastic returns and undiscounted surpluses, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer's successful conversion of Consols in the previous year had given him another
million or two to play with. But a balance of additional revenue had to be found.

Mr. Goschen had worked actively with his chief in the Committee of Cabinet for National Defence and their collaboration appears to have been continued in discussion as to how this balance should be met. On the principle of stimulating a sense of responsibility in those who, during the excitement of the last year, had been loudest in demanding the expenditure, it was decided to provide half of it by an addition of 1 per cent to the Succession Duty. But Lord Salisbury urged that the remainder should be met from indirect taxation. In a characteristic letter he suggested appropriate objects. Why not a tax on shipping, as being the business most dependent on a strong navy? The proposal had been criticised for the outcry it would certainly raise: "I admit that it would be unpopular; it might be very unpopular. I did not offer it as a specimen of popular finance—but of scientific and virtuous finance." He offered as an alternative a heightened tax on wine and foreign spirits—which again, he urged, were leading articles of the commerce for whose defence the money was to be expended. But without an irritatingly needless advance in the excise duty on whiskey, he feared that this proposal would be excluded as "tampering with that accursed thing Protection." After girding at these and other objections to his experimental flights in budget-making, of which he foresaw that the Board of Trade and Treasury would be prolific, he concluded on a directly serious note:

To Mr. Goschen, March 3, 1889.

"... But the point on which I am anxious is that these various difficulties, which a department like the Board of Trade can furnish by the yard, shall not
issue in this—that the whole burden shall be laid upon realised property. Among the conflict of various principles which are cited, and will be cited in opposition to any proposal, I am anxious to lay the strongest stress upon this one—that it is dangerous to recur to realised property alone in difficulties—because the holders of it are politically so weak that the pernicious financial habit is sure to grow, especially if it be encouraged by a precedent of our making."

His wishes were complied with though without any accompaniment of edifying congruity, through the prosaic and hackneyed expedient of a small addition to the tax on beer.

In the course of his search for new sources of revenue on this occasion, Mr. Goschen appears to have contemplated a tax on the profitable sale of leases, to be treated as income. He abandoned the idea—whether or no in response to protests from his chief—but during the Easter holidays, after the Budget had been introduced, the colleagues continued their argument as to the theoretic justification of what Lord Salisbury referred to as “this happily dropped proposition.”

To Mr. Goschen, April 26, 1889.

"... You say that the merchant makes a profit by selling commodities, and we tax those profits as income. Therefore we ought to tax as income the profit the landowner makes by selling leases.

"The important difference is this:

"The merchant is constantly selling. You do not tax the profit on each transaction but you tax the balance of profit, if any, on the gains and losses of three years. But the landowner only sells now and then. You do not propose to tax the balance of profit on the sum of his gains and losses over an adequate period of time, but you tax his gains and pay
no attention to his losses. This difference in the two cases is vital, and disposes of the analogy altogether."

(6) **Indian Councils**

Unlike the question of Defence, the other notable instance of administrative intervention on Lord Salisbury's part at this time was in a department with which he had been for years closely connected. In the autumn of 1888, Lord Dufferin, the outgoing Viceroy of India, communicated to the Home Government, just before he returned home, a scheme which he had prepared for enlarging the existing powers and membership of Legislative Councils—Viceregal and Provincial. No one questioned the need of such a measure. The Councils were still constituted as they had been under the Act of 1861, passed at the time that the Crown took over the direct government of India after the Mutiny. They were formed by an addition to the official Executive Councils of small numbers of nominated members, chosen for their representative quality from among Indians and non-official Europeans. The 1861 Act had restricted them so exclusively to their legislative functions that their members were not allowed to discuss the Budget, except such items of it as might require a change in the law, or even ask for information—or "interpellate" the Government—upon any administrative matter. Viceroy and Lieutenant-Governors had become increasingly anxious to enlarge the opportunities for Indian criticism upon official action under conditions in which it could be replied to. Lord Dufferin proposed to remove the restrictions on the Councils' powers of discussion and add to the number of their nominated members. So far, his minute would not, probably, have called for comment of any kind from
the Prime Minister. But, in deference to democratic sentiment, it further proposed the hitherto untried course of appointing the new members—at all events those on the subordinate Councils—through some form of indirect popular election, instead of by the Viceroy’s nomination. “I hope Dufferin is not going to try any rash experiments at ‘liberalising’ the Provincial Councils,” commented Lord Salisbury on first hearing of these views: “His experiment in Egypt should have sufficed him” \(^1\) *(To Lord Cross,\(^2\) September 28, 1888)*. When the minute, after consideration in Calcutta, was officially submitted to him, he expressed his more defined disapproval in a Cabinet Memorandum.

**Memorandum December 31, 1888.**

**The Indian Reform Bill**

“This is the most important change that has been undertaken since the dissolution of the East India Company. It ought to have been settled in communication with the Cabinet before any official step was taken on it. All further progress must be arrested until the Cabinet has come to a conclusion upon the most essential points.

“The momentous portion of the change proposed is that which gives legislative powers to elected Councillors. It is true that these are so few in number—they form so small a proportion of the whole Council—that their influence will be imperceptible. For the present undoubtedly that will be so. Their influence will not be felt. But the proposed step is momentous, not on account of its effect on the present, but on the future. The question is not how the Council will work now, but in what proportion its several parts will grow hereafter; and to ascertain that matter we

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\(^1\) Lord Dufferin had been sent out to draw up a Parliamentary constitution for Egypt in 1883.

\(^2\) Secretary of State for India.
must consider which have the most capacity of growth in them. The same cause that has called the elected members into existence will cause them to increase. They are not proposed because the population of India call for them. It would be a ludicrous exaggeration to say that there are ten thousand people between Cashmere and Cape Comorin who desire a system of legislation by the agency of elected members. The opinion that has introduced it is not an Indian opinion—it is the mere echo of English opinion—the application to India of ideas bred in the political conflicts of this country. But this cause is likely to operate with ever-increasing force. If we make, now, an error in the lines we are laying for the introduction of the elective principle into Indian Government, we must not console ourselves with the idea that its scope will be limited by the proportion of elective members we are introducing into the Council on this occasion.

"Judging the matter in this light, I look with some dismay at the choice the Government of India have made of their constituency of the future. They are the members of the municipal Committees and District Boneels (?) who are themselves elected. But I think I am not wrong in assuming that the men who will be brought to the front by this plan will be (in Bengal) Bengalee lawyers, agents, newspaper writers; not the men of business (who have not time for this work) nor the simpler and more numerous members of the community, who would not have the requisite qualification. Now the class thus selected would be in England a very trustworthy class; but England is not ruled by conquest. In India they are the class among whom disaffection is the strongest; and they are the most competent to use the weapon which membership of a legislative Council would place in their hands to embarrass and damage the Government. On the other hand, they are a class which has no influence over the physical force of the Indian population: they are not to be feared unless we put power into their hands.
"I cannot conceive the object of introducing this dangerous principle into the constitution of the proposed Councils. We shall in no way please the classes on whose goodwill the submission of India depends: we shall not reconcile our only enemies; but we shall give them arms against ourselves."

In February, 1890, Lord Cross introduced in the House of Lords a Bill to "amend the Indian Councils Act of 1861" which embodied the required changes in the Legislative Councils but provided that the added members, like those already there, should be nominated directly by the Viceroy and Lt.-Governors. The numbers involved were very small—an actual maximum of twelve nominated members on the Governor-General's Council being increased to sixteen and that of eight on the subordinate Councils, to twenty. The Bill had been prepared, Lord Cross said, in the previous year, but owing to the already congested time-table in the Lower House had not been brought forward. Unfortunately, in this interval, Lord Dufferin's minute had been illicitly made public—whether through some untraced indiscretion or some act of deliberate official disloyalty, at home or in India, never appeared. It had had its repercussion in a clamour for fundamental changes raised by the small Radical group of "friends of India" in the Commons, while the Indian National Congress, then in the fifth year of its existence, had responsively placed a completely democratic transformation of the Councils upon its programme.

The Liberal leaders in the Peers, Lords Kimberley and Ripon, who spoke to the second reading of the Bill on March 6, dismissed all those ideas as fantastic. But they extended a smiling indulgence to the juvenile effervescence of the Indian intelligentsia and protested against the Government's neglect to use so favourable an opportunity for a gesture of innocuous sympathy
with its Liberal aspirations. Only if the new right of interpellation were exercised by members surrounded by the democratic aura of election could it fulfil its desired purpose as a safety-valve for discontent. “Elective representation” was an ideal of which all good Anglo-Saxons must approve—particularly—a consideration only tactfully indicated—when it was applied to no more than a score or so of members distributed in hopeless minorities among subordinate legislatures. Lord Northbrook, speaking with the double authority of an ex-Viceroy and a Liberal Unionist ally, supported the protest: but in his case it was almost wholly on the ground of deference to Viceregal authority. Lord Dufferin’s approval of the elective concession was known—that of his successor, Lord Lansdowne, and of the Indian Government as a whole, was strongly suspected. The Government had, in fact, refused to lay their recommendations on the table. It was supremely necessary, he said, to leave a free hand to the men on the spot. So when the Bill went into Committee he moved, as a compromise between the views of Government and Opposition, an amendment which left the method by which the new members were to be selected to be determined subsequently by Viceregal regulations issued with the approval of the Secretary of State. The Government accepted the amendment—the last proviso, which, as things then stood, left them in ultimate control of the result, probably reconciling Lord Salisbury to the compromise.

But in the speech which he contributed to the discussion he dealt with none of these things. In content as in manner it stood separated from all others in that afternoon’s debate. To his own inner vision he was evidently not addressing the row of somewhat bewildered Liberal peers in front of him. Many of
his phrases would have been wholly inappropriate to their actual or prospective capacity for influencing events. He was speaking to the authority behind them, whose inspiration was admitted in their utterances and whose mentality, so witnessed to, urged him to this earnestness of appeal. The speech, especially in its closing passages, reads as a supreme effort to persuade the men actually responsible for government in India to turn from their absorption in the manipulation of machinery, in the oiling of administrative wheels by illusory compliances with the western verbiage of the National Congress, to face the realities upon which must depend the future fate of the crowd of humanity committed to their charge. It is notable, and is not the least striking of the contrasts displayed between this speech and those which preceded it, that it accepted—though reluctantly—and, indeed, argued its main thesis upon the hypothesis of transitoriness in the existing autocracy.

"It does not appear to me that he [Lord Kimberley] and those noble Lords who spoke before him estimate at its right value the intense gravity of the question they have raised. They did not seem to me to recognise how deep a responsibility must lie upon any Government, or upon any Parliament, which introduces the elective principle as an effective agent in the Government of India. It may be—I do not desire to question it—that that is to be the ultimate destiny of India; but the beginning of that new principle is one of the gravest parting of the ways which it is possible for any Government to have to face."

He dwelt on the alienation of all Eastern traditions and Eastern minds from the idea of elective or representative government—on its established failure in Turkey and Egypt—on the special difficulty, peculiar
to India, which lay in the passionate hostility of the two great religious communities between which her people were divided. He insisted that the first thing to find, "before you advance a single step upon your journey," was a constituency. The only one hitherto suggested in this light-hearted approach had been the municipal bodies.

"We have been offered as a constituency for the representation of the warlike races of the Punjaub, the aristocratic people of Rajpootana, and for the vast population of the ryots, spread over the whole of India, a body elected only for the purpose of making streets and taking care of drains. I do not think, without casting the least imputation or slur upon their patriotism or their capacity, that these urban representatives are either by their education or preparation, or the life they have passed through, fitted for the function of forming a constituency fitted to represent those vast interests which we have undertaken to represent."

Leaving further criticism on this subsidiary topic, he returned to the main purport of his appeal.

"What appeared to me to be most alarming in the reasoning of the noble Lords opposite was that they think that they can stumble and slip into this great change and that no harm would come to them if they had not taken count beforehand where their steps were to be placed or in what direction their journey was to be taken. You must not drift into an elective Government of India. You must make up your mind how you are to frame your constituencies, how those vast interests are to be represented, before you consign yourselves to the care, charge, and government of the most powerful principle that affects political communities. Do not imagine that you can introduce it in small doses, and that it will be satisfied by that concession. At least we know this of the
elective principle from our experience in Europe, that wherever it has made for itself a small channel it has been able to widen and widen it gradually until all has been carried before it: and that is the danger of any action you may take in India. I hope we shall not imagine that when once we have consigned ourselves to this principle we can retrace our steps or take away the powers that we have given, or that we can undo the result of any mistake that we may make.

"I therefore earnestly urge upon the House not to make so great a change without the most careful and circumspect examination of all the difficulties and dangers which surround it; not to slip into this great innovation, as it were, accidentally. But, if we are to do it, if it has to be done, let us do it systematically, counting the cost, examining all the details, and taking care that the machinery to be provided shall effect the purpose of giving representation not to accidentally constituted bodies, not to small sections of the people here and there, but to the living strength and vital forces of the whole community of India." (Hansard, March 6, 1890.)

The speech was probably wholly without effect. Lord Granville, who followed him, dismissed it in a phrase of admittedly puzzled incomprehension, and no allusion to it is to be found in subsequent speeches on the subject in either House of Parliament or from either camp of politics. The final phrase appears to have been something more than a flower of rhetoric. At least, its purport was repeated two years later in very similar words. The Bill of 1890, though it was sent down to the Commons before Easter, shared in that year's general disaster to Government legislation. An abortive attempt at its re-introduction was made in '91, but it was not till the spring of '92 that it passed through both Houses of Parliament. By that time the India Office appears to have succumbed to the pressure from Calcutta—Lord Cross, vaguely, and
Mr. Curzon, the Under Secretary, more definitely, intimating in debate their personal approval of the elective solution. But the latter—acting evidently under orders—steadily resisted in the House of Commons a series of Radical amendments to insert words enjoining or recommending it, and the brief remarks with which Lord Salisbury took leave of the Bill in the House of Lords showed his attitude to be un-changed. He closed them with phrases very similar to those which adumbrated an alternative policy in his speech of 1890.

"We must be careful lest, by the application of occidental machinery, we bring into power not the strong, natural, vigorous, effective elements of Indian society, but the more artificial and weakly elements which we ourselves have made and brought into prominence. It would be a great evil if, in any system of government which we gradually develop, the really strong portions of Indian society did not obtain that share in the government to which their natural position among their own people traditionally entitles them." (Hansard, February 15, 1892.)

These phrases, like those in the preceding speech, contain a tantalising suggestion of some constructive plan in process of incubation as to the intended tenour of the Viceroyal regulations. The suggestion is tantalising because its actuality was never brought to the test. In the following July destiny intervened in the shape of a transference of some few thousands of votes by British electors who had never heard of Indian Legislative Councils. The regulations issued by the Viceroy at the close of that year, under the aegis of Lord Kimberley, provided an elective system of

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1 The Hon. G. N. Curzon, 1859–1925. Created Lord Curzon in 1898; Viceroy of India, 1898–1905; President of the Council in War Cabinet, 1916–1919; Foreign Secretary, 1919–1923; created Marquis Curzon, 1921; President of the Council, 1924–1925.
approved western orthodoxy and carefully safeguarded impotence, founded upon a constituency of municipal boards, decorated with exiguous sprinklings of University and commercial representation.

(7) Non-Political

Outside the circle of purely political interests, 1887 was chiefly memorable as the year of Queen Victoria's first Jubilee. This celebration, by its narrower concentration on the personal anniversary, made, in fact, a wider appeal than did that of the second Jubilee ten years later. Foreign Powers, chilled by the note of Imperial self-congratulation in 1897, could and did participate in the personal tribute of 1887. Representatives of every Government, members of every royal family in Europe, including many closely related to the Queen in blood or by marriage, assembled in that June of notable sunshine to join with her own children and the leaders of her people in the Thanksgiving Service in the Abbey at which, amidst the scenic setting of her coronation, her accession to the throne was commemorated.

Among impressions left on witnesses of that central function was one that gripped by contrast. On the one hand, the train of princely riders accompanying the royal carriage, their diversity of brilliant uniforms mingling with the scarlet and blue of the military escort—a gorgeous, many-coloured grouping, flashing back the sun's rays from gold and burnished steel; and, on the other, in their midst, the one little figure in black, sought out by every eye, while, at every point, cheers from thousands of throats picked up the vision of her and passed it on, a linked-up roar of sound along the whole road to and from the great Church. The same note of a concentrated individual sentiment
was dominant, actually or in imagination, throughout the subsidiary celebrations of the year—naval, military, and civic. When, on the following New Year's Day, Her Majesty, looking back on these scenes, expressed to her Prime Minister her sense of the display of feeling of which she had been the object, he responded with a warmth which had more than courtesy in it:

To the Queen, January 2, 1888.¹

"Lord Salisbury with his humble duty respectfully thanks Your Majesty for the gracious letter of yesterday, and the expression of deep feelings which it contains. The Jubilee year will remain deeply engraved on the memory of millions. It gave opportunity for the most striking and affecting expression of national reverence and affection that has ever come from the heart of any people. Your Majesty's reign has witnessed and fostered additions to the glory and happiness of the nation in proportions far exceeding the reign of any previous English Sovereign: and the gratitude of Your people was as natural as it was manifestly sincere."

The year, nevertheless, had its afflictive experiences for the writer. The influx of royal and foreign guests had multiplied the number of social functions at which his presence was necessary, and the rain of honours with which it was thought fitting to commemorate the occasion added to the most distasteful of his minor duties. On the Easter Day of 1887 he was writing to Mr. Smith: "I feel so convinced of the universal execration with which the list of honours, whatever it may be, will be received, that I think it will be best not to publish it till the very day of the Jubilee. Otherwise, the wrath of the undecorated might imperil the Crimes Bill."

¹ Letters of Queen Victoria, 3rd series, vol. i. p. 373.
In March '88, Lord John Manners succeeded his brother as Duke of Rutland and his wife's acknowledgment of the Prime Minister's formal letter of condolence on her brother-in-law's death was, for once, punctually replied to in a very characteristic note:

To the Duchess of Rutland, April 1, 1888.

"I am very glad that I occupy the honourable position of being the only one of your correspondents who did not preach on 'responsibilities' to you. The reason of my omission probably was that I do not believe in them: that is to say, I do not believe that rich people have more responsibilities than poor people. This doctrine would make responsibility to depend on the effect of your acts, not on the intention. It cannot be said that the man with one talent was looked upon as having less responsibility than the man with ten talents. I should have been more inclined to condole with you on the unbounded nuisance of having to look after a landed property—an evil which seems quite imaginary to those who are not suffering it. I wish all property was in Consols—an ideal Consols, never liable to be converted." 1

The same event deprived Lord Salisbury of a private secretary in the person of Lord Granby, the new Duke's eldest son, who was invited to stand for Parliament. He offered the vacated post to Mr. Schomberg M'Donnell, a college friend of his son's, who served him till his final retirement in 1902, with a loyalty which warmed, as years went on, to a devoted personal championship. At a recent Christmas party

1 Mr. Goschen's Bill for the conversion of Consols had been passed by the House of Commons four days previously.
2 The Hon. Sir Schomberg M'Donnell, G.C.V.O., K.C.B., 1861–1915. Secretary to Commissioner of Works, 1902–1912. He volunteered for service at the front in the Great War, and was killed a fortnight after landing in France, November 22, 1915.
at Hatfield, the young man, with some of his con-
temporaries, had indulged in tobogganing down a steep
and imperfectly prepared snow-slide, with results in a
jarring fall of which he felt the effects for some years
afterwards.

To the Hon. S. K. Mc'Donnell, March 12, 1888.

"Henry Manners, now Granby, has made up his
mind to stand for Leicestershire and consequently has
resigned his private secretaryship. I understand from
the Duke of Buccleuch that you would be willing to
undertake his duties. If it be true, I shall be exceed-
ingly glad, for your assistance would be exceedingly
valuable to me.

"But I was once guilty of inducing you to 'to-
boggan' down a fair-looking snow-slope, with the
result of landing you on an unpleasantly hard place
at the bottom. I am anxious not to be guilty of a
repetition of this perfidious conduct. I ought there-
fore to impress upon you that, when out of office, I
have no secretaries (of your exalted kind) and that,
therefore, an engagement with me has that strong
element of precariousness which belongs to the posi-
tion of all English politicians. But for this circum-
stance I think the employment is not a bad one. The
work is interesting and not too hard; the salary is
£400.

"I shall be very glad if, having fully satisfied your-
self of the character of the snow-slope, you are willing
to embark on it."

In the following spring, Mr. Alfred Austin varied
the monotony of his political correspondence with
the Prime Minister by sending him a copy of his last
volume of poetry.

To Mr. Alfred Austin, February 16, 1889.

"I am very much obliged to you for the copy of
your book. I shall value it very much as your gift—
I wish I had a chance of giving to it the attention it deserves.

"I do not believe there is on the earth so prosaic an animal as a politician. Some ideal, some imaginative colour, may attach itself to the details of almost any other vocation; but you cannot ennoble the cares of a Minister under a Parliamentary Government. I often wish I could speak out and say what I think of it; but if I did, no one would listen to me."

1889 was the year of the great Dock Strike, surrounded and followed by lesser ebullitions of labour unrest and accompanied by a great deal of passionate talk on the one side and predictions of revolutionary upheaval on the other. "Everything is very quiet in Europe," reported Lord Salisbury to Sir Henry Wolff, then in diplomatic exile at Teheran, "and so we are wholly given over to strikes and Socialist schemes. There is a strong current of this kind of feeling which may affect the general politics of the country, though I think the better opinion is that it will not last very long" (December 10, 1889).

Mr. Austin held, on the other hand, that it would oust the present dominance of the Irish question in politics and be the decisive issue at the next general election. Lord Salisbury did not agree with him:

To Mr. Austin, December 2, 1889.

"My ground for thinking that it will be Ireland and not Socialism that will decide the election of 1892—assuming the Parliament to last so long—is that the Irish question has shewn its vitality by centuries of undiminished vigour. The Socialist question, on the other hand, is in the habit of making a burst for a year or two, and then disappearing. It did so in 1839 and in 1848, and I think again in 1880.

"The two questions differ also in this. You may make enormous mistakes about Ireland and it will
THE "RUSSIAN" INFLUENZA

not interfere with the comfort of the English people for a long time. On the other hand, a mistake on the labour question will be felt immediately, and the man who makes it will find that he has run against a hard wall which brings him up suddenly.

"Therefore I expect that by October, 1892, Socialist quackeries will either have been dropped, or they will have been exposed by experience."

Europe was visited this winter by an epidemic of influenza which, though it has since been rivalled and even surpassed in virulence, was then so unique to all living experience that it was acclaimed, whether rightly or wrongly, as a new disease. A flood of unusual magnitude in the Yangtse Kiang in the previous year, which had covered its shores with thousands of unburied corpses, was charged in popular diagnosis with having originated the epidemic. It certainly entered Europe through Russia, where it was said to have attacked more than 50 per cent of the population, and, until painfully repeated experience had naturalised it in the west, it was habitually spoken of as "the Russian influenza." Lord Salisbury became one of its earliest victims in England. He was taken ill on the day after Christmas. The attack was a severe one; for a day or two his condition was anxious and his recovery was slow. Though he went up to London in February when Parliament met and, as a compromise with the doctors, held a Cabinet in his own house in Arlington Street, he was driven away again by threats of a relapse. A fortnight spent in the softer climate near Poole at Lytchett Heath, his brother Eustace's house, followed, after an interval, by three weeks on the Riviera in April, restored him at length to his normal condition of health. Except during the first few days his work never stopped—a negotiation with Portugal having, at that moment,
reached a critical stage which made total abstention impossible.\(^1\) Long before the fever left him red boxes were imperatively sent for to his bedroom, and in spite of medical protests telegrams were dictated to members of his family or to secretaries seated at his bedside. One habit had perforce to be suspended for some time—that of writing personally to all and sundry among his correspondents. The weakness which habitually follows the disease fixed itself in the muscles of his right hand, and in his first letter to the Queen, written some weeks after the onset of the attack, he had to apologise for its illegible quality. His secretary, Mr. Barrington, reporting on this enfeebled condition to one of his ambassadors, added, however, that “his mental energies seemed in no way depressed” (January, 1890).

This was fortunate at the opening of that overburdened year. Even the demands made upon him by Church patronage were subjected to the general law of pressure which marked it. There was a notably high rate of mortality upon the episcopal bench at this period. Out of the twenty Bishoprics which fell to his appointment in the seven years covering this Ministry and the short one of ’85, as many as twelve were nominated in the course of 1890 and 1891. There were circumstances which added to the responsibility of selection. The Church was passing through one of those crises of Protestant alarm and provocation to which it is recurrently subject. The Church Association had gone to law with the Bishop of London to try and compel a prohibition of the newly erected reredos in St. Paul’s Cathedral and—what was productive of far stronger resentment—had instituted a prosecution, for “ritualistic practices,” of Bishop King of Lincoln—a prelate whose saintliness and

\(^1\) See below, Chapter IX.
singular charm of character inspired a devoted championship among his sympathisers. Feeling in the Church ran very high on both sides.

As a consequence the Queen was moved to an exceptionally active interest in episcopal appointments, which did not make her Minister’s task easier. Their disagreements on this topic were frequent, and were kept healthy by an uncompromising candour in stating them. In that which divided them during the early months of 1890, general opinion would certainly have been on the Queen’s side. The Bishop of Durham, Dr. Lightfoot, one of the most profound scholars and theologians that the Church of England has boasted, had died in the previous December. Urged by Archbishop Benson of Canterbury and Dr. Davidson—at that time Dean of Windsor—and supported by published opinions in the north of England, the Queen proposed and pressed for the appointment of Canon Westcott as his successor. He was a friend of Dr. Lightfoot’s, belonged to the same school of thought, and, though not of equal calibre, was also a man of very distinguished learning. But Lord Salisbury refused, and, during his convalescence from influenza, wrote at length to Sir Henry Ponsonby to explain his reasons:

To Sir Henry Ponsonby, January 26, 1890.¹

"My Dear Sir Henry,—The Queen has recently communicated with me once or twice about bishops through you, and I think that, in view of the state of my handwriting, it may be more convenient if I write to you what I desire to submit to her.

"I entirely concur in a remark she made in her last letter to me that episcopal appointments at the present time might affect the question of the disrup-

¹ Letters of Queen Victoria, 3rd series, vol. i. p. 558.
tion of the Church. I am deeply sensible of the responsibility of advising her at this juncture—as the conflict between the two parties has become so hot that a trifle might kindle it into a dangerous flame. The exasperation on both sides is equal, the High Church being backed generally by a majority of the clergy, and the Low Church by a majority of the laity.

"But I do respectfully differ from the Queen in thinking that a remedy for this particular disorder will be found in nominating a man like Canon Westcott to the See of Durham. . . . As a learned man he would be thrown away, as Lightfoot was thrown away. His time would be occupied in the petty details of diocesan administration; and his unequalled erudition would become useless to the world for the want of leisure to produce it."

But there was another and more positive reason. Canon Westcott was a Broad Churchman, and as such would have no hold upon the combative spirits in the present ecclesiastical conflict: "I am far from saying that I would exclude the Broad Churchmen; they are, on the whole, the strongest men." But what he was anxious for in this emergency was to reinforce the Bench with a High Churchman and a Low Churchman "of moderate temper and views" who might be able to control their more violent brethren. He had marked down Durham for the desired pacificatory nomination on the Low Church side, and on the other side proposed to appoint to his own diocese of St. Albans—whose present Bishop, Dr. Claughton, had just sent in his resignation—his cousin, Dr. E. S. Talbot, then Vicar of Leeds—"a reasonable and prudent High Churchman."

Failing him, he said, he should recommend the Dean of Windsor—a plan which ultimately broke down owing to the delicacy of the Dean's health at
this time. The comment which follows is interesting as an appreciation, all the more since Dr. Davidson had had no opportunity as yet for showing his quality on any large field of action.

"He has not the influence over High Churchmen which Talbot would have. On the other hand, his power of dealing with men is very great indeed. He ought to have a southern diocese, as he would be constantly wanted in London. I have no doubt that in time he would establish an influence over the Church not unlike that which Bishop Wilberforce possessed towards the close of his life."

There was further argumentative correspondence with the Queen before she surrendered reluctantly to her Minister's veto—first, on her side, negativing one or two of his alternative suggestions. But when he was at length free to offer translation to the superior see to other Bishops of his choice, they one and all declined the promotion. They probably dreaded to undertake a diocese in which the claims of a man of such admittedly superior distinction to themselves had already been publicly canvassed. After the third refusal Lord Salisbury accepted defeat and, to his Sovereign's triumphant satisfaction, offered the appointment to Canon Westcott. Three months had been occupied in these transactions, and the Church public had become critically curious as to the causes of delay.

It is very possible that attachment to his scheme of ecclesiastical statecraft was not solely responsible for Lord Salisbury's pertinacity in so long resisting not only the Queen's wishes but pressure from the diocese itself and from the majority of his ecclesiastical counsellors. It is permissible to suspect—though no written word of his admits the motive—that one of the attractions which the scheme had for him was the
logical defence which it supplied for avoiding Canon Westcott altogether. In spite of his genuine respect for his "unequalled erudition," they were mentally antipathetic. "The fog is very heavy in London to-day," wrote Dr. Liddon at an earlier date in correspondence with a friend in the country, adding wittily: "It is rumoured that Canon Westcott left his bedroom window open last night in Westminster." Lord Salisbury was hardly in complete sympathy with the uncompromising rigidity of Dr. Liddon's theology. Indeed, travelling along his own road of a deliberately reverential rejection of analysis in the presence of the mysteries of faith, it is probable that on many points he reached a position not dissimilar from that of the Cambridge divine. But the hazy sequences of the latter's mental processes were wholly alien to his own, and inspired him with intellectual distrust.

Meanwhile, the other branch of his plan had also met with failure through Dr. Talbot's refusal to abandon Leeds after only two years incumbency of the living. The Prime Minister took advantage of cousinship and an old intimacy to give vent to his accumulated vexation:

To the Rev. E. S. Talbot, March 8, 1890.

"I am very sorry to receive your discouraging letter.
"If good appointments are not made, at least half the responsibility lies with the 'good appointments' when they refuse, for it takes two to make an appointment—like a quarrel.
"I am weary and at my wit's end. I have had three refusals of the see of Durham and I have not got a Bishop yet. It seems likely that I shall have to commence the same enlivening round with St. Albans.
I should not mind if in any case the refusal was based on any solid, robust, practical reason. But they are all reasons of the type you have sent me in your letter.

"Possible Bishops are according to my experience divided into three classes:—

(1) Those who, in my view, are not fit.
(2) Those who seem to me fit and whom I am not allowed to ask, and
(3) Those whom I am allowed to ask but who find some coy excuse for refusing.

"Forgive me for my mutinous spirit, but I am in despair."

Dr. Talbot defended himself. "Are you quite fair to me? Please remember that I have raised no plea of unfitness,—no 'coy excuse' or 'nolo episcopari,'—but only this, that I do not think I can leave the work so lately taken up here without moral injury to the Church's work here. Ought I to have come here—I might almost say, to have been sent here—if I was to leave it so soon?" He hoped that his defence would be accepted, as it would pain him to be misjudged by one who was "not only Prime Minister and a great Churchman, but, to him, something like a House Chief by the ties of at least two generations."

The Prime Minister was more than placated. After his return to office five years later, in 1895, the first diocese that fell to his gift—that of Southwark—was offered to the writer, and accepted—seven years being happily adjudged sufficient for the establishment of continuity in Church work at Leeds.

After Dr. Talbot's refusal, Lord Salisbury offered St. Albans to Dr. Liddon—the offer being intended

1 His predecessor at Leeds having been made a Bishop, the choice of incumbent had, for that presentation, passed to the Crown; though, under the arrangement come to for this Ministry, the appointment had fallen, in fact, not to Lord Salisbury but to Mr. Smith, as First Lord of the Treasury.
as the public recognition of a debt due rather than with any expectation of its acceptance. Eighteen months before, when the great preacher and theologian's health had, in fact, already begun to fail, the Prime Minister had recommended him for the see of Oxford and had remonstrated with the Queen with unaccustomed warmth at her persistent denial of his claims: "Lord Salisbury would be wanting in his duty if he did not state frankly his opinion that the exclusion of Canon Liddon from the Episcopate, or at least from the offer of it, is a severe measure, which is likely to do harm to the Church of England." The Canon, he said, was so much the most brilliant living member of the clergy of the Established Church, that his being continuously passed over for promotion constituted a censure for which Churchmen were unable to see a reason—the personal reflection upon him being emphasised by the coincident appointment of men of more extreme opinions: "Many misapprehensions are current as to the course that has been observed with respect to him: and feelings are engendered which are not salutary for the Church, and may be detrimental to Your Majesty's authority in it" (July 6, 1888).¹

The Queen yielded so far as to say that she would postpone decision until Lord Salisbury had enquired into the state of Dr. Liddon's health. For the offer to depend on that enquiry made the concession useless for Lord Salisbury's purpose, and he acted only when she substituted an unconditional consent in the case of the St. Albans diocese. It was not then realised how near Dr. Liddon was to his death. Its occurrence only six months later invested the belated offer with a quality of irony rather than of the reparatory compliment intended.

The battle in the Church continued to rage throughout this year until the deliverance of the Lambeth judgment on Bishop King's case in November and the final refusal of the Court of Appeal in December to issue a Mandamus against the Bishop of London, closed the unedifying struggle. Lord Salisbury's Low Church friend, Lord Harrowby, appears to have demurred to some choice of a representative of that school of thought as being too inclusive in his evangelical loyalty.

To Lord Harrowby, October 22, 1890.

"I am not sure that I agree with you as to the desire for comprehension being a disqualification. I think both High Church and Evangelical have a right to due representation on the Bench—but I do not think that they have a right to demand pugnacious representation.

"I wish that people would preach on the text, 'Brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers'."

He returned to the same text a fortnight later:

To Lord Harrowby, November 3, 1890.

"I do not hope to obtain the approval of theologians of D.'s sort—on either side. These mere gladiators do no good at all. When they are not indulging in mere party passion, the whole perspective of their minds is dislocated. I frankly don't believe in the piety of either Dr. L. or Lord G." ¹

In writing to Sir Michael Hicks-Beach a few months later his reassuring rejection of a militant clerical partisan, against whom Sir Michael had warned him, was even fiercer: "P. is much too combative a man for me. I look upon such men as curses to the Church" (May 27, 1891).

¹ Leading champions of the High and Low Church extremists.
During their visit to the Riviera, before the introduction of the Home Rule Bill in 1886, Lord and Lady Salisbury had decided upon the purchase of a piece of land at Beaulieu, on which to build a house in preparation for those periodic escapes from the English winter which were becoming an almost annual necessity for the preservation of his always delicately poised balance of health. The completed purchase of the site from a number of small peasant holders and the planning of the house to be built on it had since been slowly proceeded with. When he was at Monte Carlo in '90, finishing his convalescence from influenza, final orders for the building had been given, and in October, '91, before returning home from their annual stay at Puys, he and Lady Salisbury paid a hurried visit to the coast to inspect progress in their new possession.

While they were there they heard by telegram of Mr. Smith's death on October 6. He had been in bad health all that year, but better reports had been received since the prorogation and the end came suddenly. Lord Salisbury's letters have more than one reference to his personal sorrow for the loss of this friend and "most loveable man." His occasional protests against what he regarded as his lieutenant's undue concessions to the enemy across the floor of the House never stiffened into opposition, and the mutual confidence of the two men was of rock-like solidity. He always quoted Mr. Smith as the supreme example of a favourite thesis, that character is the most essential element in a man's equipment for public life.

Mr. Smith's intellectual gifts were no doubt underrated by the public owing to his deficiency in that of

1 See ante, Vol. III. Chapter X. p. 296.
oratory. Observers on the spot used to comment on the infinite dexterity with which he would choose his battle-ground and manoeuvre his opponents on to it; on his accurate recognition of the psychological moment for compromise or for resistance. But there were other qualities which were primarily responsible for his five years' achievement in one of the most difficult House of Commons leaderships that a man has ever had to face;—that of a composite and still unfused majority against the assaults of a relentless opposition, led by two such parliamentary giants as were, each in his own way, Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Parnell. The patent singleness of his outlook, his incapacity for even the most excusable forms of self-seeking, the sense of duty which knew no compromise and was a perpetual challenge to the emulation of others, secured respect from opponents and—which was more important—compliance even from wearied or exasperated followers. When inevitable roughnesses emerged they were smoothed by a tact which was unfailing and irresistible because it was simply the projection upon his business intercourse of a complete charity.

The choice of his successor was on the face of it a difficult one;—actually there was never an alternative. The success of Mr. Balfour's administration in Ireland had been phenomenal. He had found a country seething with disorder and with a tradition of political and agrarian crime which had extended over a generation. In the teeth of resistance, highly organised and avowedly sympathised with by the whole Liberal Opposition in England, he had so completely effected its pacification that he had been able this year, in nearly every district, to withdraw the special executive powers conferred by the Crimes Act. This triumph had been accompanied by an equal brilliancy of
victory in debate over his critics at Westminster, and these positive appeals to favour were strengthened negatively by the departmental absorption which had isolated him from all fugitive jealousies and discontents in the House itself.

There were two men on the front ministerial bench who were by many years his senior both in age and in experience of leadership. Sir Michael Hicks Beach had led his party in the House of Commons for a year and was one of its most brilliant debaters. But, even in that generation noted for examples of personal disinterestedness in its public men, he had signalised his capacity for unadvertised self-effacement. His volunteered withdrawal to make room for Lord Randolph’s more brilliant popularity had already placed him out of the immediate running, and he now took an early opportunity, speaking at a public meeting within a week of Mr. Smith’s death, to renew and emphasise his renunciation. The position with regard to Mr. Goschen was more complicated. As Chancellor of the Exchequer he occupied actually the post of official heirship; he had acted throughout these five sessions as Mr. Smith’s deputy and had repeatedly led the House in his absence. His great ability and powers of speaking were unquestioned, and he had rendered brilliant service to the cause of the Union on the platform as well as in the House. But he still called himself a Liberal Unionist and had refused to join the Carlton Club. Also, a reason not so openly alluded to, he was still associated with the sessional failure of 1890. The Conservative M.P.’s would have none of him, and when Lord Salisbury returned to England on October 12 he found their call for Mr. Balfour unhesitating and unanimous.

He was not altogether happy from either the personal or the party point of view in the course thus
prescribed for him. Two days after he had landed he wrote to Lady Salisbury, whom he had left behind on the Riviera, "There is no help for it,—Arthur must take it. Beach was possible: Goschen is not. But I think it is bad for Arthur—and I do not feel certain how the experiment will end" (October 14, 1891).

To Lord George Hamilton, October 16, 1891.

"I feel at every turn how serious a loss dear old Smith has been. It was impossible to persuade him to pull up in time—we tried very hard. But I am not in complete charity with his doctor.

"The selection of his successor cannot be said to be difficult because the set of opinion is driving me irresistibly in one direction. But it is embarrassing and painful. Arthur will take the reins under very unpromising circumstances and will be exposed to very jealous criticism, and Goschen is, I think, hardly used by some in the party who do not sufficiently recognise his great ability and his very loyal service. The difficulty is his not being one of us—his refusing to belong to the Carlton. I feel how much this fact might chill the ardour of our supporters at a critical moment.

"But I confess it will be very painful to me if—as seems probable—I have to pass over Goschen. But I cannot look upon anything as decided until I have seen Hartington."

Mr. Balfour, who was at Whittingehame, was summoned to town, where, as his uncle reported to Sir Michael Beach, he accepted his promotion "with rather a wry face." He had achieved not only success in Ireland but, rather marvellously as matters stood, popularity also, and it was a wrench to leave it even for such advancement. Lord Hartington was at Newmarket;—it was the week of the Cesarewitch stakes: "Our political arrangements," scoffed his
unsporting ally to Lady Salisbury, "are necessarily hung up till some particular quadruped has run for something." But he returned to London on the seventeenth and concurred in the general judgment. So that evening Lord Salisbury wrote to impart to his Chancellor of the Exchequer the "very painful" decision of which he had spoken to Lord George Hamilton.

He dwelt at length on the impossibility of inducing members to work and vote keenly and heartily for a leader who was avowedly not belonging to their party: "The upshot of the matter is that you possess, in our judgment, all the qualities required for a House of Commons leader at this juncture, except one. . . . In opinion you are more Conservative than many of your colleagues. . . . The self-abnegation you have shown will raise your reputation even higher than it is." But there was no getting over the sentiment of separateness—particularly in the irrational frame of mind induced in a political party on the eve of an election. He spoke of his own feelings in language that was perfectly sincere but in its elaboration suggested a mind not quite at ease as to those of his correspondent—particularly as contrasted with the unconventional intimacy of their ordinary intercourse.

"I have felt reluctance to seem for a moment to be insensible to the splendid services you have rendered to the Unionist party and your unswerving kindness to myself. We owe you very much for the lustre your finance has shed over the career of the Administration; and for the steady and loyal exercise of your influence in keeping the two sections together. This matter has been to me one of great anxiety, for reasons you will well understand."

The deprecatory note was emphasised in the final phrase: "Again thanking you for all you have done
for us;—I hope you will not think I am making a poor return" (October 17, 1891).¹

The answer must have reassured him. The thoughts of the superseded minister seemed mainly directed—apart from the interests of the sacred "Cause"—to the consolation of the chief who was passing him over.

"Nothing could be kinder or more considerate than the terms of your letter and I am heartily grateful for all you say. I quite understand the reasons that have induced you (shall I say compelled you almost) to arrive at this decision. You will have gathered from what Akers-Douglas will have told you how entirely I acquiesce. . . .

"I have been quite convinced lately that Balfour was the man who should, at a most important moment, be able to command the enthusiastic support of all Unionists. I have the greatest confidence in his success and no one will desire it more ardently than I do." (October 19, 1891.)²

The words were fully borne out by deeds, and, once the new relations had been established, the younger leader's power of charm made all things easy.

¹ Life of Lord Goschen, vol. ii. p. 186. ² Ibid. p. 188.
CHAPTER VIII

THE PARTITION OF AFRICA (1)

1885-1889

THE ONSET OF THE SCRAMBLE

The closing years of the nineteenth century were marked by an advance of the white races upon the continent of Africa which, in its circumstance, was a unique phenomenon in history. Wars of conquest had little or no part in it; such fighting as took place was incidental. Yet, except for the Soudan and the eastern Sahara—reserved for absorption seven years later—it overran within the space of one decade the whole of the black populated continent where it was not already occupied by the scattered settlements of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. And the extent and rapidity of its accomplishment were not more remarkable than the number of nations that were independently and by a simultaneous impulse engaged in it.

This invasion was the product of forces over which Governments have little control and which it is not easy to identify. Some writers have postulated, as an all-sufficing explanation of it, the European demand for new markets which was created by the industrial revolution at the beginning of the nineteenth century. That is not very satisfying. It leaves a time-gap of some fifty years between cause and effect and it takes
no account of the special features which differentiated the African invasion from other admitted results of this economic pressure. A number of contributory causes nearer to the date might be cited. But they affected only individual white nations and particular regions of Africa. Two phenomena of general European incidence may be suggested, however, as having had a preparatory and distinctive influence. One was the passion for adventure which the close of the Napoleonic wars and the long peace which followed let loose throughout the young manhood of Europe. It expressed itself in the cosmopolitan stream of explorers which, from 1820 onwards, flowed continuously into and through Africa—a flow in which scores of men, drawn from many nations and all classes, risked, and in the majority of instances ultimately sacrificed, their lives to the ardour of discovery. They spread the contagion of the dark continent’s fascination through their respective countries and made it, for two generations, the centre both of romantic and of purposeful imaginations. The other phenomenon was the slave-raiding horror which the reports of Livingstone and his contemporaries in the 60’s and 70’s first made vivid to the Christian public. Cynical commentators have doubted the genuineness and extent of the revolt of conscience which was roused by this revelation of preventable human agony on a vast scale. But its reality was witnessed to by the stubbornness of resolve which it engendered. More than once in these later years a consent to compromise on this issue with the Arab and other dominant slave-making races would have smoothed the way for national ambition or individual

1 The cutting of the Suez Canal; the diamond and gold discoveries in South Africa; the British occupation of Egypt; the revival of France after the Franco-German war and her discontent with her European outlook.
profit and saved expenditure in money and the lives of men. But consent was always refused.

A double effect can be diagnosed from these two categories of roused emotions. They assisted, through the financial support which they encouraged, the operation of that economic pressure which had hitherto been held back by the disabilities of African climate and disease; and when the trading ventures started they surrounded them with a popular sympathy which—with or without the will of Governments—transformed them into national enterprises.

In the atmosphere thus prepared, a multiplicity of individual motives, mingled of every shade of selfishness and altruism, were combined in the culminating initiation of the onrush;—the urge of trade, the ardour of evangelisation, the love of gain, the pride of empire, the conscious trusteeship of civilisation, the jealousies of patriotism. Its continuance was inevitable from the moment that contact was fully established between races so far apart in the scale of progress. By the bulk of the black population it was acquiesced in and, at the outset, universally welcomed. Later on there were revolts on the part of its more masterful tribes—who were also its most blood-thirsty—against the forfeiture of their local supremacy, while from the hybrid Moslems who had hitherto represented, and cruelly abused, racial superiority resistance was often desperate. There were gruesome episodes, but on the whole the blood-price exacted for this conquest of a continent for civilisation would compare favourably with less extensive revolutions. Perhaps its two most remarkable features, and those which mainly concern us here, were that it was accomplished without any serious quarrel between the white Powers engaged in it, in spite of the hot rivalry which inspired their nationals on the spot, and
that the complex arrangements which embodied it, unlike other territorial apportionments on a large scale, have called for no subsequent modification. For these results the statesmen of that generation may claim credit. Among them Lord Salisbury was the leading figure, partly on account of his personal characteristics, partly because he represented the country which enjoyed a priority of opportunity in most of the regions affected.

That priority, in its reaction upon opinion at home, constituted one of his major difficulties. In the speech in the House of Lords in which, in the summer of 1890, he defended his final settlement with Germany, he dwelt upon the special circumstances which had encouraged his fellow-countrymen to exaggerated and therefore disappointed expectations. Lord Rosebery was one of them, and had criticised him for having originally admitted Germany to a competition of empire in East Africa when the position which England had already acquired in Zanzibar entitled her to claim an exclusive domination. But Lord Salisbury reminded his audience of the significant change which had taken place during the last ten years throughout the African continent—incidentally exonerating England from the charge of having been the initiator of an aggressive Imperialism.

"Up to ten years ago we remained masters of Africa, practically, or the greater part of it, without being put to the inconvenience of protectorates or anything of that sort, by the simple fact that we were masters of the sea and that we have had considerable experience in dealing with native races. So much was that the case that we left enormous stretches of coast to the native rulers in the full confidence that they would go on under native rulers and in the hope that they would gradually acquire their own proper civilisation without any interference on our part."
“Then, suddenly, we found out that that position, however convenient, had no foundation whatever in international law. We had no rights over all these vast stretches of coast, both on the West and East coasts of Africa. We had no power of preventing any other nation from coming in and seizing a portion of them.” (July 10, 1890.)

It was no longer a case of leaving the natives to themselves. A new spirit was abroad, and other Powers—it was as true of France as it was of Germany, and to a lesser degree of Italy, Belgium, Portugal—asserted their right to have a share in directing the destinies of these masterless lands. Lord Granville first, and he himself later, had been confronted with these demands in respect of territories to which England had no legal claim, though Englishmen had come to look upon them as a field providentially set apart for the operation of their enterprise. A refusal of acquiescence would have been internationally intolerable. “It was impossible that England should have the right to lock up the whole of Africa and say that nobody should be there except herself.”

The contention so stated was unanswerable. But there was scarcely one of the parts of which that whole was composed for which there were not groups among his fellow-countrymen anxious to dispute its validity. Explorers who had taken their plunge into the unknown with the odds of previous ventures heavily against their return; officials who, single-handed, had extemporised law and order amidst conflicting mobs of black savagery; traders who had wagered El Dorado against death, and, paying with their persons, had made even balance-sheets romantic; to these and such as these, with the friends grouped behind them in each adventure of peril or hardship, England’s right to lock up that particular district of Africa appeared
patent. They were loyal in final submission—indeed surprisingly so, when all the conditions are considered—but since foreigners’ rights were to weigh against theirs when the time came for the diplomatic delimitation of frontiers, they not unnaturally felt that it was up to them to minimise beforehand as far as possible the actuality of those rights. They rushed competitive advances into all unappropriated territory, and their fellows of other nationalities did the same. The bewildered native chieftains complaisantly pledged contradictory loyalties and granted overlapping concessions, while the unlucky “armchair” politicians, in the far-off capitals of Europe, were left to solve as best they could the resultant problems of title. The “scramble” for Africa which had begun in the early eighties attained during these last years a multiple momentum.

Lord Salisbury was not unsympathetic to the spirit of this advance. His habitual dislike to the forcible imposition of superior standards could not maintain itself in the presence of the cruelty and degradation which permeated indigenous Africa, and he shared to the full in his fellow-countrymen’s belief in the special vocation of Englishmen for the regeneration of uncivilised humanity. But in the specific action to be taken in fulfilment of that vocation differences arose which marred his popularity with the Anglo-African world. He was authoritative in insisting that he must be the sole judge as to the priority to be given to alternative objects in the interests of the whole, and men’s hearts on the spot grew sore when the fruit of their labours was threatened for some purpose too wide or too remote for them to visualise. Then, he combined with his patriotic faith an imaginative appreciation of the foreigners’ point of view, and his will to meet it wherever possible was
inevitably repellent to the single-minded nationalism of the local venturers. In the speech which has already been quoted from, he referred to the hesitations through which he had passed before deciding to take imperial control of their activities. The immediate reference was to the negotiations with Germany, but the description would have applied also, with qualifications, to those with France on the West African frontiers.

"I will say that, during these negotiations, it occurred to me more than once that it might be wiser to break them off altogether and to allow the years to pass over us until the natural progress of civilisation and the struggle for existence should have determined, in a far more effective way than can be done by protocols and treaties, who are to be supreme, and in what parts of that vast continent each nation is to rule. But, on reflection, we could not convince ourselves that that, though for the most part comfortable course, would be our duty; because, in front of this advancing tide of colonisation, there are numbers of men of both nationalities,—men of energy and strong will, but not distinguished by any great restraint over their feelings,—who would be urging in every part where rivalry existed and the two Powers touched, the claims of each nation to supremacy in each particular piece of territory; . . . trying to establish by means which must constantly degenerate into violence, the supremacy of that nation for which they were passionately contending."

The echo of the collisions which must follow would be magnified in the press of both countries until the Governments themselves might be unable to resist the contagion of feeling: "I fear that if the existing state of things had gone on, harmony between the two countries might not have been long maintained" (July 10, 1890).

In an earlier Cabinet memorandum, he had con-
fessed to his colleagues to the same temptation and had admitted the added lure of a conviction that, if the Government were to stand aside and leave individual forces to operate, the British would, within a very few years, become masters of all the territories in dispute because "the number of their adventurers" was far larger than that of their rivals. His resistance to this temptation, his resolve to keep control over these many cross-currents of excited cosmopolitan ambition, constitutes the theme of the present record. It transmuted a confusion of independent movement into an expansion of Empire more rapid and far-reaching than by his own choice he would ever have initiated, but, in all probability, it saved the colonising Powers of Europe—and others by their contagion—from the catastrophe of a general war.

One quarter of Africa can be dismissed at the outset from the complex history. On the more southerly part of its western coast, the delimitation of white sovereignty was already an accomplished fact when Lord Salisbury took office. In 1883–84, the German annexation of Angra Pequena had raised violent protests from Cape Colony, which, as the district was wholly unoccupied at the time, could rest only upon that tacit claim to universal African dominion to which Lord Salisbury demurred in the speech quoted. "A Monroe doctrine for Africa!" exclaimed Prince Bismarck in angry denial, and Lord Granville had had to retreat with some loss of face from the indefensible position into which he had been thrust by his colleague at the Colonial Office. Germany had entrenched the position thus successfully asserted by proclaiming a protectorate over the whole coast—outside of England's actual settlement in Walfisch Bay—up to the frontier of Portugal's centuries-old colony of Angola.
North of that came the widespread delta of the Congo mouths, whose estuaries had been sprinkled with small trading posts of many nationalities, which were repeated on the coast of the Cameroons beyond, in that re-entrant corner of Africa which lies between the watersheds of the Congo and the Niger. In 1879, King Leopold of the Belgians had launched a privately financed expedition through the jungles of the Congo valley, under the leadership of Mr. Henry Stanley, the latest and most famous of British explorers. Lieutenant de Brazza had simultaneously engaged upon a similar adventure in the same region to the glory of France, and, by 1882, the Congo Free State and the French Congo had emerged as recognised political entities, though as yet with no trade and with nebulous frontiers.

This rapid development of Belgian and French enterprise, simultaneously with a German advance in the Cameroons, and the consequent breathless race of zealous consuls of many nationalities to secure concessions and alliances from all unattached tribes in their neighbourhood, had entailed the summoning of a Conference at Berlin in 1885 for the purpose of sorting out the resultant national claims. The prevalence of fever and of impenetrable jungle in those regions, and the absence of mineral incitements, made accommodation comparatively easy. There was an agreed rounding off of frontiers, in which England disinterested herself finally from the locality by exchanging her settlements in the Cameroons against those which a German Company had interposed in the midst of her developing colonies on the Niger. Thus, in the period from 1885 to 1890 with which we are concerned, the West Coast south of that river had become of little interest to diplomacy. The destinies of the vast regions in the centre and east of the con-
tinent, with those in its western "bulge" north of the Niger mouths, proved sufficient, however, to claim from it an activity which, in the last two years of the time spoken of, became one of absorbing demand.

This was in part due to the emergence in the interval of the British Chartered Companies—a unique revival of earlier methods in commercial and political expansion. There were three of them—all of which received their Charters within the space of three years. The idea appears to have originated with Sir George Goldie, the founder and administrator of the Niger Company and one of the two or three men whose forceful personalities determined African history in that generation. After some years' negotiation with Government, he obtained a Charter for the "Royal Niger Company" from Mr. Gladstone's ministry during its brief return to power in the summer of 1886. The East African Charter followed in April '88, and the South African one—under Mr. Cecil Rhodes' impulsion—in October '89. The conditions on which these Charters were granted differed in material particulars from those of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Companies duly received monopolist rights in trade and administration in the districts allocated to them, but with the obligation imposed to promote a civilising as well as a commercial development: their fiscal powers were limited: the Imperial Government reserved rights of supervision over their native policy and practice, an exclusive control over their external relations, and the right to withdraw the Charters if the objects for which they had been granted were not achieved to its satisfaction. With the doubtful exception of the Niger Company, the experiment was financially a failure. "Our shareholders have to take out their dividends in philanthropy," was the rueful admission of Sir...
William Mackinnon, the chairman and first administrator of the East African Company. With an added inspiration of Empire building, the same confession might have been made by the South African promoters. That it should have been possible, nevertheless, to raise funds from private investors for all three ventures within such a short space of time was characteristic of the degree to which Africa had possessed the public imagination and the contradictory types of motive to which it appealed.

The high popular estimate of Great Britain's special claim to supremacy in East Africa, nurtured in the first instance by the achievements of her explorers and reinforced by Mr. Rhodes' enthusiasm, had, in fact, no foundation in any original pre-eminence there. Her established influence in the island capital of the old Zanzibar Empire had lost importance with the dwindling of that Empire's authority on the mainland. Except among the Arab population on the coast, this had practically disappeared. In 1885 German traders had secured the larger half of commerce in the island itself and, on the mainland, had been decisively beforehand with their British rivals both in point of time and of the extent of territory covered. Their superiority had been recognised in those agreements of October 1886, to which Lord Rosebery demurred in the House of Lords. There were two of those agreements, drawn up by an International Commission which had been appointed during Lord Salisbury's Ministry of 1885. Under the first, the Sultan of Zanzibar consented to renounce his claims to illimitable empire on the mainland in return for an international recognition of his sovereignty over the strip of coastline, some 600 miles in length and

1 Originating mainly in her despotic interferences with the Slave Trade. See Chapter VIII. in Vol. III. of this book.
averaging 10 in width, where settled Arab occupation gave it actual existence. Under the other, the "spheres of interest" assigned to the British and German East African Companies in the interior were delimitated. This phrase—or the alternative "spheres of influence"—which became all-pervading in African negotiations, was convenient as establishing an option in possession as against other civilised Powers, without the necessity of immediate occupation. Thus, in this case, the two Companies became entitled, without competition from each other, to make treaties with or obtain concessions from native chiefs in the still unsurveyed territory on either side of the dividing line. In drawing it, operations already engaged were the determining consideration with the Commissioners, and the Germans, therefore, obtained a basic frontier upon the Arab coast nearly three times as long as that of the British. The division between them in its prolongation inland was admittedly provisional. The territory lying round and beyond the great lakes was, at that date, unmapped, but half explored, and as yet untouched by trading pioneers.

The process of more or less peaceful penetration thus prepared for was interrupted by an unexpected interlude of disorder which had the unfortunate effect of embittering the relations between the British and Germans on the spot. The Zanzibar Sultan—like other oriental princes before and since—was in acute need of funds for the maintenance of his harem luxuries. He at once proceeded to secure cash value for the legalised title for which he had exchanged his larger and less tangible claims. In May 1887, he granted, for a substantial rent, a lease to the British East African Company of that northern portion of his coastal strip which bordered their "sphere of interest." He was longer in coming to terms with their neigh-
bours, but in April 1888 he made a similar arrange-
ment with the German Company as regarded the
longer southern portion. The leases carried with them
full powers of administration.

The heads of the British Company, though without
previous training in the art of government, had dis-
played the national facility in establishing peaceful
control over the stormy Moslem Arabs of the coast.
Their German colleagues were not so successful. The
Sultan's authority was formally transferred to them in
August '88; a revolt followed almost immediately,
provoked, so their critics declared, by an abnormal
display of incompetence on their part, and by the end
of the first week in September they had been driven by
the infuriated Arabs out of every coastal station in the
territory assigned to them except Dar-es-Salaam and
Bagamayo. There was instant fear of the disorder
spreading to British territory; all trading operations
were suspended; European lives were endangered
and, before the winter was over, several, both among
Germans and British, had been sacrificed. English-
men on the spot and at home were loud-voiced in
denunciation of the Teutonic marplots.

Lord Salisbury's first anxiety was lest Prince
Bismarck should wreak his indignation upon the Arab
capital of England's ally.

To Sir Edward Malet, September 18, 1888.

"I hope we shall not have trouble about Zanzibar.
We will do all we can to make the Sultan give what
help is in his power, but his power is not great. This
weakness must not be made a pretext for attacking the
island of Zanzibar. If there is any indication of such
an intention, protest energetically.

"We have left Prince Bismarck free hand in Samoa
(and a pretty mess he has made of it!), but we can not
do so in Zanzibar. The English and Indian interests are both too strong.”

There was danger also from Italian militancy. Italy had engaged in a quarrel with the Sultan over the lease of Kismayu on the Jubaland coast. She claimed a grant of it from his predecessor which he showed a disposition to repudiate, and only Lord Salisbury’s intervention had prevented her that summer from carrying out a threat to bombard his capital. On September 26 a warning note was sent to Lord George Hamilton at the Admiralty: “I am sorry to be keeping your fleet at Zanzibar—but you see I was not wrong in thinking that there was going to be trouble; and I do not like to let the ships go until Crispi has definitely abandoned his intention of bombarding Zanzibar. As soon as they are free, I want them to make a promenade in the Persian Gulf to see what the Turks are at at Fao.”

Count Hatzfeldt, whilst attempting no defence of his blundering compatriots, appealed to Lord Salisbury in this moment of crisis for moral support against the common enemy. He suggested that white solidarity should be publicly witnessed to by a combined and intensive naval blockade in Zanzibar waters against the Slave Trade and the importation of arms. Solidarity with the Germans was the last thing which British opinion was anxious to witness to at that moment. But Lord Salisbury’s judgment of his allies’ mentality—perhaps also the recollection of a not dissimilar crisis in Egypt, seven years before, and the penalty which France had then paid for passivity—were decisive against standing aside. The Cabinet were scattered, and he communicated the proposal to Mr. Goschen with the diffident comment: “I do not like to assent to so important a proposal as this without some authority besides my own” (October 9). But
he expressed in the same note his certainty of its being the "right thing to do," and when Mr. Goschen's opinion proved unfavourable, persisted as regarded its principal and least popular feature. He explained his reasons—which were of necessity not those with which he argued the defence of his action in public.

*To Mr. Goschen, October 14, 1888.*

"It keeps our ships by the side of the German ships during the whole of the operation and therefore enforces upon them such moderation as suits our ideas. No doubt, by allowing them to act alone, we may avoid a possible confusion in the Arab mind which would involve us in a portion of their discredit. But this is a small matter compared to the importance of preventing the Germans from suddenly turning on to the Sultan in the Island of Zanzibar itself, and effacing him altogether. . . . I have done all I can to recommend patience and slowness of movement and allowance of time for the ebullition to subside. I think Hatzfeldt is quite sensible of all the brutalities and follies of which his countrymen have been guilty: whether he can infuse this view into the Chancellor I do not know. He urges very strongly that we should enter an appearance in whatever is done for the purpose of preventing his people from doing anything hasty or rash: 'Et puis,' as he says, 'il y a l'ami Crispi.' We shall also prevent any Italian adventures. The great anxiety with respect to Zanzibar is that both Germany and Italy, if they do not get any outrageous demand gratified, are always hinting that they will bombard Zanzibar. You speak severely of Bismarck's action,—he is an angel of light compared to Crispi. . . . In cynical and arrogant injustice it is impossible to surpass Crispi's policy towards Zanzibar. We have only prevented him exacting what he pleased from the Sultan, by keeping the squadron at Zanzibar and intimating pretty plainly that force would be repelled by force."
On the 29th the agreement with Germany was signed. He defended it to the Queen on the same grounds that he had urged it on Mr. Goschen.

"It would be possible, of course, to stand aside and allow Germany and Italy to act alone. But in that case they would act without a check and would probably, before they had finished, turn their arms against the Sultan in the island of Zanzibar." (October 29, 1888.)

Throughout the whole of the following winter the Arab insurrection continued until the German Government had completed its arrangements for taking the administration of its colony out of the hands of the impossible company-directors. Lord Salisbury's policy of collaboration was profoundly unpopular in his own country. There was widespread fear that the Arabs, ceasing to distinguish between the two nations, might vent their anger upon British mission posts, isolated in the interior. The Queen was much moved on this score, and Sir John Kennaway, a supporter of the Universities' Mission, wrote among others to urge this danger upon the Prime Minister. Colonel Euan Smith, the British Consul-General in Zanzibar, had telegraphed to advise the immediate withdrawal of the Mission—advice which was not followed.

To Sir John Kennaway, November 4, 1888.

"I felt bound to transmit to the Universities' Mission the recommendation telegraphed with regard to them by Colonel Euan Smith. But I do not myself believe in the danger,—that is to say, I do not believe that our acting with the Germans will create any danger, over and above that which would be created by the Germans acting alone. As far as regards the inhabitants, it will in no way change our action and attitude. We have always prevented, so far as we

1 Letters of Queen Victoria, 3rd series, vol. i. p. 444.
could, the exportation of slaves, and we shall continue to do so. I do not in the least believe that our doing so in concert with the Germans will affect the safety of a single missionary, whose safety would not be affected by the Germans acting alone."

In the following spring, Major Wissmann, an officer of the German Imperial army, arrived on the coast with a body of disciplined troops and powers to supersede the Company's directors. He had had experience in dealing with half-civilised Moslems, and, accompanying military suppression with discreet civil compliances, succeeded after some months in establishing peace. German authority was kept thenceforward in Government hands and its enforcement gave no further cause for complaint on the coast.

But the Company's administrative fiasco and the scornful candour with which it was commented on by their British rivals had appreciably increased the friction between them. Competition, instead of a circumstance of trade, became a patriotic provocation, and was pursued with passionate zeal: that status quo, beloved of prudent statesmen, vanished in a continuous shifting of landmarks. Already in '87, within a year of the delimitation settlement, the two Governments had tried to get in front of events by agreeing to "discourage annexations in the rear of their respective spheres of interest." The Germans would have liked a restrictive pledge of more absolute quality. Their priority in commercial enterprise had secured them the lion's share in the original partition, but its future development was threatened on every side by a diversity of British activities. Before Major Wissmann had completed his pacification, the pioneers of the East African Company, making their way across the Kenya plateau, had reached the northern shores of Lake Victoria and were seeking alliances in the
kingdom of Uganda on its western coasts, whose frontier merged southwards into the hinterland of the German sphere. The same hinterland was being simultaneously challenged from another direction. Mr. Stanley had started two years before from the Atlantic seaboard on his famous march across Africa for the discovery and rescue of Emin Pasha—an Austrian official of the Egyptian Government’s, whom the dervish outbreak had left derelict in the Equatorial Soudan. Though actually financed by private subscription, the expedition was generally credited with being a precursor of British dominion. Accompanied by a large body of armed blacks, Mr. Stanley had pushed his way through unexplored jungles—with some tribes making treaties of friendship as he passed; from others, exacting penalties for enmity; inspiring respect for the British name and sometimes, it is to be feared, instilling terror of it. Lost to all civilised knowledge for long tracts of months, he emerged finally from his great adventure towards the close of 1888, and his heralded approach towards the western shores of Victoria and Tanganyika suggested to the German traders who were pressing forward between them intolerable possibilities of final exclusion from the interior.

From the south, a more distant but more solidly backed and respectably conducted advance upon their field of operations had also begun—directly sponsored in this instance by the British Prime Minister. Livingstone’s early travels north of the Zambesi had been followed by the establishment of a few sparse settlements by British missionaries and traders on the shores of Lakes Nyasa and Tanganyika, the two southernmost of the chain of great lakes. But, except for these, no organised movement either of trade or evangelisation had visited those regions until recently.
Between Germany's narrow coast colony on the Atlantic, with Angola to the north of it, and the old Portuguese possessions of Sofala and Mozambique on the Indian Ocean, the vast inland territory stretching northwards for 1000 miles from the frontiers of the Transvaal and British Bechuanaland, had remained untouched by European enterprise and largely unexplored. It was a tragic immunity. North of the Zambesi these lands had long been a favoured hunting-ground for Arab slave-raiders, while they shared with the countries to the south of it in the attacks of the Matabele Bantus, more wholesale in slaughter if less fiendish in supplementary torture than their Moslem competitors. Whole villages had been swept away—wide reaches of territory had been depopulated—and it would be hard to fix upon any spot in the habitable globe whose standards of well-being, moral and material, would not have borne favourable comparison with this sanctuary of black independence.

But, in any case, the era of detachment had passed by. The wind that was blowing across Africa from outside had not left it unvisited. On its southern and eastern borders, trading companies of more than one nationality were on the alert for concessions; individual adventurers—British, Boer, German, Portuguese—were seeking to establish ownership by actual possession; tribal chiefs, whether for advantage or defence, were looking to the protection of civilised Governments and notably to that of "the great white Queen beyond the seas." Both Germany and Portugal were casting tentative glances at the openings offered for new sovereignty. The Germans in "South-West" having, unfortunately for themselves, taken foothold on a coast walled in by the Kalahari Desert, had fixed their hopes upon the unsurveyed territory north of the Kalahari, round Lake Ngami,
to provide them with an outlet to the interior on the Zambesi. In '88, Lord Salisbury was preparing to negotiate "spheres of interest" with them in that direction and also to discuss the demands which Portugal was already tabling inclusively across the continent from Sofala and Mozambique on the strength of mediæval title-deeds. He put his Colonial Secretary into touch with these purposes—with a concluding glance across the globe at the politics of the Pacific Ocean—in a letter which, for comprehensive brevity, might serve as a model for interdepartmental communications. The newspapers had announced that the Colonial Office was about to hand Bechuanaland over to the Cape Government.

To Lord Knutsford,¹ October 12, 1888.

"I was very glad to receive your letter about Bechuanaland. I was getting quite frightened at the positive assurances in the newspapers.

"We are thinking of trying to negotiate with Portugal. My hopes about the Zambesi are breaking down. It is of no use declaring a river to be a highway of nations when there is only one fathom of water in it—and not always that. Have you any strong feelings about the Sofala boundary? or Lake Ngami—on which Bismarck is casting the eyes of desire? . . .

"I hope you have not annexed the Savage Islands. They will generate some very savage mainland in the neighbourhood of Berlin. They are clearly in the German 'sphere of influence.'"

But within the limits of any arguable claims on the part of either of these European competitors a large opportunity remained for his own nationals. In the summer of '88, following upon some frontier disputes with the Boers, a treaty had been concluded between

¹ Sir Henry Holland had taken a peerage at the beginning of this year with the title of Viscount Knutsford.
the British High Commissioner at the Cape, and Lobengula, the chief of the Matabele. The latter, who asserted rights of dominion over all the territories lying between the frontiers of the Transvaal and the Zambesi river, engaged to recognise no other foreign influence than that of Great Britain. Simultaneously, Mr. Cecil Rhodes, the as yet unofficial representative of the De Beers Diamond Company, had obtained from the same chieftain an exclusive concession for gold prospecting in Mashonaland. Meanwhile Lord Salisbury was revolving wider projects both for Matabele-land and for the region north of the great river. Reversing the procedure adopted on the Niger and in East Africa, he wished to make Imperial control precedent to commercial advance. In his *History of the British Empire in Africa*, Sir Harry Johnston — whom Lord Salisbury selected in this same summer of '88 as his agent in Nyasaland—says that, at this date, "he was seeking for some means of bringing all South Central Africa, not actually claimed by Germany or Portugal, under British sway, from Lake Nyasa to the Limpopo; he was hindered in his projects by the obstinate dislike of the late Lord Goschen and the British Treasury to any further adventures in Africa which would increase the responsibility and the yearly expenditure of Great Britain."  

Since no document-

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1 1858–1927. Consul-General to Portuguese East Africa, 1889; High Commissioner of Nyasaland Protectorate, 1890–96; Consul-General in Tunis, 1897–99; Special Commissioner in Uganda, 1899–1901. Lord Salisbury was responsible for these appointments and had a great confidence in Sir Harry’s intuitive capacity for the management of natives.

2 Page 122. As we have not got Lord Salisbury’s own words, it would be rash to assume that, except as a matter of colloquial brevity, he charged the “obstinate dislike” on Mr. Goschen personally. The Treasury’s normal attitude was backed at this time by a House of Commons whose Liberal majority, though divided on Irish policy, was inspired by frugal traditions where Imperial expenditure was concerned. Mr. Goschen’s own sympathies, apart from his departmental position, appear to have always favoured “large” policies and Imperial aims.
ary evidence is quoted for this statement, one must assume Sir Harry to have received it from Lord Salisbury's own lips, and the occasion can be identified through a more reserved reference to it which appears in one of his earlier books. In this \(^1\) he speaks of a conversation which he had with the Prime Minister at Hatfield at the time of his own selection for Nyasaland, in which Lord Salisbury "developed his views about Zambesi," and he adds that it was from this conversation that he "dated to a great extent his own conception of the policy to be pursued," which appears to have been, from further remarks, one of active Imperial advance. The indiscreet candour with which Lord Salisbury confided even his ineffectual wishes to his chosen representative would be entirely characteristic of his methods when initiating a trusted subordinate into his policy.\(^2\)

Sir Harry became in due course his chief agent in the foundation of the Nyasaland Protectorate, but that Protectorate only included territories immediately surrounding Lake Nyasa and the settlements already established there. For the rest of South Central Africa the objections of the Treasury prevailed and the less expensive precedents of Nigeria and East Africa were followed. The British South African Company was formed this year under Mr. Rhodes' auspices and engaged to pay all administrative expenses in the territories handed over to it during the

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\(^1\) British Central Africa, 1897, p. 80.

\(^2\) Had this project—which was also advocated by Sir Henry Loch, High Commissioner at the Cape—materialised, both of the Rhodesias would have been included in an Imperial Protectorate which, during Lord Salisbury's life, would no doubt have been kept, as were those of East Africa and Nyasaland, under his own direct control from the Foreign Office. It is interesting to speculate as to what might have been the results on South African history in view of the linked connection between the Chartered Company's victorious conflict with the Matabele, the alarm aroused among the Boers by Mr. Rhodes' ensuing dominance, and the South African War.
period of unremunerative development. During the early months of '89, the terms of its charter were being discussed between Mr. Rhodes and the Prime Minister, and in June Lord Salisbury wrote to Sir Edward Malet:

"I am afraid that the new Company which is to carry civilisation into the midst of Africa will Startle people a little at Berlin. I have, however, strongly recommended them in the first instance to confine their proposed region of operations to the south of the Zambesi." (June 12, 1889.)

This caution the Company found no present difficulty in complying with. Its hands were sufficiently full in forestalling Boer and Portuguese pioneers in actual occupation of the concessions granted to it by Lobengula in Mashonaland. The only protest made by Count Hatzfeldt was in connection with the district around Lake Ngami, on the western borders of the Company's destined field of operations. He feared that the Directors might refuse to honour Lord Salisbury's promise of a negotiated delimitation there, and in August he asked to have the publication of the Charter postponed till Berlin had been consulted. The British Minister refused with prompt though polite decision, consoling the ambassador with the assurance that he had kept foreign relations in his own hands and that the Company would have no option but to do as he directed.

Meanwhile, he and Mr. Rhodes were not the only Englishmen in whom purposeful imaginations were being stirred by the contemplation of those desolated and still unappropriated regions north of the Zambesi. The scattered half-dozen of pioneer settlements, missionary and trading, which were already there called loudly for emulation; there were rumours
of mineral wealth for the future; traditions of sentiment in the past and present; Livingstone's journeys—the Stevenson road—appeals to all descriptions and degrees of inspiration. All through the summer and autumn of 1889, British adventurers were skirmishing outwards from Nyasaland and Matabeleland, as well as others from the north round Kenya, staking out titles to possession south and west of the German occupation. They were competed with, though but poorly, by Emin Pasha, who had taken service under Germany mainly as a protest against his forcible "rescue" to an undesired civilisation. It was a race for vantage-ground whose prospective issue made daily more apparent to the Foreign Secretary, as he pointed out to his colleagues the following summer, the risk of a British victory of adventure over the Germans too complete for the continuance of friendly relations.

This rivalry of national ambitions was embittered by a mutual antagonism of colonising tradition which, in the interests of peace, called even more insistently for the segregation of British and German activities. In the spring of '89, Colonel Euan Smith, the Consul-General at Zanzibar, had a breakdown of health, and Mr. Gerald Portal was seconded from Sir Evelyn Baring's staff at Cairo to take his place for six months.

1 Made at his own cost by Mr. James Stevenson [of Haillie, Largs, Ayrshire, 1822-1903], to connect the isolated mission stations on Lakes Nyasa and Tanganyika. He spent £150,000 upon it. A keen Scottish Free Churchman, he undertook this expenditure solely with the object of assisting in the rescue of those districts—which he had never seen and had no business connection with—from heathenism and slavery. It is a notable instance of the altruistic enthusiasms which were continually to be found cutting across more sordid inspirations in the great "scramble." Mr. Stevenson was, through his mother, a near cousin of Prebendary Carlile, the founder of the Church Army, and of Sir Hildred Carlile, for many years Member of Parliament for Mid-Herts.

He was a man of brilliant ability, whose early death a few years later was held to have cut short the most promising career in the diplomatic service. But he was only thirty years old, and, this being his first independent mission, his chief sent him a few words of preparatory warning as to his relations both with the Sultan and with his German allies.

*To Mr. Gerald Portal, April 4, 1889.*

"The task you have kindly undertaken in Zanzibar will not be an easy one. You have to govern an imbecile Sultan, and make him like the operation, whilst encouragements to revolt against you, more or less open, are being held out by both Germans and Arabs. It is a task that has been admirably performed by Colonel Euan Smith, but it requires vigilance and a scrupulous abstention from heroic or summary methods of action. One or two pitfalls which seem to be visible from my point of view, I may try to indicate, but I do it rather to call your attention to the matter than with any idea of asking you to take my opinion against any which a deliberate survey of the circumstances on the spot may induce you to form."

The Sultan, Seyyid Khalifa, who had only recently come to the throne, was a wretched specimen of oriental decadence who drank himself to death two years later. It would be quite easy, Lord Salisbury said, for the Consul-General to upset him, but the temptation must be resisted at all hazards: "There is nothing for it but an extra dose of patience and virtue, which, I am conscious, it is easier to preach in this foggy climate than to practise under the sun of Zanzibar."

As to the Germans, he would find their national characteristics displayed in "a very unamiable
light,”¹ but here also he must strive for tolerance and maintain all external manifestations of friendliness. Above all, he must keep clear of any situation which could lend colour to the idea that he was working the Sultan or the French Consul against them: “They are intensely suspicious and their favourite delusion is that their misadventures are due to the incurable prejudice against them entertained by British Consular Officers.”

In his farewell letter at the close of the mission, after expressing his appreciation of the way in which the young official had grappled with its difficulties, the Minister concluded, sympathetically: “The whole question of Zanzibar is both difficult and dangerous, for we are perforce partners with the Germans whose political morality diverges considerably from ours on many points” (November 25, 1889).

But circumstances were not yet propitious for effecting a dissolution of partnership. In both countries home opinion had become increasingly intolerant. Germans still led the way in trading efficiency, and had convinced themselves, and were assuring the Zanzibar Arabs, that commercial pre-eminence would entail political supremacy and must make them at an early date the heirs of British authority in the island. The Bismarcks were being bitterly attacked in their own press for their subservience to England and failure to materialise these ambitions. On the other hand, the exasperation induced in England that winter by Lord Salisbury’s cautious restraint in dealing with Portuguese provocation ² did not encourage further

¹ It is interesting to note that, two years later, when Count Caprivi, the then Chancellor, was defending in the Reichstag his consent to withdraw from the island in England’s favour, one of the pleas that he urged was that “the German element in Zanzibar has been increased, for the most part, by very doubtful acquisitions” (February 5, 1891).
² See the next chapter.
experiments upon British altruism, and, unfortunately, the prevailing view among Englishmen was that rivalry in any part of the eastern half of Africa was in itself an infringement of their inherent rights. This thesis was not maintained in so many words, but it was of the essence of Mr. Rhodes’ proclaimed ideals; it is the basic assumption on which most of the contemporary British records and comments proceed; it was implicit in the criticisms which even Lord Rosebery, the Liberal leader, passed upon Lord Salisbury’s policy. It had received new strength from Germany’s failure with the coastal Arabs, which was held to have demonstrated finally the futility of her attempts to bend England’s bow of native dominion. When Count Hatzfeldt in the late autumn pressed for a general settlement of competing claims between the two countries Lord Salisbury hung back. The ambassador’s reports present him as nervous of his jingo opposition; as doubtful as to whether such a reasonable arrangement as he himself might approve of was possible under actual conditions; and Count Hatzfeldt, judging from his own observation of the state of feeling in London, agreed with him. On December 22, 1889, Lord Salisbury suggested arbitration as a way out of the difficulty. Aggrieved Chartered Companies and their supporters at home might more patiently submit to sacrifices if decreed by a neutral arbitrator than if required from them on the sole authority of their own Government. But the proposal was not pressed at the moment. Conditions, Lord Salisbury said, were complicated and difficult, and time had better be taken for riper consideration. The internal politics of Germany soon became on their side imperative of delay; and for some months the two Governments, while alternately urging on one another

the need for a comprehensive settlement, were, in fact, content with warding off each cause of offence as it arose.

The west coast of Africa supplied its quota to the labours of the British Foreign Office at this period, but under conditions very different to those which prevailed in the east. With one exception, the sensational white advances there were all made by France and, in the view of Lord Salisbury's critics, largely at the expense of Great Britain.

The European settlements on what used to be known as the Guinea Coast, could already boast an established antiquity, the unsavouriness of whose beginnings had been atoned for by subsequent generations of individual sacrifice in health and life. Some two centuries before, representatives of every white nation owning maritime opportunity—Englishmen and Frenchmen, Portuguese and Spaniards, Germans from Hamburg, Dutchmen and Danes—had sprinkled this seaboard with trading posts whose prosperity depended on the growing demand for slaves in the colonies of North and South America. Englishmen had been foremost in this traffic. Throughout the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century the merchant princes of Liverpool and Bristol had equipped fleets for its conveyance. With rare exceptions the British public, with varying degrees of warmth according to the amount of personal interest involved, had approved of it as an entirely commendable form of commerce. Then, in the course of a single generation, through a uniquely rapid revolution in standards of public ethics, England became the world leader in a crusade for its suppression.
This crusade exacted sacrifices of ease from her nationals even more than of money. Traders, who had earned their profits in effortless bargaining over "head-money" with Moslem or pagan purveyors who required no begging to bring their human merchandise on shipboard, were now called upon to pursue an arduous search after gold, grain, palm-oil, or what not through malaria-infested countries and against the antagonism of native chiefs, fiercely resentful of the war declared upon their most cherished institution. The sacrifice was too heavy for universal acceptance, and the Government of the day was soon called upon to assert sovereignty over the trading companies. Fortunately for England and for Africa, it did not hesitate, though it showed no enthusiasm for the task. Seventy years later the terrible revelation of Congo cruelties witnessed sufficiently to the danger of shirking empire where trade has already connected unequal civilisations.

The trading posts thus annexed by the State were grouped into administrative units and formed a string of small colonies. They were at this period unproductive and unhealthy, separated from one another by stretches of coast in which were scattered competing foreign ventures, evolving also, though more languidly, into national possessions. Mid-Victorian statesmen regarded them frankly as an intolerable burden, and, in 1865, the House of Commons adopted a resolution proclaiming, as a policy generally agreed upon, that they should be abandoned as soon as considerations of humanity would allow. Civil servants, labouring in their fever-ridden exile for the fulfilment of their country’s responsibilities, resented this depreciatory attitude, and, unhampered as yet by electric cables, protested now and again against the Little Englandism of Downing Street by them-
selves embarking upon unauthorised annexations. The tradition so established, surviving into later years when neutral margins had shrunk with the automatic enlargement of European settlements, led to disturbing incidents which profoundly irritated Lord Salisbury’s sense of discipline. Lord St. Aldwyn has left on record the impression made on him as a young Colonial Secretary in 1879 by the “extreme anger” of his colleague at the Foreign Office on one such occasion. The French had secured concessions from the King of Dahomey in a district to which a neighbouring British Governor thought his own country morally entitled. Without attempting to ask for permission from London, he retorted by running up the Union Jack in territory claimed by France. In the letter in which Lord Salisbury prepared Lord Lyons for the foreseen diplomatic difficulty, his anger still reveals itself behind the habitual veil of mockery.—“Governor R. has had no better occupation for his spare time than to annex some place with an unrememberable name, near Dahomey on the Lagoon. Really, these pro-consuls are insupportable. I believe it is a reply to the annexation on the part of the French of some other places on the coast; the object of both Powers being, in promotion of commerce, to acquire the means of blockading Dahomey by customs duties. I have implored the Colonial Office to recall Governor R.” (November 12, 1879).

The new conditions produced by the sudden efflorescence of colonial ambition among the continental Powers were nowhere more marked than on this coast, where the competition of England’s rivals had hitherto been negligible. There were flutterings of annoyance in colonial circles over the unwelcome emergence of one or two German trading posts into budding protectorates in Togoland and the Cameroons.
But the advance of France was far otherwise purposeful and effective. Since 1884, starting from her old-established colony of Senegambia, to the north of the Guinea coasts—long a neglected step-child of the mother country—she had been sending forth her explorers, traders, and administrators in a continuous flow, eastwards towards Timbuctoo and the great north bend of the upper Niger, and southwards along the rear of the British colonies of Gambia, Sierra Leone, and the Gold Coast. The pioneers of this southerly advance had linked up as they went with the scattered French settlements interspersed on the seaboard between the British possessions, which thus saw themselves, with their immediate hinterlands, in process of being separately hedged round between the sea and a continuous stretch of French occupied territory. A series of new frontiers resulted, where rival claims to "influence" in unappropriated margins merged hazily into one another and offered peculiar danger in the exasperated opposition of Anglo-French sentiment at the time.

In its ultimate tendency this development was not unwelcome to the British Foreign Secretary. The advance up the Nile which he was already contemplating was, unlike most of the other expansions of Empire in which he was called to acquiesce at this time, a purpose to be consciously prepared for. Its reactions upon his policy towards France have already been referred to, and they were nowhere more directly operative than in connection with this north-west corner of Africa. The association of her new-born colonial enthusiasm with projects of empire in those regions presented the most tangible hope of detaching her from her Egyptian dream. In spite of his fellow-countrymen's discontent, he offered no objection to her rapid absorption of their "hinterland," and, a year later, was giving it direct encouragement.
Still, "incidents" had become uncomfortably frequent. British officials charged French ones with attacking native chiefs with whom they had concluded alliances; Frenchmen retorted by accusing Englishmen of hoisting Union Jacks within sight of French cantonments. One mail brought news that French raiders had destroyed villages that were—or were not—with British jurisdiction; another—through Paris—that Englishmen had supported an Arab chief in the arrest of a French officer who had erected a customs house within one of the innumerable stretches of debateable land. Left to its own powers of adjustment, local patriotism must evidently soon founder in some irreparable breach. In February '89, Lord Lytton reported privately that the advent of a conciliatory Minister to the Paris Colonial Office had created an atmosphere propitious for negotiation and the opportunity was taken. A joint commission of delimitation was appointed by the two Governments and did its work rapidly. A number of arrangements embodying its conclusions were signed in London and Paris this August, which established on a permanent basis the limits for French and English opportunity and, with minor modifications, still form the frontier titles of the three British colonies of Gambia, Sierra Leone, and the Gold Coast.

The most recent and important of British undertakings in West Africa did not, however, come into this scheme of delimitation. Since the Royal Niger Company had obtained its charter three years before, its agents had been pushing northwards through the fever-stricken, jungle-covered country on the banks of the lower Niger and were now negotiating protective alliances with the string of Hausa Sultanates, occupying the high pasturelands beyond, along the southern borders of the great Sahara. The French advance
had not yet approached this field of achievement, and a short stretch of boundary near the sea coast, between Lagos and French Dahomey, was the only bit of Nigerian frontier included in the August delimitations of 1889.

A storm was raised this year, both at home and abroad, against the Company's fiscal arrangements. To the probable satisfaction of its native subjects it had adopted a method of raising revenue by means of trade monopolies instead of by taxes. But this was, unfortunately, a violation of its Charter engagements. Foreign competitors were outraged; their Governments took up their cause with vigour; House of Commons free-traders indignantly re-echoed their complaints and the Foreign Secretary had, with some difficulty, to enforce a return to legality.

Meanwhile he was doing what he could to refute the charge of "ignorant interference" usually brought against Downing Street supervision. He no longer complained of finding African place-names unrememberable. The maps of Central Asia or the Balkan States, which had made modest appearance in the Secretary of State's room at the Foreign Office, had been superseded by huge sheets, representative of every district in Africa, which curtained the walls in aggressive profusion and were repeated in crowded layers on those of Lord Salisbury's own study at Hatfield. Their tracings of rivers and contours were clothed with imaginative body by the reports, verbal and written, which he invited from all and sundry as to the characteristics of each district in dispute. "Africa," he informed his City audience that November, "is the subject which occupies the Foreign Office more than any other," and it was certainly true of its chief.

These maps were subject to progressive substitution; a full sequence of surveys was being taken under Government direction. In the various territorial
agreements come to at this time, the authority referred to by consent is nearly always "the map drawn for the British Foreign Office in 1889." African geography was only slowly attaining the status of an exact science. There is a naïvely worded article in the Anglo-German Convention of 1890 which notes that the inclusion in a solemn treaty, five years before, of a river—the Rio del Rey—as part of the frontier agreed upon between Nigeria and the Cameroons, was to be cancelled because "it had been proved to the satisfaction of the two Powers" that no such river existed. And the Anglo-Portuguese negotiation as to the opening up of the Zambesi had been complicated by a generally admitted ignorance, only removed in this autumn of 1889, as to the whereabouts or existence of its navigable mouths.

An important international happening at the close of '89 was healthily reminiscent of the finer aspects of the African scramble. Requests to other Powers to co-operate in the Anglo-German blockade of the Arab coast in '88, and pleas to them for impunity with regard to it, with the discussions so provoked, had made prominent the confusion which existed between the differing national commitments against the Slave Trade. This spring, Lord Salisbury invited the King of the Belgians to summon a general Conference at Brussels for the purpose of formulating an agreed code of international law on the subject. His initiative in the matter is referred to in a private letter to Lord Lytton, written on April 16. "We shall send the proposal to Belgium to summon a Slave Trade Conference at Brussels to-morrow, and as soon as we hear that they consent, we shall instruct you to support the invitation. I am sorry Münster ¹ is hurt at the

¹ Count Münster, for many years German ambassador in London, had been transferred to Paris in 1885.
Conference not being held at Berlin—but it would have too much justified the scoffs of those who say we are in Bismarck’s pocket.”

Practically every civilised Government obeyed the summons and the Conference met in November. Its consultations issued in the promulgation the following year of the famous Brussels Act which, ratified by all the participating Powers, formally enacted the outlawry of the Trade and provided a mechanism of maritime law for its suppression. Lord Salisbury in his speech at the Guildhall dwelt upon the great advance in European opinion which had been witnessed to by the wide acceptance of the invitation.

“The matter undoubtedly with respect to Africa which interests Englishmen the most is the question, how far we shall be able to suppress the Slave Trade which has so long disgraced it. Happily, the results of recent years have done more in that direction than those of many years which have gone before. I am glad to point to a Conference which will meet at Brussels in the course of the present month and which forms undoubtedly an epoch in the history of this movement, for such a Conference has never met before. . . . It marks a great advance in general European opinion upon the point; it shows that many nations are anxious to join with us, and whenever we have persuaded all nations to lay aside the various difficulties which prevent them from co-operating in the suppression of the Slave Trade, the great object we have in view will be attained.” In a further sentence, he pointed to an even wider and deeper cause for congratulation: “I do not think any Conference in the history of the world has ever before met for the purpose of promoting a matter of pure humanity and goodwill” (November 9, 1889).
CHAPTER IX

THE PARTITION OF AFRICA (2)

1889–1891

THE DISPUTE WITH PORTUGAL

Portugal offered the only exception to the rule of sustained friendliness which characterised the relations of Great Britain with European Governments during these two years of crowded African happenings. Her attitude was unique in more respects than one. The grounds upon which she rested her territorial claims were romantic; reaching back through centuries to the memories of a dead empire. The fever of African advance by which all Europe was now possessed had reacted upon these memories and aroused throughout the whole nation a demand for their re-embodiment whose passion defied all appeals to reason in actuality. The monarchy, though destined to endure for another twenty years, was already challenged; revolutionary forces were strong; the King’s Ministers were powerless to influence popular feeling and dared not resist it. It was thus with an impotent Government controlled by a half-mad democracy that Lord Salisbury, in the spring of ’89, set about the task of negotiating “spheres of interest” between the English and Portuguese colonies north and south of the Zambesi.

There was the usual chaos of claims on both sides to be dealt with—claims, actual, developing or asserted.
North of the Zambesi, round Lake Nyasa and in the Shiré highlands lying between Lake and River there were British missionary and trading posts in settled occupation; south of it, in Matabele and Mashona lands there were British posts in rapid process of establishment by the pioneer gold-seekers of the South African Company. Portugal on her side could adduce solid proof of occupation along the banks of the Zambesi for some distance inland from its mouths. Her sea-coast colonies of Mozambique and Sofala stretched for 500 miles along the borders of Matabeleland and, long before this, by the mere process of automatic self-extension, she could have established outposts of civilised order there. But her people, though they could trade, could not colonise. Even since the gold discoveries her geographical opportunity had availed her for no more than a few sporadic, individual attempts at claim-pegging which, entangled as they were with the more purposeful advance of the crowd of South Africans, served for little but to complicate the problem of delimitation.

At first starting, however, her Ministers rejected all attempts at delimitation. It was superfluous, they said; Portugal's right of sovereignty covered all the territory stretching across the continent from Mozambique to Angola. Lord Salisbury pointed out that the region now in dispute contained no trace either of her jurisdiction or of her colonisation and that British settlements were already in existence there. The Lisbon Ministers haughtily repudiated such empirical criticism; Portugal's title rested upon discovery and conquest 250 years old and could be effaced by no subsequent abandonment. It took eighteen months of persistent reasoning to shift them to a less visionary standpoint—reasoning assisted by the steady de facto advance of Mr. Rhodes' adventurers.
But during that period the two Foreign Offices addressed only a fraction of their correspondence to such academic discussion. Most of it was devoted to mitigating the immediate and very practical effects of local provocation. The Portuguese “men-on-the-spot” were neither worse nor better than their comrades of other nations. The trouble which they created may be taken as a measure of the larger disasters which were avoided by the more absolute control of Home Governments elsewhere. Already, in ’86, forcible foreign intervention had been necessary to make the Mozambique Portuguese accept the delimitation of Zanzibar boundaries decreed by the International Commission of that year. Since then, the rapid advance of British enterprise had concentrated their jealousies upon England with results which proved, during this and the following year, a testing trial to Lord Salisbury’s patience and still more to his fellow-countrymen’s toleration of it.

The missionaries on Lake Nyasa and the Lakes Trading Company incurred the wrath of Arab slave-raiders in the neighbourhood by the protection which they gave to their native friends and adherents. Their only approach to the sea lay through Mozambique territory. For the last year or two the Arabs had been continually attacking them and they had been seriously hampered in defending their settlements by the repeated refusal of the Portuguese coast officials to allow them to import arms for the purpose. Lord Salisbury as repeatedly remonstrated. It was intolerable, he wrote in January ’89, even on grounds of common humanity, that his fellow-countrymen, “beset by slave-hunters,” should be so treated. If this succession of unfriendly acts continued, the relations between the two countries would not long bear the strain. Things got a little better but the power of the
central Government in Lisbon was very limited and the officials on the spot, though yielding to every threat of force, were endlessly repetitive in offence. In May, Lord Harrowby, a supporter of the Nyasaland Missions and also an old friend and ex-colleague of Lord Salisbury’s, wrote to transmit complaints from correspondents on Lake Nyasa and to urge further diplomatic remonstrances.

_To Lord Harrowby, June 3, 1889._

"My inclination is to think that the lecture to Portugal will be more valuable later than it is now. Just now she is rather better behaved. The Portuguese authorities stopped Bishop Smythies and his companions at Tunghi, or at least forbade them to take their arms with them. We do not admit Tunghi to be Portuguese so we sent Bishop Smythies back in a ship of war—and the Portuguese gave way at once. Again, they arrested Vice-Consul Ross on the ground that he was importing arms, but the moment the matter was brought before the Home Government they quashed the proceedings at once.

So I think it may be better to wait until they become troublesome again—which will probably be by the time you come back. I do not believe the story that they allow the Arabs to import arms—we have not had a word in justification of that idea."

But pleas in mitigation of judgment became more difficult to urge as time went on. Great anger was roused in England a few weeks later by an assault of the Portuguese authorities in Lorenzo Marques upon the representatives of a British company to which they had previously granted a concession for the railway line between that port and the Transvaal frontier. They arrested the engineer and sent soldiers to tear up the rails that had been laid. Strong action was clamoured for in London and the Queen’s letters
echoed her subjects' indignation. Lord Salisbury demurred, however, to making a quarrel on this issue, telling the Queen that "there was some doubt whether Portugal had entirely broken the obligations of international law, though she had certainly strained them." But her unfriendliness was noticeable and he added, significantly, that the disposition which she was showing "to presume upon her weakness" must soon call for some sharp warning (June 29, 1889).

With the advance of autumn the unfriendliness increased. There were incidents on the Matabele frontier; isolated pioneers of both nationalities erecting flags and mutually hauling them down again. The disappointment of Portuguese speculative traders at finding themselves forestalled in the goldfields fortified the bitter sense of mortification which filled the nation as a whole at the threatened dispersal of their dreams of imperial renascence. But the culminating achievement which stirred all Portugal to exultant enthusiasm and roused corresponding fury in England was, in fact, wholly detached from the more sordid motives operating south of the Zambesi. News reached England in December that Major Serpa Pinto, an officer in the Portuguese army, and a typically irresponsible African adventurer, had marched into the Shiré highlands at the head of 700 armed Arabs; had demanded, in the teeth of Mr. Johnston's protests, the submission of the Makololo tribe which was under British protection, and had shot them down with Gatling guns when they refused.

To Lord Salisbury's irate public, calling for instant ultimatums, the preliminaries of diplomacy which ensued were exasperating. As a matter of fact, the Cabinet had for some weeks been discussing the form which the "sharp warning" should take which had been already foreseen as inevitable. In November
they had considered an occupation of Goa, but the Government of India did not approve and they had reverted to the more direct measure of a naval demonstration against Mozambique itself. The squadron already cruising in Zanzibar waters was to be reinforced by ships from the Cape. If bloodshed was to be avoided efficient punctuality was the first essential, and Lord Salisbury’s normal respect for departmental independence did not prevent a word in season to his First Lord:

_To Lord George Hamilton, December 19, 1889._

"The time of the squadron meeting at Mayotte will depend on the time required by the Cape contingent—as the Cape is the farthest off. Would it not be well to have all the necessary orders for the Cape,—coaling, etc., etc.,—got ready, so that they can be telegraphed off without delay at all if wanted? I am urgent on this matter because I know that the period between the withdrawal of our Legation from Lisbon and our occupation of Mozambique will be one of great anxiety and all kinds of things may happen.

"It is a matter of serious importance that the threat should not be separated from the blow by too long an interval."

The first demand for a withdrawal of the piratical expedition met with no satisfaction.

_To the Queen, December 23, 1889._

"Lord Salisbury with his humble duty to Your Majesty respectfully submits that, from the telegraph he has received this morning, it seems probable that the Portuguese Government will refuse to give the undertaking not to interfere with the settlements of British subjects, and the protected chiefs, which has

1 _Letters of Queen Victoria_, 3rd series, vol. i. p. 538.
been required of them. In that case, it has been agreed by the Cabinet to recommend that the island of Mozambique shall be temporarily occupied. It is probable that the Portuguese Government dare not give way on account of the strong feeling there is in Lisbon, and that they themselves would not be sorry that Great Britain should take some decided step showing her to be in earnest in the matter. The negotiations are not yet concluded, but in case they should end badly, the requisite naval force is being assembled at Zanzibar."

The Portuguese Minister again took argumentative refuge in their seventeenth-century title as exonerating Major Pinto’s action.

_Memorandum to the Queen, December 27, 1889._

"Lord Salisbury utterly rejects the archaeological arguments of the Portuguese who claim half Africa on the supposed cession to them in 1630 of the Empire of Monomotapa, of which event Lord Salisbury can find no account whatever in this country.

"Nor does he consider that the existence of ruined forts proves any claim, but rather the contrary, since it shows the power that built these forts to have abandoned them.

"Your Majesty’s Government therefore announce to all the Powers that they consider the attempt of the Portuguese to exercise dominion over the Shiré, etc., as an invasion of Your Majesty’s rights."

This memorandum is in Sir Henry Ponsonby’s handwriting, though preserved among Lord Salisbury’s letters to the Queen. Now and again he would summarise information for her benefit, derived either from Lord Salisbury himself or—as it must have been in this instance—from an efficient representative. But the subject-matter of such précis was, ordinarily,

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1 _Letters of Queen Victoria_, 3rd series, vol. i. p. 543.
quite unimportant, or of a nature too lengthy to be dealt with otherwise. His intervention on this occasion may be accounted for by the fact that it is dated on the day after that on which Lord Salisbury was struck down by the savage attack of influenza which has been referred to in a previous chapter.\(^1\) It was only two days later, on the 29th, that his doctor, Dr. Douglas Powell, warned Lady Salisbury that his condition had become gravely serious. Happily, in the Portuguese dispute, all decisions had already been taken, though they still remained to be acted on. By the end of that week the first crisis of his fever was over, and, the preparatory flourishes of diplomatic fence having been completed, the Foreign Minister, dictating telegrams from his bed, insisted upon himself directing the final challenge. "I should much prefer," remonstrated his doctor, despairingly, "to be treating a half-starved patient living in the worst slum in London than to be responsible under such conditions."

The opening message of the resolved ultimatum, sent on January 6, cleared the ground by a disclaimer of all needlessly irritating demands. Lord Salisbury repudiated any wish for apologies, or reparations, or censure upon individual agents; recognised with courteous completeness the right of a sovereign Power to deal as it thought fit with its own officers. But the forcible intrusion on territory occupied by British subjects or native tribes under British protection must be at once abandoned. An accompanying private telegram instructed Mr. Petre\(^2\) to leave Lisbon within three days if a satisfactory reply to this missive had not been received: "H.M.S. Enchantress will be

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\(^1\) See Chapter VII. p. 207.
sent to bring you away.” Senior Barros Gomez postponed distasteful decision by serenely ignoring facts. Forcible intrusion, he declared, was far from Portuguese thoughts: but until the negotiation of frontiers was concluded, he suggested that the status quo should be maintained. Present news from the scene of action illuminated the meaning that was intended to be attached to that phrase. Major Pinto’s lieutenants were continuing their march up the Shiré river; had proclaimed a Portuguese protectorate, and were establishing fortified and garrisoned posts of permanent occupation in the Makololo territory. Minor aggressions of a similar character were reported from Matabeleland. On the 10th, Lord Salisbury asked to be informed as to the precise terms of the orders which had been sent to the Mozambique Governor. Unless they included the immediate recall of the offending expedition the assurances received could not be accepted as satisfactory. Twenty-four hours were allowed for a response to this enquiry. It failed to arrive, and on the 11th an ultimatum in form followed. H.M.G. “demanded and exacted” that the recall should be ordered in a telegraphic despatch whose terms they verbally dictated.

The British warships in African waters were now assembled in the neighbourhood of Mozambique, and it was announced that the Channel squadron had left for the coast of Portugal under sealed orders. Presumably, if Lord Salisbury’s diagnosis was correct, Ministers at Lisbon had got what they wanted. They submitted, as they proclaimed, “in presence of an imminent rupture with Great Britain” and all that must ensue from it. The telegram to Mozambique, as dictated by the British Government, was sent; Major Pinto’s force withdrew from the Shiré territory and

¹ Portuguese Foreign Minister.
the fortified posts were razed; the Lisbon mob broke
the windows of the British Legation—though, since
it extended the same treatment to the houses of its
own Ministers, no diplomatic significance was attached
to the incident; the British ships returned to their
stations and the British Foreign Minister surrendered
himself to his influenza supported by the satisfied
consciousness that the sum had worked out to its
calculated solution.

A certain amount of criticism was expressed at the
time at the contrast which these methods of ultimatum
and naval pressure presented to those of careful
courtesy employed towards more powerful nations.
The criticism was cheap and the retort was obvious.
No great Power would have dared to offer to an equal
the provocation which Portugal had been continuously
indulging in against England in the course of the
past twelve months. The situation has frequently re-
curred. Since there is no shame in the surrender of
impotence, the weaker of two widely unequal nations
enters upon a dispute with the stronger, consciously
immune from ultimate catastrophe and is propor-
tionately reckless. No great harm need result if, on
the one hand, the great Power keeps its temper and
maintains justice, and, on the other, abjures vanity
and refuses to falsify realities by an exhibition of
journalistic "generosity."

The two Governments resumed diplomatic dis-
cussion of "spheres of interest" undisturbed by
further sensational interludes. In March the Portu-
guese Minister, probably anxious to escape responsi-
bility before his public, proposed to refer the questions
of title in dispute either to an international Conference
or to an arbitrator. Lord Salisbury thought both
courses impracticable and circulated a draft of his
proposed reply among his colleagues. An inter-
national Conference, he said, was appropriate only for problems in which several nations were interested. The reasons which he gave for thinking that arbitration would also be unsuitable on this occasion are interesting from the fact that he repeatedly witnessed to his belief in that method of settlement by resort to it on both large and small issues.

"In the view of Her Majesty's Government there are difficulties of a not less formidable character in the way of a reference to the decision of an arbitrator. If the question to be decided is a disputed issue of fact, reference to arbitration is not very difficult to arrange, and it is often the most expedient mode of terminating a discussion. It is easy to state the question of fact on which the difference of opinion has arisen and not difficult to find an arbitrator of sufficient capacity and impartiality to give a decision in which both parties may with confidence acquiesce. Again, if there is an admitted code, rule or system of law, the terms of which are well ascertained, and the validity of which is fully accepted by both parties, great advantage may result from seeking an arbitrator to ascertain the bearing of such a law upon the facts of the disputed case.

"But the discussion between Great Britain and Portugal unfortunately does not come under either of these descriptions and it is difficult to see how a Tribunal could give any judgment upon them, except one of purely arbitrary character. Portugal rests her case almost entirely upon transactions which are said to have passed two or three centuries ago. Great Britain rests her claim almost entirely upon the title that has been established by the self-sacrifice and successful exertions of British missionaries and traders within living memory. In this case the facts are not the main object in dispute, and there is no law applicable to them which both parties would be willing to accept. It would not be possible to find any accepted principle or doctrine of international juris-
prudence that would guide an arbitrator in deciding the issue that is thus raised. He would have no rule by which his decision could be framed except that of general political expediency as it might present itself to his mind. It is evident that for such a task as this an arbitrator of sufficient impartiality would be exceedingly difficult to find.” (March 20, 1890.)

After five more months of patient negotiation an agreement was reached which, though it failed to survive in its actual form, contained the gist of the final settlement. North of the Zambesi, England’s right to extend her settlements round Lake Nyasa and in the Shiré highlands, and Portugal’s claim to push her trade over the country to the west of these, round her ancient capital of Tete, were mutually recognised; a Mashonaland frontier was agreed upon south of the Zambesi, and the demand for free international navigation throughout the length of the great river was also conceded by Portugal. She had hitherto assumed restrictive rights on its lower reaches and for the past two years Lord Salisbury had been insisting in vain that in the public interest it should be given the status already accorded to the Congo and the Niger as a “highway of the nations.” The doubts which he had confided to his Colonial Secretary as to the practical value of this privilege for a river which had “only one fathom of water in it, and not always that” had been removed through the discovery of the Chinde mouths in the autumn of 1889 by an officer of the British survey.

This Convention had a very brief life. It was signed on August 20, 1890, and was killed on September 21, by the stormy refusal of the Portuguese Cortes to ratify it. The sequel was typical of the two races. The Portuguese Ministers depressingly postponed further negotiation until the excitement of their
public had calmed down. The English in Matabeleland took immediate advantage of the pause to establish claims of material possession on their opponents' side of the unratified frontier. Lisbon took fright and appealed to Lord Salisbury to legalise it in a modus vivendi until new terms were negotiated. He agreed so far as to promise that for six months no act of British sovereignty should be exercised beyond it, but declined to be responsible for its defence against the inroads of unofficial persons. "We have no power to do this," he wrote to the Queen on November 6; "we have no force in the country, and it is the business of the Portuguese to protect their own territory."¹

This they proved quite incapable of doing, even by pre-occupation, and when negotiations were resumed in earnest in the winter, a crowd of diggers, mostly of British nationality, had established themselves on the Manica plateau, a gold-bearing district which had been left to Portugal under the August Convention. The South African Company demanded, both in Africa and in London, that what had now become vested interests should be respected in the new Treaty. Lord Salisbury found himself in the thankless position of arbitrator between his own energetic nationals and their singularly inefficient competitors. Neither side showed any disposition to make his task easier. The British pioneers pursued their advances into the challenged districts with unremitting activity, even making treaties with black potentates in the Queen's name, which Lord Salisbury promptly repudiated; while the Portuguese, incompetent for colonising rivalry, revenged themselves by violent obstruction of waterways and roads of communication, over nearly all of which their possession of the sea-coast gave them control. Their friends meanwhile

¹ Letters of Queen Victoria, 3rd series, vol. i. p. 632.
introduced a new feature into the negotiation by addressing petitions to Lord Salisbury through various private channels, to save the throne of Portugal from destruction by concessions to the passions of its people—an attempt to blackmail his monarchical sympathies which irritated him extremely. He indemnified himself for his resolved patience in action by letters to his representative at Lisbon of a very opposite quality:

_To Sir George Petre, December 24, 1890._

"I write a line to reinforce my telegram of yesterday. The Portuguese are in a fool's paradise if they imagine we are going to take anything less than the Convention of August 20th. We may not require the various stipulations to be in the same proportion. We may take more territory and less communication, or more communication and less territory. But whatever is withdrawn from us in one respect must be supplied in another. . . .

"I am very much disgusted by the way in which their various agents harp upon the argument that unless we give them what they want their King will lose his throne. Their tone convinces me that this is mere 'exploitation.' They are making the most of their weakness. They should be made to feel that if they do attempt to shew their temper by upsetting their King, the only result will be the loss of their whole Colonial Empire, and their probable absorption by Spain.

"I think your language should be stiff and uncompromising, and you should point out to them that I have a public opinion as exacting and as powerful as their own; and that I shall not be allowed, even if I wished to do so, to sacrifice the rights of British Companies and close the door to British emigration in order to satisfy their susceptibilities.

"Let them shew themselves really anxious to encourage communication by river, rail and telegraph through their dominions, and we shall have something
to shew if we ask for considerate treatment on the territorial question. Otherwise they must expect much more rigorous terms in the delimitation of frontier than those of August 20th.”

High personages were drawn into support of the monarchical appeal: the Grand Duke of Baden, the Prince of Wales, the German Emperor; Her Majesty became a worried intermediary. These mediators were concerned only secondarily with the prophesied revolution in Portugal itself. Its importance in their eyes lay in its probable extension to Spain, whose emergence from chronic constitutional anarchy was scarcely yet a generation old. Her King was a child. The young Austrian widow of Alphonso XII. was carrying on the government with politicians largely corrupt and incredibly factious; with a public opinion torn into opposing fragments by the schisms of past years; faced by a growing popular discontent; herself, as a foreigner, suspected and distrusted by all parties alike. The courage and ability with which, in solitary self-dependence and inspired only by a mother’s loyalty, she maintained her struggle for order and cohesion under these disabilities, had evoked a strong sentiment of personal sympathy with her throughout Europe—a sympathy which was reinforced to reason by memories of the endless civil disorder which had hitherto been the normal sequel to political upheavals in Spain.

Lord Salisbury, though he was more sceptical than his correspondents as to the imminence of the crisis in Portugal, appears to have shared in their apprehension as to its results, and sent messages of encouragement and sympathy to the Queen-Regent through Queen Victoria, who carried on a correspondence with her. But he remained constant in his refusal to deflect his diplomacy as England’s trustee, and when
Count Hatzfeldt wrote in March to urge a plea on his master's behalf for politic complaisance, he replied in much the same fashion as he had done to Sir George Petre at Christmas, though more civilly. Whatever influence the German Court owned at Lisbon would be more serviceably directed towards inducing a reasonable discretion in conduct than in suggestions of mediation. News had just been received that a British boat had been seized by Portuguese Customs officers on its way up the Limpopo river and sent back with its passengers under arrest to Lorenzo Marques.

_to Count Hatzfeldt, March 31, 1891._

"... There are grave objections to submitting the proposals we intend to make to the preliminary approval of the German Government, or of the Triple Alliance. Such a step would be generally looked upon if it became known as involving the admission that, if our proposals should not meet with the approval of the German Government, it would be incumbent upon us to modify them, and I need not say that I am not at liberty to make any such admission.

"You may urge that, apart from any question of obligation, it is expedient for England to take steps to ascertain what terms will please the Lisbon populace, and to offer those in order to save the Monarchy. My reply is that we are quite willing to offer reasonable terms and are doing so now; but that we do not think it worth while to submit to unreasonable terms for the sake of preventing the Lisbon populace from overthrowing the Portuguese Monarchy; and we should not be sustained by English opinion in doing so. If the Monarchy is so desperately weak that a concession to our reasonable demands will overthrow it, it is not worth saving. Even if by the sacrifice of our countrymen's rights we saved it for the moment, any slight accident would speedily bring it to the ground. . . .

"If the Portuguese Government is really in the
perilous condition which you fear, it should shape its conduct with some view to its own safety. It should abstain from exasperating the South African opinion with which, as it knows perfectly well, we have constant difficulty in contending. Instead of pursuing such a pacific policy it takes every opportunity of insulting and ill-treating British subjects.

"We are now in great embarrassment because, apparently without any legal warrant whatever, they have seized one of our ships on the Mozambique coast, or rather, in one of the rivers, which was doing no wrong; and they keep her under arrest and will give us no explanation. So strong is the feeling in South Africa that I have had a telegram from the High Commissioner, Sir Henry Loch, a calm and experienced man, strongly urging us to take action with the fleet, which would amount to a declaration of war with Portugal.

"I cannot believe that the Portuguese Cabinet believe themselves to be in the danger you apprehend, or they would behave more reasonably. At least you will admit that they are making our position one of intolerable difficulty."

The balance of indiscretion hung about evenly between the contending claimants in South Africa. A few weeks later a somewhat similar incident called down the Prime Minister’s wrath upon his own compatriots. As one of the conditions of the modus vivendi the Portuguese had promised free navigation on the river Pungwe¹ through their dominions. They failed to keep their promise, and in April, Sir John Willoughby, in command of two boats belonging to the Chartered Company, attempted to start up the river in defiance of their prohibition. The boats were seized, the Union Jack was hauled down from them, and their commander was treated with insulting

¹ The Pungwe reaches the Indian Ocean at Beira and is the direct waterway to Manica and Eastern Mashonaland.
contumely. Lord Salisbury tolerated no poaching on Government prerogatives, and, having duly protested at Lisbon, let the Company know privately what he thought of their proceedings. Sir John wrote to defend himself through a friend, Lord Granby, but did not get much satisfaction.

To Lord Granby, May 23, 1891.

"... Does it not occur to him that he and his ought to have taken their own Government into counsel before he exposed his military uniform to insult. ... ¹ Portugal has never declared the river open. What she has done was to promise last November that she would give facilities for passing over it. No doubt she has been very dilatory in keeping that promise. If Willoughby had told us of his projects, we had full right to urge—and, if we chose, to enforce,—its performance. But that was a right which belonged to Her Majesty's Government, not to him. If I had contracted to give you a park key that you might go through the park at Hatfield—that contract would give you a right if you chose to sue me for non-performance of it. But it would not give you the right to kick my park gate down because the key had not come. That is the grievous confusion of thought of which Willoughby was guilty when he told the Portuguese that he should go up the river in defiance of them."

Under the arrangement finally effected, the Company secured most of the ground already occupied by its pioneers. Massi-Kessi, Lord Salisbury insisted upon its restoring: an agitated note of M. de Soveral's, the Portuguese Minister in London, reminds him of a promise that he would do so. The remainder of the

¹ Sir John Willoughby held a commission in the Royal Horse Guards. He had been seconded for service with the Company and was a leader in the Jameson Raid four and a half years later.
coveted districts on the Manica plateau it retained on condition of surrendering an equal number of acres from the territory north of the Zambesi which had been accorded to it under the August Convention. On May 14 the Prime Minister was able to tell the Queen that the Portuguese had accepted this compromise, and that, "after an endless negotiation," an agreement had been come to. It was ratified by the Cortes in June 1891. Its negotiation had lasted two and a half years and seen the defeat of four successive Foreign Ministers at Lisbon.

Twenty-five years before, Dr. Livingstone had denounced Portugal's tolerance of the Slave Trade, and his missionary successors were still critical of her treatment of the natives. Lord Harrowby's congratulations to his friend on the conclusion of his task must have been expressive of this attitude, to judge from the deprecatory note in Lord Salisbury's reply: "Poor Portugal! We have come to some sort of an arrangement which I trust will reasonably suit the British South African without upsetting the Braganza dynasty. But people are not reasonable, either at Lisbon or Cape Town" (May 15, 1891).

The Portuguese Committee on Foreign Affairs, in recommending the Convention to the approval of the Cortes, spoke of it as an "acceptable compromise," while sadly admitting that it did not "realise entirely their historical aspirations or legitimate rights." In spite of this and of the crises of anger on either side, through which the negotiation had advanced, the settlement was surprisingly unproductive of lasting national estrangement. The reason for this is probably to be found in the merit which Lord Salisbury claimed for it in the speech in which he announced its conclusion to the House of Lords on June 11. It fulfilled the condition essential to the smooth per-
manence of a political arrangement in its appropriateness to the national characteristics of the contracting parties. The territory which it reserved for Great Britain’s influence would require, as he pointed out, active colonisation for its development; that which would pass under that of Portugal would call for no extraneous labour beyond that of its actual inhabitants. The Portuguese could, in fact, have made no use of the opportunities which their public were so loth to renounce. Thus there followed none of those revolts of consciously baulked ambition in societies or individuals which, in a race of greater colonising capacity, would have recurrently renewed and kept alive resentment.
Photo F. Hollyer

ROBERT, MARQUIS OF SALISBURY

From a portrait by G. F. Watts in the National Portrait Gallery
CHAPTER X

THE PARTITION OF AFRICA (3)

THE ANGLO-GERMAN CONVENTION
1890

THE EAST AFRICAN PROTECTORATES

Lord Salisbury's suggestion to the German Government that the multiplying disputes of title in East Africa should be referred to arbitration was not replied to till the third week in January 1890, and then the reply, though approving, was inconclusive. The Germans had not been fortunate in a resort to this method on a minor issue in the previous summer, in connection with their detached settlement at Witu— a centre of recurrent discord at this period. It had a provocative value in the eyes of the more aggressive members of the German Colonial party. Their possession of it barred any coastal expansion of the British Colony to the north, and, were it ever practicable to extend their occupation of its desert background far enough inland, the English might be cut off also from approach to Uganda and the Nile sources. But it was economically worthless, such commercial value as it had being dependent on two or three islands which lay close to its shores. To one of these, Lamu, which was almost contiguous to the mainland, Germany had laid

1 The earliest German acquisition on the coast, lying to the north of the then territory of British East Africa. See Vol. III. Chapter VIII.
claim. But the Sultan of Zanzibar had never forgiven the compulsion under which, four years before, his predecessor had had to recognise her title to Witu itself. He rejected her claim and granted a lease of the island to her British rivals. M. Lambernon, the Belgian Foreign Minister, was asked to arbitrate. He decided that Lamu had not been included in the original cession of Witu and that the Sultan could do what he liked with it.

The trouble from the German point of view was that what the Sultan liked—whether it were Seyyid Barghash or Seyyid Khalifa or his successor of this year, Seyyid Ali—was always what the British Consul-General of the day asked for. The German Chancellor's erstwhile vituperation of the hostile "incitements" of Sir John Kirk and his subordinates found an echo now in his son's denunciations of Colonel Euan Smith's "intrigues." Manda and Patta were other small islands lying also in the neighbourhood of Witu, but still admittedly in the Sultan's own hands. Disorders broke out in them this winter, and the British Company sent an agent of its own to pacify them. The German Government protested strongly against this apparent illegality; Count Hatzfeldt besieged Lord Salisbury's convalescence with urgent appeals for his intervention. And then it was announced that the Sultan had privately conceded rights of administration in the islands to the Company. Count Herbert was very wroth, and demanded assurances from Sir Edward Malet that there should be no more "secret concessions, suddenly announced." Lord Salisbury remonstrated with his subordinate, but made the incident a text on which to preach more serious efforts after settlement than the Germans had recently displayed. "Colonel Euan Smith has been strongly warned and I think there is no danger of surprises
from that quarter," he wrote to Sir Edward in February. "But the Germans must not throw difficulties in the way of arbitration as the friction between Germans and Englishmen in Africa whenever they come into contact is increasing" (February 21, 1890).

In spite of this adjuration no active steps appear to have been taken by either Government for the next two months. Count Hatzfeldt was on a holiday; Lord Salisbury was seeking recovery from influenza on the Riviera; a more sufficing explanation is probably to be found in Prince Bismarck's fall from power. It took place in March and was preceded and followed by a turmoil of uncertainty at German headquarters.

Meanwhile, happenings in the interior of Africa, rumours of which gradually filtered through to Europe, showed that efforts to secure a favourable de facto position before judgment was entered were not confined to Englishmen. When, in the spring of '89, Dr. Karl Peters, the Chairman of the German East African Company and founder of its colony, was deposed by his Government from its control, he determined to strike a blow for the Fatherland on his own account. He collected a force of 300 Zanzibar Arabs, evaded the British men-of-war which, in conjunction with those of his own country, were still blockading the coast, and in May landed in Witu and plunged forthwith into the unexplored region in its rear. It was inhabited by untameable tribes and intersected by deserts and marshes which had hitherto been looked upon as impenetrable. Rumours reached Europe in the winter that he and his whole force had been slaughtered. They were not true, and in March 1890 the indomitable adventurer appeared in Uganda, 600 miles from his base, and concluded a treaty with Mwanga, the king actually in possession, under which the whole kingdom was declared a German protectorate. Beyond it lay
the region of the mountain Nile, as yet, except for one or two pioneer explorers, untouched by white visitors, and, through it, the southern approach to the Soudan. A treaty of protection concluded with a black potentate was, until ratified by material occupation, a friable foundation on which to build hopes of empire. But the fact remained that Germany had formally tabled a claim, which if it should become effective would not only seriously hamper the inland development of British trade, but would place the head-waters of the great river at her command and even make her a competitor for dominion in the valley—sacrosanct in Lord Salisbury's eyes—with which Egypt's existence was bound up. The ownership of Witu had attained a new and critical importance through this practical assertion of its hinterland rights.

In April the project of arbitration had so far advanced that it was decided to send Sir Percy Anderson, the head of the Colonial Department at the Foreign Office, to discuss its bases with the Colonial officials at Berlin. They also had to be discussed with the directors of the two British Companies whose chartered rights and responsibilities gave them a status almost equivalent to that of self-governing colonies. Lord Salisbury consulted these clients loyally, but was austere in the demands which he made upon them. He expected from them not only a compliant self-restraint in their demands for new opportunities but a perfect energy and efficiency in making use of those which they already owned. Sir William Mackinnon, the Chairman of the British East African Company, failed to satisfy him in either respect. He was a patriotic and genuinely disinterested man and finely philanthropic in his ideals, but he had neither the command of funds nor the personal characteristics required for the task of quasi-sovereignty which his
Company had undertaken. Lord Salisbury wrote from the Riviera to his Chancellor of the Exchequer a week before his return to London.

_To Mr. Goschen, April 10, 1890._—_Monte Carlo._

"... The great difficulty here [in the East African problem] is the character of Mackinnon. ... He has none of the qualities for pushing an enterprise which depends on decision and smartness. He has got the finest harbour on the coast—has had it for five years—yet there is not even a jetty there. His hopes of trade depend on his enabling the caravans to get over a waterless belt of fifty miles which separate him from the profitable country. Yet, though he has had a mass of railway material there a long time, he has not yet laid a yard of it. He has no energy for anything except quarrelling with Germans.

"With such a man, the only chance is settling everything by arbitration—and for that I am pushing as hard as I can. Any terms we might get for him from the Germans by negotiation he would denounce as a base truckling to the Emperor. So the responsibility must be thrown on an arbitrator. ..."

Nevertheless, in the event, it was shouldered by the writer. This letter contains the last reference to the proposal for arbitration to be found in his private correspondence, nor is it again alluded to in the German documents. The Germans had never shown themselves enthusiastic about it—but they had not rejected it, and no reason appears on the face of things for Lord Salisbury’s sudden silence upon the one positive proposal with which he had hitherto identified himself. The only explanation that seems probable is that at this date a fundamental change took place in his conception of the problem to be dealt with. The issues opened out in the scheme of the Anglo-German Convention, as he presented it four weeks
later to the German ambassador, were, in fact, detached from any question of "claims" and were therefore outside the purview of arbitration. There is a discouraging absence of written records as to his inception of this scheme or indeed as to his awakening to the need and opportunity for it. In no letter to Queen or colleague or agent working for him at Berlin is there any anticipatory allusion to its provisions, startlingly new as some of them were. Nor, until that day in the middle of May when he presented Count Hatzfeldt with the whole plan, cut and dried, does he appear to have ever hinted at any separate item of it in conversation with him. Rarely can a political enterprise of equal importance have left behind so few traces of the process of its incubation. One can only say that since, when he wrote to Mr. Goschen on April 10, he was still "pushing as hard as he could for arbitration," his conscious purpose had not then gone beyond the drawing of frontier lines between the existing settlements. It must have been only after his return to England on the 18th, and during the three weeks that followed, that he faced the full possibilities and dangers of the position in East Africa and, with a brain cleared from the last lingering mists of influenza, set his powers of vision and calculation to work upon a plan for dealing with them. That during that interval he should have breathed no word to confidant or counsellor on the alternative choices which must have filled his thoughts would be eminently characteristic of him. One is reminded of his self-confession: "I can't understand the value which people attach to 'talking things over.' Until my own mind is made up I find the intrusion of other men's thoughts merely worrying."

All this time the delimitation negotiations were proceeding in the quasi-publicity of departmental cor-
respondence with Berlin and consultations in London with the two British Directorates. The bases on which this question of boundaries came to be argued might have proved, had the matter been brought to the test, as difficult of reference to arbitration as the Portuguese dispute—and for much the same reasons. No issue of law or of fact was involved: the opposing claims rested on the application of rival theories, both of which were arguable and neither of which was supported by any objective or traditional sanction. In a Memorandum circulated later to his colleagues, Lord Salisbury summarised these conditions:

"The claims of the Germans rest simply upon the doctrine of 'Hinterland,' which they have to a great extent invented, and which in their arguments appears to mean that, if you have possessions in an uncivilised country, you have a right to extend those possessions to an unlimited distance inland from the sea, until you strike the frontier of another civilised country. On this ground they claim to extend their territory westward, both to the south and the north of Lake Tanganyika, till it abuts on the frontier of the Congo State."

He describes what the geographical results of this extension would be, and then, with customary detachment, states the case of his own two clients.

"... The English, on the contrary, rest their claims upon two grounds. In the first place they have a claim, for which it is not very easy to discover any international foundation, that they shall have an unbroken stretch of territory from Cape Town on the south to Lado, the point at which the Nile becomes navigable, on the north, and that this stretch of territory shall only be broken by the waterway of Lake Tanganyika. Secondly, a far more tenable ground of claim consists in the fact that, on the south of Lake Tanganyika the English originally discovered,
and have now for many years, through the African Lakes Company, through Mr. Stevenson and through the Scottish missions, occupied the territory which the Germans claim. . . . To the north of Lake Tanganyika the English claim rests wholly upon the treaties which Mr. Stanley, and possibly Mr. Jackson,¹ have made with the King of Uganda and other natives. The weak point of such treaties, as a ground of title, is that generally they are confronted by a parallel set of treaties made with another European Power by the same native Potentates, or by native Potentates claiming the same country; and Mr. Stanley's and Mr. Jackson's treaties do not seem to be exempt from this inconvenient flaw.” (Cabinet Memorandum, June 2, 1890.)

He presents his colleagues with the compromise which he has proposed and hopes to achieve. The Germans, especially the German Emperor, “whose personal interposition is evidently shaping the course of German policy in this matter,” were ineradicably opposed to the idea which Mr. Rhodes had made popular in England of a continuous line of British occupation from south to north. They dreaded being “hemmed in” between England and the sea, and insisted upon some substantial outlet to the Congo Free State—whose territories at this time were generally looked upon as prospectively purchaseable. Lord Salisbury suggested that this outlet should be supplied between the Lakes Victoria and Tanganyika through an acceptance of the German “hinterland” principle for their northern demarcation. Against this he had demanded that the British principle of “previous settlement” should be accepted for the southern demarcation, which would secure Great Britain's

mission and trading stations on the two southern lakes, the connecting Stevenson road, and the access of the new Rhodesian enterprise to the waterway of Tanganyika. This would involve a thrusting back of the frontier which the Germans would have secured south of Tanganyika on the hinterland principle to the extent of 150 to 200 miles, and their consent to the concession was only finally obtained in connection with the larger scheme of the Anglo-German Convention.

On the other hand, the East African Company, through their chairman, were resisting with even greater obstinacy the sacrifice demanded of them between the Lakes. Lord Salisbury comments, not quite fairly, upon the superior reasonableness of their South African colleagues—the beneficiaries under the compromise. But the East Africans were powerfully championed. The proposed arrangement would involve the abandonment of some of Mr. Stanley’s treaty-bought provinces, and Lord Salisbury charged him with being the instigator of Sir William Mackinnon’s revolt. The Memorandum concludes with a challenge to possible Cabinet nervousness: "The question, practically, to which ‘Aye’ or ‘No’ must be replied is, whether Sir William Mackinnon and Mr. Stanley are to be over-ruled or not."

Nervousness would not have been incomprehensible. Mr. Stanley had returned to England in the spring. The story of his wonderful two years’ struggle through the sunless Congo jungles had preceded him and the unsavouriness of some of its episodes had not yet been revealed. For some months he was enthroned as the idol of the British nation; crowds followed him wherever he went; high and low competed for the honour of his presence. His speeches were probably affected by the unexhausted effect upon his nerves and brain of the strain through which he had passed.
At a series of meetings, called together by various public bodies in his honour, he sprinkled the thrilling story of his adventures with denunciations of craven politicians who should fail to reap the harvest of glorious empire which he had sown. The reaction of these attacks upon Lord Salisbury's combative instincts was apparently to dissipate the fears of jingo wrath on which he had dwelt to Count Hatzfeldt in the winter. He did not restrict himself to ironic references in confidential communications to his Cabinet. In a speech at a Merchant Taylor's Banquet on May 22, he made public fun of the hero's perorations: "Mr. Stanley has warned you that the British Government is doing terrible things—that it has surrendered vast forests and tremendous mountains and great kingdoms which he has offered the British public to occupy; and he gives you mysterious hints in order that you may interfere in time or—if you do not interfere—that you may be satisfied to submit to his threat that the Company with which he is connected will abandon Africa to its fate."

Perhaps his spirit was attuned to defiance of flag-waving patriotism at this moment by the consciousness that he was contemplating a more intimate affront to it than could be inflicted by any paring down of "spheres of interest" in tropical Africa. What his Elizabethan ancestors might have described as the "Inward plot" had by now reached fruition so far as confidential communication to the German ambassador went.

His new study of the situation had impressed upon him the urgency of two problems of danger and opportunity with which the trading Companies had no direct concern, but which, if left unsolved, must remain a constant menace to the peace of the world. One was the position in Zanzibar. It had for the last seven
years constituted a running sore in our relations with Germany and more than once threatened trouble with Italy. The theoretically sovereign status of its Arab ruler entitled all other Governments to approach him independently, and his actual subservience to England exposed her to their wrathful suspicion whenever they failed to get what they wanted from him. This sentiment, sporadic among the less interested Powers, had become chronic in the case of Germany. The exasperation was mutual. German colonial pioneers, with small experience of their own, and jealously repudiating that of their rivals, were perpetually offending against British traditions of conduct in their behaviour towards the natives. When these appealed, as of course, to the dominant white Power, its officers, impotent to exhibit the championship expected of them, expatiated in expletives in their reports home and did not conceal their fevered irritation on the spot. The boot was sometimes on the other leg. The servants and subjects of the great white Queen were not content with maintaining, in their own persons and with general approval, their standards of justice or financial purity—they expected them, most unreasonably, to be deferred to by the indigenous hierarchy. There were Arab princelings—many of them—who hated to be reformed: the formation of "German" and "French" parties among them was a self-evident procedure: a decadent Court at the centre provided ample opportunities for intrigue, bribery, and menace, and British Civil Servants, with fingers itching for paternal compulsion, were themselves forced to resort to those methods in combating even the grossest abuses. The central and also the least popular object of their efforts—the anti-slavery crusade—was hopelessly hampered. Multiple control had long been an axiomatic evil in Lord Salisbury’s
conception. What he had protested against attempting in Samoa and successfully eliminated from Egypt, he now felt to be justifying all his condemnation in its practical working in Zanzibar. There could be no permanence of peaceful neighbourliness between the wrangling whites or the Governments that had perforce to back them, nor solidity of civilising progress in the island itself until England was given a free hand and the Sultan and his Court ceased to be provocative subjects for cosmopolitan bullying and corruption.

Of less immediate importance to the cause of peace, but threatening it even more acutely in the future, was the question of succession to the Witu hinterland in Uganda and beyond. This subject finds no direct mention in the boundary negotiations, but a phrase in Lord Salisbury's correspondence with one of his agents abroad is significant of the course of his thought. In the first week in May, news reached Europe that King Mwanga, true to the traditions of his kind, had—within a month of signing his treaty with Dr. Karl Peters—asked, through one of the pioneers of the East African Company, to be admitted to the protection of the Union Jack. Baron von Marschall, the new Foreign Minister at Berlin, was agitated at this news and very angry. To soothe him, Sir Percy Anderson suggested that an exchange of assurances in support of the status quo in Uganda should be offered. Lord Salisbury demurred: "Until our information is more complete, I should not be inclined to enter into fresh specific engagements about those regions" (May 4). Baron von Marschall's indignation was symptomatic. A British treaty with Uganda was already looked upon as poaching upon German preserves, as intruding upon an appanage of the Witu protectorate. A vista of future conflict was opened out, with Uganda and the head waters of the Nile as
the prize to be contended for. With the British missions established in Uganda on the one hand, and the hinterland rights of Witu on the other, as basic claims, the race for material possession which must follow would reproduce in aggravated form every existing source of trouble between England and Germany, and that on an issue upon which Lord Salisbury had made up his mind not to give way.

But England had no more _locus standi_ for claiming to replace Germany in Witu than for inviting her consent to an exclusive British Protectorate in Zanzibar. Neither object could be attained except in return for value paid down, and Lord Salisbury’s African banking account was already overdrawn. In May, in fact, the boundary negotiations came to a standstill owing to Germany’s refusal to regard the treaty-bought provinces between the Lakes as an adequate set-off to the wide stretch of hinterland demanded of her south of Tanganyika. The purchase money must evidently be looked for elsewhere.

There is a touch of unconscious drama in Count Hatzfeldt’s account of the British Minister’s sudden revelation of his new requirements and of the price that he was prepared to pay for them. On May 13,¹ after the two men had been engaged in long and fruitless discussion in the Secretary of State’s room at the Foreign Office over the irreconcilable claims of “hinterland” and “previous settlement,” Lord Salisbury made a break in the conversation and “after some hesitation” offered to reveal for Count Hatzfeldt’s personal benefit the “sum of his wishes” with respect to East Africa. The Count, with ready curiosity, welcomed the offer and listened with admitted dismay to the budget which the Prime Minister proceeded to unfold. It began with a full statement of the boundary con-

cessions demanded by both Companies to the north and south of the German colony—without the compromise subsequently agreed to on the northern line. This was followed by an invitation to cede Witu, with its rights over "neighbouring districts," and the list of requirements closed with the proposal for an exclusive British Protectorate at Zanzibar. Then, without further preface or any hint of invitation from the wholly unprepared ambassador, the Prime Minister threw down Heligoland on the table.

Count Hatzfeldt boasted at the close of the negotiations which followed that Lord Salisbury had never been allowed to suspect the value which Germany attached to Heligoland. If that were so, he must have been a singularly audacious negotiator, since—except for the offer to utilise England's conceded authority in Zanzibar to secure Germany the opportunity of purchasing her present leasehold on the coast—this proposal of May 13 involved an unbroken series of German concessions, with Heligoland as the sole makeweight.

Ignorance, it is true, might have been explicable in that Germany's value for the island, except on purely sentimental grounds, was of very recent origin. It had had no history, mainly because no one had wanted it. It was useless commercially, had never been fortified, and was so near the German coast that its fortification by any other nation would have been a deliberately provocative act. It may be affirmed that for many years past no British Government would have refused a reasonable offer for it. But no offer, reasonable or otherwise, had ever been made. Even the sentiment of Germany with regard to it had attained no force until her emergence as a united Empire under the aegis of Prince Bismarck; and Prince Bismarck

was not the man to waste diplomatic resources on a sentiment. For a few brief days in 1884, he appears to have contemplated inviting the Gladstone Government to make him a free gift of the island in acknowledgment of his friendly offices in Egyptian politics. But in his outbreak of anger that spring, over the Colonial quarrel, he told his ambassador that he would not mix up a fanciful grievance with the very real ones which he conceived that he had against England and forbade him to prosecute the matter further.¹

The inception of the Kiel Canal in 1887 had changed all this. The hitherto despised sandrock was recognised by naval strategists as an invaluable bastion to the future gateway of the German fleet. Silence was jealously preserved as to this revised assessment of its worth, but the consideration was one to appeal acutely to the young Emperor who succeeded to the throne the following year and who was already in love with naval aspirations. His counsellors followed suit; public opinion felt the unpublished impulsion, and by 1889 the press had begun to teem with allusions to the old grievance of sentiment and to the chances of its removal as an outcome of England’s present friendship.

Mr. Chamberlain, meeting Count Herbert Bismarck at a dinner-party in London that spring, suggested the idea of exchanging Heligoland against Angra Pequena—the circumstances of whose acquisition by Germany five years before seem still to have rankled in the memory of Lord Granville’s Imperialist colleague. The German documents give a full account of the conversation and of the perturbations that followed in Berlin.² Count Herbert reported it home exult-

antly, reminding his father that many of their compatriots were already anxious to get rid of the disappointing experiment in South West Africa at any price. He said that he had carefully concealed his elation from his interlocutor but had suggested his bringing the proposition before the Prime Minister through the mediation of Lord Hartington. Count Hatzfeldt was warned, and in due time, on April 13, discovered in the course of conversation that the proposal had “come through” to Lord Salisbury. The Minister showed no enthusiasm for it: though veiled under diplomatic courtesy, “Thank you for nothing” seems to have represented his attitude towards the offer of Angra Pequena. As to the reciprocal cession of Heligoland he said nothing, except to agree when the ambassador, true to his instructions to eschew all appearance of eagerness, expressed his personal doubts as to its being of any real value to Germany. The conversation was interrupted and Lord Salisbury ended with a non-committal “Si vous voulez, nous en reparlerons une autre fois.”—“If you wish, we can talk of it another time.”

But the “other time” never came. “Wait!” Prince Bismarck tersely noted on the margin of the ambassador’s despatch, and Count Hatzfeldt obediently waited. But in vain: nothing happened: Lord Salisbury never recurred to the subject, and after two months the Emperor became impatient and exploded in an excited message to his Chancellor. He “considered Heligoland to be militarily of the greatest importance”; he was confident that the proposed arrangement could be effected; had not the Queen just made him an Admiral? Lord Salisbury was as

2 Ibid. vol. i. p. 381 (Gr. Pol. vol. iv. p. 413).
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favourably inclined to Germany as he was all-powerful, and besides, there was the Chamberlain influence to count upon. Let them hurry up the business so that he could sign the exchange of territory during his approaching visit to Osborne in August (June 21, 1889). But the old statesman read the mind of his English neighbour otherwise. Lord Salisbury’s continued silence, he said, was in his eyes conclusive of an attitude the reverse of what the Emperor hoped for.¹ If they forced him to break it, it would be by a definite refusal—wounding to Anglo-German friendship—injurious to further hopes for Heligoland. His counsel prevailed and the subject was allowed to drop.

Less than a fortnight after the high powers at Berlin had been thus interchanging guesses as to the British Minister’s state of mind, a passage in a letter to Sir Edward Malet suggests an instance of the almost uncanny vision as to what was going on behind closed doors in Europe of which he sometimes gave proof. The occasion for the coincidence was too trivial to account for it. A German naval captain had omitted to salute the Union Jack as he steamed past Heligoland. Lord Salisbury apologised for troubling the ambassador on the matter; “But the awkward part of this proceeding is that newspapers in both countries have talked about the possible cession of Heligoland. As you are aware, we are absolutely opposed to such a measure, but the ways of the German navy rather give countenance to such a rumour.” He didn’t propose any formal remonstrance but wanted Sir Edward, if he had the opportunity with some leading member of the German Admiralty, “to suggest to them the expediency of more respectful behaviour” (July 3).

The education of this undefined official in inter-

national good manners, or even the disciplining of press rumours on an eminently non-urgent matter, seems scarcely to have justified this direct interposition by the Secretary of State. Even Lord Salisbury made occasional use of his under and private secretaries. But the preparation of an unconscious and indirect channel for delicately counteracting the divined impression left by Mr. Chamberlain’s over-zeal might comprehensibly call for personal handling. In the light of subsequent history the repudiating phrase must evidently be amplified. He wanted nothing from Germany at that moment which offered measurable equivalence to what he believed to be her present estimate of Heligoland’s value. Angra Pequena, from that point of view, was derisible. Therefore, under existing or contemplated conditions, his opposition to the cession was absolute. As the game stood, that particular card was unplayable. But it remained in his hand. In the following May, as has been seen, the occasion for its effective production arrived. The removal, now and for the future, of all occasions for quarrelling with Germany in Africa; the rounding off of a large and fruitful opportunity for the development of England’s enterprise in what is now Northern Rhodesia; the safeguarding for all time of her southern approach to the Nile Valley, were the prize at stake—and the card was played.

The initial response was dubious: the German Foreign Office either had not been admitted to the confidence of the “all highest” or was subtle in its caution. Baron von Marschall, while indignantly rejecting Lord Salisbury’s exorbitant African demands, only noticed the Heligoland-Zanzibar suggestion to recommend Count Hatzfeldt “not to adopt a priori an attitude of refusal” towards it.² Lord Salisbury

drew back, regretfully doubting whether, in view of the Stanley agitation in England, it would not be better to postpone the negotiations altogether for a few months. Baron von Marschall retorted on this suggestion by a reminder that before the end of June Dr. Peters would have reached the coast of the Red Sea on his return journey from Uganda, and that the Stanley agitation would be more than paralleled in Germany; England had no monopoly in fire-eating popular idols.¹

There ensued a comically rapid revolution to an eager welcome of the new proposals on the part of the Berlin Minister. It was expressed in a series of telegrams to his ambassador on a rising note of urgency—representative, no doubt, of successive messages from Potsdam. They culminated on May 29 in a declaration that “the possession of Heligoland was of supreme importance to Germany and by far the most serious matter in the whole negotiation.” By the side of it “our East African interests merely come forward as matters for concession.”² Two days later, the Count was instructed to abandon altogether the long-contested struggle over the southern frontier and surrender the whole of the hinterland in dispute south of Tanganyika. Witu and its hinterland were to be conceded; the Zanzibar Protectorate was to be recognised; the claim to Lake Ngami and to its surrounding territories in the South-West had already been given up in return for a rectification of frontier between Togoland and the Gold Coast and a corridor approach from German South-West to the Zambesi. If Lord Salisbury, after all this, still insisted also upon the British East African Company’s demands north of Tanganyika, and “if the conclusion of the agree-

ment depended exclusively on this question,” the ambassador was to “ask for further instructions.”

Lord Salisbury did not insist and would probably not have done so even had he been aware of that final note of hesitation. Hard bargains make bad diplomacy and the complete envelopment of the German colony would have been submitted to under an abiding sense of grievance. So on Tuesday, June 3, the Cabinet decided “to overrule Mr. Stanley” and accept the compromise which their chief had recommended to them in his Memorandum of the previous day.

Over the Heligoland-Zanzibar project there was more hesitation. It is not clear as to when precisely Lord Salisbury took his colleagues into consultation about it. On May 30 he expressed to Count Hatzfeldt an intention of discussing it with them and said that some of them were nervous on account of public opinion, a nervousness which “he did not share.” At the meeting of the Cabinet on the following Tuesday, June 3, at which the delimitation arrangement was agreed to, he brought the proposal formally before it, and reported to the ambassador that evening that he had found “much anxiety” among its members on the subject. He suggested that it might be deferred for later consideration. Berlin telegraphed an emphatic refusal; the whole negotiation must now stand or fall together; opinion in Germany would otherwise never tolerate the frontier concessions which had been proposed. This reply was no doubt anticipated and Lord Salisbury prepared to round off his case for presentation for the Cabinet’s final decision. On Thursday the 5th, a private and “most secret” telegram was despatched to Colonel Euan Smith.

THE SULTAN SOUNDED

To Colonel Euan Smith, June 5, 1890.

(Private and most secret.—To be deciphered by yourself.)

"Negotiations have reached a point at which it may be agreed between us and Germany that we should take the Protectorate of the Sultanate of Zanzibar. It is a mere possibility and would probably be accompanied by some proposal for buying the Sultan's interest in the German Coast line. I am consulting you to know, in the utmost confidence, whether the Sultan could be prevailed upon to accept our Protectorate quietly. Of course it would involve the guarantee of his throne by us."

It needed only to suggest reluctance in this quarter in order to demonstrate its absence. The Sultan could hope for nothing better than to exchange his many masters for the one who, in spite of pernickety standards of administration and ascetic views about finance, had always stood his friend against the threats and bullying of the others.

The Queen had been informed of the project and, from Balmoral, reinforced the group of reluctant protesters among her Ministers. On Sunday the 8th, Lord Salisbury reported to her that the Cabinet had met again, had decided that the matter required more careful sifting, and had appointed a Committee consisting of himself, Mr. Smith, Mr. Goschen, Mr. Balfour, the Secretary for War, and the First Lord of the Admiralty, to confer with naval experts on the subject. The Cabinet would meet to consider the result of this Conference on Tuesday the 10th. As he subsequently informed the House of Lords, the verdict of the sailors was not unfavourable, and on the 10th, after a somewhat agitating week, the Cabinet unanimously agreed upon accepting the arrangement.
The Queen, however, required further persuasion, and two telegrams which Lord Salisbury sent to her are severally illuminating as to the reasons which had primarily inspired himself and as to the arguments which, presumably, had proved convincing to his colleagues and naval advisers:

To the Queen, June 10, 1890.¹

"... The Cabinet unanimously and earnestly recommend this arrangement to Your Majesty under these conditions. The equivalent for Heligoland will be the Protectorate over the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba, and 150 miles of coast near the Sultanate of Zanzibar and Pemba, and the abandonment of all claim to the interior behind it by Germany. Under this arrangement the whole of the country outside the confines of Abyssinia and Gallaland will be under British influence up to Khartoum, so far as any European competitor is concerned. On the other hand, we could not without this arrangement come to a favourable issue as to the Stevenson road, and any indefinite postponement of a settlement in Africa would render it very difficult to maintain terms of amity with Germany, and would force us to change our system of alliances in Europe. The alliance of France instead of the alliance of Germany must necessarily involve the early evacuation of Egypt under very unfavourable conditions. On these grounds the Cabinet unanimously recommend the arrangement for Your Majesty's sanction. . . ."

The Queen admitted the force of her Minister's arguments—"but that any of my possessions should be thus bartered away causes me great uneasiness." She could only consent on receiving Lord Salisbury's positive assurance that the arrangement would not constitute a precedent.

¹ Letters of Queen Victoria, 3rd series, vol. i. p. 613.
THE QUEEN CONVINCED

Telegram to the Queen, June 12, 1890.¹

"... He quite understands and so do his colleagues that this case is not and cannot be a precedent; it is absolutely peculiar. The Island is a very recent conquest. It became a British possession by Treaty in 1814. Why it was retained at the general settlement we do not certainly know; but most probably because it was geographically a dependency of Hanover which was then ruled by the British Sovereign. Now that Hanover has gone, it has no connection with us. No authority has ever recommended that it should be fortified; and no House of Commons would pay for its fortification. But, if it is not fortified, and we quarrelled with Germany, it would be seized by Germany the day she declared war, and it is so near her great arsenals that she could fortify it impregnable in three or four days. Unless we are prepared to arm it, we are merely incurring a certain humiliation if ever we are at war with Germany. Yet a war with Germany is the only contingency in which any possible danger could arise from it.

"There is no danger of this case being made a precedent for there is no possible case like it."

These arguments proved effective and the last obstacle in the long negotiation was overcome. Its earlier stages had coincided with a critical passage of arms with the United States over the Behring Sea seal-fisheries,² and its later ones with a parliamentary revolt against his Commons colleagues which he had been called in to conciliate at a Carlton meeting on the very day on which his labours over the German Convention came to an end.³ The demand upon his diplomatic powers during the last few weeks had been a varied one: the protracted duel of tactics with the German ambassador; the manœuvring towards compromise of two excited and mutually antagonistic

¹ Letters of Queen Victoria, 3rd series, vol. i. p. 614.
² See below, Chapter XII.
³ See above, Chapter VI.
Company directorates; the avoidance of an imminent breach between an enraged Canadian public and a singularly provocative American President; the appeasement of patriotic alarm in the breasts of an anxious Sovereign and a number of "nervous" colleagues; and the reconciliation of an obstruction-maddened parliamentary majority with its aggrieved leaders.

The terms of the agreement were made public on June 17. Lord Salisbury had inserted as one of its conditions that the clause enacting the cession of Heligoland should be dependent on the assent of Parliament, and resolutions conferring that assent were submitted to the House of Lords on July 10 and to the House of Commons—postponed by prolonged debate on the Irish estimates—on the 24th. This condition presented an unexampled abdication of the Crown's right of independent treaty-making, and Mr. Gladstone—who uttered no other criticism of the Government's policy—was warm in condemnation of it. His fervour in defence of the Royal Prerogative roused amused comment at the time from his followers in press and Parliament. But he no doubt appreciated Lord Salisbury's motives for the innovation and was consistent in his indignation. It was said that this was the first occasion, recorded in history, on which any part of the British Empire had been alienated in time of peace.1 Lord Salisbury was uneasy lest it should be used as a precedent by some future Minister sharing Mr. Gladstone's taste for national self-immolation. The provision requiring parliamentary assent ensured that the precedent should not become available without the safeguard of a full debate and vote in both Houses.

1 In a letter of Lord Salisbury to Mr. W. H. Smith, stating this view, the queried word "Dunkerque?" is inserted in the margin in another hand.
The reception given to the agreement in the two countries was curiously similar. In both alike, rulers and instructed politicians congratulated themselves while the public grumbled. It was metaphorically congruous that the removal of a bone of contention should have issued in the first instance in a redoubling of mutual snarling between the two parties. Frustrated Colonial enthusiasts in Germany refused to find consolation in the future security of the Kiel Canal, and—apart from more coherent criticism on naval grounds—the lowering of the Union Jack, even on so small a fragment of the earth's surface, inspired the normal Englishman with a conviction that the foreigner had somehow got the better of him.

The German Emperor, curiously impenetrable to the existence of antagonistic sentiment, was anxious that the occasion of the transfer should be celebrated by the presence of British men-of-war at his naval manoeuvres at Kiel in September. Lord George Hamilton made tactful excuse but the Emperor refused to take no for an answer. Count Hatzfeldt appealed earnestly to the Prime Minister to overrule his First Lord—His Majesty had the matter closely at heart—he would be bitterly disappointed at a final refusal—the political reactions might be serious. Lord Salisbury was driven to candid explanations. The English people, he said, were and always had been particularly jealous of any foreign influence upon their Government, and this year that jealousy was concentrated against Germany.

To Count Hatzfeldt, August 22, 1890.

"I do not think that it would be a wise thing to do, for the first time the same year as that in which we have ceded Heligoland. The cession of Heligoland has not excited much open objection in England. But
it is bitterly resented and will not soon be forgiven by a small political section. Unfortunately, this section consists of men who are, or were, among our strongest supporters. We have, besides, plenty of opponents who are anxious to raise the cry that the German Emperor has too much influence over us. If that cry were raised and if an ignorant electorate were to echo it, our power of taking the right course in the greater politics of Europe would be very much hindered."

But as regarded relations in Africa itself, the Convention amply fulfilled the purpose for which it was designed. The pacification proved a lasting as well as an immediate one. The stream of acrimonious dispute, which for years past had flowed between the African departments of the two Foreign Offices, dried up from this date. Once or twice German nationals intervened in the internal politics of Zanzibar more than the British Government thought fitting, and on one occasion Lord Rosebery roused wrath at Berlin by attempting to get behind the provisions of the Convention and secure the dreaded "envelopment" of German East Africa through a separate understanding with the Congo State. But, as a whole, peace reigned diplomatically in these regions as well as actually until all peace vanished in the cataclysm of 1914. The African fruits of the victory in which that war ended would hardly have found favour with Lord Salisbury. A year or two before his death, he dwelt with convinced satisfaction on the presence of Germany in Africa: we could not be sufficiently grateful for it, he said: it was the best, indeed the only, guarantee that we possessed of South African loyalty.

A curious departmental development in the Foreign Office, personally traceable to Lord Salisbury, was one
of the bye-products of the Anglo-German Convention. It was natural that Zanzibar, with its still reigning Sultan, should follow the precedent which had already been borrowed for Egypt from the self-governing Indian States and be controlled by a political agent in the person of a Foreign Office Consul-General. But such a precedent could hardly be adduced for the diverse negro tribes on the mainland. There was no reason in the nature of things why Nyasaland and—after the surrender of the Company’s Charter—East Africa and Uganda should not have been from the first administered, like their West African fellows, from the Colonial Office.

But Lord Salisbury, whether because of his dislike to Colonial Office methods, or, as has been suggested, because he wished, for the sake of the natives, to maintain a closer Imperial control than is possible under a Colonial status—or, which seems the most probable, simply from a reluctance to lose touch with dominions in whose fortunes he had acquired a strong personal interest—proclaimed them also as Protectorates. Lord Rosebery made no change during the brief interval of his Ministry and they remained under Foreign Office direction until after Lord Salisbury’s retirement and death thirteen years later. For that period, therefore, one department of the office was wholly given up to duties which had no relation whatever to its diplomatic functions, recruiting the needful Commissioners and sub-Commissioners from all branches of the public service. It is fair to add that the task required of this extemporised machinery was comparatively simple. In the three black Protectorates the population was practically homogeneous and in the most primitive stage of civilisation. The disturbing white element, even in Kenya, was scarcely more than negligible at the date of Lord Salisbury’s retirement.
It is only with the prefatory stages of this administrative experiment that Lord Salisbury was concerned in the remaining two years of this Ministry. Zanzibar was the only one of the new Protectorates in which it had actually begun to work. Colonel Euan Smith's health having finally succumbed to the climate soon after the proclamation of the new order, his successor, Mr. Gerald Portal, took up the work in July 1891. He was commissioned by Lord Salisbury to "make the Protectorate a reality"—though invited to "conceal the iron hand in a liberal allowance of velvet." He set about his task with an energy learnt in the classic school of the Cairo Agency though, perhaps, with a smaller admixture of patience than his chief there would have approved.

The evils common to all petty Oriental autocracies had been aggravated during the last few years in Zanzibar by the disintegrating influence of irresponsible interferences from outside, and civilised government had to be built up from the foundations. Mr. Portal extemporised executive posts and telegraphed urgent demands for fellow-countrymen to fill them. Within three months of his arrival he could boast that he had established a disciplined police force; had restored order in the streets and partially cleaned them; had planted promising seedlings of civil and sanitary regulation; and, by restricting the Sultan's sporadic raids on the Treasury, had secured a public service no longer dependent on blackmail for its remuneration. He had balanced revenue and expenditure and was looking forward to a surplus in the spring. These reforms had been achieved, he proudly assured the Foreign Secretary, without the employment of force or the threat of force. Sympathetic appeals to influential Arab chiefs had induced their moral support, and the tiny English staff had multiplied itself by the
intensive energy of its members. In one of his earliest letters, he gives a picturesque account of his methods of dealing with the crimes of violence which had become of nightly occurrence in the streets of the town and for which the black darkness which prevailed in them was mainly responsible: “I issued an order to everyone to have lights over their doors all night and the town is now beautifully illuminated. I go round occasionally at midnight, like Haroun al Raschid, and, on the first occasion, roused up dozens of sleeping inhabitants who, like the foolish virgins, had not got their lamps and next day we fined them all. Now they are more careful” (September 14, 1891).

When some new extension of the field of reform was being prepared for, he asked for another British helper: “It will be simply impossible for me to keep all these things in my own hands; neither my head nor my body is strong enough: and above all, the day consists of only twenty-four hours, out of which I have been working an average of about thirteen or fourteen without moving from my table” (Sept. 2, 1891). This was in a temperature which hovered around 100° Fahrenheit, and the writer’s health never fully recovered from the strain then placed upon it. Such was the stuff of which the men were made who implemented Victorian Imperialism in its wide-fronted assault upon the earth’s dark places.

Lord Salisbury became a little nervous at his subordinate’s vehemence in a good cause. In November he was asking for an explanation of a “lamentable complaint” which the Sultan had telegraphed to him direct as to the heavy burdens which the Consul-General was imposing on him. Mr. Portal referred it to a recent refusal of the Englishman who had been placed in charge of the Customs to hand over, on his Highness’ note of hand, 80,000 rupees for the ladies
of his harem, in addition to the Civil List to which he had agreed. The explanation sufficed, but in the Foreign Secretary’s next letter cordial congratulations were qualified by cautions:

_To Mr. Gerald Portal, December 4, 1891._

"... It appears to me that you are advancing quite on the right lines in Zanzibar; the only question is whether you are not going ahead a little too fast. It is very difficult for me here to judge of that point and therefore I have not felt justified in interfering; but I was a little apprehensive during the period which ended with the Sultan’s telegram.

"That you are running against a good deal of Arab opinion is certain and inevitable. No reform worth having could be obtained without it. The question is not as to the existence, but the degree of their resentment. Has it reached to an explosive point—or a point at which, under the influence of any accident, it might suddenly become explosive? We cannot answer that question here. You may have some difficulty in answering it, for the Oriental power of dissimulation and of storing up revenge is unlimited. But the danger is a real one and requires to be constantly borne in mind. And it is in no degree diminished by the circumstance that your action is righteous and that their opposition is corrupt, selfish, and stupid.

"There is another consideration to be borne in mind. Our preponderance at Zanzibar—owing to its being an island—may be so great that an explosion, under any circumstances, is not within the field of practical politics. Yet, even so, there may be evils in moving too fast and pressing the Sultan and his Arabs too hard. We have a character to maintain among Mahometan races. It would be bad for us if they believed that our preponderance was dangerous to their material interests, and especially to the material interests of the most powerful persons among
them. Such a reputation might do us no serious damage in Zanzibar, where almost everything is within the range of our guns, and yet it might produce very inconvenient results upon the mainland of Africa and even in India.

"Commending these cautionary observations to you, I have no difficulty in adding that your measures seem to me bold and well conceived, and, if you have not underrated the Arab resistance, and especially the Sultan's resistance—they are likely to be very successful and to lead to a highly satisfactory result.

"I confess I feel some unwillingness to spoil the Sultan too far, especially when I think of the terrible maltreatment he has suffered at the hands of European Powers during the last seven or eight years. But that is perhaps a mere sentiment. . . ."

It was not a sentiment that appealed to the sympathies of this correspondent. A few weeks later Mr. Portal suggested that, in the interests of good government, the Sultanate should be abolished altogether on the death of the present holder and the island be formally annexed to the British Empire. His chief demurred with decision. He admitted the temptation offered to administrative enthusiasm, but it must be resisted at all hazards. The effect upon the minds of the feudatory Indian princes would be deplorable. They occupied towards the Imperial Government exactly the same position as did the Sultan, and the possibility of annexation had always been their bugbear. "Five-and-thirty years ago, that dread drove some of them into the Mutiny and, ever since, the necessity of avoiding any step that would suggest this terror to their minds has been a cardinal principle of Indian policy." Incidentally, he doubted whether the advantage to Zanzibar would be unequivocal.
To Mr. Gerald Portal, March 8, 1892.

"... I am not sure that I should consider it an unmixed blessing if Zanzibar became British territory. It would at once become liable to a code of law and administrative conditions which are very stiff and inflexible, and often accomplish results precisely the reverse to that they were designed to effect. It would certainly become enormously expensive. The semi-patriarchal government which you have invented for Zanzibar and are conducting with so much success, would have to be at once set aside. The island would have to be governed according to the strictest rules of the Colonial Office. This, I think, would be far from an advantage and would probably result in an early and permanent deficit in your Budget...

The Nyasaland Protectorate had scarcely yet reached the stage for civil administration of any kind. Mr. Harry Johnston, who had been appointed as its first Commissioner, was otherwise occupied, and his military activities are the only ones alluded to at this time in Lord Salisbury's correspondence. The neighbouring Arab and Yao chieftains, auguring justly that the advent of a British Commissioner portended disaster to their rights of raiding and enslavement, were incessant in their attacks upon the feeble tribes along the borders of the Lake and upon their white protectors. Mr. Goschen grumbled a little at the new "empire" which the Commissioner's fighting excursions were bringing into being, and Lord Salisbury retorted by reproachful reference to his subordinate's need for reinforcements. "Johnston on Lake Nyasa is beginning to shriek for assistance to stop the Slave Trade on that Lake—which I'm afraid that he won't get" (September 9, 1891). But he underrated either his colleague's breadth of mind or
his own powers of insistence, and three gunboats for transport in sections were added to the naval estimates the following spring and duly launched upon the Lake a year later.

He was a good deal more occupied with the affairs of East Africa, though, as it was still under the rule of its Chartered Company, he had no direct responsibility for its government. The Company’s financial position had been going from bad to worse, and in the spring of ’91 its directors intimated that they would have to withdraw the force which they had sent under Captain Lugard ¹ to assert occupation and establish order in Uganda. They also finally declared themselves unable to proceed with the long-purposed railway from Mombasa to the Lakes. Uganda was an Imperial heritage whose pacification must bide its time until Parliament and the directors had mutually faced the now inevitable transfer of authority from the Company to the State. But in Lord Salisbury’s view, the human interests involved in the construction of the railway were too serious to wait for such undated readjustment of East Africa’s political status. To persuade a House of Commons whose majority, in spite of differences upon the Irish question, was still soundly Gladstonian in its financial creed, to spend public money upon the development of a private trading enterprise was a task, however, before which his Commons colleagues recoiled. Throughout the spring and summer of ’91, he was struggling with the forces of financial orthodoxy on this issue.

In May he took the opportunity of a massed

working-class meeting in Glasgow to seek support from the House's masters. A large part of this speech was, by exception, devoted to foreign affairs.\(^1\) Among other things, he dwelt on the marvellous phenomenon of recent African history:

"When I left the Foreign Office in 1880, nobody thought about Africa. When I returned to it in 1885, the nations of Europe were almost quarrelling with each other as to the various portions of Africa which they could obtain. I do not exactly know the cause of this sudden revolution. But there it is. It is a great force—a great civilising, Christianising force."

It was typical of this country, he said, that her share in this general movement should have been mainly initiated by private enterprise, and he referred in turn to the work of the three great Chartered Companies—the Niger, the South African, and the East African—but dwelt at greatest length upon the last. The Scottish nationality of its founders was duly brought forward as a passport to the favour of his present audience. He was the reverse of encouraging as to its commercial prospects. It would be long, he said, before its territories would be fit for colonisation. But, in its inspiration, it was more purely philanthropic than either of the other two undertakings. "Its object, I believe, has been to deal a deadly blow at the Slave Trade, the destruction of which has been, along with our own commercial and material progress, the animating impulse of English policy in those regions for nearly a century." He hoped that they were now within measurable distance of seeing "the utter destruction of that hateful traffic," and he referred to the decisive action towards that end which had already signalised the establishment of our Pro-

\(^1\) See Chapter XIII.
SLAVE CARAVANS FROM THE LAKES 311

tectorate in Zanzibar. But the slave-raiders were still able to convey their wretched merchandise by various routes across the desert belt of country which lay between the high lands around Lake Victoria and the sea—country lying within the Company’s “sphere of interest.” “There is no doubt that the slave caravans across that territory can be destroyed by one method and one method certainly, if that method can be applied.” They were primarily trade caravans, and while it was impossible to intercept and detect their illicit proceedings at all points, a railway would compete them out of existence. “If there were no caravans there would be no means of carrying slaves from the interior to the coast.” Such a railway the Company had projected.

“From a Foreign Office point of view, I take a very deep interest in this railway. But I must tell you fairly that it is from a purely Foreign Office point of view. Sir William Mackinnon is of opinion that he cannot construct this railway without Government help, and I always speak of the Treasury with awe, still more the Treasury when it is acting, as in this case it necessarily must act, under the guidance of and according to the principles of the House of Commons. Whether the Treasury will be able, consistently with the sound principles of finance which it has always upheld, to give Sir William Mackinnon the assistance which he requires, or whether it must be deferred to a distant date, I do not know; but whenever that railway can be made I believe that the end of the African exportation of the slave will have been attained.” (May 20, 1891.)

Backed by the support of the philanthropic and missionary public, the Cabinet at length felt itself strong enough to defy parliamentary precisians, and at the close of the session it formally agreed to the preliminary step of placing a vote for £25,000 for the
survey of the projected line upon the estimates of the coming year. Its chief retired satisfied to Puys, from whence he wrote to Mr. Goschen, evidently in high spirits, to discuss the procedure to be adopted in spending the money and, incidentally, to try and "poke up" the Treasury through its Cabinet representative.

The uncivilised state of the country through which the survey was to be taken made an armed escort necessary.

_To Mr. Goschen, August 29, 1891._—_Puys._

"... My own view of the way in which the work should be done is this. Let Lugard, with half the force he is now withdrawing from Uganda, come down to the coast, or, if you prefer Indian policemen, (they are costly articles!) let him come down to the coast alone and meet them. Let him have command of the expedition. His orders should be that the surveyors are to survey whatever country they think necessary between Mombasa and Uganda—and that he is to see that they do so in safety. Give him a sufficient pay out of the £25,000; and let him and Berkeley 1 be responsible for spending the rest. With these instructions he should have supreme command. He is to understand that he must not exceed the £25,000. If he does, there will be no more forthcoming. The surveyors, selected by you, will be under his orders, but he will be instructed to give them every latitude and complete discretion as to the execution of their technical duties. Having done this and got your vote, make no conditions: require no guarantees or securities; and challenge no expenditure, unless it is obviously unreasonable even to unofficial eyes. Do not attempt to keep an exact Treasury control, though of course you will receive general reports of expenditure and vouchers when they can be had. . . .

1 Mr. Ernest Berkeley, appointed this year as administrator of the Company in East Africa.
"I have ventured to give you my views briefly on this matter, for the liberation of my soul,—but I am sorry to say that in testifying against the departmental tradition, I generally find myself preaching in the wilderness.

"In this case I have a great dread of the wisdom of Downing Street. It is rough Colonist's work—to be done by trusting well-chosen men—who will do the job as best they can,—by hardihood, resource, and a quick eye—but often with irregularities in detail, against which you cannot guard without embarrassing them."

In his further correspondence with the Chancellor from Puys, he assumes the logical corollary of a subsequent Treasury guarantee for the construction of the line. Even more might be achieved. Holiday meditations over the map suggested to him a method of spreading the expense so as to include a general attack on the slavers by water as well as by land. Might not the railway be taken from the highest navigable point of the river Tana instead of from the coast, thus halving its length and leaving a margin of funds for the construction of Lake gunboats?

Meanwhile Mr. Goschen had been discussing trade prospects with some of the directors and was becoming anxious as to the burden which a guarantee might ultimately entail on the taxpayer. Lord Salisbury had no consolation to offer him on that head, but summoned him to higher grounds of policy.

To Mr. Goschen, September 20, 1891.

"... I am afraid that, if you examine into the finances of the E.A. Company, you will not be very much pleased by the result. They have undertaken a speculation which cannot pay unless there are minerals. For the peculiar vegetable products of Africa the market is limited, and cereals could not be
produced and brought to the coast at a price that would compete with Indian produce.

“But though there is not much to be done in the way of trade, there is a great work of civilisation before them, and to H.M.G. which is under a permanent obligation to spend money upon the slave trade, judicious assistance in measures which will kill the slave trade may be a very profitable outlay of money.

“If I had my way and could command the assent of the House of Commons, I should put two steamers on each of the three lakes—Nyasa, Nyanza, and Tanganyika. Then put two more on the Tana and make the short railway from Tana to Nyanza lake. The slave trade of the East African coast south of Guardafui would be at an end. Nothing would then remain except watching the Red Sea...

“As far as I can judge from the map, the Northern Railway will run over a far less mountainous country than the Southern. By beginning your railway at three hundred miles from the coast, you will to a great extent evade the water difficulty.

“My impression is that the eight steamers together ought not to cost £50,000. But in the first instance you might halve the expense by beginning with one upon each piece of water. They will require to be musket proof; and they must carry Maxims and quickfirers, but otherwise they need not be armed.”

The experts refused to consider the Tana compromise; and Lord Salisbury, regretfully abandoning for the present the project of gunboat patrols, closed the correspondence by enjoining upon his colleague to “let the survey go forward, reserving all decision upon its results to a future time” (September 29, 1891).

The survey did go forward, under the urgency of his pressure, without even waiting for its cost to be voted by the House of Commons, an act of disrespect to Parliament which roused Mr. Gladstone, who was shocked by the whole proceeding, to eloquent heights
of denunciation when the House met in February. It was completed just before the fall of the Unionist Government in that summer of '92.

Even at the cost of chronological order the brief story of Lord Salisbury's association with this cherished project must be carried to its close. Lord Rosebery, during his succeeding Ministry, had his hands full with the task of persuading his colleagues and followers, first to the expense of taking over Uganda and then to that of finally buying out the Company, and when Lord Salisbury returned to office in '95 the railway was still unbegun, though it had now been nearly eight years in preparation. He put its construction in hand at once, and for the next five years championed its claims for support from a sceptical Treasury through all the emerging obstacles and unreckoned expenses which beset the progress of a pioneer line. Those who were in his intimacy can recall the special place which, during those later years, "the Mombasa railway" occupied in his thought and conversation. His attitude towards it might be described as one of militant paternity. His earlier doubts as to its economic soundness were merged in confident forecasts of an ultimate return. The various engineering difficulties which it had to overcome and the tantalising delays in its advance became matters of genuinely personal concern. Some of the obstacles met with, racy of the environment, appealed to him with a more detached interest. There was an episode of a man-eating lion whose incidents, as they were unfolded in successive official telegrams, he would report in vivid language to his home audience: the unfortunate Indian station-master, barricaded in his telegraph-box, tapping out desperate appeals for rescue, while his assistant clung cross-legged to the top of a signal post
and the lion paraded the platform in unchallenged possession; the hastily raised stockades, the night bonfires, which proved as futile against the animal’s morbid ferocity as were the efforts for his destruction of the unskilled marksmen who were alone available; the tragic toll taken from the midst of a waggon-full of sleeping coolies, and the final flight to the coast, before this solitary enemy, of the whole of the railway and engineering staff—black, white, and brown. All work had to be suspended until the fortunes of war were at length reversed through the arrival of two expert and rejoicing shikari, seconded on telegraphic demand from their military duties in India. More normal memories recall the sheaves of photographs sent home periodically from rail-head, and brought out for sympathetic inspection: the pictured troops of wild animals, flocking, fearlessly inquisitive, round the advancing herald of their doomed destruction; the changing vistas of mountain, forest, and pasture-land, still virgin to the white man’s tread, through which the line was slowly pushing its way. The slowness was a disenchantment to his expectation, but the imaginative appeal did not fade—the railway remained for him the tangible symbol and guarantee of the “civilising, Christianising” task over whose inception he had presided. He just lived to see the accomplishment of its initial stage—postponed far beyond the date of his original hopes. It reached the shores of Lake Victoria in 1902—the year before his death and that of his final retirement from office.
CHAPTER XI

THE PARTITION OF AFRICA (4)

THE FRENCH AND ITALIAN NEGOTIATIONS

1890–1891

ISSUES OF THE PARTITION

As was freely pointed out by critics of Lord Salisbury's African diplomacy, Heligoland was not the only price which he had to pay for his East African settlement. A mutual agreement to respect the independence of Zanzibar, which had been entered into in 1862 between France and England, gave the former a *locus standi* for protest against the new Protectorate. She at once made clear her intention of availing herself of it. Her press was suffering under an especially severe attack of Anglophobia. Sir Evelyn Baring had, after some difficulty, succeeded in effecting a large saving on his budget through the conversion of some of Egypt's international debt: France had declared that she must refuse consent to its being used for purposes of administrative reform so long as England refused to fix a term to her indefensible occupation: mutual recriminations had ensued as to which Power was responsible for the incidental sacrifice of the unlucky fellaheen on the political altar, and French anger had been coincidently reinforced by a violent development of the Newfoundland quarrel.1

1 See below, Chapter XII.

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It was thus upon an already inflamed sense of injury that there burst the news of the Anglo-German Convention, with England's sensational acquisition of Colonial opportunity and Germany's panegyric of triumph over Heligoland. "As you have given Heligoland to Germany," grimly observed the Foreign Minister, M. Ribot, to the British ambassador on the day after the news had reached Paris, "I suppose that you will now not mind handing Jersey over to us?" The "moral damage" suffered by France in the Zanzibar Protectorate—there was no question of any damage of a more solid description—became hysterically magnified in the public eye: "The tension of feeling here," wrote Lord Lytton on June 29, "is certainly intense, owing to the scuttlesful of coal which the press has been throwing, coup-sur-coup, on the burning questions of Newfoundland, Zanzibar, and Egypt. The journalists talk as if we were almost on the eve of war."

The outbreak had not been unforeseen. Count Hatzfeldt in one of his despatches home expresses surprise that in the conversations which Lord Salisbury had had with him about the Convention he had completely ignored the indignation which it would certainly arouse in France. The British Minister may perhaps have thought the subject an unsuitable one for discussion with the German ambassador. He certainly displayed no symptom of having been taken by surprise when the event happened. Lord Lytton was formally instructed to invite French consent to the Convention within eight days of its publication, and the propitiatory terms to be offered were brought forward with a smooth rapidity which suggested a plan prepared.

There was an initial obstacle to the opening of the negotiation in Lord Salisbury's refusal to admit that
any infraction of the Treaty of 1862 had taken place. The Sultan welcomed the Protectorate, he said, and it could not therefore be described as an interference with his independence. M. Ribot did not argue the point on its merits, but simply told Lord Lytton that for him to consent to a discussion of the subject on that basis would be to ensure his own immediate defeat in the Chamber. The difficulty was got over by a skilfully worded approach which neither forced the British interpretation nor endorsed the French one. Lord Lytton informed M. Ribot that he had been instructed to express the hope that in view of the advantages secured to the Sultan and the people of Zanzibar by the Protectorate, "the French Government would consent to such a modification of the Treaty of 1862 as would enable them to accept and approve of the change which the Sultan of Zanzibar had freely and independently accepted" (June 28).

Conversations were at once begun in London as to the terms upon which the invited consent was to be given. The rapidity with which they were agreed upon was in notable contrast to the course of the earlier German negotiations. There were tentative proposals for the inclusion of a bargain in which a more definite recognition of France's rights in Tunis would balance a suspension of her obstruction in Egypt. But they did not materialise. It is to be presumed that the susceptibilities of Italy on the one hand and of the French chauvinists on the other offered an insuperable obstacle, and the arrangement actually come to was simply one of placatory offering on the part of England. France agreed to approve of the Zanzibar Protectorate on consideration of England's recognising her protectorate over Madagascar and the addition of the Algerian hinterland to her African sphere of influence. This hinterland was to
be measured generously so as to extend as far south as Lake Chad and the frontier of the Niger Company's operations, and thus include practically the whole of the western Sahara. A Commission was appointed to delimitate the new frontier, and Lord Salisbury wrote to Mr. Egerton, the Secretary of Legation at Paris and the delegate nominated by the Foreign Office, to put him into communication with Sir George Goldie, the founder and actual Governor of Northern Nigeria: "In this matter the interests of this country are the interests of the Royal Niger Company. . . . I do not myself anticipate any rapid progress—and I think the possibility foreseen in the agreement, of a failure to come to any result is not outside the bounds of probability" (August 10). The frontier was, in fact, not definitely delimitated till eight years later.

This agreement has been the most severely criticised of Lord Salisbury's African transactions, and, on the face of it, the return offered was large for an uninterested onlooker's acquiescence. France's permanent goodwill was admittedly unattainable except at the sacrifice of our whole position in Egypt: she had no real interest in Zanzibar and would certainly not have gone to war with us over the question of its protectorate. It has been held, therefore, that Lord Salisbury made a bad bargain in offering recognition of such extensive claims for the sake of an approval which England could very well have done without.

Had the recognition involved any sacrifice of British interests or general policy, he would probably have agreed. But, that limitation being understood, he would not have admitted that the prevention of another running sore in Anglo-French relations, however irrationally threatened, was not worth a great effort. The tenacity of the popular memory for grievances, which has always been a characteristic of France, had
at this time acquired a dangerous power through the dependence and instability of her parliamentary Ministers. There were French statesmen who already admitted freely in private conversation, both with Lord Salisbury and Lord Lytton, that the demand for a British evacuation of Egypt had become an impracticable anachronism; but they always added the corollary that no public man in France would dare to weaken in insistence upon it. On that issue this enthroned irresponsibility had to be defied. But that was all the more reason for not adding occasions for its further irritation. A Zanzibar added to Egypt as a permanent reinforcement to press denunciations of England's unscrupulous ambition and disregard for international law would have aggravated an evil whose lack of rational foundation constituted its principal danger.

On the same grounds, terms based on an abstractedly just measurement of values would have been useless for the purpose aimed at. M. Ribot and his colleagues were probably perfectly conscious of France's detachment from all real interest in the fate of Zanzibar and the fragility of her claim for compensation. But Lord Salisbury was not now diplomatising with M. Ribot and his colleagues: the people whom he wished to satisfy—or at all events to silence—were the Paris public of pressmen and electioneering politicians. His and M. Waddington's search was therefore directed to the discovery of terms which would be spectacular enough to achieve that object without impairing either the interests of England or those of general white policy in Africa.

The ones decided on were calculated to effect that purpose both in its positive and negative aspects. The position in Madagascar was in some ways reminiscent of that in Egypt. Englishmen had at one
time competed there on equal terms with Frenchmen and still had considerable commercial and missionary interests in the island. But in the last few years they had fallen behind in the race. France’s pre-eminence had been accepted, however reluctantly, by the native rulers; its formal recognition and legalisation would only be advancing an already determined issue and would be accordant with Lord Salisbury’s creed of undivided responsibilities. He was doing by France in Madagascar as he claimed that she in Egypt, and Germany in Zanzibar, should do by England. The allocation of the Algerian hinterland was in the same way only anticipatory of the part which France must ultimately play in the development and civilisation of those regions. In the imaginative appeal of its geographical magnitude it would further be of positive advantage in helping to deflect the African aspirations of her public from east to west.

The Convention was signed on August 5—five weeks after the one concluded with Germany. In defending it in the House of Lords the following week, Lord Salisbury succumbed—even though it was only in the employment of a single fatally appropriate and quotable adjective—to his besetting temptation to mocking comment. Though frequently and defiantly yielded to in his home-speaking, the temptation was, as a rule, scrupulously resisted where foreign affairs were concerned. Refreshing touches of irony had diversified the seriousness of his exhaustive account of the Anglo-German Convention in the House of Lords; but they had been exclusively directed against his own compatriots. Mr. Rhodes’ proclaimed ideal of an unbroken British “Cape to Cairo” route, which was then the last word of zealous Imperialism, was referred to as “a curious idea which had lately become prevalent.” It would mean, he
pointed out, a long tract of narrow occupation, hedged in by two white protectorates—those of Germany and Belgium—and placed at a distance of three months' march from our own sea-base: “I cannot imagine a more inconvenient possession!” Commenting on the excitement which had been roused in England over the retention of Lake Ngami and its surrounding deserts, “I think,” he said, “that the constant study of maps is apt to disturb men's reasoning powers. . . . We have had a fierce conflict over the possession of a lake whose name I am afraid I cannot pronounce correctly—I think it is Lake Ngami—our only difficulty being that we do not know where it is. . . . There are indeed great doubts as to whether it is a lake at all or only a bed of rushes.”

Again, at the Mansion House dinner to Ministers at the close of the session, after a gravely earnest congratulation on the conclusion of agreements which would remove “the most probable and dangerous causes of possible quarrel between nations which ought always to be at peace,” though he had concluded with a gibe, it was a gibe directed against the whole body of negotiators, amongst whom he himself had been the most prominent. “We have been engaged in drawing lines upon maps where no white man's foot has ever trod: we have been giving away mountains and rivers and lakes to each other, only hindered by the small impediment that we never knew exactly where the mountains and rivers and lakes were” (August 6, 1890).

Perhaps, since the concessions in the French Treaty were all on one side, he did not feel called to carefulness, or perhaps—as likely an explanation—the fatigues of this strenuous session had begun to tell on him. To quote his own confession: “I dislike speaking when I am tired, not because I am afraid
of being dull, but because I’m afraid of not being dull enough.” His sense of mockery had been stirred by the solemn reproaches which had been addressed to him by a section of his own followers for having, in the extent assigned to the Algerian hinterland, abandoned so vast a portion of the map of Africa to French colouring. He admitted the large amount of mileage reserved for our neighbour’s development, but pointed out demurely that the value of land was usually measured by its quality as well as by its extent: “This is what agriculturists would call very ‘light’ land” (August 11, 1890). No doubt the attenuated audience of peer-landowners present at an August sitting smiled appreciatively at this euphonious reference to the sands of Sahara. But the French ambassador, glowering from the gallery, visualised the comments in the morrow’s press and the blow given to the popular enthusiasm for France’s new acquisition which had been carefully cultivated in Paris. When the next day’s mail brought corroboration of his fears, he vented his feelings in a scolding note to the Minister. His remarks, he told him, had caused great surprise at Paris and had much diminished the good feeling created by the arrangement: “No doubt the Sahara is not a garden and contains, as you say, much ‘light’ land; but your public reminder of the fact was, perhaps you will allow me to say, hardly necessary. You might well have left us to find it out” (August 13). No answer to this missive is recorded—a silence which may perhaps be taken as the admission of a guilty conscience.

Germany, Portugal, and France did not exhaust the list of Powers whose African ambitions made a call upon Lord Salisbury’s diplomacy during these
THE FIRST EARL OF CROMER
(Sir Evelyn Baring)

From a photograph by G. C. Beresford
crucial two years. In the autumn of '89, Signor Crispi had joined the number of competitors with instructions to Count Tornielli \(^1\) to open discussion in Downing Street as to the rival claims of Italy and Egypt upon the territories lying to the north of Abyssinia. He had abandoned his unfruitful efforts to make a third with his two allies on the Zanzibar coast, and was looking for outlets for Italian energies in a forward movement from the port of Massowah and the newly founded colony of Eritrea northward along the Red Sea littoral and westward along the borders of Abyssinia towards Kassala. Kassala stood on one of the southern tributaries of the Nile, not far from the Abyssinian frontier. Its Egyptian garrison had been massacred by the Mahdi in 1885 under circumstances of peculiar cruelty, and its dervish conquerors were now fiercely contesting the Italian approach, still some scores of miles distant from the fortress itself.

Neither of these ambitions was welcomed at Cairo. Mutual accusations were constant between the British and Italian commandants of Suakin and Massowah. Sir Evelyn Baring transmitted the complaints of his subordinate home; appealed to the Foreign Office for diplomatic remonstrances; growled at Italian activities among the tribes around Suakin; and—evidently suspicious that Egyptian interests might be sacrificed to the exigencies of European politics—expressed a challenging hope that in any case his chief would insist upon "hands off" at Kassala. Lord Salisbury responded with re-assuring criticism of his allies—though it was the reckless unwisdom, from their own point of view, of their Minister's policy which seemed mainly to impress him: "The Italians are exceedingly tiresome

\(^1\) Italian ambassador in London.
with their misplaced and suicidal African ambitions, and I have no wish that their aspirations should be gratified at the cost of any solid sacrifice on our part” (November 15, 1889). He concurred fully as to the inviolability of the valley of the Nile even in its affluents, but was unsympathetic as to the Eastern Soudan. Neither Egypt nor England, he declared, had more than secondary interests there, and he refused to be disturbed at the prospect of Italian competition on the coasts of the Red Sea.

These imperfect sympathies were shown more emphatically in the following spring of 1890 in connection with a desert expedition which Sir Evelyn urged upon him. The crushing defeat of the Khalifa’s forces at Toski had secured present peace on Egypt’s southern frontier, but, in the neighbourhood of Suakin, the dervishes were still actively in the field. The military authorities in Cairo were anxious to strike them a decisive blow by taking Tokar, their principal stronghold on the coast, and the Consul-General’s support had been gained for the project. Tokar was about fifty miles south of Suakin, and its capture—so Sir Evelyn’s advisers assured him—could be effected, probably without firing a shot, certainly at very small cost in men or money, and might prove the signal for a final collapse of Mahdism in the Soudan.

But Lord Salisbury would have none of it. The military genesis of the proposal and the optimistic anticipations of its advocates sufficed in themselves to provoke him to combative scepticism. Sir Evelyn was persistent, and pages of argument on the subject were interchanged between Cairo and London during that spring and autumn. One extract will suffice for quotation. It shows incidentally the place which the enterprise that was only to materialise eight
years later was already occupying in the writer's thoughts.

_To Sir Evelyn Baring, March 28, 1890._

"... The argument you have used with so much force in respect to Kassala, that it gives to the Power occupying it command over one of the main affluents of the Nile, and therefore a power of diverting a portion of the supply which is vital to Egypt, does not apply to any possessions on the east coast. Tokar has nothing to do with the Nile Valley. The doctrine of the military authorities that it is necessary to possess the territory round Suakim in order to protect the flank of Wady Halfa, which is 300 miles off, is too abstruse for civilian comprehension, and though undoubtedly there is a certain advantage in bringing a fertile territory under regular government, and so assuring its regular cultivation, it is not an advantage of a kind which would justify a military operation on which much certain expense and many possible embarrassments necessarily follow. . . . When once you have permitted a military advance, the extent of that military advance scarcely remains within your own discretion. It is always open to the military authorities to discover in the immediate vicinity of the area to which your orders confine them, some danger against which it is absolutely necessary to guard, some strategic position whose invaluable qualities will repay ten times any risk or cost that its occupation may involve. You have no means of arguing against them. They are upon their own territory and can set down your opposition to civilian ignorance; and so, step by step, the imperious exactions of military necessity will lead you on into the desert. . . .

"As far as I can see matters, I should say that until you have money enough to justify you in advancing to Berber, you had better remain quiet. When that time has arrived you may possibly go to Khartoum and you may possibly contemplate the railway from
Berber to Suakim. Such measures may be necessary for the purpose of protecting your Nile Valley against the dominion of any outside Power, and if you have any money to throw away, or any money to justify an expenditure which will not yield an immediate return, the operation may not be without profit. After that time, when you are masters of the Nile Valley, you may, as a matter of pure luxury, extend your dominion to the Red Sea. But I confess I look with apprehension upon a reversal of the process, because I think it is only by a forced process of reasoning that the Eastern Soudan, draining into the Red Sea, is represented as essential to the safety of Egypt."

The season was now becoming too advanced for desert operations, and Sir Evelyn suspended his appeals; but not before he had reinforced them by an argument which must have had a familiar ring to his correspondent. The day of diplomatic delimitations was approaching, and even this transcendental representative of the "man-on-the-spot" was true to the universal impulse to establish de facto possession in time. Suakin must be safeguarded from competitive approach.

*From Sir Evelyn Baring, April 4, 1890.*

"... We should keep the Italians away from the walls of Suakim, and I am beginning to doubt whether anything short of action will stop them. The Nile Valley is, of course, the most important point. At the same time I do not at all want to have Crispi's Bersaglieri running all over the Eastern Soudan, and especially I do not want them to bring under their influence the tribes which lie between Suakim and Berber. The Suakim-Berber route, rather than the Nile Valley, must eventually be the commercial route for the Soudan. . . ."

Lord Salisbury had already drafted a demarcation of "spheres of influence" with Count Tornielli, and
wrote reassuringly that the draft would leave Tokar well on the Egyptian side of the line. It was sent for approval to Cairo and criticised there on divers grounds of detail. The Foreign Minister was just entering upon the most crowded weeks of that year of arduous negotiation. Count Hatzfeldt and the two Chartered Companies were by now daily assailing him with incompatible demands, impossible expectations, and indignant refusals; in the silent travail of his own brain their requirements and his own were being balanced through complicated processes of modification and decision towards the conciliation formulated three weeks later; at the same time proposals and counter-proposals were being exchanged alternately with Lisbon and Cape Town, in the vain search for terms mutually acceptable, and the satisfaction of foreseen French jealousy was no doubt already adding its quota of demand upon his inventive faculties. So that self-protection may well be assumed as the main inspiration of the procedure which he now suggested for the solution of this minor problem.

He wrote on April 25 that the objections offered convinced him that it was useless for him and Count Tornielli to attempt a settlement on their borrowed and contradictory information. To remit its discussion to the irate frontier officials at Suakin and Massowah would be decisive of failure. There was a middle course: Sir Evelyn would shortly be coming home on leave—why should not he himself conduct the negotiation in London? Apology was offered for a devolution of responsibility so unusual in this quarter:

To Sir Evelyn Baring, April 25, 1890.

"... The temperature of the points of contact between British and Italian authority is at boiling
point in the Soudan, but it is at zero here, and it is impossible for us to give full effect to the considerations of which we only feel the force vicariously.

"If it were a directly or distinctly British interest that were in question, I should feel that the whole responsibility for the decision was here and should act with more confidence; but I do not think that I have a right to take that view with respect to these matters of Egyptian interest, because if what is, at all events, the formal and official theory of our relations be carried out, the time will come when these matters will cease to be of any interest whatever to England but will still be of all absorbing interest to Egypt. . . ."

Sir Evelyn commented bluntly that, since he did not believe in the possibility of evacuation—"for a long time to come at all events"—he attached small importance to the distinction between English and Egyptian interests. But that was a matter for Lord Salisbury's judgment and he offered no objection to an acceptance of the invitation.

When the time arrived, the original plan was modified. It was arranged that Sir Evelyn, instead of negotiating with the ambassador in London, should visit Italy on his way back to Cairo and confer with Signor Crispi himself. Lord Salisbury sent informal instructions in a letter from La Bourboule, where he was recuperating after his hard-pressed summer. Personal intercourse in London had evidently reduced the detail of coast delimitation to its true proportions, and there was now no substantial difference of policy between the two chiefs:

To Sir Evelyn Baring, August 31, 1890.

"I am now writing to say one word about the negotiations. That we should insist on the command of all affluents of the Nile, so far as Egypt formerly
possessed them, is agreed. I think you also agreed that we have no such well defined and imperative interests to safeguard on the Red Sea slope. I am not counselling unlimited concession; but our interests, or the interests of our ward, Egypt, in that region, do not force themselves on the mind and require the magnifying glass of military theory to be visible at all. There is only one point that interests me in that direction—namely, that you should not sanction the tribal theory of dominion. The Italians are rather fond of the view that if one end of a tribe submit to them, they have a right to all the soil over which that tribe may have or may claim to have rights. . . . Actual right over the soil itself, proved by the exercise upon it of the functions of a ruler, is the only title we could accept. It is possible that you may not persuade the Italians to accept this principle; or to keep their hands off the affluents of the Nile. In that case, we must be content to let the negotiations be adjourned—putting in a note to make it clear what our claims are.

"I do not think England will lose by delay. Italy is pursuing a policy which is financially impossible. Sooner or later she must recede from it, and then she will not be so particular about frontiers. I daresay things will go on as they do now so long as Crispi is at the head of affairs.—But he is 71! . . ."

The meeting took place at Naples. It would have presented an interesting psychological contrast to listeners—between the cool bluntness and glorified common sense of the English civil servant and the restless, eloquent emotionalism of the Sicilian peasant. One cannot help wondering whether, in arranging or agreeing to the conference, Lord Salisbury had not thought more about the initiation of his Cairo fellow-worker into the difficulties of European diplomacy than of success in the actual negotiation. But the ground which Signor Crispi took up would
have made success impossible under any auspices. Though he asserted no present purpose of going to Kassala, he not only refused to pledge himself not to go or remain there, but—arguing rashly from the particular to the general—declared that, in his view, Egypt, in abandoning the Soudan six years before, had lost for herself and for England all prior claim to dominion in the Nile Valley.

That such a contention would be unhesitatingly repudiated by any British representative seems to have come as a new light to him: "Crispi," wrote Sir Evelyn, after the final talk, "is evidently very much put out at the failure of the negotiation. . . . He said, 'Vous m'avez traité en ennemi. La France même n'aurait pas fait ça.' He attributes the failure, I think, to personal enmity on my part to the Italians. He then went on to say that the whole incident would in no way change his friendly attitude towards England" (October 11, 1890).

Lord Salisbury made argumentative use of this conversation a month later when his Consul-General returned to the charge about Tokar. In the light of what it had revealed, would the immediate crumbling of dervish power, assuming that as a possible issue of the proposed expedition, be so wholly desirable after all? If the Khalifa's dominion were to disappear, what would happen to the territory now under his control? "Would it wait, masterless and ownerless, till your financial recovery would enable you to govern it from Cairo? . . . I imagine not!" There was, they now knew, another nation—"which would be happy to provide a master and an owner for the Valley of the Nile to which, as you were told in Naples, the title of Egypt had lapsed." That being so, would it not be better to think twice before engaging in further
merely destructive attacks upon the Arabs? "Of course," he concludes, "these observations are all written on the assumption that you are not now financially ready to go to Khartoum. Whenever you are ready to do so, they cease to have any application" (November 21, 1890).

Sir Evelyn’s reply was disarming, coming from such an unhesitating champion of his own views and one who rarely wasted ink on compliment: “Apart from any official connection, I have—pardon me for saying so—such confidence in your political coup d'œil, that, if you think there are serious objections to the policy, the chances are enormously in favour of your being right and my being wrong. But I should like to tell you why I recommend it” (November 28, 1890).

The reasons now offered were studiously limited and practical—Sir Evelyn’s own, purged from the military aspirations of which he had been the mouth-piece in the spring. He wholly accepted his chief’s political diagnosis and was prepared to answer for it that the expedition would be rigidly restricted to its immediate objective. The taking of Tokar would make things more comfortable at Suakin, would assist in the fight against the Red Sea slave-trade, and would, so he was assured, be of the easiest achievement. That was all.

After one more interchange of letters, Lord Salisbury gave in, and in the new year Tokar was duly attacked and taken. None of the extensions of risk which he had dreaded followed, but on the other hand, the promised insignificance of Arab defence swelled in experience to an army of several thousands and there was substantial loss of life in both forces. The long argument between the two chiefs closed with tacit withdrawals on both sides; with a congratulatory message from Lord Salisbury to the troops and an
indignant denunciation of his own intelligence department from Sir Evelyn: "If I had known how strong the dervishes were, I should certainly have hesitated to recommend the advance."

February 1891 saw the consummation, so long desired by the Prime Minister, of Signor Crispi's fall from power. He was defeated in the Italian Chamber, mainly on account of the reckless extravagance of his Colonial policy. His successor, the Marchese di Rudini, showed a more accommodating temper, though he initiated no fundamental change in policy. The African negotiation between England and Italy was brought to a successful conclusion, and an agreement was signed before the summer. The Italians recognised Egypt's claim to the ultimate reversion of Kassala, and on that understanding the British Government waived objection to its occupation by them as a temporary measure, should their warfare with the common dervish enemy require it. A year or two afterwards they availed themselves of the permission—with results so disastrous to themselves that, in the event, they became more anxious to hand it over to the Anglo-Egyptian forces than they had ever been to take possession of it themselves.

One or two small readjustments in the Anglo-French frontiers in Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast were made in '92. Otherwise, this agreement with Italy was the last of the series of African demarcations for which Lord Salisbury was responsible in this Ministry. For seven years no further move of importance was made. Only two substantial gaps had been left in the apportionment of political control among the white Powers. On the middle Niger no limits had been fixed to the mutual approach of French and English enterprise and Arab anarchy still reigned unchecked in the Egyptian Soudan. When
the British conquest of the Nile Valley in '98 at last convinced the French public of the futility of their Egyptian die-hards and heralded the close of the sixteen years' quarrel, Lord Salisbury was again in office. It still fell to him, therefore, to negotiate the agreement upon Nigerian boundaries and the delimitation of frontiers in the Soudan which finally completed the work of African partition.¹

His share in that unique transaction cannot be considered apart from the dominant influence which his country, whether by accident of inheritance or through the automatic operation of racial qualities, exercised upon its issue. A mere catalogue of the international instruments through which the partition was effected would in itself be expressive on that point. A small group of treaties would be found defining the frontiers of the Congo Free State, as against French, German, and Portuguese explorations; but these would be the only ones in the whole long list in which England was not a primary participator. Lord Salisbury was not in every instance the signatory agent. The settlement with Germany in the "South West" and the arrangements come to in the Berlin Conference of '85, under which the eastern frontiers of Nigeria were determined, were effected before he took office. But otherwise his name appears upon all the enacting documents.

When one comes to a less formal responsibility distinctions have to be drawn. The aspect of the

¹ "Finally completed" is not quite accurate. White "spheres of influence" in Morocco are of post-war delimitation, and there were also Somaliland delimitations which dragged on indeterminately for some years.
“scramble” which loomed largest in the exultant eyes of his own public—and, it may be, though to a lessapplausive conclusion, in those of their continental neighbours also—was the uniquely rapid growth of British dominion which accompanied it. Lord Rosebery, speaking in 1896, estimated the amount of territory which had been added to the British Empire within the last twelve years at two and a half million square miles, and the larger part of this increase was contributed by Africa. For reasons already suggested at the beginning of this account, this increase cannot be attributed to the action of any Government or Minister. The dynamic force of adventure and colonisation which achieved it, operating simultaneously with a similar though less vigorously effective impulse on other nations, produced the situation with which Lord Salisbury had to deal. He had nothing to do with its inception. His watchful insistence upon averting the competitive intrusion, successively, of Germany, Italy, and France upon the Nile Valley might justify a more positive description of his action in that instance. But with that doubtful exception—inspired as it was, originally, by the occupation of Egypt, which he had inherited—his functions with respect to the Imperial aspect of the partition were limited in reality to a selective regulation of the British advance. He prepared pathways for it, he removed obstacles from its course, at times he deflected or even arrested it. The left wing of his parliamentary opponents condemned his insistence upon taking Imperial control of it: the right wing of his own followers criticised the hamper which he imposed on it in deference to foreign rivals. But in no case could its inspiration be referred to him. His association with it was essentially dependent and consequential.
It was in his influence upon the partition in its international aspect that the part which he played was both distinctively individual and of large importance. The negotiations which have been dealt with in the foregoing pages suggest comment of peculiar biographical interest. The unanimity with which his leadership was accepted by the foreign Powers engaged in them and the initiative which they abandoned to him in each successive transaction are notable features in the record. This was no doubt in part due to his position as the representative of Great Britain. But his right to leadership would hardly have been so willingly accorded had it rested only on that title. England’s achieved pre-eminence in colonisation did not make her popular among her more recently arrived rivals. The feeling against her was not then so strong as it became subsequently in presence of the full realisation of her Imperial expansion. But already she was charged with greediness, with pushful ambition, with unscrupulous tenacity in adhering to the advantages which fortune or accident threw in her way. Whether actually justified or not, such judgments became inevitable from the moment that continental nations entered as competitors in a race in which her start of centuries handicapped them so heavily against her. But the note of jealous antagonism is curiously unprominent among Lord Salisbury’s foreign correspondents. They assume in him throughout a responsive understanding of their requirements; they challenge his ingenuity to discover issues of conciliation; they appeal to his personal sense of justice or moderation against the more extreme demands of some of his compatriots. There are moments indeed when their attitude towards him would not have appeared out of place in consultation with a neutral arbitrator.
The faculty for imaginative comprehension and detached judgment so witnessed to bore immediate fruit in what was undoubtedly the most important reward of his efforts, as it was the one upon which he was most urgently intent—the peaceful adjustment of conflicting international interests in an atmosphere tense with exaggerated ambitions and embittered local jealousies. But it must also be held to have been largely responsible for a more distant and enduring result—the effective permanence of the settlements which were made under his guidance.

It should be noted that these treaties of delimitation differed from those to which one is accustomed in European diplomacy, in that they were mainly concerned with contemplated developments as distinct from existent conditions. Whole tracts in the territories apportioned were at the time unoccupied, or but partially occupied, by their destined rulers. The maps drawn were largely prophetic and the stability of the arrangements come to had to depend upon the way in which the nations concerned would fill in the framework provided for them—an issue which could only be prepared for through a calculation of their individual characteristics and circumstances.

Lord Salisbury's consciousness of this requirement is witnessed to more than once in his utterances as well as in his action. We see it in the grounds on which he based his justified confidence in the successful working of the settlement with Portugal in spite of the unpromising conditions under which it had been effected; in his irritated condemnation, for reasons of purely Italian interest, of Signor Crispi's policy—equally justified in the event; in his practical recognition of France's ambition of sentiment and its ineradicable strength—alien as the characteristic was to his own temperament and outlook. A recognition
of her faculty for dominion may be taken also as a contributory element in his attitude towards her claims, though the evidence of this is more negative. He never expressed doubt as to her ability to make good use of whatever was abandoned to her. He grumbles in his letters at the folly of her Egyptian obsession; at the fiscal egotism of her colonial policy and the injury which it inflicted on international commerce; but never—as with Italy—at her incapacity to digest her acquisitions, nor—as with Germany—to manage her native subjects.

It was in his arrangement with Germany that his power of comprehension—or, more accurately perhaps, of foresight—may be charged with failure. He recognised and, against the pressure of his followers and of his fellow-countrymen in the Dominions, insisted on deferring to her Colonial ambitions in their sober practical or commercial aspects. Apart from his complaisance in the Pacific, the opportunities which were reserved for her in East and West Africa under the Convention of 1890 proved in the event more than sufficient to occupy her colonising and trading energies for all the period in which she enjoyed them. But the bargain which he made for his own country in that Convention was too good not to outrage the expectations of her colonial enthusiasts. It is difficult, for instance, not to sympathise with the feelings of Dr. Karl Peters on that solitary journey homewards across the deserts to the Red Sea after his great adventure, when he learnt that the prize for which he had personally achieved and suffered so much had been signed away in London and Berlin; that by a stroke of the pen the hated rival had won in Uganda, Zanzibar, Nyasaland, and Central Africa a colonial empire by the side of which his original enterprise, which, at the outset, had made the Fatherland
the predominant power in East Africa, had shrunk into irremediable insignificance. Whatever it may have been to his rulers, Heligoland was poor compensation for him and his like—except as suggesting possibilities of retaliation. And so naval and colonial dreamers reacted upon one another in a mutual intoxication and a few years later were drinking together to the "day" of requital.

Lord Salisbury ignored this body of opinion and the offence offered to it, nor, at the time, did it appear to merit more serious consideration than did his own "wild men" among the jingoes. Prince Bismarck had just turned Dr. Peters out of his own colony; Count Caprivi was deriding his supporters in the Reichstag; the Emperor, exulting in his North Sea acquisition, was instructing his ambassador that "our East African interests merely come forward as matters for concession." What Lord Salisbury did not foresee was the progressive power which this unregarded group would in time acquire over the mind of its unstable monarch until the day came when he was himself to re-echo its aspirations in an indignant wail for "a place in the sun."

But we have been led aside to the discussion of an extraneous and indeed fortuitous sequel to the African partition: the Emperor William's character and the power which it gave—in other directions besides this one—to the irresponsibility of fanatics may almost be looked upon as a tragically abnormal accident. In Africa itself, setting aside such incidental influence upon later European politics, the arrangements made with Germany in 1890 stood the test of time as well as those effected with other countries. Thus it may be claimed that, except for the catastrophic disturbance produced by the Great War, the frontiers established in this partition have attained the prescriptive
strength of forty years’ existence without substantial change or the emergence of serious friction.

There is one subject notably absent from these letters, which would nowadays have taken a large place in any political correspondence about Africa. One may look in vain for expressions of hesitation about, or indeed for reference of any kind to, the ethical aspect of this organised European absorption of the black man’s territory.

As regarded Lord Salisbury his first approach to the African question was probably that which, in his House of Lords apologia for the German Convention, he described as having been originally that of Englishmen as a whole. Conscious of their virtual supremacy in influence on the shores of Africa, they had been content, he said, to leave political conditions as they were, in the hope that these lands “would gradually acquire their own proper civilisation without any interference on our part.” When the contrary impulses of foreign Powers and of our own missionaries, adventurers, and traders made such passive abstention impossible, he took hold of the new world of movement and set himself vigorously to guide it along paths of peace towards its goal of white possession.

To say that in entering on this policy he ignored the black man’s rights would not be true—would, in a sense, be the reverse of the truth. Certain of those rights he accepted as of peremptory obligation. First and foremost stood the right to a rescue from the curse of the Slave Trade. The supremacy of that claim upon him finds expression again and again in his actions and in his words, both in private and in
public. It was perhaps the only purely crusading impulse which was effectually felt by him and for which he did not hesitate to call for national sacrifice. Next, as opportunity opened out, came recognition of the black man's right to share in the religion and civilisation of which the white races were the trustees; and, finally, when the responsibilities of government had been fully shouldered, the right which he owned in common with all humanity to be well governed. Lord Salisbury had no illusions as to the prevalence of high altruistic virtue among the indiscriminate crowd whom every form of incongruous motive had brought to these undeveloped lands; his conviction to the contrary was a reinforcing element in his will for full annexation. One can recall the grim satisfaction with which he welcomed the report of how the pioneer administrator of a still unsettled district had summarily executed a white trader who had done to death an injured and resentful native husband. His reluctance to relax in any degree the Imperial power of control over the personal relations between the two races might indeed have invited criticism from protagonists of white supremacy. When the Bill for the Natal Constitution was under consideration in the summer of 1892, he demurred to one of the clauses submitted to the Cabinet by Lord Knutsford. Under it, he pointed out, "the overwhelming majority of natives would remain practically at the mercy of a Ministry chosen by the small minority of Colonists. . . . This seems to me hardly safe." He appealed for larger protective powers to be reserved to the Governor.

But among the black men's rights it did not appear that he or those who worked beside or under him included, even in thought, a right to independence or sovereignty in their own country. The reason is not far to seek. That generation had contemporary know-
ledge of what "Africa for the Africans" stood for before civilisation entered;—the dead, effortless degradation which it represented, broken only by interludes of blood-lust, slaughter, slavery, and unspeakable suffering. It was impossible for them to feel doubt—far less scruple—as to replacing it, wherever occasion served, by white dominion.

To the men at the top the ethical dilemma presented itself from the opposite direction. How far were they justified, for the rescue of these black populations, in placing fresh burdens of cost and responsibility upon their own people at home? In practice Lord Salisbury found varying solutions for this dilemma. The Treasury, true to its trust, championed negative replies in all instances; but the Prime Minister was at the most half-hearted in its support. In Uganda, just before leaving office, he warned the missionaries' friends that the Government must hesitate before embarking on the vast expense of "pacification" to which a bankrupt Company were inviting them. But, in Kenya, he called his Chancellor of the Exchequer to "a great work of civilisation" without hope of economic reward; in Nyasaland, he boldly took the burden of administration and anti-slave-trade warfare, ab initio, on Government shoulders; in Rhodesia, he only refrained from doing so with admitted reluctance.

The officials who, directly or in service of the Companies, implemented Government policy, were not troubled with these contradictory obligations: their task only began when the burden had been taken up. The leading men among them attained well-deserved distinction, and their names survive and will survive honourably in history. But behind them were unrecorded numbers to whom a tribute of memory is due. Scattered in isolated authority
over myriad troops of tribal savages; exiled in roadless wilds from all civilised amenities; confident in initiative; fearless in self-dependence; unresting in labour; reckless in their stake of health and often of life; they spent their best years in a service which brought little or no reward in wealth or fame. Single-hearted altruism need not be claimed for them; the impatience of small horizons, the racial instinct for adventure and mastery, ambition for distinction—had contributory part, no doubt, in the incitement of their activities. But—leaving aside inevitable exceptions—it may be affirmed that from the souls of these men the sense of mission and, if need be, of sacrifice in its fulfilment, was never far distant. The rigour of their lives will seem as superfluous as it would be intolerable to a generation bred to a world of softer and lesser demands: Imperialism in its stimulus as well as its opportunity was the root impulse of their political creed. But the ethic which governed their tutelage of the dependent peoples committed to their charge has assuredly nothing to fear from comparison with that of many later and more self-conscious champions of uncivilised humanity.
CHAPTER XII

1889-1891

DIPLOMACY AND THE DOMINIONS

THE BEHRING SEA SEAL FISHERIES AND THE FRENCH SHORE

While the rest of Europe was occupied in the engrossing task of partitioning the continent of Africa, the British Government suffered the penalty of world-wide empire by coincident claims on its attention from the other side of the Atlantic. Two disputes between foreign Powers and our self-governing colonies, both containing germs of dangerous development, became acute during this period.

One was the quarrel between Canada and the United States over the seal fisheries in the Behring Sea. About twenty years before, in the eighteen-sixties, the United States had bought Alaska from Russia, and with it the sealing rights upon the Pribyloff Islands, lying some hundreds of miles to the west of it, in the Behring Sea. Farther south stretched the shore of British Columbia, whose population at that period consisted of only a sparse sprinkling of British pioneers. The profits of the fisheries had now been leased by the American Government to a Company, powerful in Washington politics—a circumstance which, though never referred to officially, added a complicating element to the dispute.
The originally provocative cause lay in the family arrangements of the seals, which were not easily accommodated to proprietary rights based on geographical frontiers. During each year’s breeding season, in July and August, when they landed on the islands, America’s exclusive ownership of them was indisputable; in the winter months, when their vigorously nomadic habits dispersed them through illimitable stretches of ocean, they became as unquestionably the legitimate prey of individuals of any nationality who chose to attack them. But there were intermediate periods when mother seals were concentrating upon the breeding grounds in armies of millions, when the opportunity offered for slaughter by independent attack in the open sea became fruitfully destructive. The increase of population in British Columbia, with the consequently ever-growing number of predatory sealing-smacks issuing from her ports every summer, was creating an industry of substantial profit for the Canadians, with a corresponding diminution of returns for the American owners—or lease-holders—of the fishery. More than that, the American authorities contended—with undoubted justification—that since this independent slaughter was subject to none of the limiting regulations which were in force upon the breeding grounds themselves, the final extermination of the species was already in sight. Their Government had for some time clamoured for the interference of the Canadian, and ultimately of the Imperial Government of Great Britain, while their nationals carried on a petty warfare of more than doubtful legality with the intruding smacks.

In ’87–’88, Lord Salisbury had tried to negotiate a compromised agreement for close seasons between America and Canada. He had earned thereby con-
siderable unpopularity among his fellow-subjects without any mitigation of abusive defiance from American patriots. The Canadian Cabinet absolutely refused to take action and repudiated the whole of their opponents’ case. There was no need for restrictions of any kind—no danger of extermination for the seals: the only result of Government—or still worse of Imperial—interference, would be to secure larger profits for the American company at the cost of ruining the Queen’s subjects in Canada. There was indeed no question as to the loss with which their constituents would be threatened by the enforcement of any measure of protection.

When the interval created by the tail-twisting excitements of the Presidential election of ’88 and the Sackville-West incident had passed, Lord Salisbury urged Sir Julian Pauncefote, the newly appointed Minister at Washington, to lose no time in making efforts for the conclusion of an agreement between the two militant Governments.

To Sir Julian Pauncefote, June 26, 1889.

“. . . I hope you will bring us home more news about the Behring’s Sea matter. It is the only really black point on the Anglo-American horizon. I feel that we may have trouble any day, because the views of the two parties—the American and Canadian—are so very far apart. And the awkward part of the question is that if the Canadians have their way the seal must disappear; or, to put it another way, any effective rule for the preservation of the species must begin by forbidding the only kind of seal-catching in which the Canadians can take part. . . .”

This summer saw an extension of the most dangerous element in the controversy. President Harrison took under his direct patronage the questionable
methods by which his fellow-countrymen had been resisting the encroachments of the "poachers." He despatched revenue cutters to the Behring Sea with instructions to seize any Canadian vessels which they found there engaged upon sealing, disable them, and confiscate their booty. The instructions were carried out in more than one instance, and the news of each seizure added fuel to the flame of anger which was now raging throughout the Colony.

Lord Salisbury remonstrated at Washington and Sir Julian was instructed to inform Mr. Blaine, the Secretary of State, that all negotiation for a general settlement must be suspended unless his Government agreed to recognise the claims of the aggrieved smack-owners for compensation. Mr. Blaine professed himself willing to give them favourable consideration, and Sir Julian continued his unhopeful task of triangular discussion, reporting progress in his letters home. A joint committee of expert authorities in the life-history of seals was nominated. The Canadian experts reported in favour of the Canadian view—and the American experts in favour of the American view—and the diplomatists were no further forward. Sir Julian tried the magic influence of the "round-table," and invited a member of the Canadian Cabinet to take a seat at one in Washington with himself and Mr. Blaine. But the results were depressing; the two trans-Atlantic statesmen exchanged such drastic comments upon each other's Governments that the placable representative of an older civilisation felt relieved when his colonial colleague, admitting that his temper could stand it no longer, withdrew to Ottawa. The British Minister drafted a Convention for the appointment of a mixed commission to decide upon the technical issue, with appeal to an outside arbitrator in the event of disagreement,
but it met with no better fate. At its first submission it was summarily turned down by the Canadian Privy Council, and when, after prolonged argument, they had consented reluctantly, and, as they said, under coercive moral pressure, to a modified form of it, it was rejected with contumely by Mr. Blaine. "Both Canada and the United States are rather unreasonable in the matter and it is no easy task to bring them together," was a comment of Lord Salisbury’s to the Queen, which hardly did justice to his actual state of mind as portrayed in his less restrained correspondence with his representative at Washington, his Colonial Secretary, and Lord Stanley, the Governor-General of Canada. It is difficult to say whether he was more tried by the crudities of the American diplomatic style or the refusal of his own clients to face the facts of the situation.

But in March 1890 a letter came from Mr. Blaine whose purport reduced all such minor irritations to insignificance. Sir Julian, whose imperturbable calm and strong sense of humour rendered him impervious to the Secretary’s occasional outbursts, always maintained that he was a man of essentially "good mind," sincerely intent on a just and peaceful solution. One must assume that the winter had brought counsel from outside of unfortunate influence. He now explained to the English diplomat that, while he had been ready to discuss compensation to individual smack-owners as a conciliatory contribution to the general settlement, he could in no way admit a question of his country’s right to treat all intruders upon the Behring Sea as illegal trespassers. The sea in question was America’s national possession.

This extraordinary claim to some million of square miles of ocean in the northern Pacific was based on a ukase which Alexander I. of Russia had issued at
the beginning of the nineteenth century. Apart from the boldness of the assumption that it had been transferred to the United States with the title deeds of Alaska, it had, in fact, been repudiated, as a matter of course, by every British Foreign Minister who had touched the question, from Lord Castlereagh downwards. But it was the prospect of the immediate practical application of this claim rather than its theoretic hollowness which occupied Lord Salisbury.

To Sir Julian Pauncefote, March 28, 1890.

"... We were a good deal disturbed by the letter that you received from Mr. Blaine. It is difficult to be certain what he means by it: whether it is simply written to spur on the Canadians to more rapid negotiation, or whether he really foreshadows the policy which, in the absence of a treaty, the United States will pursue in the summer. In the latter case the news is very grave indeed, for my colleagues are all of opinion that we cannot tolerate a renewal of the captures. It is early to say what form our resistance will take; but I think I am justified in saying, from the judgment I can form of the state of opinion here, that we shall not be allowed, even if we were inclined, to permit the United States cruisers to treat Behring Sea as if it were their private property.

"I confess that the attitude, both at Washington and at Ottawa, makes me somewhat apprehensive of the result. The Canadians have the strict law on their side; the Americans have a moral basis for their contention which it is impossible to ignore. If both sides push their pretensions to an extreme, a collision is inevitable. We shall look with great anxiety to your reports of the progress of negotiations. . . ."
with. In the third week of May, President Harrison—it was rumoured without consultation with Mr. Blaine—published in the form of a proclamation a defiant repetition of the orders which had been issued to the revenue cutters in the previous year.

To the Queen, May 24, 1890.

"Lord Salisbury with his humble duty respectfully submits that at the Cabinet yesterday the most important matter dealt with was the grave telegram from Sir J. Pauncefote at Washington. It was agreed unanimously that, whatever the consequences might be, the Cabinet could not recommend Your Majesty to allow your North American subjects to be interfered with, on the open ocean, in the prosecution of their legitimate industry; and that the claim of the United States to treat Behring's Sea as if it were their own territorial water could not be tolerated. The First Lord of the Admiralty was directed to make provision for sending ships to Behring's Sea to protect the British sealers; but the orders would not be given to them to start from Japan until it was quite certain that orders to stop British ships had been given to United States cruisers. In the meantime a formal protest was telegraphed, and will be renewed by mail in a fuller way. The incident is extremely to be deplored—but Your Majesty has, under our advice, already carried patience and longsuffering to a point which is arousing much discontent on both sides of the Atlantic; and you could not submit to this quite unjustifiable assumption without a serious loss of reputation and power. . . ."

There could be no doubt as to the gravity of the crisis. If it was impossible for England to tolerate the result of the President's action or the assumption of right on which it rested, it would be equally impossible for the President to eat humble pie in face of the almost hysterically anti-British sentiment which
then pervaded American opinion. Lord Salisbury dealt with the claim in international law by an immediate proposal to refer it to neutral arbitration. His method of meeting the more pressing danger of its present application may be counted to the credit of the often abused element of secrecy in diplomacy. He allowed no word as to England's intentions to be breathed in press or Parliament: no specific note of them was addressed by his representative to the American Secretary—only a generally worded verbal intimation, gravely courteous in style, that, since their immunity could not otherwise be guaranteed, British vessels would have to be protected on the common highway of the seas by their own Government. So resolute was the Prime Minister on silence that he refused even to soothe the anxiety of Canadians, now palpitating in passionate anticipation of further outrage.

To Lord Knutsford, June 26, 1890.

"My ground for disliking to give Canada at present any information as to what protection the Canadian vessels may look for is simply this: that, unless they allow it to be known, such information is worthless to them; and if they allow it to be known, it will be repeated in every newspaper throughout the Union, and will almost drive Blaine into an aggressive policy."

The faint hope that President Harrison might be content to leave his proclamation as a gesture of defiance without giving it practical sequence was soon dissipated. Sir Julian obtained private information that the orders to give it effect had been actually issued from the American Admiralty. A cypher telegram was at once despatched to the British admiral in command of the China squadron; four men-of-war started unobtrusively upon a summer cruise of undefined
duration: a news agency noted their departure, but, happily—perhaps not quite spontaneously—announced the coast of South America as their destination. A few days later they appeared in the Behring Sea and for the next few weeks patrolled with leisurely aimlessness the scene of Canadian sealing enterprise. No word on either side broke the official silence. The withdrawal of the President’s proclamation had never been invited and it was never withdrawn; nor, so far as public knowledge went, were the orders required by it countermanded. But, in fact, no revenue cutter left American ports that summer for the Behring Sea. No one in his senses on either side of the ocean wished to go to war over the seal fisheries and all that was sober in American statesmanship was probably relieved by this silent obliteration of its President’s reckless experiment in bluff.

In the one direction where awareness was imperially desirable, the absence of the cutters and the reassuring presence of the British war ships were duly noted. In the following spring, Lord Stanley in one of the many letters in which he tried to mitigate the Imperial Cabinet’s irritation with the recently uncompromising attitude of Canadian Ministers, referred it to their conviction, which he had been powerless to dispel, that the Home Government would never stand by them if it was in its own political interest to do otherwise. That belief had passed away: “Your firmness in protecting our sealers last year did untold good.”

All that was critical in the controversy was now over though its final stages were prolonged by the dawdling which the intervening ocean seems to impose upon all transatlantic negotiation. Lord Salisbury’s proposal to refer the question of international law to arbitration was extended by mutual consent the
following January to include the whole subject of seal protection in dispute. Another twelve months were spent in wrangling over the terms of reference as they affected the questions of individual compensation which might be involved in the award—whether for smacks that ought not to have been confiscated or seals that ought not to have been destroyed. But an Arbitration Convention was at length signed on February 29, 1892, and ratified by the American Senate in the following April. Lord Salisbury was able to see the Court constituted before he left office that summer. Two British lawyers, Lord Hannen and Sir John Thompson, the Canadian Minister of Justice, were balanced by two American lawyers of similar distinction, while the neutral element was supplied by a Swede, an Italian, and a Frenchman—the Baron de Courcel—who acted as President. The award was given in August 1893. As frequently happens in these cases, it expressed the conclusion which the man in the street, when uninfluenced by the passions of controversy or self-interest, would have spontaneously reached without expert assistance. On the issue of international law it supported the English case and confined American sovereignty in the Behring Sea to her territorial waters. On the other hand, it imposed very substantial restrictions on the sealers’ activities. Sealing was prohibited altogether over an area of sixty miles round the Pribyloff islands and was forbidden elsewhere in the open sea during the months of July and August.

**NEWFOUNDLAND**

Lord Salisbury was not so successful in the other of his triangular negotiations on the American continent of this date. When in 1713 the French were given first claim over a stretch of Newfoundland coast
for the drying and packing of their fishermen's cod-catch, it no doubt seemed a reasonable return for their recognition of British sovereignty over the island as a whole. They were then the owners of the adjoining mainland and, except for a score or so of adventurous British settlers, Newfoundland was uninhabited. It is less easy to understand why its "French shore" did not follow French Canada into British hands fifty years later, or why in some subsequent negotiation of peace treaties and rearranged frontiers the anomalous double occupation was never eliminated. Presumably the population of the island was still too small and its situation too remote for its existence to be remembered by statesmen of a pre-telegraphic and pre-steamship era. Even when, as the nineteenth century advanced, the recurrent squabbles between the growing number of British colonists and the contingents of French visitors who annually crossed the Atlantic to claim their privileges necessitated a constant patrol of cruisers of both nations to keep the peace between them, the Home Governments do not appear to have been seriously disturbed. Unfortunately, by the time when in the '80's these squabbles became too violent to be ignored, the French were not in a mood for any sacrifice for the promotion of good feeling.

In '86, as has been recorded, their Government, in pursuit of its normal protectionist policy, made matters worse by initiating a system of bounties upon the sale of their countrymen's cod in neutral countries. To see the fruits of their industry ousted from European markets by fish caught off their own coasts and actually prepared for sale in their own territory was exasperating to the Newfoundland fishermen. Their legislature retorted by forbidding the foreigners to get bait in their territorial waters—thus making them almost as angry as the Newfoundlanders. Upon this scene of mutual
provocation a fresh cause of quarrel supervened in ’89 in connection with a recently developed industry of lobster-catching. The lobsters had to be tinned as soon as caught; the Frenchmen proceeded to erect sheds of timber and corrugated iron for that purpose on the beach of discord; the Newfoundlanders protested angrily that the right of drying and packing codfish did not include that of building permanent structures for other purposes; their rivals pointed out that the Treaty of Utrecht said nothing about cods, but spoke of “fish” and that therefore lobsters, with all that was required for their preparation for the market, should certainly be read into it. Both parties backed their opinions by defiantly building sheds for themselves and demolishing those built by their rivals.

Diplomacy again became active between London and Paris. Lord Salisbury groaned to his Colonial Secretary over “this grotesque lobster difficulty”: “To think that we should be paying, in hopeless weary negotiation, the penalty of Bolingbroke’s abortive intrigues a hundred and eighty years ago!” (December 10, 1889.)

He proposed to refer to arbitration the question as to whether the Treaty’s generalisations did or did not include lobsters. The French consented, provided that they could be assured that the award, if in their favour, would be complied with. The Colonial Government hung back; arbitration on a minor issue would be useless; they could be content with nothing short of the abrogation of the intolerable eighteenth-century settlement: “As to the Newfoundland negotiation,” wrote the Foreign Secretary, “I am in despair. Trying to bring a colony and a foreign country to terms is very like negotiating between Lord Clanricarde and the Land League.” (To Lord Knutsford, February 22, 1890.)
To meet the immediate difficulty a *modus vivendi* was agreed upon and signed in March, '90. Tinning factories erected by either French or English up to the previous July—the last fishing season—were to stand, and no further ones were to be built by either party until the legal question had been decided.

In May Lord Knutsford appears to have suggested the policy, which proved eventually effective, of persuading France to an abandonment of her provocative privileges by an offer of concessions in Africa. “We had better talk over the Gambia-Newfoundland question to-morrow;” commented his chief, “I doubt the French accepting the bargain, for they value the fishery so much as a nursery for sailors that they give an extravagant bounty to maintain it; and they have as much West African property as any reasonable nation can desire.” (June 2, 1890.)

All present possibility of such a solution vanished within the next few weeks. The Zanzibar-Madagascar Agreement in July exhausted the capacity of British public opinion for the digestion of African “compensations” to France, while simultaneously French opinion became exasperated to danger point by happenings in the island itself. Its Government not only refused to take part in a treaty of arbitration but, less excusably, failed to comply with the *modus vivendi* to which the Queen’s signature had already been affixed. Public feeling rose high against the Home Government for its failure in Imperial championship. Meetings of protest were held throughout the Colony, at which perorations were adorned by vague threats of secession. When the fishing season opened in July, these sentiments took a more practical form. The islanders, with the connivance—if not with the direct encouragement—of their own Government, attacked the French factories in force
and the Paris press placed this fresh proof of the treachery and arrogance of Great Britain in the forefront of an embittered campaign against her.

The English man-of-war's-men, assisted by their French colleagues, laboured to enforce loyalty to international engagements, while Lord Salisbury made a last effort to obtain consent to his policy of arbitration. The Newfoundland Cabinet had urged that the French Government should be invited to abandon its Treaty rights in return for a grant of full financial compensation to its individual fishermen. Lord Salisbury, having warned them that the proposal had no chance of acceptance, formally instructed Lord Lytton, nevertheless, to press it upon M. Ribot. An accompanying private letter explained the apparent futility of this approach to his ambassador, as belonging in reality to the other branch of his triangular negotiation.

_To Lord Lytton, September 19, 1890.—Puys._

"... I am sending you a despatch instructing you to begin negotiations about Newfoundland. What we had wished to do and had contemplated doing, was to go at once into the question of arbitration. But the Newfoundland people press us very strongly to make a diplomatic effort to get rid of the French rights upon their island altogether. We have been wholly unable to persuade them that the attempt will be futile. They cannot shake off the idea that what they desire so keenly must be possible; and it is evident that until we have got a good plump refusal from France in black and white, they won't believe in the obduracy of the French, and will attribute the continuance of the French rights to our indifference. It is of no use talking to them of arbitration until this question is settled. We have therefore instructed you to make the proposition on which their
heart is set, though we indulge in no illusions as to the probable fate of our offer. . . ."

Lord Lytton was on no account to let the French Minister suspect his expectation of failure: "Your attitude should be pressing and earnest—as of one fully convinced of the reasonableness and practical character of the suggestion he is making. If he attempts to fence, I would draft a telegram in his presence implying that he assents. He will not dare to let that go, as it would compromise him with the Chamber, and he will be forced to give an honest negative." The ambassador was also warned against allowing the conversation to drift towards Egypt, Tunis, or other inadmissible field for "compensation."

These precautionary counsels proved needless. M. Ribot made no bones about refusing the proposal and indicated no terms upon which his country would consent to the abandonment of its privileges. His only suggestion was for a compromise which the Colony had already turned down in 1885—the delimitation of the Treaty shore, African fashion, into "spheres of interest," giving the two nationalities exclusive rights on either side of an agreed frontier.

But in spite of the French Minister's candour, the approach failed of its primary purpose. The irate Newfoundlanders remained unconvinced and as recalcitrant as ever to any compromise of their interests. A recent development had given new importance to their obduracy. In fulfilling their functions as guardians of international law, the British naval officers had relied on an old Act of Parliament which gave special executive powers to the Crown in face of such emergencies as the present one. Unfortunately the Act had lapsed in 1834, and though the
Colonial Office and the Admiralty had remained unaccountably unaware of the fact, the parties principally interested had discovered it. This summer, when the Admiral on the station, in pursuance of his standing instructions, ordered the demolition of a British tinning-shed, newly erected in contravention of the *modus vivendi*, the owner sued him for damages in the local court. He won his case and the decision was upheld on appeal by the Privy Council.

The decision mulcted the Imperial Treasury in £1000 and, which was much more important, deprived the Imperial Government of any power of enforcing treaty obligations in the future. Lord Salisbury, in a confidential circular, presented the case to his colleagues and invited their assistance in preparing public opinion in England for a revival of the defunct Act. Even in those days the coercion of a self-governing colony was not a thing to be lightly faced:

*Cabinet Memorandum, November 21, 1890.*

"No one can say confidently what the obligations are which the Treaty of Utrecht and subsequent instruments have imposed upon Great Britain. France has naturally tried to make the most of them, and England to explain them away. The matters in controversy being really very doubtful, it is obvious that no solution of them can ever be reached by diplomatic discussion. There are only two ways of bringing the difference to an end: Either we must compromise various points, one side giving way upon one point and the other upon the other; or we must refer the whole question to arbitration. England has been ready for either issue. A compromise was arranged with France in 1885; our willingness to come to arbitration has been more than once expressed; and France does not seem to be averse to it. But to
either mode of settlement, the Colony offers an absolute veto."

The reason for this attitude was that Newfoundland took no interest in the elucidation of French rights under the Treaty nor in any arrangement for their compromise. It would be satisfied with nothing but their total abandonment, and it believed that this object could be secured by the offer of a sufficient bribe in the way of territorial concessions in other parts of the globe. Therefore its Government had become wholly deaf to all proposals which came short of that result.

The belief on which this attitude was founded was illusory. Even if England were willing for sacrifices of territory elsewhere for the sake of making a single industry in one corner of the Empire more profitable, France was wholly unpersuadable to the proposed bargain. But things could not be left as they were.

"We are bound by Treaty obligations to France, which we must fulfil. We must fulfil them as a matter of honour; but, apart from that consideration, we run a considerable risk by not fulfilling them. I do not mean to say that France would deliberately go to war about the French shore of Newfoundland; but the rights on each side are sustained by vessels of war and armed men. . . . An unlucky blow or shot is always a possibility, and the honour of one nation or the other, before we knew it, might be so far pledged as to excite popular feeling on one side of the Channel or the other to an extent that would not stop short of war."

No treaty of arbitration could be negotiated without some preliminary guarantee that its awards would be given effect to.

"For that purpose, it would be useless to rely upon the enactments of the Legislature of Newfoundland."
Whatever we mean to do will have to be done by Act of Parliament, and there is no doubt that an Act of Parliament on this subject cannot be passed without great friction with the Colony, or without great outcry from unthinking persons at home who have not studied the difficulties of the case. But we have no escape from this issue."

In the following March (1891) an arbitration treaty was concluded between France and England, and in the same month Lord Knutsford introduced in the House of Lords a measure regranting power to the Crown to ensure, by executive action, the carrying out of the Fishery Treaties with France. In the debate that followed, Lord Salisbury was anxiously conciliatory in the expression of sympathy with his fellow-subjects in the burden laid upon them by past history. But facts were facts, and he pointed out with crushing realism that threats of secession were beside the point. The objectionable privilege belonged to France and she could enforce it against them under international law to whatever sovereignty they were attached.

The Newfoundland Legislature protested strongly and demanded to be heard at Westminster in opposition to the proposed Bill. The demand was agreed to, and in April a delegation of its members came to London. On the 23rd their Prime Minister, Sir William Whiteway, in a speech marked by a notable dignity, addressed the House of Lords from the bar—an interesting incident in the constitutional history of the Empire.

But the argument of international necessity was too strong to combat. The parties to the quarrel showed their common Anglo-Saxon origin by refusing to drive it to ultimate extremes. The Bill passed the House of Lords, but, after its first reading in the
Commons, Mr. Smith announced the postponement of its further stages to give time for the Colonial Legislature to take such action as it thought right. A measure was introduced there by its own Ministers, legalising the intervention of the sailors for the enforcement both of the modus vivendi and of any further award of arbitration on the subject, and the Imperial Bill was not proceeded with.

In the event, the Treaty of arbitration remained a dead letter, the colonists preferring to leave the questions in dispute open and to carry on from one modus vivendi to another under the tactful tutelage of the naval officers. In 1896, when Mr. Chamberlain was at the Colonial Office, another abortive attempt was made for a final settlement. It had to wait till it formed part of the general reconciliation with France in 1904.
CHAPTER XIII
1890–1892

ENGLAND’S MEDIATION

In the third week of March 1890, with but little preparation even in rumoured gossip, the world learned that Prince Bismarck had resigned or been dismissed from all his offices. "An enormous calamity of which the effects will be felt in every part of Europe!" was Lord Salisbury’s telegraphed response to Count Herbert’s announcement. He did not particularise his apprehensions, and it is useless to enquire how far this appreciation was inspired by deliberate anticipations and how far by an unreasoned instinct of dismay at the sudden elimination of a force which had dominated European politics for twenty years. Its expression was no doubt warmed by the natural impulse to salute fallen greatness and that sympathetic reaction to his correspondent’s sentiments which was habitual with him.

But neither sympathy nor dismay was lasting. "It is a curious Nemesis on Bismarck," was his comment to the Queen a fortnight later: "The very qualities which he fostered in the Emperor in order to strengthen himself when the Emperor Frederick should come to the throne have been the qualities by which he has been overthrown" (April 7, 1890). And, on the other hand, the immediate results of the change proved satisfactory from a personal and a
national point of view. Lord Salisbury was no longer constrained to a ceaseless probing for the subterranean understandings by which Prince Bismarck loved to balance his overt engagements, and he was freed from the explosions of his nerve-wracked temper. The new Chancellor, Count Caprivi, was simpler in his inspirations. The secret Reinsurance treaty with Russia, by which Prince Bismarck had qualified his obligations to the Triple Alliance and English friendship, expired that summer, and Count Caprivi and his Foreign Minister, Baron von Marschall, refused to renew it. "A great man like Bismarck," wrote Baron von Marschall, in his own defence, some years later, "might work with such complicated instruments, but I, a simpler man, could not have justified such a treaty to our allies if ever it had become known. Caprivi was of the same opinion." (December 4, 1911.)

This refusal precipitated the conclusion of the Franco-Russian alliance, and its authors have been charged by their fellow-countrymen with having thus set the European stage for Germany's ultimate disaster. But it is fair to remember that there was one notable difference between the grouping of nations which they prepared for and that which immediately preceded the great catastrophe. They recognised fully then—as neither they nor their successors seem to have done later—that their decision involved as a precautionary corollary, a more zealous cultivation of British goodwill. Count Caprivi, as soon as he was installed in office, wrote a warm personal appeal to Lord Salisbury for a strengthening of friendly relations, and active co-operation with England became, for the next few years, a dominant note in German policy.

This emphasising of diplomatic cordiality was unconnected with sentiment, and rested on the belief

of the German powers that England’s support was essential to the cohesion, as well as to the strength, of the Triple Alliance. The two Latin powers had coincidently become convinced that the same support was their best safeguard against each other’s aggressive potentialities. The double recognition gave a distinctive character to international relations during these last two and a half years of Lord Salisbury’s Government. England occupied a position of independent mediation between the warring nations, and her Minister stepped for the time into Prince Bismarck’s place as the central figure in European politics.

The greater warmth of German friendliness was actively encouraged from above. The Emperor William continued with ardour that courtship of his mother’s country which he had initiated in the spring of '89. “When the Emperor came to the throne,” wrote Sir Edward Malet in January 1890, “I was told that there was great danger of his becoming an ‘Anglophobe.’ He is now generally accused of being an ‘Anglomane.’” A fortnight later he was reporting that the Emperor had sent a message to Count Radowitz at Constantinople to express his annoyance at the rumoured “Russianism” of the German embassy there: “If these reports continued he should have to change his ambassador”—and he wished Sir Edward to let him know if any further complaints on this score were received from Sir William White. While exultantly claiming sympathy with his own discipleship in ship-building, he was, throughout this period, as congratulatory of England’s naval and colonial supremacy as he became afterwards jealous of it. His sincerity was witnessed to by a series of private remonstrances as to deficiencies in British naval organisation. They were more earnest than discreet and were not received with enthusiasm by the object of his reforming zeal.
They culminated, in the spring of '91, in an elaborate minute, sent—unofficially—through the embassy at Berlin, cataloguing the changes and additions which, in his view, were required in the equipment of the English fleet.

_To Lord George Hamilton, February 20, 1891._

"You will probably have a tendency to imprecation when you read of the Emperor's kind solicitude for the good conduct of your department. But it is wise to return a soft answer.

"Please send me a civil, argumentative reply,—showing that in some directions we are adopting his recommendations—that we are sensible of the great difficulties attaching to these very large pieces—that we are doing our utmost to improve the capabilities of Woolwich—and that we will give our best consideration and attention to his valuable suggestions.

"It rather looks to me as if he was not 'all there'!"

In spite of the confidential aside with which this letter closes, Lord Salisbury continued active in promotion of cordial relations between the two courts and, so far as could be seen, shared personally to the full in the partiality displayed by the German sovereign towards all things British.

In the summer of this year, the state of feeling in this country, being no longer disturbed by disapproval of the Emperor's filial behaviour nor by the jar of Heligoland's cession, was adjudged to be in a favourable condition for a public gesture of friendship. In July 1891 the Emperor and Empress paid a state visit to England, which was celebrated with the usual accompaniments of naval and military reviews, a procession to the City, a Guildhall banquet, and festivities at Windsor. By express desire it concluded with a night and morning spent at Hatfield, on
July 11-12. The train of German court dignitaries and political and military officials required by Hohenzollern traditions, when added to a corresponding number of British guests, made a house-party of somewhat overwhelming dimensions. The difference between the standards of personal comfort in Jacobean and Victorian days was patently exemplified. Though there would have been no difficulty in feeding and entertaining a party of twice the size in the rooms designed in the spacious conception of a seventeenth century courtier for the reception of his Sovereign, there proved to be, according to modern ideas, a hopeless deficiency in the appropriate number of bedrooms. Fortunately, two houses belonging to Lord Salisbury near the park gates were unlet and sufficed as sleeping quarters for the younger guests and members of the family. Though the preparations were arduous they were rewarded in the event. The sun shone brilliantly, the house and park showed in their fullest beauty; the visitors were cordial in their will to please, and the Emperor's personal charm and eager spontaneity in conversation made him easy of entertainment. After his return to Germany he sent Lord Salisbury, as a memorial of the occasion, a full length oil-painting of himself, dressed in the uniform of a British admiral.

The Crown Prince of Naples also visited England this summer, and a fortnight after the departure of the German guests another party had to be assembled at Hatfield to do him honour—though as he was travelling in a modest incognito his entertainment was of a more normal quality than that of his predecessors: "The facility of locomotion," sighed Lord Salisbury in a letter to Lord Lytton, "adds to the sorrows of human life in the shape of German Emperors and Princes of Naples. It is a great comfort to me to think that

1 The present King Victor Emmanuel of Italy.
M. Carnot† has not got an heir apparent!" (July 20, 1891.)

In the following spring a curious little incident, expressed more markedly perhaps than either diplomatic support or social civilities the relations which subsisted at this period between the Emperor and his grandmother's Minister. There had been a stir in Germany over an unpopular Education Bill which the Imperial Chancellor had introduced in the Prussian Chamber. The resentment which it aroused had been intensified by one of those highly coloured speeches in which the Emperor William excelled, which was interpreted—erroneously—as a threat to force the measure through in the teeth of popular opposition. In fact, he had disapproved of its introduction, and there had been critical scenes in council, and the self-assertive phrases of the speech had been intended for the Minister, who was privately resisting its withdrawal. All this, as commenting upon the abuse with which democratic champions had assailed him, was explained at great length in conversation to Sir Edward Malet, with earnest injunctions to repeat the explanation in full to Lord Salisbury: "He said that he hoped that after you had heard his version of what had happened, you would not think that he had acted as a tyrant and a despot." (April 2, 1892.) As the question had not the remotest connection with international politics, one must assume an even exaggerated anxiety for the good opinion of the British Prime Minister.

Lord Salisbury, though probably puzzled, acknowledged with all courteousness of respectful phrasing the condescension shown by this confidence. Unfortunately, another unofficial communication, made a week later, did not excite in him the same

† The then President of the French Republic.
sensations. The Khedive Tewfik had died that winter, and the Sultan had shown a disposition to utilise the firman which it was his function to issue on the accession of a new Khedive for the purpose of withdrawing from the Egyptian autonomy a small district on its eastern frontier, and Lord Salisbury had required that the text of the firman should be submitted to the British Government before it was published in Cairo. The Emperor William sent for Colonel Swaine, the military attaché at the Berlin Embassy, with whom he was on terms of social intimacy, and after congratulating him warmly on his chief's display of firmness, invited him to convey to him his—the Emperor's—advice as to the steps which should now be taken to follow it up. British men-of-war should be immediately despatched to the Dardanelles, and, passing through them under cover of night, appear in the morning before Constantinople, where they should train their guns upon the Sultan's palace at Yildiz Kiosk. Then the Sultan should be summoned to sign a dictated firman on pain of the immediate annexation of Egypt by England if he hesitated. If Russia were to protest against the breach of treaty, "you can tell her that you have taken a leaf out of her book," but he, the Emperor, would answer for it that neither she nor France would fight. "This is an opportunity which may never recur for England to make herself feared at Constantinople." (April 9, 1892.)

This startling advice was proffered in a time of profound peace and upon an issue, in itself unimportant, as to which no difficulty seems to have been apprehended as to coming to terms with the Sultan. Since it reached him only as the report of a private conversation, Lord Salisbury was spared the necessity of replying to it. But he gave vent to the feelings
which it aroused in him at the close of a letter to the Queen, who was in Germany at the time on a visit to her Hesse grandchildren: "Lord Salisbury respectfully draws Your Majesty's attention to the Emperor William's conversation as reported. He appears to be strangely excited; and it would be a very good thing if Your Majesty would see him and calm him" (April 14, 1892). A week later he was moved to a repetition of the advice. "Lord Salisbury hopes that Your Majesty will enjoy the week of intercourse with the family of the Grand Duke of Hesse Darmstadt; and that some opportunity may occur which will enable Your Majesty to recommend to the Emperor calmness both in his policy and in the speeches which he too often makes" (April 22, 1892).

The counsel of spirited statesmanship which inspired these reflections was seriously intended and, divorced from its wholly inadequate occasion, could have been defended on general grounds as the best method of dealing with this particular potentate. Its summary dismissal as an outburst of hysterical excitement must, if repeated to him, have offended the Emperor more deeply than any other conceivable reception of it. Lord Salisbury left office three months later, and when the two men resumed intercourse in 1895, a violent revulsion of feeling towards the English Minister was revealed in the Emperor. What had been to all appearance a peculiarly forthcoming confidence was replaced by a bitter personal hostility which endured to the end of Lord Salisbury's life. It is possible that some indiscreet disclosure of his attitude towards this report of Colonel Swaine's may have assisted in the transformation. He always professed himself unable to account for it—though it is doubtful whether at that later period
he had become disposed to any very serious efforts of memory in search of an explanation.

Prince Bismarck's fall from power preceded by just under a year that of his admirer and disciple at Rome. Public opinion in Italy, divided into two opposing currents by dread of France and resentment at Austria's continued possession of the Trentino, was at no time an easy authority to defer to. It was now embittered by a wave of acute distress induced by heavy taxation combined with a desperate tariff war with France. Worried by conflicting electoral threats, Signor Crispi, during his last months of office, emphasised his normal mission as the chastener of slothful ease in the Foreign Offices of Europe. German Ministers were kept in a turmoil of anxiety as to the prospects of keeping the Triple Alliance in being—in France, corresponding spasms of hope occasionally interrupted a more habitual state of irritation begotten of Mediterranean quarrellings—while British diplomacy was forced into sympathetic participation in both these causes of unrest.

A typical episode can be traced in Lord Salisbury's correspondence in the autumn of 1890. At the end of July, Signor Crispi sent him a "most secret" letter by the hand of a trusted intermediary, and without the knowledge of his own ambassador in London. Count Tornielli was credited, whether rightly or wrongly, with being opposed to Italy's present system of alliances—was a constant object of suspicion to the Germans, and appears to have been only moderately confided in by his own chief. The letter was keyed to an agitated note. The writer was convinced that France intended in the near future not only to transform her protectorate over Tunis into a sovereignty but to extend her dominion
to Tripoli also. That would place the whole of the northern coast of Africa, from Morocco to Egypt, in her hands; Italy would be maritimely encircled and her national survival imperilled, while the power of England in the Mediterranean would be gravely compromised. There was only one way to avert the catastrophe. Italy must be beforehand with events and proceed herself to the immediate occupation and annexation of Tripoli. He hoped that he might reckon upon England's countenance and assistance in this project.

Lord Salisbury did not, it appears, take this menacing proposition too seriously, but he replied on August 5, with much sympathy and more depreciation. He quite agreed, he said, as to the destiny foreseen for Tunis and also as to the intolerable situation which would be created by France's further acquisition of Tripoli. But neither advance was imminent; as regarded Tripoli especially, "la France a beaucoup de chemin à faire." He demurred strongly to the remedy proposed:—premature precautions were full of danger. The gratuitous invasion of a province of the Turkish Empire in time of peace, and without excuse in any overt act of aggression on the part of France, would precipitate a disastrous reopening of the whole Eastern question. He urged patience and circumspection and held out no hopes of English support to such a project. (August 5, 1890.)

Three days later Count Hatzfeldt assailed him in conversation at Osborne 1—also about Tripoli and also showing signs of agitation. But it was differently inspired. Reports had reached Berlin as to Signor Crispi's North African aspirations—and also of coincident French efforts to detach him from his present allies;—probably by the offered bribe of Tripoli. He

1 From a private Memorandum of the conversation, dated Aug. 8.
must not therefore be resisted too imperatively—the ambassador entreated Lord Salisbury for some display of practical sympathy with him. Lord Salisbury conceded a suggestion to recognise Italy's claim to the inheritance of Tripoli in the event of its becoming derelict. He did not mention to the German the drastic proposition which had been confided to himself, and shortly afterwards, in conversation with Lord Dufferin, Signor Crispi, expressing great delight with Lord Salisbury's letter, observed that "there was no greater folly in politics than precipitation," and announced the abandonment of his idea.

To Lord Dufferin, August 12, 1890.

"... The Germans say they are very apprehensive about Crispi's disposition; and that unless he is assured as to the 'compensation' which is the only, but sovereign, remedy for his apprehensions, he will get tired of the Triple Alliance, and seek the less expensive friendship of France by coming to terms with her about Tunis and Tripoli. I do not share these fears of the German Government. I believe that Crispi discerns them, and is bluffing in consequence; and that he hopes to take advantage of this opportunity to extract from Germany, Austria and England, a written guarantee that he shall some day be the heir of Tripoli. This written guarantee I would not be a party to giving. I am quite sure that a copy of it would find its way to Constantinople and that the Sultan would see in it a confirmation of his present suspicion that among the European Powers, Russia is the one that will despoil him least. But, I should like to have your judgment as to Crispi's mental attitude. If it be what the Germans suspect, and that he is hovering on the brink of a new alliance, it might be necessary to go so far as to give him to understand verbally, that while we were faithful to the rights of the Sultan as guaranteed by the Treaty of Paris, we fully
recognised that Italy had a special interest in the maintenance of the integrity of the Turkish Empire as regards Tripoli; and that in case any catastrophe were to overwhelm the Ottoman domination, that position of special affection and relationship would have its natural bearing upon the distribution of the inheritance. . . .

"I do not like to disregard the plain anxiety of my German friends. But it is not wise to be guided too much by their advice now. Their Achitophel is gone. They are much pleasanter and easier to deal with; but one misses the extraordinary penetration of the old man."

A few weeks later the French Foreign Office threw further light upon the incident by joining the circle of Lord Salisbury’s confidants. Their grievances against England had evidently not affected their belief in his capacity for telling them the truth. M. Jusserand, an Under Secretary at the Quai d’Orsay, took advantage of the Prime Minister’s presence in his holiday home to come down to Dieppe and pay an afternoon call at Puys. He was a distinguished scholar as well as a diplomat—specialising in the English language, historically considered—and was said to be the greatest living authority on mediæval English literature. He was an old acquaintance of Lord Salisbury’s, having been at one time attached to the Embassy in London.

To Lord Lytton, September 23, 1890.—Puys.

". . . 'Ecce iterum Crispimus.' Yesterday morning Jusserand made his appearance. I did all I could to prevent his talking business—but he would. He had come to tell me that Menabrea \(^1\) by direct orders from Crispi had ‘hinted’ (Jusserand spoke English and that was the word he used) that if France wanted

\(^1\) The Italian ambassador in Paris.
to obtain the good graces of Italy, it could only be done by helping her to occupy Tripoli; and for this policy he declared he already had the approval of England. Jusserand's errand was to ask me first, whether we knew anything of this project of Crispi's and secondly, whether it was true that we approved it. As Crispi had in August unreservedly withdrawn in conversation with Dufferin the suggestions of a similar sort which he had let drop, and admitted that they were entirely premature, I was able with good conscience to say that according to my information there was no truth in the idea that Crispi contemplated any such step; and of course I was able to add that it would be very far from being in harmony with the policy of Her Majesty's Government.

"I took the opportunity of preaching to him, as I have more than once preached to Waddington, that if they wanted a quiet life they must not attempt to alter the status of Tunis at present. It was a point on which Italy was exceedingly sensitive, and on which England, though her own interest in the matter was indirect, would be sensitive on account of Italy. He of course protested that nothing was further from the mind of the present Government. What intrigue is Crispi at now? It looks as if he was trying to make his game with France behind Germany's back. The Irredenta agitation¹ is beginning to alarm him, and he is providing for the possibility of having to drop his dear friends of the Triple Alliance. In the summer, Hatzfeldt was almost feverishly anxious about Crispi's state of mind; evidently fearing that the growing difficulties of his position internally might induce him to change camps, if he was certain that he would be adequately paid for the evolution, so as to make it agreeable to the Italian electorate. . . ."

Fundamentally speaking, Lord Salisbury's task as mediator between the Latin nations was probably

¹ "Italia irredenta"—"unliberated Italy"—was the traditional slogan of protest against Austria's retention of the Adriatic provinces.
assisted by his detachment from their mentality. But, incidentally, it added to his difficulties. Count Hatzfeldt was always lamenting his want of personal sympathy with the Italian Minister, and, in the winter of this year, Lord Dufferin reported that feelings in Rome had been wounded by his "coldness." Signor Crispi's anxieties were concentrated at this moment upon a rumoured intention of the French to fortify Biserta on the Tunis coast as a naval port and military base—which would have been a breach of the assurances which they had given when taking Tunis under their protection.

**To Lord Dufferin, January 7, 1891.**

"... I cannot make out what Crispi means in taxing us with coldness. As far as I know, we have had no differences with him except about Kassala—and that was certainly his fault. I can only conclude that in transmitting my conversation to Crispi, Tornielli flavours it with some of his own vinegar. He does not like Crispi; and I think it pleases him to report something that shall be disagreeable to Crispi, so long as he can do it with safety.

"The only subject on which we have discussions is Biserta. . . .

"At present it is certain that the French have done nothing that is inconsistent with their professed intention of making it a purely commercial port. If they were to change their policy we should certainly have a right to remonstrate. It is not a right to which I attach much value. It usually means nothing more than writing despatches which look well in the Blue Book, and have a satisfactory ring of vigour about their language. But if France should give us the occasion for remonstrating, and Signor Crispi should wish to exercise that precious right, I do not suppose that we should refuse to gratify him. But our firm intention to exhibit that amount of vigour is no reason
for mentally wearing each other's nerves out by an exchange of apprehensions. We had better not think of the matter till the *casus objurgationis* has arisen.

"I try to conceal this philosophical view from Tornielli as much as I can. But Count Hatzfeldt, who also lectures me on my coldness, insists that the head and front of my offending is a want of sympathy on the subject of Biserta.

"Meanwhile Ribot sends me earnest entreaties to try and get Crispi to stop the Anti-Gallic campaign in the Italian newspapers, which, he says, may produce real danger if it goes on. I have been afraid, however, of stirring, for fear of giving Crispi renewed occasion for doubting the fidelity of my attachment. . . ."

A week later he closed his letter to the same appreciative correspondent: "Crispi reproaches me like a neglected lover; Tornielli scolds me like an injured wife. And now that the Bismarcks are gone it is not so easy to keep Crispi in order as it was. I suppose there is nothing for it but patience" (*January 16, 1891*).

Patience was rewarded in the following month by Signor Crispi's defeat in the Italian Chamber. Under his successor, the Marchese di Rudini, a less emotional atmosphere prevailed. The permanent difficulty remained of finding undivided support in the Italian public for either of the available choices in continental friendship, and, perhaps on that account, Signor di Rudini was earnest in seeking closer co-operation with England. So far as diplomatic relations went, Lord Salisbury was responsive—but an effort to fortify these by "personal intercourse" met with its usual fate at his hands. He was spending Easter on the Riviera that year. A travel through Paris, to and from a sojourn within an hour of the Italian frontier, presented possibilities of heart to heart talks with the ruling statesmen of France and Italy which the
diplomats concerned on either side felt should not be thrown away. "Rudini is very anxious to see you now that you are in the neighbourhood," telegraphed Lord Dufferin from Rome, and German allies backed up the request, while M. Waddington had already prepared for a counterbalancing interview at Paris. But he eluded them all—carefully withholding report of his proceedings to his sovereign until he had again found safe refuge in his native land.

To the Queen, April 17, 1891.

"Lord Salisbury with his humble duty to Your Majesty, respectfully reports that he arrived in England last night. He had been much pressed by the German Government to have a personal interview with S. di Rudini at Ventimiglia. At first he was rather disposed to yield to the idea, but when he saw the extraordinary stories as to special engagements between Italy and England, he felt that for Rudini to come all the way north to Ventimiglia to meet him would amount to a demonstration, and he excused himself on other grounds. On the other hand, Mons. Waddington, before Lord Salisbury had left England, had pressed him rather strongly to see Mons. Ribot on his way back through Paris. He felt that this had become impossible, after his declining to meet Rudini. So he went back by the St. Gothard, and avoided Paris altogether.

"Lord Salisbury has a great aversion to these Ministerial interviews. The Foreign Offices at Paris and Rome are perfectly unscrupulous in their communications to the newspaper press of their respective countries; and any such interview would be followed by press gossip which it would be hopeless to contradict and yet which would be inconvenient."

It must be said in his defence that that autumn, while on his travels in western Europe, M. de Giers, the Russian Foreign Minister, had paid a casual visit
to the King of Italy's country house at Monza, and that the event, of which no evidence of political origin or sequel ever appeared, occupied diplomats and journalists with excited surmises for weeks. The relative rarity of such meetings in those pre-League-of-Nations days, and perhaps also the relatively greater capacity of the personalities concerned to influence events, made such occasions more subject to the exaggerations of public comment and interpretation than they have since become. They were treated more pompously and as of greater moment by general opinion. Other statesmen would have agreed with Lord Salisbury as to their liability to misconstruction. Where he was singular was in his habitual refusal to recognise any utility in them.

The "extraordinary stories" alluded to in this letter had repercussions in the House of Commons. A deputy of the French Chamber, a M. Millevoye, announced in the _Figaro_ newspaper on the authority of Prince Jerome Napoleon—who had lately died—that the King of Italy had told him that he had received from Her Majesty's Government a formal promise of assistance from the British fleet in the event of any attack being threatened on the Italian coasts. Questions were asked in the House in the first week of June. Lord Salisbury, replying through his Under-Secretary, Sir James Fergusson, assured it— with perfect accuracy, as his foreign correspondents could have regretfully testified—that he had entered into no engagement with any Power, involving material assistance of any kind or under any circumstances, on the part of this country. But parliamentary feelings were not the only ones to be considered; and Sir James was instructed to add by way of comment that "Italian statesmen were well aware that Her Majesty's Government was at one with them in desiring..."
the maintenance of the status quo in the Mediterranean” (June 4, 1891). Italy’s susceptibilities were safeguarded, but France’s equanimity was proportionately disturbed, and Lord Salisbury excused himself wearily to his ambassador in Paris: “This hare of Millevoye’s has done harm. . . . We have been unable so to frame our answers as to avoid giving the impression that we are more ‘Tripliste’ than people thought; and France is consequently out of humour” (June 16, 1891).

Meanwhile, Signor di Rudini had been making cautious enquiry through his German friends as to the possibility of inducing a still more “Tripliste” attitude in the English Minister, and, a week before this letter was written, Count Hatzfeldt was reporting to his Foreign Office as Lord Salisbury’s response to his conversational suggestions that he would still refuse to consider any engagement “which might encourage Italy to provoke, light-heartedly, a conflict with her neighbours” (June 8, 1891). It was a practical repetition of the answer given four years earlier.

Except for this tentative experiment, the members of the Triple Alliance had made a virtue of necessity, and no further overt protest is recorded against Lord Salisbury’s insistence on independence. There was no succession to Prince Bismarck’s direct attempt to enlist England as a fighting partner in the alliance: nor had German statesmen yet embraced the suicidal view, which became an obsession among them in the closing years of the century, that the surest path to that end was through the pressure of a persistent bullying. It would have been incongruous, indeed, to the solicitous deference to Lord Salisbury’s wishes, whether judged to be rational or the reverse, which

1 Hansard, June 4, 1891.
Baron von Marschall and Count Hatzfeldt were always enjoining upon each other in their despatches. But one traditional Bismarckian method was not forgotten. If occasion for quarrelling between England and France could be sufficiently encouraged, England might find herself compelled to a more active cooperation with France's enemies.

Correspondence, illustrative of these tactics, took place at the close of '91 in connection with Tuat, a desert oasis lying indeterminately either in the hinterland of Algiers or within what was then taken as the southern frontiers of Morocco. It was said that France intended to assert possession of it.\(^1\) England had traditional interests in Morocco which had at one time been even predominant. Apart from that, she had agreed with Italy and Spain to a defence of the *status quo* there. It was scarcely to be hoped for that Lord Salisbury himself, with his known hesitating apathy, would initiate a protest to France against this hypothetical challenge to Moorish rights in the middle of an African desert—but he might be induced to it under pressure from the other two Powers similarly situated. Moved by these considerations, German diplomacy became busy on the question in London, Rome, and Madrid simultaneously.\(^2\) It is amusing to contrast its conscious pride, as revealed in the published German documents, in this hidden manipulation of a great intrigue, with Lord Salisbury's comments, at the close of the following letter, on the result as it emerged, according to plan, in London.

\(^1\) She did not, in fact, take possession of Tuat till nine years later, in 1900.

To Lord Dufferin, November 13, 1891.

"I am very glad you have taken the Cinque Ports—and I am very much touched and gratified by the kind words of your letter in accepting it.

"I gather that the Germans are very uneasy at the interview of Monza, and have the impression that Italy is slipping through their fingers. It is a dangerous state of mind, because it stimulates Germany to find every possible excuse for setting Italy and France by the ears. In the same regard, Germany is very anxious that we should make love to Italy, so as to withdraw her from the illegitimate embraces of her neighbour. In this we should be wise to gratify them. It is better that Germany should be reassured by Italy by means of endearments with us, than by means of bickerings with France. I think, therefore, that you will do good service if, when you see Rudini, you would press the note of mutual interest, esteem, and affection, without, of course, entering into any definite engagements.

"As to Tuat, I have reported to both Spanish and Italian ambassadors—to the latter several times—that I consider the matter to be far more their interest than ours; that if they thought right to state their opinion that Tuat was Moorish and ought to be left alone, either at Tangiers or Paris, we would do the same; but that we did not counsel such a course, for the matter was of small importance in itself. We obviously could not take any serious action in respect to it, and as France was perfectly aware of this fact, any representation would only provoke a rebuff, and give the French an opportunity of boasting of their spirited resistance to the menaces of three great Powers. I found the Spanish and Italian Governments were very much of that opinion.

"But in the course of these conversations, a curious contrast has come out. Hatzfeldt has been insisting day after day on the enormous importance which the Italians attached to Tuat, and on the absolute
necessity of our showing sympathy with them upon it, if we did not wish them to break away from us altogether.

"But Tornielli, on the other hand, to-day tells me that Rudini is puzzled beyond measure by the urgency of the German Government, which insists that they shall press us to take action about Tuat.

"Which is telling the truth? This last statement about Tornielli is of course very confidential.

"My feeling is that Caprivi and Marschall have got hold of Bismarck's bow—but they do not know how to bend it."

On May 21, 1891, Lord Salisbury addressed one of his rare speeches on foreign affairs to a non-party audience in St. Andrew's Hall, Glasgow. The concluding and larger half of it, from which quotations have already been made, was devoted to an account of the recent partitioning of Africa; in the earlier part he spoke of the special dangers to world peace which had accompanied the decay of Mahomedan civilisation.

"A curious part of the duty of the Foreign Office in its great dominant mission of preserving peace and extinguishing all danger of war, wherever it may arise, is the relation in which it places us with the Mahomedan communities in Europe and Asia. One of the great provocations and dangers of war has arisen from the position of these great communities; and if I speak of them as Mahomedan, I am not relying upon their religious character but upon the peculiar nature of the civilisation which their religion, continued now through 14 centuries, has carried into every fibre of their politics and of their social

1 See Chapter X. p. 310.
life. That civilisation hangs back from the general movement of the world, and certainly from the movement of the Christian nations. It will not assimilate the modern ideas which are essential to progress and essential even to preservation, and for many, many years past the solicitude of statesmen has been concentrated upon how they are to keep these Mahomedan communities from crumbling into dust. . . . When a nation dies there is no testamentary distribution of its goods, there is no statute of distribution for what it leaves behind. The disappearance of a nation means a desperate quarrel for what it has possessed."

This danger was largely passing away in the progressive improvement of the majority of these states under the contagious influence of more enlightened ideas: he referred to instances: Turkey—Persia—Egypt. Still, it must be remembered that these communities remained unalterably Mahomedan: "Though, of course, we wish they were of the same faith as ourselves, we must reconcile ourselves to the fact that such conversion is not a matter of any early probability; though we believe that, in the long run, if they can be persuaded to pursue paths of justice and righteousness, those paths will lead to truth." Meanwhile their separateness in history and inspiration must not be ignored, and he concluded with a warning, addressed, not for the first or last time, to Anglo-Saxon social and political bigotry.

"They will develop in their manner and after their nature. If you have got a good larch tree you cannot, by any contrivance, make it grow like an oak; and you will only spoil your larch and cover yourself with ridicule if you attempt it. The same thing is true of nations, and we must, whether in foreign countries or in our own dominion, be patient with the fact that they are developing. Their growth
is different from ours, and it is only by suffering them to follow the law of their nature in all legitimate lines, that we can hope for the greatest perfection of which those nations are capable." (Glasgow, May 20, 1891.)

He had included the Turkish Empire as an instance of hopeful progress, though with qualifying allusions to the evils which still survived there. The tiger in Abdul Hamid, which was so shortly afterwards to emerge under the panic terror of assassination, had not yet shown itself, and Lord Salisbury on this occasion referred civilly to his labours in the cause of reform. The civility, it must be admitted, did not accurately represent the sentiments which find expression in his private letters. Turkey was, indeed, the weakest link in the chain of his diplomatic achievement during this Ministry. On his first taking office in '85, he had noted and deplored the extinction of the paramount influence which England had formerly exercised there. Perhaps, if its tradition had remained unbroken, it might have survived the disappearance of the condition to which its strength had largely been due. When he had left office in 1880, England had stood, to the ruler of Turkey, as the only dependable barrier against the direct advance of Russia upon his capital. The development of the Balkan principalities and, more particularly, the insurgence of Bulgaria, had driven this danger into the background and closed Russia's straight path to material domination over Constantinople. In the perennial struggle with England for pre-eminence there, which tradition had handed down as inherent to their Asiatic rivalry, she had fallen back upon the achievement of a diplomatic influence for which she was racially far better equipped than her Western competitor. It was in his efforts
to counteract this influence and regain lost ground for his own country that Lord Salisbury had had to admit defeat.

His normal diplomatic methods were ineffective with the Turks. It was impossible to achieve a mutual accommodation of interests with a sovereign who recognised no larger interest for his country than escape from some vision of immediate danger, real or fancied, to himself, and no operative motive in other Governments except a certain, if sometimes suspended, purpose of evil against his own. Lord Salisbury's Bulgarian policy in 1885 was directed—successfully—to avert the eventual subjugation of Constantinople by Russia. But it involved present acquiescence in the Roumelian revolt and his urging of that necessity served only to render British counsels irremediably suspect in the Sultan's eyes. In the fate of Egypt, Turkey had no interest more substantial than the maintenance of those shadowy feudal rights to which she had been restricted ever since Mehemet Ali's victorious rebellion. Lord Salisbury had been unequivocal in his pledges to respect these, hoping something from the contrast offered by France's traditional hostility to them. He had been successful at the outset, but Russia's soreness over her failure in Bulgaria was then at its height; the Wolff Convention became a flag of battle between Russian and British influence at the Turkish Court, and his first success had been followed by more lasting defeat. It had not been without reactions. Rational Moslem opinion recognised that Turkey had been the main loser by the failure of a Convention which would have given solidity to her claims. Since '87, fear of the discontent of these co-religionists had alternated with fear of Pan-Slavist threats; suspicion of French patronage with a deeper suspicion of British acquisitiveness or philan-
thropy, or both in combination, to drive the "sickly, sensual, terrified, fickle" ¹ Sultan towards and away from the idea of coming to terms with England over Egypt. But the centre of gravity towards which his oscillations returned appeared to be an ever increasing antagonism to this country. In August '91, Sir William White wrote that never in his experience had his power at the Palace been so low, or the Sultan’s aversion from him so apparent, as it was now. Lord Salisbury consoled him by deducing a national and unavoidable cause:

To Sir William White, September 14, 1891.

"... He hates us. Egypt and Cyprus would be sufficient to account for this feeling, for in each case we have made ourselves masters of a Mahomedan community, which makes our sin much deeper than that of Greeks or Bulgarians, who have only alienated Christians. But that is not the full measure of our offence. We have shewn that we can govern Mahomedans so as to make them prosperous and contented—and that on our side of the Red Sea. On the other side of the Red Sea—in Arabia—people have begun to talk and move, and to ask themselves whether eternal misgovernment by Turks is their irrevocable doom. And Arabia is the terror of the Sultan’s dreams—the joint in his armour: because it is in Arabia that some day an opposition Commander of the Faithful will be manufactured. If my view is right, I cannot comfort you with the hope of an early restoration of your popularity, though the Sultan may think a certain amount of dissimulation respectable. The English are the only people who have shewn that they can conduct Mahommedan communities—in India and Egypt—to prosperity and internal security without meddling with their religion; and to the Sultan, to whom his position as the first Moslem of the world is everything,

¹ See above, Chapter II. p. 51.
this rivalry is both exasperating and alarming. I can conceive no other reason for the manifest aversion he displays to us, for he must know that we are not competitors for Constantinople, and that his new friends aim at nothing else."

The Germans had now taken a hand in the game and were pressing the Sultan to approach England with proposals for reopening negotiations—offering Count Hatzfeldt as a mediator with the British Prime Minister for that purpose. A revival of England's influence at Constantinople had become for them an admittedly essential object. In the event of that war upon which their mental gaze was constantly fixed, Italy's security, and consequently, her efficiency as an ally would depend on the continuance of England's maritime supremacy in the Mediterranean. Visions of its being endangered by the simultaneous issue of hostile fleets from Toulon and through the Straits were what stirred the Emperor William to his indignant protests at the inadequacy of Admiralty preparations. Russia was known to be adding steadily to her war-fleet in the Black Sea, while the fortifying of the Dardanelles, which—as Lord Salisbury grimly reminded Count Hatzfeldt at intervals—had been initiated under German auspices in '85, was being continued to completion and intensified the strategic perils of Russo-Turkish friendship.

Considered from this point of view, Lord Salisbury's own attitude was curiously detached. He told Sir William White that he was mainly moved to come to an understanding with the Sultan on account of the importance which his friends of the Triple Alliance attached to it, and he assured Sir Clare Ford later that he in no way shared their anxiety on the subject. Perhaps the strategic conditions of the "next war" did not fill so large a place in his inner vision as it did in
their. Perhaps he was not equally clear as to the part which England was destined to play in it. In any case he was sceptical as to the possibility of arriving at any solid or satisfactory settlement with the present occupant of the Turkish throne.

But he was willing to try, if dated evacuation were excluded, and when the Sultan, as advised, sent a message this year to suggest a reopening of negotiations, he invited him to formulate bases for discussion. Count Hatzfeldt, through Rustem Pasha in London, pressed urgently for a response; so did Count Radowitz at Constantinople with an energy which left no need for further remonstrance from his sovereign. But the Sultan had apparently exhausted his capacities for initiative; he pettishly refused even to see either Sir William or Count Radowitz, and the combined efforts of British and German diplomacy remained impotent before the nerveless silence of Yildiz Kiosk.

At Christmas, Sir William White, falling a victim to a sudden attack of influenza, died at Berlin on his way home to England on leave, and the Egyptian negotiation remained in a state of suspended animation. Sir Clare Ford was appointed to the Constantinople Embassy, and two months later Lord Salisbury wrote to instruct him in the inner history of the question and to suggest a new line of argument for use in any renewal of its discussion. The Khedive Tewfik’s death in January, and the advent of a young and inexperienced successor had inspired the Sultan to futile efforts for the extension of his feudal authority. His representative at Cairo, Moukhtar Pasha, had used language so irritating to the young Khedive that Sir Evelyn Baring had asked Sir Clare to try and obtain his recall. Lord Salisbury warned him of the uselessness of the attempt, but saw in the resentment which the Sultan’s action had aroused an argument which
might predispose him to friendlier relations with ourselves.

His recognition of the developments already at work in Egypt itself is interesting in the light of later experience.

_To Sir Clare Ford, March 2, 1892._

"... The Sultan's fixed idea, so far as his timid and nerveless nature enables him to have anything fixed, is to undo the work of Mehemet Ali, at least in some degree, and make Egypt more dependent upon Turkey. Moukhtar has to act on his master's views and is necessarily, therefore, disagreeable to the Prince, but he is not in fault: and the fact that he is disagreeable will not induce his master to remove him.

"His language may have been embittered by the consciousness of a corresponding change which is slowly passing over the influential classes in Egypt. They are becoming less and less tolerant of Turkish interference, and more and more inclined to quarrel with the Sultan. The Sultan's own policy may partly be to blame for this, but I should rather imagine that they are being slowly touched by the feeling or fancy of nationality, which is the fashion or moral epidemic of the day. Arabi had got hold of something of the kind, and it would be odd if in Egypt, where all Mediterranean nations congregate, ideas that have operated so strongly in Italy and Greece should be wholly without representation. At all events, I think it is plain that the process, though slow, is going on, and it is one to which I invite your very earnest attention. I believe if we could convince the Sultan of its existence, we might create a very different feeling in his mind towards ourselves. We have no leanings towards the independence of Egypt, and do not desire to diminish the connection which exists between her and Turkey; and therefore, so long as we are in occupation, the Sultan's prerogatives, such as they are, will not be retrenched. . . ."
He dreams of some pan-Islamic renovation, under which Egypt shall return to the condition of Macedonia; but a movement the other way is far more probable, and the English power is at present the only serious obstacle to its being carried out.

I do not mean to say that even the support of England can make the present state of things eternal. If Egypt goes on improving as rapidly as she is improving now, the time will come when she will insist on being free from Turkey, or England, or anybody else. But I imagine that that result is some distance off; much too far to enter into our calculations for the conduct of present diplomacy. . . ."

In the autumn of '91, a sudden revival of interest in Egypt among British Liberals had caused a flutter of expectation abroad. The Radical wing of the Opposition had for some time separated itself on this issue from the approval with which Lord Salisbury's foreign policy was generally accepted by the country. In September, Mr. John Morley spoke strongly in criticism of the occupation; and Mr. Gladstone followed with a pronouncement whose precise meaning foreigners were hardly equipped to analyse. He spoke of the "burdensome and embarrassing" occupation of Egypt—"escape from which it was to be feared the Tory Government would hand over to its successors to deal with" (October 2, 1891). By-elections, already heralding Tory defeat, gave him authority as the heir-presumptive of power, and the French press, ignoring the subtleties of his style, hailed this deliverance, with peans of excited anticipation, as a pledge of early evacuation. The anti-British press in Cairo responded sympathetically, and Sir Evelyn, in his letters to his chief, grumbled at the mischievous ferment which was being excited. On October 25, he telegraphed: "If you could take some public occasion to say policy of the British
Government about Egypt was unchanged, it would have an excellent effect here. All the talk about evacuation is doing a good deal of harm.”

Lord Salisbury responded at the Guildhall. He began by alluding reproachfully to recent statements which had “given heart to all who were unfriendly to England and pain to all who valued her prosperity,” but the bulk of his speech was addressed to far away audiences in Paris and Constantinople. The Conservative Government was not itself responsible, he said, for the existing situation in Egypt: “We did not go there.”

“But we know that England before our time underwent great sacrifices, shed her most precious blood and scattered treasure freely in order to rescue Egypt from the evils that had overtaken her, and that if England acted alone in that matter, it was not her fault. And now that the blood is spilt and the treasure spent, and the great result is in course of being achieved, we cannot allow all that to be swept away as if it were a last year’s almanac, and suffer the country which at so much cost has been rescued, to fall back into the condition of anarchy and confusion and danger to all its neighbours which it occupied a few years ago.” (November 9, 1891.)

There was no wish to divorce Egypt from her legal status as part of the Ottoman Empire, but, before England left her to herself, she must be strong enough to repel all external attack and put down all internal disturbance. That position was not to be gained in a day, and there was a significant hint that the desired goal would be reached more quickly if the task of reform and reconstruction were assisted and not obstructed by “others.” He closed with a confident assertion of national support for his Government’s policy, independent of party divisions, and an earnest
warning to foreign onlookers not to be misled into any contrary belief.

"I entreat those who criticise us from abroad not to believe that this matter is one which will be disposed of by the vicissitudes to which party government is exposed. . . . We can fight out our domestic quarrels, whatever they may be, as we have done in old times, but let not any persons deceive themselves into the belief that that will, in its main feature and outlines, modify the foreign policy of the people of this country. I am convinced that the people of this country take a deep interest in the solution of the problem which we have undertaken, and that they are very proud of the splendid success which has accompanied the efforts of our administrators and soldiers, and that, whatever happens, . . . whatever party may be in power, the English people will never withdraw its hand from the steady and vigorous prosecution and the benefit of the humane undertaking with which now it is their pride and honour to be connected."

The challenge was not taken up by Opposition speakers: Mr. Morley and Mr. Gladstone both intimated that their remarks had been misunderstood; and criticism of the Government's foreign policy made no further appearance in the electoral battle which raged on the platforms during the next few months.

Sir Evelyn telegraphed his congratulatory thanks for the speech, but the speaker himself was depressed at having been compelled to a more truculent delivery on the affairs of his department than was within his custom. Three weeks later he was writing to Sir Evelyn:

To Sir Evelyn Baring, December 4, 1891.

". . . The trouble raised by the unfortunate utterances of Gladstone and Morley about our occupation has nearly subsided, both at Paris and at Constanti-
nople, and I am in hopes that we shall not hear much more about it. But the situation is not as good as it was before. Everybody is more jealous and less certain of the future. My Guildhall speech was a necessity under the circumstances, but it has acted as an irritant—and I heartily wish the G.O.M. had spared me the necessity of making it. . . ."

This ripple of angry feeling was the more annoying because, though only for a few weeks, it had disturbed a long waited for period of appeasement with French opinion. In August, by Lord Salisbury's invitation, the French fleet had visited Portsmouth on its return journey from its sensational welcome by the Russians at Kronstadt where had been celebrated the friendship which was then on the eve of becoming an alliance. The invitation appeared—and was no doubt intended to appear—as an assertion of England's resolved detachment from the enmities of her friends. The visit was a great success. The Queen went to Portsmouth to inspect the fleet and be gracious to its officers, while assembled crowds on shore and on the water cheered ships and sailors to the echo. Lord Salisbury wrote to congratulate Her Majesty on the impression made: "Though in the present state of Europe our interests lie on the side of the Triple Alliance, it is most important to persuade the French, if we can, that England has no antipathy to France, or any partisanship against her" (August 22, 1891).

In November, the forces making for reconciliation suffered loss in the death of Lord Lytton which took place in Paris on the 24th, after a very brief illness. But it became the occasion for a striking witness to his successful achievement. The French Government ordered a public celebration of his funeral. Along the whole way from the embassy to the church and on to the station of St. Lazare, every shop was closed as
the procession passed and the pavements were thronged with gravely sympathetic crowds. Such a tribute of honour to the memory of a foreign representative was unique in the records of diplomacy and though it was no doubt rendered primarily to Lord Lytton's own personality, it would have been impossible in the atmosphere of national ill feeling which he had so brilliantly seconded his chief in exorcising.

There were small diplomatic disputes between the two countries in the summer of '92—about the administration of justice in Madagascar and commercial negotiations with Morocco. But, as a whole, the atmosphere of appeasement continued and when Lord Salisbury's Ministry came to an end in the following August, a calm, amounting almost to cordiality, had replaced the strain and embitterment of Anglo-French relations which had characterised its earlier years.
CHAPTER XIV

1892

THE END OF THE MINISTRY OF ’86–’92

The sixth year of this Parliament ended in July ’92, and, according to the unwritten law which allowed no Parliament to run the risk of dying a natural death under the Septennial Act, the session of that year was passed under the shadow of certain dissolution at its close. Interest shifted from Westminster to the constituencies; party leaders began to “make their hands” for the approaching appeal to the electorate; and platform speeches, more abundant than ever, became less purely negative and controversial. On the Opposition side, especially, efforts were made to depose the eternal Irish question from its exclusive—indeed, even from a predominant—possession of the field, and projects of radical reform of more immediate appeal to the British voter were pressed to the front. This movement was strengthened by the scandal of internal conflict which was tearing the Home Rule party asunder on the other side of St. George’s Channel. Even after Mr. Parnell’s death in the autumn of ’91, the battle continued to rage between Parnellites and anti-Parnellites. The latter, who were largely in the majority, stood for continued alliance with the British Liberals against the passionate resentment of their rivals at the Gladstonian excommunication of the dead chief.
They owed their superiority mainly to the priests who, acting with practical unanimity under the orders of their Bishops, worked for them in every parish throughout Ireland. This aspect of the conflict roused Lord Salisbury more than once in his speeches to fervent denunciations of the "priest in politics." Since the clerical activities were avowedly inspired in defence of the outraged sanctities of Christian marriage and his own Conservative public had agreed to look upon the anti-Parnellites as, on the whole, the least disreputable section of its Irish opponents, his fervour was found rather shocking even by friendly critics.

As a matter of fact, his habitual dislike to sitting in judgment on his fellow-men on moral issues was intensified to repulsion in this instance by the doubtful spontaneity of the uprising in the priesthood. It had only become externally operative after Mr. Gladstone’s published ostracism of the Home Rule leader. The priests’ somewhat dictatorial methods of influencing their flocks formed a patent object lesson in support of Protestant Ulster’s plea of probable persecution, and these considerations were quite enough to liberate to action an instinctive revolt at clerical interference in secular affairs, which was one of the Tory leader’s innately British characteristics. Another inspiration there probably was. The prompt abandonment “for reasons of state” of the condemned leader by followers who owed their whole achievement to his genius, might be defensible on grounds of patriotism but was wholly repellent to Lord Salisbury; and the fight to the death against overwhelming odds with which their victim responded appealed to every militant fibre in his being. This sympathy with a man whose standards of private and public conduct were so alien to his own was not avowed—perhaps
scarcely so to himself—but the suspicion of it as an explanation of his anti-clerical outbursts—Mr. Gladstone charged him with it—probably lost him more votes than were gained by any responsive disapproval of the priest in politics.

In a very different order of seriousness stands another utterance of his, during this campaign, which was widely criticised for its electoral indiscretion. It would hardly deserve notice but for the heavy structure of aristocratic insolence which his opponents laboured to rear on its slender foundation. The Conservative Government had not included Parish Councils in their scheme of Local Government Reform and the Opposition had now placed the creation of them in the forefront of their programme for improving the lot of the rural labourer. Speaking at Birmingham in November, Lord Salisbury challenged them to show any advantage in the proposal. The Councils would have nothing to do. Their advocates had contended that they would make rural life more interesting: "If," he commented, "among the many duties the modern State undertakes, the duty of amusing the rural population should be included, I should rather recommend a circus or something of that kind. . . . As far as I have had the opportunity of attending vestries, I am bound to say that amusement is not the feature to be remarked upon as most prominent in them" (November 24, 1891).

Throughout the length and breadth of the land agricultural labourers were thenceforward assured that Lord Salisbury so despised their intelligence as to hold it unfit for any demand upon it more serious than a travelling circus. An attenuated deference to criticism was witnessed to in a speech made three months later at Exeter in which, in the teeth of intervening comments, he returned to the charge. He
again deprecated the duty of the State to provide amusement for its citizens—gibed at the idea of their finding it in the membership of Councils or Committees—recalled comically his own experiences in that connection—but avoided the use of the incriminated comparison.

This speech at Exeter was mainly devoted to placing his party’s case before the county elector, as such, and was remarkable for its candour. He spoke of a government Small Holdings Bill which was passed into law that session—dwelt on the advantages of a peasant proprietary, on his strong wish that this Bill might prove successful in establishing it—but would promise nothing. The measure was essentially experimental, he warned his audience, and there were economic difficulties in the path of small culture which it might be impossible to overcome. He referred to a scheme for contributory Old Age Pensions which Mr. Chamberlain had advocated and gave it his blessing, but said that details would have to be worked out before he could vouch for it as possible. His boast of the grant of free education was made the occasion for condemning the bribes which canvassing politicians were offering to the rural population. He dwelt feelingly on the deplorable condition into which they had sunk in the early part of that century, and he traced its worst features directly to the working of the old Poor Law. The lavishness of its gifts to the poorer classes had been unstinted, but it had nevertheless issued ultimately in an intolerable servitude and in wages so low as to be “an absolute negative to any moral or intellectual progress.” The law had been abolished but it had taken two generations for the country, even with all the assistance of prosperity coming from scientific discovery, to escape from the injury
that it had inflicted. He drew a moral of general application:

"... We must learn this rule, that no men and no class of men ever rise to any permanent improvement in their condition of body or mind except by relying upon their own personal efforts. The wealth with which the rich man is surrounded is constantly tempting him to forget that truth, and you see, in family after family, men degenerate from the habits of their fathers because they lie sluggishly and eat and enjoy what has been placed before them without appealing to their own exertions. The poor man, especially in these days, may have a similar temptation offered to him by legislation, but the same inexorable rule will work. The only true lasting benefit which the statesman can give to the poor man is so to shape matters that the greatest possible liberty for the exercise of his own moral and intellectual qualities should be offered to him by law. ..."

(Exeter, February 2, 1892.)

He claimed the freed schools as such a benefit.

His correspondence during this period included, naturally, many suggestions from different quarters for "popular" items to be added to the party's programme. They were replied to in divers ways, but he constantly recurred to his old contention that "as a question of electoral arithmetic", as he put it, the party would lose more by alarming its normal supporters than it would ever gain by bidding for the gratitude of those who were not. At this time he used to maintain in conversation that, though he himself had approved and did approve of such measures as the Local Government and Free Education Acts, he looked upon them as electioneeringly damaging for the discontent which they had engendered among the old established Tories in the country:

"You may say that they cannot vote against you,
but they won't trouble to vote for you and they
won't work for you, and you'll find it out at the polls." He attributed the loss of this election as a whole largely to that cause.

One special difficulty presented itself in connection with Mr. Chamberlain's still anomalous position. These elections could no longer be run, as had been the case in '86, exclusively upon the Home Rule issue. As regarded questions now before the country there was no vividly disturbing difference between him and his present associates. But, in seeking the suffrages of his old Radical followers in Birmingham and elsewhere, he naturally had to dwell on the acceptable quality, from their point of view, of the legislation for which, by his votes and parliamentary support, he had made himself responsible during the last six years. In one or two of his speeches he had given precision to this aspect of it by trying to show that, in matters where, during the election campaign of 1885, his view and that of the Tories had been opposed, his view had now prevailed. This was not a contention calculated to oil the wheels of the party machine, and Lord Salisbury wrote to him. The letter is a good example of his style in personal diplomacy.

To Mr. Chamberlain, June 22, 1892.

"... I can quite understand that you should describe our legislation as liberal, progressive, and so forth; and even that you should be more indulgent to us in that respect than we deserve. But what I am afraid of are the references to 1885.

"To say that the Tories have supported measures

1 Through the death of the Duke of Devonshire this winter and Lord Hartington's consequent removal to the House of Lords, Mr. Chamberlain had become the leader of the Liberal Unionists in the Commons.
whose liberalism you approve, will only be interpreted by them as showing that, knowing them better, you do them more justice. But if you say that they have given in on all the points on which you differed from them in 1885, you give them an uncomfortable feeling that they have deserted their colours and changed their coats.

"I do not think there is any ground for such a self-reproach—though I believe it is true that they have proved—and that you have found them more liberal on many points than in 1885 you could have imagined. But if you wish to praise us on this head—as may be very expedient—do it absolutely and without any unnecessary reference to the controversies of 1885.

"I dare say you will think the point a small one, but if I have made myself clear I shall not quarrel with that judgment.

"Cornflakes when you examine them in a microscope are very small things."

Parliament was dissolved on June 28, and by the second week in July the defeat of the Government was assured. The final results gave Mr. Gladstone a majority of 40 votes, 355 to 315. But there were circumstances of consolation. The divisions of opinion among the victors were already notorious; an analysis of the figures showed Great Britain to have still returned a majority in favour of the Union, and England itself a large one; Lord Salisbury had announced beforehand that, in view of the multiplicity of subjects upon which the Liberals were appealing for the electors' suffrages, he should not accept a verdict adverse to his own party as a mandate in favour of Home Rule. Altogether the Unionist Party were prepared to look upon the election as but a single skirmish in a long campaign and were in good spirits from the outset, while lobby rumours suggested a corresponding absence of elation on the other side.
When a party has adopted a programme of constitutional revolution, an indecisive victory is almost more embarrassing than a defeat.

The Tory Ministry met Parliament on August 4, and the House voted an amendment to the address on the 11th. On the 12th, Lord Salisbury went down to Osborne and gave in his resignation. There was none of the agitating emotion which had accompanied his retirement from office in 1886. No foreign question of importance was at issue to excite Her Majesty's anxiety; Lord Rosebery's succession to the Foreign Office and general support of Lord Salisbury's policy was assured; and there was besides the universal assumption that the new Government's tenure of power would be brief and indecisive.

As to Lord Salisbury himself, he was tired, and the prospect of rest enlivened by anticipations of an early resumption of the struggle in the House of Lords with good prospects of securing a constitutional victory for that body was refreshing. Before leaving for Puys to the enjoyment of his first real holiday for six years, he wrote a letter to Sir Philip Currie for communication to Lord Rosebery. The bulk of it was devoted to explaining the limitations and urging the necessity of the engagements with Italy, whose existence, actual or suspected, had been dwelt upon unbrageously by Lord Rosebery's Radical following in the House of Commons.

To Sir Philip Currie, August 18, 1892.

"The key of the present situation in Europe is our position towards Italy, and through Italy to the Triple Alliance. Italy fears a war with France because her ports are exposed and her fleet is weak, and she is very anxious for our protection in such an event. We have always refused to give any assurance
of material assistance. I have said that no English minister could do so, because the action of an English ministry must depend on the national feeling at the moment, and the national feeling would be decided by the nature of the *casus belli*. But while keeping clear of any assurance of material assistance, we have expressed the strongest concurrence in the Italian policy of maintaining the *status quo* in the Mediterranean, and in the seas belonging to it, and we have agreed to consult with them if any circumstances should arise by which the *status quo* should be threatened. I have always done my best to show friendliness to Italy, with a view to preventing her from thinking that she was deserted by us, or that there was no hope of assistance for her if she was wrongfully attacked.

"In abstaining from any pledge of material assistance, I have gone as far in the direction of pure neutrality as I think I could safely go. If England were to become more cold to Italy than she has been, or were to give any indication of likelihood that she would give even a moral preference to France in the event of a conflict, I think very serious risks to European peace would be run, as well as to the interests of this country."

He went on to point out that there would be grave danger that such a breaking away from our present "grouping" might induce a drawing together of Russia and the German powers, and a revival of the Drei-Kaiser-Bund with its attendant evils in the south-east of Europe.

Colleagues and ambassadors sent letters of affectionate farewell. Lord George Hamilton wrote to congratulate him especially on the success of his Cabinet management.
To Lord George Hamilton, August 16, 1892.

"Very many thanks for the kindness of your letter. I agree with you that the agreement and solidarity of our Cabinet have been quite remarkable—ever since Randolph left us. But I fear I cannot flatter myself that the cause is that which you are good enough to suppose. We have been fortunate in having had a very "straight" set of men; so that intrigue in the Cabinet was unknown. And a good deal must be attributed to the great affection in which Smith was held.

"I need not say with what satisfaction I look back to that large part of our official career which has been passed together. The loyal support you have always given me, both in backing me when I was right and advising me when I was wrong, has been invaluable."

To Lord Knutsford, August 24, 1892.

"Many thanks for your very kind letter. The thanks should have come from me—for we should certainly have come to grief in Africa and W. America if the Colonial Office had been in less experienced and judicious hands.

"What a luxury it is to have no boxes arriving of an evening! I suppose one will miss it some day—at least, my friends tell me so; but at present it is a delicious change."

An effectively logical paradox was made to do service in deprecating gratitude from his private secretary:

To the Hon. S. K. McDonnell, August 26, 1892.
(Puys.)

"My dear McDonnell—I am much touched by your very kind letter. The debt of thanks is the other way—for it did not matter to you how I discharged my
duties, but it mattered very much to me how you discharged yours. That our term of office was singularly free from quarrels among friends, or party divisions, was in a large measure your work.

"I am very sorry our official connection is severed, though I have got very sick of office itself. Without your help it would have been unbearable long ago.

"The heat wave has left us alone and we have had a very pleasant climate here. I mainly employ myself in sleeping."

Lord Salisbury looked upon this parliamentary defeat with a political equanimity which allowed free course to his sense of personal release. And, so far as home affairs were concerned, he was right. It proved to be only a brief interlude in a command of his fellow-countrymen's confidence which endured to the end of his life. But abroad its effects were less fugitive. His policy of "neighbourliness", as he worked it, had secured for his country a position of influence in Europe which was unique, in that it owed nothing to military pre-eminence or to that subtle manipulation of international jealousies, which was the chief weapon of Prince Bismarck's genius. Its weakness as a principle of statesmanship lay in the extent to which it depended on his individual characteristics. It could not be passed on to a successor. Neither, as the event proved, could it suffer interruption without loss. That easy familiarity with the hidden course of international happenings, to which his letters witness, owed something to a sustained intimacy with their development; the deference which he received was in part due to the extent to which his personality was identified abroad with the power which he represented. His exclusion from office, though it was only for three years, broke the charm on both sides. He never regained fully for himself, or for England, that
mediatorial authority which through a process of unremarked growth attained its height during the years just recorded. In his later tenure of office there are successes in diplomacy to be chronicled; but it was this Government which saw the zenith of his fame and achievement as a Foreign Minister.
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