POLITICS—GRAVE AND GAY

Sir Herbert Williams, M.Sc., A.M.I.C.E.

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by

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CHAPTER I

BOYHOOD

I HAVE always felt that anything in the way of an autobiography is somewhat immodest, because it assumes that other people have an interest in one's sayings and doings, and I should not have attempted to write these reminiscences unless someone else had suggested I should do so.

Judging by other people's reminiscences, it is customary to furnish a background by giving some account of one's origin.

I first saw the light of day on December 2nd in the year 1884 at Hooton, in the peninsula of Wirral, Cheshire, now better known for the fact that there is a racecourse about two miles from where I was born. My father and mother had come to live there in the early part of that year from Newtown, Montgomeryshire, which was my mother's native town, and where my father had conducted a private boarding-school which he transferred to Hooton.

The only other important event that appears to have happened on December 2nd, but in another year, was the *coup d'état* of Louis Napoleon, afterwards Napoleon the Third. I mention that fact because of a subsequent contact with a relative of Napoleon the Third.

My father was born 102 years ago, and my mother 108 years ago, but my father died when I was only 12, so naturally I do not remember as much about him as I do about my mother, who died in 1931 at the age of 91.

My father came from the quarrying district of Bethesda, Caernarvonshire. His father and mother died before I was born, so I never knew my grandparents, but I had a step-grandfather who was employed at Lord Penrhyn's quarries. My father's career is rather an interesting commentary on the educational opportunities of that now remote period.

As a small boy he attended a local church school, the headmaster of which, and presumably the only teacher, must have been quite remarkable, judging by the number of boys who started at that elementary school and ultimately graduated at one of the older Universities. When my father had exhausted the facilities of this church school he attended a secondary school in the cathedral city of Bangor, whose origin was indicated by its name, namely the Friars' School. To attend the school he had to walk four-and-a-half miles each way. From this school he obtained a scholarship at the training college of St. Mark's and St. John,

Chelsea. From this, apparently without any further experience, he was appointed headmaster, and probably the only master, of a church elementary school in Newtown, Montgomeryshire. The appointment was in the hands of the rector, and one of the qualifications for the post of headmaster was the ability to play the organ at church on Sundays. This was rather a stumbling-block, as though my father played the piano, he had never touched an organ in his life. However, he managed to satisfy the rector, whose musical attainments were not a great feature, that he would be able to manage sufficiently well. There was a mixed choir, and one of the female members of the choir was my mother, who told me that she and the other members of the choir were rather shocked at the incompetence of the new organist.

When he had been about two years in this post he met an undergraduate from Cambridge, Mr. R. R. D. Adams, who had relatives in Newtown, and who turned out to be a very remarkable scholar. Adams painted a very rosy picture of Cambridge, and my father determined to go there, but I never discovered how he managed to finance himself, because I do not think his stepfather was in a position to make much contribution, but it might have been he was helped by his grandfather, of whom he used to tell the story that as he walked home every evening from the Friars' School he was stopped by his grandfather always with the same question, "Have you learnt anything today, Thomas?" and if Thomas had, the reward was sixpence. An interesting form of educational payment by results.

Adams, before he went to Cambridge, had been head boy of the City of London School, where Asquith, afterwards Prime Minister, was second boy, and even when that statesman held high office Adams always referred to him as "Young Asquith".

My father became an undergraduate at Cambridge when he was 23, and was therefore older than the other undergraduates. He studied Mathematics, and according to Adams was tipped as a probable Senior Wrangler, but unfortunately he was taken ill in the middle of the Tripos and therefore never had the chance of winning this now defunct honour, and only passed as a junior optime.

Of Adams it was said by his contemporaries he might have been Senior Classic or Senior Wrangler or both had he wished. He took Classics, had a carousal the night before the exam, and as a hang-over was not the best way in which to start such an intellectual test he was not Senior Classic. Adams later had the misfortune to marry a lady whose first husband was still alive while she had every reason to believe he was dead! This wrecked what promised to be a great career as an Army coach. After this he engaged in a variety of literary work, which included a great deal of literary research for Cecil Rhodes. One of the friends of Adams

and my father at Cambridge was Hely-Hutchinson, who became the Governor of Cape Colony, and with whose son, Mr. Maurice Hely-Hutchinson, I served in Parliament for many years. Adams spent his declining years as a brother of the Charterhouse and as a well-known *habitué* of the "Cheshire Cheese" in Fleet Street.

After my father had graduated he took one or two posts as a master in boarding-schools, and then on his marriage to my mother, who had a small amount of capital, he started his own enterprise of a private boarding-school.

My mother lived in the house in Newtown in which Robert Owen was born, who made a fortune as a cotton-spinner in Lanarkshire, and later achieved fame as a pioneer in Socialistic experiments. As an old man, Robert Owen returned to Newtown and died in one of the local hotels, and the body was brought into my grandfather's house the night before the funeral in order that he could be buried from the house in which he had been born.

A few years ago I established another indirect connection with Robert Owen when, attending one Sunday at St. Margaret's Church, I listened to a sermon by Canon Alan Don, now the Dean of Westminster, in the course of which he happened to mention that his grandfather and Robert Owen were partners together in the cotton business in Lanarkshire. A more recent connection between the Dean of Westminster and myself was that in 1946 he read my daughter's banns of marriage and assisted the Bishop of Portsmouth at her wedding.

Newtown, my mother's birthplace, seems to have had some strange people in the district in her young days, very notably a local squire, who married three times. His third wife was a little disturbed when she found that her husband had kept the embalmed bodies of his two previous wives in coffins in his bedroom.[1]

Elections in my mother's days appear to have been very exciting and bribery and corruption were rife.

There were two hotels in Newtown; one was the headquarters of the Tories and the other the headquarters of the Liberals, and the respective supporters of the parties could have all the free refreshment they desired; and, of course, there were other hotels in other villages and towns in

[1] I had a curious confirmation of this strange story on April 19th, 1947. I went with a party on the annual pilgrimage organized by the Primrose League to Disraeli's grave at Hughenden. After the memorial service at Hughenden Church we adjourned for lunch at the "Red Lion", High Wycombe. Arising out of a remark by one of those at the table at which my wife and I were sitting, I mentioned I was writing a book of reminiscences, and that I was including the story mentioned above. To my surprise, Mrs. Cyril Johnston, the Dame President of the Grantham Croydon Habitation of the Primrose League, the wife of the celebrated manufacturer of carillons and church bells, said: "Oh, the story is quite true. It was my great-grandfather, Sir John Pryce, who lived at Newtown Hall and had the corpses of his two previous wives in coffins in his bedroom."

Another of the strange examples of the long arm of coincidence.

which similar provision was made. One gentleman claimed to have had seven free breakfasts on election morning, but I imagine the number must have grown as my mother's recollection of the incident grew more dim.

Now I come to myself.

I was the youngest of three brothers. My eldest, the late Charles Thomas Williams, was seven-and-a-half years older than I and my other brother, Dr. John David Ellis Williams, five years older, a very big gap in age when you are young—so that I was generally known as "the Kid", or if the three of us were playing whist, "the live dummy". It was a disadvantage having no sister, particularly as there were no girls of my own age within a couple of miles. I certainly think it is desirable that all families should have both girls and boys.

As I mentioned earlier, my father was a schoolmaster, but for some reason neither he nor any of the staff of the school appear to have been able to teach me to read. So in despair I was sent to stay for three months with an uncle at Bethesda, and attended the local church school, where on weekdays I learnt to read English, and where on Sundays we all went to Sunday-school, where we were taught to read—or at least they tried to teach me to read—the Bible in Welsh. In those days, and I suppose it is still true, the children of that district all grew up to speak Welsh and only learnt English when they went to school, but as the instruction in the weekday school did not include the teaching of written Welsh, the Sunday-school was used both for that purpose and for religious instruction. In the ordinary way, by the time they were ten, everybody in the district was bilingual, both in the spoken and the written sense, and this had one advantage, namely that this apparently made it easier for them to learn other languages.

This was very notably the case of a family of one of the local parsons, Canon Thomas. He was master of five languages, his wife, a well-known Welsh Bard, of seven languages, while their five children, two boys and three girls, followed their parents' example, and the oldest became a Professor of Hebrew at Lampeter. They were a very kindly family, but this colossal accumulation of learning had a somewhat intimidating effect on their friends and neighbours.

I was one of the original beneficiaries of what we call "free education". It is not, of course, free, it is paid for in the rates and taxes, but not by means of fees. I entered the local church school on the day when free education came into being.

The introduction of compulsory free education was a revolutionary conception, and as most people have forgotten the fact, may I remind them that the necessary legislation was passed by Lord Salisbury's Conservative Government?

My recollections of that short period at school in Wales are somewhat dim, but I do remember I achieved great fame by kicking a football through one of the windows, though that fame had somewhat tender consequences!

Sunday in Wales, in those days, and it still is the case, was not a day of joy. At ten minutes to ten in the morning the streets of the village were empty, then all the front doors opened, and the whole population streamed to the place of worship, and generally with umbrellas because of the heavy rain in those parts. At noon we consumed the largest meal of the week, Sunday dinner. At one-thirty we were all sent to Sunday-school, after which the next big meal of the week, Sunday tea; then evening service, with a long sermon, invariably in Welsh, in the chapels, occasionally in English in the churches, and finally the most enthusiastic event, a prayer meeting with much hymn-singing. All amusement was strictly prohibited, no newspapers were read, and all reading was limited to religious books, and, of course, there were no forms of recreation.

I remember one Sunday afternoon playing by the side of the local river with another boy, and we engaged in skimming flat stones over the water. The mother of the other boy saw us from the window of her house, and called out to me, who happened to be the elder, that I was a very naughty boy, and when my father came to the village she would report me to him for the terrible crime of throwing stones into the river on Sunday. I cannot believe that this form of Sunday was as religiously advantageous as the inhabitants of Wales then thought. On the other hand, perhaps we have reacted a little too much in the other direction.

It was not only in Wales, however, that Sunday was so austere; it was nearly as true in Cheshire. The local parson who had baptized me, the Rev. John Owen, was in his day one of the chess "masters" of the country, and he went on one occasion to attend the Chess Conference in Edinburgh. He travelled back by the night train on the Saturday, and on his journey he was playing chess in the railway carriage with another man from the Conference, and, according to the gossip of his parish, the game continued after midnight—that is to say it continued into Sunday morning. This was the subject for weeks of anxious theological discussion as to whether he, a parson, had broken the Fourth Commandment.

One of the assistant masters at my father's school bore the name of Andrew Napoleon Bonaparte-Wyse, and this is my second link with Napoleon the Third, because this gentleman, a Catholic Unionist from Cork, was a great-nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte. He was at the school at the time of Gladstone's Home Rule Bill, and I still recollect his violent denunciation of the proposal.

Many years later, when Southern Ireland obtained Home Rule and part of Ulster was also given its own Parliament, the Protestant Govern-

ment of Ulster appointed Mr. Wyse as the first Permanent Secretary of their Department of Education. Having regard to the violent antagonism between the Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, it was a remarkable example of religious tolerance, no doubt assisted by Mr. Wyse's very strong adherence to the cause of Unionism.

My interest in politics must have been a very early one, because I remember one day in the year 1892 there was a concert at the church hall in one adjoining village, and my father, who was going to register his vote at another village some two-and-a-half miles away, asked me whether I would rather go to the concert or come with him to the polling station, and for some strange reason for a boy under eight I chose to go with him to the polling station.

Curiously enough, my next visit to a polling station was to record my own vote, which did not take place until I was thirty-four years of age, because by the chance of circumstances I was never resident on polling day in the district in which I was on the voters' register until the year 1918. This led me to believe that postal voting should be widely extended, and I urged this strongly at the Speakers' Conference in 1944, and I am glad that effect has been given, generally speaking, to my views in the Representation of the People Act. Politics in my boyhood seem to me to have been very much a matter for the grey-beards.

Mr. Gillette had not then made his remarkable discovery of the safety razor, so a very high proportion of the men had beards, and for some reason beards go grey much sooner than heads go bald, so middle-aged men, if not antiquities, were greybeards. I still remember the wagging of these greybeards when income tax was raised from 8*d.* to 9*d.* in the £. It was such a revolutionary change that one night three of the greybeards conspired to drown their sorrows in a bottle of whisky, which cost them 3*s.* It will be clear from this that the cost of living has risen substantially in the intervening period, though I am afraid neither income tax nor the price of whisky is yet included in the index number of the cost of living prepared by the Ministry of Labour.

Political meetings in those days were few and far between, and it was not until I was twenty-two that I went to my first meeting addressed by the local Liberal candidate, Mr. W. H. Lever, afterwards Lord Leverhulme, whose factory at Port Sunlight I can remember seeing in its early stages of construction.

Mr. Lever was politically a Liberal, and was without doubt a very progressive employer. He was the first one in this country to indulge in mass advertising, and fifty years ago every railway station had placards which explained that the reason a woman looked older sooner than a man was the lack of Sunlight Soap in the washtub. One of his forms of advertising was to encourage the public to inspect his factory,

through the departments of which he had constructed overhead gangways so that the visitors could walk through without interfering with the production, and I remember with interest that he used extensively in his factory what is now called the belt system of conveyors, which quite a lot of people think was an idea we imported into this country from watching the example of Mr. Henry Ford in the U.S.A. many years later!

Though we did not import the conveyor belt system from the United States, I think we must have imported that popular feature of American life, the cocktail. My mother's eldest brother went to Peru and became manager of a British bank there somewhere about 1865. He came home for a holiday, and according to my mother appears to have disturbed the household at about seven o'clock in the morning by taking to his father and his brothers and sisters what was regarded as a Peruvian invention, the cocktail. We seem to have made some progress since then, as 7 a.m. is not now regarded as the proper time for cocktails!

When writing about Sunday in those days I have given some account of the religious intolerance of the time, but in another direction they appear to have been more tolerant, because one of the churchwardens of Mr. Owen's church was what is officially called a commission agent, more generally described as a "bookie". In his silk hat and frock coat on a Sunday morning he did not very much resemble the modern representative of the "old firm".

My father's school was never very prosperous, and when he died, within two days of his fiftieth birthday, my eldest brother was an undergraduate at Liverpool University, and in order to preserve the goodwill of the school until he could himself take charge of it on graduation he secured the services as acting headmaster of the R. R. D. Adams to whom I have already referred.

In those days Mr. Adams supplied a column of gossip to a London weekly known as *Modern Society*, which consisted mainly of biographical details of people who had attended Society functions in London. It always seemed to me a very remarkable thing that with the assistance of the *Daily Telegraph*, of which Mr. Adams was a devoted reader, and one or two biographical books of reference, he was able to supply to the people in London from a small village in Cheshire the inside gossip as to what was happening in polite society in London, at functions none of which he had attended.

Mr. Adams possessed one of the most remarkable memories I have ever known. On one occasion, not being able to sleep, he stayed in bed and recited to himself from memory the whole of a book of Virgil. He had one of those photographic minds which enabled him to remember virtually anything he had read, though

his short-term memory was a bad one. To a minor degree I seem to have caught the same characteristic from him. I can be almost certain to forget to do something I am asked to do five minutes before, but on the other hand, if someone in Parliament made a statistical statement about something that happened twenty years ago, though I might not remember what the exact facts were, I am almost certainly able to say whether the statement was right or wrong, and I have frequently found this an advantage to myself and a discomfort to my political opponents.

This reference to memory has served to remind me of a very delightful old gentleman named David Davies, who was a foreman in the foundry at Lord Penrhyn's quarries in Caernarvonshire. This old gentleman was a musical enthusiast and instilled the love of music in his two children, a boy and a girl.

The son, after a period in Holy Orders, renounced those Orders, and fifty years ago, as Mr. David Frangcon Davies, was one of the best-known singers in oratorios in this country. The old gentleman's daughter became the mother of four daughters and a son, all of whom obtained some measure of fame on the stage in London. Mr. Frangcon Davies's daughter, Miss Gwen Frangcon Davies, is, of course, well known to the British public today.

The christian name Frangcon is drawn from Nant-Frangcon, the pass near Ogwen Lake in Caernarvonshire. I noted with interest that when the London papers recorded a recent visit of Their Majesties the King and Queen to North Wales they described them as driving through the pass of Nant-Frangcon. Actually those correspondents could not have been aware that they were wrong, for "nant" means "pass of".

During the period from 1900 to 1907 I lived in the parish of New Ferry, Cheshire, the local church of which was St. Mark's. The Vicar of St. Mark's was the late Rev. Halsall Segar, who was a most attractive personality. He was the father of nine children, eight daughters and the youngest a nice boy. He was a man of the most robust physique, a marked contrast to his charming but small, slim wife. The daughters all took after their father, and with the assistance of three cousins formed the best women's hockey team in the whole peninsula of Wirral.

Mr. Segar was of the High Church variety. He was not Anglo-Catholic, because I do not think there were any at that time. Because of the amount of ceremonial in his church he attracted the attention of the Kensitites, the organization formed by the late Mr. J. A. Kensit, who was, I think, a bookseller in London. Some members of the organization used to cause disturbances in the church during services. Though my inclinations are of the Low Church variety rather than the High Church, I always thought that this kind of demonstration was improper and used to act as one of the stewards who, from time to time, took

part in helping to turn out of the church what are legally known as "brawlers".

Port Sunlight came within the parish of St. Mark's. For many years Mr. Segar had been in the habit of taking special services every Good Friday in the Gladstone Hall in the village of Port Sunlight. This was before a magnificent undenominational church had been built on the estate. Mr. Lever was, I think, a Wesleyan, and accordingly had appointed as minister of this undenominational church a Wesleyan, the Rev. Gamble Walker. For some reason there sprang up a controversy between the Rev. Gamble Walker and the Rev. Halsall Segar. Mr. Segar, as I have said, was of robust build, rather tall, with a long red beard. His normal means of progression round his parish was on a bicycle. The controversy became somewhat acute, with the result that the loan of the Gladstone Hall was refused one Good Friday, and the local paper described the controversy as one between the Ramble Talker and the Eager Scorcher.

Mr. Lever was an extraordinary character. A most progressive employer in some ways, and yet at the same time in some respects a most intolerant one.

The layout of Port Sunlight really was magnificent, but the footpaths were of Mr. Lever's own design, namely flagging a yard wide down the middle, and gravel eighteen inches wide each side of the flagging. The maintenance of these roads and footpaths was, of course, a heavy burden on the company, and accordingly he thought that it would be a good idea to have these private roads taken over by the local authority, the Bebington Urban District Council. (It is now a borough with a Mayor.) The local authority had a different sort of footpath, and said that they would take over the estate's footpaths provided that Mr. Lever did away with the gravel and flagged the whole width.

It was really quite a nonsensical demand, but neither Mr. Lever nor the Urban District Council would give in. Accordingly Mr. Lever decided to deny to the public the use of his roads, and had wooden stakes driven across all the roads leading into Port Sunlight, with the exception of one which he left open for the use of the firm's vehicles and the vehicles of the inhabitants of the estate.

This autocratic defiance on his part might have been successful but for a fire. As soapmakers, the firm used a very large quantity of timber for the purpose of making packing-cases for the soap. One night the timber store caught fire, and the conflagration was far beyond the resources of the firm's fire brigade, so help was asked for from the fire brigade of the neighbouring borough of Birkenhead. Most unfortunately Birkenhead Fire Brigade approached the estate by one of the roads which Mr. Lever had blocked with stakes, and some thirty minutes were wasted while the

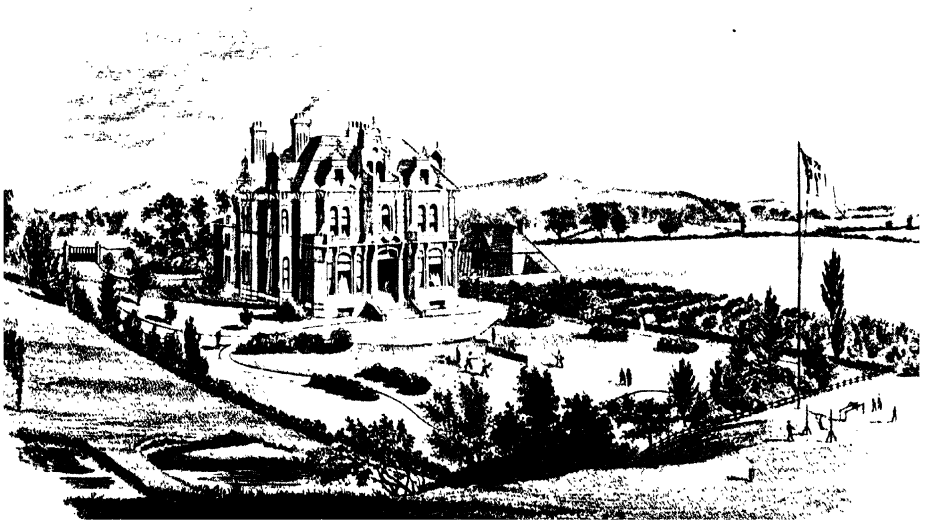
firemen removed the obstructions with their axes, so far more timber was burnt than need have been. After that Mr. Lever surrendered to the local authority.

At Neston, about four miles away from where I was born, was a place of pilgrimage to all the small boys; it was the house where the celebrated Captain Webb, the first man to swim the English Channel, was born. Near by Neston was a fishing village, Parkgate, which, before the silting-up of the Dee, had been the port from which boats frequently sailed to Dublin. Handel, the celebrated composer, who was on a visit to Ireland, was once held up at Parkgate for, I believe, three weeks because none of the ships would risk the crossing. It was while he was at Parkgate that he composed his oratorio "The Messiah", and which, I believe, was played for the first time on the organ at Chester Cathedral.

In my days, Parkgate was the place for catching shrimps. One of the local fishermen, while out fishing, ran into a squall. His boat overturned and he was drowned. Some days later his body was washed up on the banks of the Dee, a tidal river at that point, and his widow was sent for. The body of the deceased was covered with shrimps, and his widow's only remark after the shrimps had been removed is supposed to have been, "Put him back in again."

Opposite: the Author's mother

Below: Hooton Lawn, Cheshire
—the Author's birthplace



Mr. Neville Chamberlain talking to Mr. Harry Hawkins, J.P., of Huntley & Palmer's, Ltd., and the Author at Reading on August Bank Holiday, 1924

CHAPTER II

UNIVERSITY DAYS

WHEN I was nearly eighteen years of age I went to the University of Liverpool, which was one of the constituent colleges of Victoria University, though it obtained its own charter at the beginning of my second year, so I had the interesting experience of seeing the birth of a university. The charter provided that there was to be a Guild of Undergraduates, the membership subscription of which was compulsory, except that the Vice-Chancellor had the discretion of remitting the subscription in any case where it involved personal hardship, but without disclosing the names of the undergraduates who had been so exempt.

The Guild of Undergraduates at the University of Liverpool was the first guild of its kind, and there is still nothing of a comparable nature at the older universities.

I spent rather a long time at the University—five years—and after taking an honours degree in Engineering I spent another year in taking an honours degree in Mathematics. In Engineering I was the top man of my year, but did not achieve the same distinction in Mathematics, largely because in that year I was one of the joint Presidents of the Guild of Undergraduates.

Under our rules we had two Presidents, one a man and the other a woman, which had its advantages, but also its disadvantages, because the two Presidents did not always agree. Being President of the Guild was quite a busy job and absorbed a lot of the time I should have devoted to studying Mathematics, though I have never regretted the experience it gave me in administration and leading a body of men and women of very mixed and divergent views.

The year before I became President I had been Chairman of the Debating Society. I wrote to Mr. D. Lloyd George, then very prominent, though he had not become a Minister of the Crown, to ask if he would speak at one of our Debates, and to my surprise and satisfaction he accepted. My satisfaction, however, was tempered by the fact that I felt that my side, the Conservatives, would be somewhat overwhelmed by this political orator, and after some consultation I secured an introduction to a well-known Conservative speaker, Mr. F. E. Smith, who had then not become a Member of Parliament. He naturally jumped at the idea of being the chief opponent in a public debate with Mr. Lloyd George. I accordingly wrote to Mr. Lloyd George to tell him of the arrangement, and was somewhat chastened when

I received his reply to the effect that he had often spoken at the Unions at Oxford and Cambridge, and that when he accepted my invitation he did not realize that he was going to be opposed by a local gentleman. From which it became quite clear that he had never heard of Mr. F. E. Smith in the year 1905.

It is interesting to remember that thirteen years later Mr. F. E. Smith, then Lord Birkenhead, was Lord Chancellor in the Government of which Mr. Lloyd George was Prime Minister. I once told Lord Birkenhead about this, and for some reason he did not appear to be very pleased. It is an astonishing thing that many very eminent persons do not like to be reminded of the time when they were less eminent.

I had a somewhat similar experience in talking to the late Viscount Long (W. H. Long). Lord Long was born near Newtown, and when he was six weeks old his father drove him into the town in order that the baby could be shown to friends and acquaintances, and amongst those who dandled the future statesman was my late mother. When I told him about this when he was about seventy he did not quite think it proper that he should have been dandled! Most people are rather proud that they finish up more important persons than when they began, like the man who said he was a self-made man, when his cynical friends replied, "Yes, and very proud of his creator." It is interesting to speculate why different people look on the developments of their career in such diverse ways.

I remember the story of a gentleman who put up for Parliament in a Cheshire district who happened to be the bearer of a foreign title, though he was of several generations British. His opponents put round the rumour that he was not entitled to be called Baron. This made him very angry, and at a public meeting he said he was a Baron, his father was a Baron, his grandfather a Baron, and his great-grandfather a Baron, at which a cynical opponent remarked it was a pity his mother was not "barren".

The year I became President of the Guild I thought it would be a good idea if members of the Guild were addressed by eminent persons. I learnt from the Press that the celebrated actor, the late Sir Herbert Tree, was coming with his company to Liverpool, so I invited him to address the undergraduates, an invitation which he accepted.

In order to fit in with his performance at the local theatre we fixed the lecture at five o'clock, and I invited him and members of his company and the local celebrities to tea before the proceedings. It was the first occasion on which I had sent out a large number of invitations and I learnt for the first time how casual a great many people are, because at least one-fifth of those invited to meet Sir Herbert Tree never answered and never turned up. I have learnt since that this seems to be a normal

percentage of discourtesy. I suppose some of them will fail to respond on the day when the Archangel sounds the Last Trump.

An interesting episode on the occasion of Sir Herbert Tree's lecture arose out of his observation when I was showing him and his secretary round the University before tea, and he saw the placard of our students' magazine, which was known as the *Sphinx*, and he turned to his secretary and made the remark, "I must make a note of that." He had chosen as the subject of his lecture "The Highways and Byways of Shakespeare". After I had introduced him as the celebrated actor upon whom the mantle of Irving had so rightly fallen, he stood up very nervously and after a few generalities said he was shortly proposing to produce *Antony and Cleopatra* at His Majesty's Theatre, and that he thought it might interest the undergraduates if he were to describe to them how he proposed to interpret the play. He then said that when the curtain rose the *Sphinx* would be found.

Nothing gives undergraduates greater pleasure than when a visitor mentions something which is topical to them, and they cheered the remark with customary enthusiasm, and half the audience made signs to me that I was to explain to Sir Herbert why they were so enthusiastic, but I knew that he had said it on purpose and was inwardly rejoicing at his success.

On learning that Mr. St. Loe Strachey, the then editor of the *Spectator*, was coming to Liverpool I invited him to address the undergraduates on the subject of the *Spectator* Experimental Company, in which he sought to show that it was possible to train men to be good soldiers in six months. He came and gave a most interesting lecture to what was in fact a very disapproving audience, for a reason I will indicate a little later. I sometimes speculate what view he, such a strong individualist, would express today about the bread rationing introduced by his Socialist son.

On another occasion when the late Lord Baden-Powell was visiting the district for the purpose of inspecting a boys' school, I invited him to address the undergraduates. Unfortunately he could not accept, but he wrote me the following letter, which was written shortly before he retired from military employment and forecast his intentions with regard to the Boy Scout Movement which he founded not very long afterwards:

> "I am much obliged for your letter, and invitation. It is true that I shall be in Liverpool on 23rd inst., but I am unfortunately engaged to address an audience of boys that day and then have to return to London. I should otherwise have been particularly glad to be present at your Inter-Varsity Debate—especially as I have designs on the Universities with a view to enlisting their help in a scheme which I want to put forward regarding the training of all boys to be scouts.

I believe that if I could get a chance some day of explaining it to undergraduates they would see in it an interesting occupation for themselves and one in which they could be doing work of national importance in training 'patrols' of half a dozen lads to be really useful men, by teaching them observation, tracking, alertness, discipline, self-reliance, self-sacrifice, and patriotism, etc., by means of the fascinating sport of scouting. Should any of your members care to hear more particulars I should be glad to send them if they will give me their addresses.

"Yours truly,
"R. Baden-Powell."

One of the most interesting things that happened to me as a result of becoming President of the Guild of Undergraduates at the University of Liverpool was an invitation to represent the undergraduates of Liverpool at the 400th Anniversary of the founding of the University of Aberdeen, the celebrations of which took place in the autumn of 1906.

We have all heard stories about the alleged meanness of Aberdonians, most of which I think must have been invented by the Public Relations Officer of the Corporation of that city. In the same way it is alleged that Mr. Ford used to have someone to invent stories about his motor-cars.

With all the other guests I was the recipient of the most abounding hospitality. The guests comprised representatives of nearly every University in the world, and for a week they were provided with free hospitality in the homes of the people of Aberdeen, and we participated in a series of most splendid public ceremonies of one kind or another.

My host was a reverend gentleman of eighty-four years of age, a Professor of Divinity, who lived at West Cults, about five miles out from the city, and the only means of access in the evening was by a tram service which terminated at eleven o'clock at night. It was impossible to hire any kind of cab, for the service of every cab in Aberdeen for every night of the week had been booked months before. Because of the overwhelming hospitality I did not see very much of my host, but on the one evening when I dined at his house he reported with much pleasure an episode that had happened at the house of another host, also a Professor of the University. This other professor was entertaining two American professors, one of them a Professor of Zoology and the other a Professor of Theology, the latter, however, not being a Minister of Religion. On the night of the arrival of these two professors the host professor, addressing as he thought the Professor of Theology, asked him to say grace; unfortunately his remarks were addressed to the Professor of Zoology, who rather crudely refused to do so on the ground that he was a freethinker!

Aberdeen really spread itself to be hospitable, and, provided the

delegates wore their academicals, everything was free. Though I was President of the Guild of Undergraduates I had actually taken my first degree, so throughout the week I was arrayed in my gown and hood, and amongst other things was given free tram rides, and even induced an Aberdeen bank that had never seen me before to cash my cheque.

Amongst the notable events of the week was the opening of Marischal College by King Edward VII, a garden party at which we were received by the Chancellor of the University, the First Lord Strathcona, then well over eighty years of age, who actually shook hands with 6,800 guests. In this he was supported by the Principal of the University, the Rev. Marshall Lang, the father of some very celebrated sons, one the late Archbishop of Canterbury, another the Moderator of the Church of Scotland, and another the celebrated actor, Mr. Matheson Lang.

It was thirty years later that I met his Archbishop son in my capacity as Member of Parliament for Croydon South. When I told the great prelate that I had met his father he was naturally somewhat surprised. I always esteem it one of my privileges that I met Archbishop Lang on a number of occasions, and to one of those meetings I shall refer later on.

The star turn of the week in Aberdeen, however, was the banquet. Lord Strathcona expressed the wish to entertain all the delegates at a banquet. Both the civic and University authorities explained to him that there was no place in Aberdeen large enough to hold the 2,500 guests who were invited, so the old gentleman said, thinking of the time when he built the Canadian Pacific Railway, "then build a hall".

There happened to be a large open space in Aberdeen which was suitable for the purpose, and a great wooden banqueting hall, complete with kitchens and every facility, was constructed for the great banquet, and Messrs. J. Lyons and Co., Ltd., were the caterers. They sent up one special train with 600 waiters from London to Aberdeen, and another train full of thousands of plates, knives, forks and spoons, and all the other things necessary for a banquet, and I presume on the same train was a good deal of what we ate and drank. The then Archbishop of Canterbury said grace, after which a bell was rung and the whole assembled company applauded the 600 waiters as they came in carrying plates of melon.

There were a very large number of clerical gentlemen present of every denomination, including a cardinal and the Moderator of the Church of Scotland, who said grace at the end of the dinner, after which Lord Strathcona gave us the Royal toast. Amongst the 2,500 persons present only one person did not rise to drink the toast, namely the most attractive lady sitting next to me, an undergraduate of a Scottish University, who came from the Orkney Islands, and still thought that the Monarch of Britain ought to be the Bavarian Princess, the heiress of Bonnie Prince

Charlie. The lady indulged in a cigarette, which was a very extraordinary thing in those days, and the result was that gossip spread to the effect that she was intoxicated, which I happen to know was not true.

One of the interesting features of the evening was the performance of the celebrated Mr. Knightsmith, who many of my readers will remember as the doyen of London toastmasters. Messrs. Lyons and Co., sent him to Aberdeen. It was his first performance in Scotland, and he acquitted himself with his customary dignity and success but for one strange error.

The official representative of the undergraduates of a Scottish University on the governing body is the Lord Rector, who is elected by the undergraduates of each University for three years.

The rectorial elections are the great "rags" of Scottish University life, and as a rule the candidates are eminent party politicians. The conduct of the elections is reminiscent of what happened with Parliamentary elections 100 years ago, and the interests of democracy are thoroughly well satisfied if the student leader of one political party happens to be correct in his aim when throwing a bag of flour at the student leader of another political party.

At the rectorial election prior to 1906, however, Aberdeen, instead of electing a politician, had elected as its Lord Rector the eminent surgeon Sir Frederick Treves, the man who made appendicitis popular, or at least well known, when he removed the appendix of King Edward VII only a few days before he was due to be crowned, which led to the postponement of the Coronation in 1902.

Mr. Knightsmith had a great knowledge of the correct description of every person who had ever received any sort of honour, and when calling upon a speaker always used to reel off with sonorous diction the full titles of all the orders of chivalry to which the speaker whom he was announcing had been the recipient. Unfortunately Mr. Knightsmith had never previously met a Lord Rector, and seemed to be under the impression that he was some form of clergyman, with the result that the distinguished surgeon was somewhat surprised when he was introduced as the Right Reverend the Lord Rector. This gave immense pleasure to the whole audience, including, in particular, the supporter of the Queen of Bavaria.

I mentioned earlier that my host lived five miles out, and the only means of conveyance was a tram. The last tram was at 11 p.m., so I had to leave the banquet in time to catch the tram, and, I am told, missed the best part.

I was told afterwards that at 4 a.m. ministers of religion of every denomination were sitting, in a somewhat dishevelled condition, leaning against the wooden walls of Lord Strathcona's banqueting hall.

It was a proud night in Aberdeen, and whenever I meet an elderly Aberdonian the memory of the banquet of forty years ago is still fresh. The Aberdonians are rightly a proud people, because probably few cities have produced more men who have achieved eminence in every walk of life throughout the British Empire. There is an attitude of arrogance about their pride, as will be seen from the motto on the walls of King's College, the old part of the University, which, if my memory serves me rightly, reads, "Say they, Quhat say they, let them say."

On one occasion during the end of his life I had the great privilege of seeing that most remarkable scientist the late Lord Kelvin. He was over 80 when he visited Liverpool for the purpose of receiving an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Science. It was on the occasion of the Annual Graduation Ceremony, and after all the degrees had been conferred he addressed the company assembled in St. George's Hall, Liverpool. Together with the other students I was in the gallery, but we happened to be overlooking the platform, so I was able to observe his technique in speaking. He had all the notes carefully inserted in his flat hat of Doctor of Science.

Many scientists, of course, are not very good administrators or commercial men, in fact some of them are exceedingly bad. The idea that scientists are broadminded is very inaccurate, and the more specialized the more narrow-minded. Kelvin, on the other hand, had a very wide range of interests. There are some rather interesting stories about him.

When the results of the mathematical tripos at Cambridge were being published he did not trouble to go to the Senate House, but asked one of the others to tell him who was the Second Wrangler. William Thompson, as he was then, was surprised that *he* was Second Wrangler. It seemed to him quite fantastic that anybody could have beaten him. The Senior Wrangler of the year was a man named Parkinson, who achieved a scientific career of quite modest degree.

Thompson, at the age of 21, was made Professor of Natural Philosophy at Glasgow University. This, I imagine, was one of the earliest appointments to a Chair ever made.

Some years later, when the first Atlantic cable was being laid, he was attached to the expedition as scientific adviser, and during his absence from Glasgow University a man named Day took his place as lecturer. Kelvin was a deplorably bad lecturer despite his scientific achievements, but Day, only a mediocre scientist, was, however, a brilliant lecturer. Thompson, for his services in connection with the laying of the Atlantic cable, was knighted by Queen Victoria. When the undergraduates of Glasgow realized he was shortly returning to his duties there appeared on the board the following: "Let us work while we have the Day with us as soon the Knight cometh when no man can work."

Just about the time when Kelvin was coming to Liverpool I asked one of the staff of the Engineering Department of Liverpool University, a Mr. Leech, who was a Glasgow graduate, whether he had ever studied under Kelvin. He said he had, and that he was fascinating but awful. I asked why. He said his lectures were so interesting, but so useless. I pressed him a little further, and he said that the old gentleman would come into the lecture room and say, "This morning I am going to lecture to you about . . ." He would see a fly crawling up the window, and then proceeded to give a most fascinating lecture as to how it was a fly was able to walk up the window. "It was not much help when examination time came on," was Mr. Leech's comment.

Kelvin was quite a remarkable inventor, and made a lot of money out of his inventions. His chief contribution to scientific knowledge was in the sphere of electricity, but in his spare time he invented a water-tap, the forerunner of nearly all the modern water-taps because it shut the water off gradually and therefore averted water-hammer.

The Kelvin tap was much more widely known to the general public than his theoretical and practical discoveries in connection with electricity. This was well shown on the occasion when a man was being prosecuted for exceeding the speed limit many years ago. The magistrate asked the constable how he had assessed the speed of the motorist. The constable said by the use of the Kelvin electric speed measurer, at which the prosecuting counsel scoffed, and said he had heard of Lord Kelvin as an inventor of taps, but was not previously aware he knew anything about electricity. It is curious how limited one's reputation can sometimes be.

I am writing these words on the morning of the day when we have heard of the sad news of Lord Baldwin.

Some 20 years ago, when he was Prime Minister, he was travelling alone on a railway journey in a compartment with one other person. After they had been travelling together for about an hour the man opposite to him said, "By the way, I think I was at Cambridge with you; isn't your name Baldwin?" To which the Prime Minister replied, "Yes." "It is years since we have met," said the stranger. "What are you doing these days?" Clearly he had not identified his former fellow graduate with the then Prime Minister, which was even more disturbing than failing to identify Kelvin with electricity.

There was no Officers' Training Corps at the University of Liverpool. Some of the undergraduates comprised one company of the 1st Cheshire Royal Engineers, the other five companies consisting largely of shipyard workers from the other side of the Mersey, where our Battalion Headquarters were situated. Anti-militarism was very rife in those days, and particularly at Liverpool University, where some of the wealthy supporters

were men like the late Sir John Brunner and Mr. E. K. Muspratt, who did not seem to approve of undergraduates belonging to military forces. During the five years I was a member of the Volunteers we never had a single official parade at the University.

The attitude of the public to uniforms was a strange one. One year we went to camp at Chatham. I had been invited on my way home to stay with some friends near London, and was excused from travelling back with the battalion, and was given a free pass provided I travelled in uniform. I arrived at my friends' house in all the glory of a scarlet tunic and other clothing to match, and was received rather coldly. On leaving, my hostess said to me that she would be delighted if I would come again, but "please do not come in those dreadful clothes". It was not very encouraging to a young man who thought he was doing his best, and explained to some extent why the audience at Mr. Strachey's lecture was not as enthusiastic as it should have been.

It was the practice of the Department of Engineering at the University of Liverpool to provide facilities for the undergraduates to have practical experience during the long vacation, and through the courtesy of the late Sir Alfred Jones, the head of the Elder-Dempster Line, many of us had the experience of travelling as supplementary engineers on voyages to West Africa and the West Indies.

I found this to be a most invaluable experience. My voyage was one of some 10,000 miles, and covered the West African Coast from Liberia to Portuguese West Africa. It was curious to find how pidgin English seemed to serve for purpose of conversation in territories under seven different national flags. It had the effect of making the national status of the natives who travelled very frequently somewhat indefinite. I remember having a talk with a native policeman in the Belgian Congo, who told me that he had attended the coronation of King Edward VII as a member of the Gold Coast contingent, and I do not think he had gone through any naturalization process in transferring his services from King Edward VII to King Leopold.

In the 40 years which have elapsed since I paid my visit to West Africa it is clear that enormous developments have taken place, and no doubt the service which many tens of thousands of West African British subjects rendered in both Great Wars in so many different places is bound to have the effect of bringing new thoughts and great material progress to the inhabitants of the British West African colonies, and I still wonder whether it would be possible to see now what I then saw: the economic anomaly of a totally nude native working a Singer sewing-machine.

One of the strangest episodes during my period of service as an engineer on H.M.S. *Sobo* arose in a curious way. All the crew were white

except for the coal trimmers, who were West African negroes, and a very cheery lot of workmen.

The one with whom I was most friendly bore the name of Tom Bob. When I went on duty one day at midnight with the second engineer, the third engineer whom we were relieving told us that Tom Bob had refused duty, and would not wheel any more coal from the bunkers to the boiler-room. The chief engineer promptly sent for Tom Bob and asked him why he would not work. The latter, without giving any excuses, said, "Me no work." So after a little preparatory discussion the second engineer suggested they should fight it out, and for 15 minutes in the somewhat restricted space between the main engine and the auxiliary plant the second engineer and Tom Bob had a splendid stand-up fight with bare fists, but otherwise all strictly in accordance with the rules of boxing.

Though there were no foul blows on either side, many hard ones were struck. At the end of a quarter of an hour, during which I think the second engineer's fists had suffered somewhat through contact with the hard skull of Tom Bob, the latter said, "Finish, me go work," and he promptly returned and wheeled coal from the bunkers to the boiler-room, and he showed no malice of any kind whatsoever. He was his old cheerful self next day, though his black skin probably had some bruises.

Most people would say it was most improper on the part of the second engineer, but I think it was very much better than submitting him to legal process later on the ground that he refused to work while at sea. As far as I could make out, Tom Bob had no reason for his action except that he did not feel like work that night.

Another somewhat unusual episode arose in connection with another member of the engine-room staff, namely one of the greasers. He was a tall, good-looking young man who was engaged to be married to a Liverpool girl. A few days before the ship was due to sail he and his *fiancée* apparently had a violent quarrel, for which the girl's parents were largely responsible. He celebrated the quarrel by a heavy bout of drinking during the three or four days before we sailed, and this showed its results when we were two days out at sea, when he commenced to behave very strangely, dashing up and down the steel steps of the engine-room in order to chase the imaginary figures of his *fiancée* and her family, who according to his account were addressing rude remarks to him.

When he announced to one of the engineers on duty that he had successfully killed his prospective father-in-law with an oilcan and thrown him into the sea, it was thought desirable that he should be put under some control. He was accordingly locked in a second-class cabin, and one of the stewards was instructed to keep an eye on him by occasionally looking through the grille in the door of the cabin. During one of these inspections the steward discovered the greaser was halfway through

the porthole. In order to save his life the steward rushed in and got hold of his legs to pull him back. At precisely the same moment the greaser's hands reached the deck immediately above at a point facing the doctor's cabin, and the doctor also thought he had better save the greaser's life and grabbed him by the hands. There then took place an extraordinary tug-of-war until the circumstances were realized by the doctor above and the steward below, after which the greaser was pulled back into his cabin. He duly recovered and recommenced duty a few days later. Like Tom Bob, he was an exceedingly agreeable and intelligent man, but, as a poet once said, "When the wine is in, the wit is out."

This reminds me of a somewhat unusual episode some years later.

For some reason Lady Astor always disapproved of me. I was not, of course, quite unique in that respect, and she apparently had in her mind that I was connected with the trade in alcoholic liquor. A trade with which I have never had any connection directly or indirectly, except as a moderate consumer.

While attending a British Legion function in Croydon when I was a Member of Parliament for part of that borough I met an old soldier named William Merrigan, who was in fact the original of Captain Bairnsfather's famous "Old Bill". He had served in the Burmese War, the Boer War, and in the First World War he joined a Home Service Defence Battalion, and the Commanding Officer of his Company was Captain Bairnsfather.

I invited "Old Bill" to pay a visit to the House of Commons, gave him tea, got him a seat in the gallery, and later on provided him with a much-appreciated pint of beer.

He appreciated the hospitality of the House of Commons, and thereafter used to write me at regular intervals suggesting it was time he came again. In due course "Old Bill" became a Chelsea Pensioner, and on the next occasion when he wrote he suggested that he should bring with him one of his friends from the Royal Hospital, and the programme was, as usual, tea, two seats in the Gallery, and then the pint of beer in the strangers' smoke-room. While he was down there I introduced him to several other Members of Parliament, but at seven o'clock I had to leave him in order to keep an appointment. The Members of Parliament who were then with him promised to look after him.

Exactly what happened I do not know, but I think that while he and the other old Chelsea Pensioner remained fixed there was a frequent change of hosts, none of whom was aware of the previous hospitality the old men had enjoyed, which unfortunately was not accompanied by any food. About ten o'clock they left the smoke-room with a view to returning to the Royal Hospital. On getting into the fresh air they became

rather the worse for wear, and just as they were going through New Palace Yard Lady Astor came out and observed to a policeman that it was "a shocking sight", or words to that effect, and then asked who had brought them there. The policeman, who had happened to see me meet them on arriving, replied that I had been their host, whereupon Lady Astor said she was not surprised that they were in that condition. However, I must say she was very sporting. She asked the policeman to call a taxi, and provided the Chelsea Pensioners with their fare back to the Royal Hospital. I thought it wise to write her a letter next day explaining that I had not been responsible for them during the three hours before she saw them.

"Old Bill" was then over eighty, and I never saw him again, because on account of the air raids the inmates of the Royal Hospital were evacuated to the country, and it was with grief that I received a message some two years after the episode referred to above from General Sir Harry Knox, who was then the Governor of the Hospital, to the effect that "Old Bill" had died of cancer.

Amongst the activities of the engineering students at Liverpool University was an Engineering Society, and once a month we used to have lectures from distinguished engineers and scientists. During the year I was President of this Society I had the pleasure of presiding over a lecture given by the late Sir Ronald Ross, the great authority on malaria. He explained it was really a very useful thing that engineers should know about malaria. It was largely in their hands to eliminate it. The mosquito which carries the disease from one human being to another breeds in the main in stagnant water, and accordingly if engineers will fill up all the shallow pools and puddles the mosquito will be eliminated from the district concerned.

Ross, in addition to being a medical man, was also a mathematician of distinction, and he was able to make use of his mathematics in his medical research. He captured a large number of the malaria mosquitoes, treated their wings with an indelible dye, and released them, and then offered a small monetary reward to the children of the district for each such mosquito they caught. He recorded on a chart the distance from the place of release the places at which these mosquitoes were caught, and then, by making use of the mathematical theory of probabilities, was able to establish the distance round a settlement from which it was necessary to destroy the breeding-places in order to obtain reasonable immunity from malaria for the people within the settlement.

One of Sir Ronald's great colleagues in the School of Tropical Medicine at Liverpool was the late Sir Rupert Boyce, a tiny man with an enormous head. When the city of New Orleans had a bad outbreak of yellow fever Sir Rupert was asked to advise. He made enquiries and

discovered that virtually every building had an open tank on the roof. The yellow-fever mosquito, unlike the malaria mosquito, likes to breed in artificial tanks, so Sir Rupert's advice was also an engineering one, namely that the tanks should have lids on them.

In my day it was the practice of Liverpool undergraduates to conduct their "rags" in a very orderly manner, and the great "rag" of the year was the students' visit to one of the local pantomimes. We used to let our talented poets loose on the task of writing extra verses for all the principal songs. We presented suitable gifts to every member of the cast, and arranged for a number of topical references to be introduced into the dialogue on panto night.

In the year I was President it was my duty to organize all this. This involved many visits to the theatre behind the scenes, which naturally was a great thrill for a young man. The principal girl of that year was Miss Mabel Russell, whom I met only once or twice in the succeeding 16 years until we resumed our friendship as Members of Parliament. She, in the meantime, had become Mrs. Hilton Phillipson. I had the task of writing a verse for her chief song, but I never expected twenty years later to find her acting as godmother to my son in the crypt chapel at the Palace of Westminster. The song for which I wrote the additional verse was one entitled "Alice". The opening line was, "Alice, where art thou going?"

My task in writing this song was very much eased by something that had happened a few days before to the late Professor Lionel Wilberforce, our Professor of Physics. He was a keen musician, and very fond of outdoor sports, and just before the students' visit to the pantomime there had been a very heavy frost, and there appeared a notice in the physics laboratory, therefore, to the effect that Professor Wilberforce regretted that he was unable to meet his students on a particular day. That afternoon he was seen skating on Sefton Meadows. My efforts accordingly ran something like this:

"Oh, Lionel, where art thou going,
Where shall we spend the day?"
"On Sefton Meadow I will be there
To while the time away,"

and there were further verses each of which began with the word "Lionel". By an unrehearsed effect every time Miss Russell said the word "Lionel" she pointed to the audience, and the direction of her finger fell on the Professor, to the great rejoicing of the students, who thought it had been rehearsed.

These days nearly every political speech contains a reference to streamlines and blueprints. A blueprint, of course, is not a plan but a

photographic copy of one, a fact of which most political orators seem to be totally unaware. But streamline is something of which I heard much from our Professor of Engineering, the late Professor Hele-Shaw. His chief scientific fame was established by his investigations into the flow of fluids past solid objects, and he discovered that if the solids were appropriately shaped the streamlines flowed past the solid objects in such a manner that there was the minimum of obstruction to the movement. The principles of streamline used to be illustrated most interestingly by passing into the stream of water from a series of small jets coloured fluids, and what was happening in the fluid was admirably illustrated on an illuminated screen.

The late Professor would sometimes turn in his grave if he now knew how frequently the word "streamline" is being misused.

For a very young University it was notable for the distinction of its staff. In addition to the Professor I have just mentioned, and the two great experts on tropical medicine, we had the great Sir Oliver Lodge, predecessor of Professor Wilberforce in the Department of Physics, and the world-famous Sir Charles Sherrington, in his time the greatest living authority on the human brain. The founders of the University had that greatest of all human qualities, the ability to pick good men. Another young man then associated with the University as Warden of the University Settlement, Mr. Frederick Marquis, is now known to every housewife under the more familiar name of Lord Woolton. He is the only marquis that His Majesty has turned into a baron!

A graduate of the University who became one of its professors was the historian, Mr. Ramsey Muir, who for the last few years of his life was the National Chairman of the Liberal Party.

I mention these facts because of course there appear to be many people who think there are only two Universities in this country, and it is impossible to have a good education unless one is a graduate at one or other of these great and ancient institutions.

I well remember that some years ago a writer in reviewing a certain session of Parliament was kind enough to make some flattering reference to me, and then went on to add how much better I would have done if I had only had a good education. I wrote to the writer of the article and explained I had taken degrees with honours in two schools of the University, and had won nearly all the cups and medals I could. He replied that of course a degree in engineering and mathematics did not make one an educated man, and that it was necessary to have studied the classics to qualify for this description. I tried to explain to him, without much success, that I thought training in the highest form of human logic, namely mathematics, together with a fairly wide general education, might have its advantages even compared with the great knowledge of the

sayings and doings of a small and cultured class whose circumstances were based upon a large mass of slave labour in a small city state in Greece two or three thousand years ago.

In the early part of the century, on the initiative of the undergraduates of Edinburgh, a body had come into being known as the British Universities Students' Congress. In the year of my Presidency of the Guild we invited the Congress to hold its meeting in Liverpool. This coincided with the 25th anniversary of the foundation of the college, so we were all able to afford the student delegates who came from all the British universities a very varied programme, both of discussions and hospitality. Of those who were present as delegates, most of those who have since obtained public reputation were women, not men, and included Dr. Letitia Fairfield and Lady MacRobert, then Miss Rachael Workman, who did so much during the Second World War for members of the R.A.F. in memory of the three sons whom she lost in that Force.

Liverpool University was very fortunate in its first Vice-Chancellor, the late Sir Alfred Dale, who by his personality and intellect not merely impressed the University but the whole of Merseyside. He was the distinguished son of the Nonconformist minister Dr. Dale, of Carrs Lane Chapel, Birmingham. A friend of mine was present in his chapel on a notable occasion just after Joseph Chamberlain had broken from Gladstone on the Home Rule issue, when it had been rumoured that Dr. Dale in his sermon was going to refer to the matter, and the chapel was more than usually crowded by the Birmingham congregation seeking guidance on a controversy that was splitting the Birmingham Liberals and Radicals from top to bottom.

Somewhat to their surprise, the sermon was a perfectly normal one. As he was about to finish, Dr. Dale said he understood that a large number of the congregation desired his guidance on a matter of great controversy, and after explaining that he thought it undesirable for a minister of religion to advise on politics he voiced his view by saying, "If my choice is between Hawarden Castle and Highbury Manor I would turn my eyes to Highbury Manor."

To many people of the present day the phrase would be meaningless; but Hawarden Castle was the residence of Mr. Gladstone and Highbury Manor that of Mr. Chamberlain, so Dr. Dale had made clear that he was a Unionist. Though I saw a great deal of Sir Alfred Dale, I never discovered what his politics were, though I am certain that he had strong views, and this shows very clearly how wise he was as head of a University to abstain from seeking to influence the undergraduates in their political views.

CHAPTER III

EARLY POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

My personal political activities commenced as a member of the students' debating society, and I well remember how nervous I was on the occasion of my first speech. I am afraid that I have forgotten what the subject was, but I do remember that I wrote it all out and then learnt it off by heart, and was very relieved at the end of five minutes to discover that I had recited it accurately without, I think, the audience discovering that it was a recitation and not a speech. I came to the conclusion that the proper way to take part in debates was to speak as frequently as possible on subjects of which one had some previous knowledge, and to build up one's speech by making notes on what previous speakers had said; in other words, I tried to teach myself to be a debater, and if I could be immodest enough to say so, I wish more people in Parliament would learn the same lesson. Too many speeches in Parliament stink of the midnight oil.

When in 1928 I became a junior Minister in Mr. Baldwin's Government, the Press comment that pleased me most was one that said I had restored the lost art of debating. I realize to the full that when great international problems are being discussed the Front Bench speakers have to choose their words with the utmost care, but frankly I think Parliament ceases to perform its proper service when a Minister reads every word of his speech, so many copies of which have been printed in advance that each man in the Press Gallery has a copy, and from the floor one can hear the swish of papers as 30 or 40 pages are turned over in tune with the Minister down below.

Politics are more and more the application of economics to the art of government; therefore I think everyone who proposes to take part in politics ought to study economics as well as history and constitutional law.

I am afraid I did not have the advantage of any formal study of economics, but mathematics and engineering seem to me a good mental training for the study of economics. So much of the task of the engineer is to try to make things work more efficiently—in other words, to produce a greater result in relation to the effort expended—and none of those problems of increased efficiency could be examined properly without the aid of mathematical reasoning. While in Parliament I found a curious attitude of contempt, or rather of an inferiority complex, towards the mathematical and scientific consideration of any problem.

My first real experience in the economics of distribution was during a

The visit of King George V and Queen Mary to Reading for the Royal Show, 1926. The Author being presented to the King and Queen

result of new methods of selling electricity, we now pay about one-seventh for a unit of electricity used for lighting compared with what I was paying 40 years ago. The net result of all this is that the cost of illumination is now about one-hundredth of what it was when I was studying electrical engineering at the University of Liverpool. I do not suppose during the whole of economic history has there been any more remarkable a cheapening in price.

Because of the general trade slackness, the technical staff in the main were not worked very hard during the 18 months that I spent at Stafford, and I am afraid many of us devoted a lot of time in arguing about technical and political problems. This led me to initiate the establishment of a debating society in connection with the Works' Institute Social Club, to which all employees, irrespective of grade, belonged. I was the first speaker at the opening debate, and I proposed a resolution in favour of Tariff Reform and Imperial Preference. As was customary in those days, the free traders won when it came to the vote.

Perhaps the most interesting and important debate the society had during the period I was at Stafford was one on Home Rule for Ireland, when, in addition to the members of the society, we had outside speakers, the leading one being that brilliant Irish Nationalist Professor, Tom Kettle, M.P., who was regarded as the rising hope of the Irish Nationalists in Parliament, and whose great career was cut short by his death in action in the First World War.

I was one of the speakers against Home Rule in the debate, and, in order to equip myself for the task, had obtained some historical book from the local public library which gave an account of events up to the year 1900, and apparently I was reasonably successful in my review of the events up to that date.

Professor Kettle, who spoke after me, ragged me unmercifully because my historical knowledge lacked the last eight years. He had obviously had enough experience to realize my difficulty, and the experience taught me the great lesson of how risky it is to take part in a debate unless one is thoroughly well prepared.

One phrase of Professor Kettle's has always stuck in my mind. He said: "I frankly admit the Conservatives have done far more for Ireland than the Liberals. The trouble with the Liberals is they have always got some principles which prevent them from doing what they ought to do, whereas Conservatives have the advantage of having no principles at all." Of course, the phrase is an overstatement, but it nevertheless embodies a great truth which explains why it is the Conservatives have been much more successful in their legislation socially and otherwise than parties which keep to fixed ideologies.

In the debate on Home Rule the chief supporter of that cause, apart

from Professor Kettle, was an Irish engineer, Dr. J. F. Crowley, who was characteristically Irish because, except for the support for Home Rule, he was a believer in all the fundamental principles of Conservatism, and apparently for that reason when he has stood for Parliament he has done so as a Liberal. His brother today is a Member of the Parliament of Eire, while he is a distinguished consulting engineer in London, and still, as far as I can make out, a Conservative and a Nationalist.

Though I only lived in Stafford for under two years, I later had indirect contacts with the town, because some years later, when I met in London the lady who is now my wife, I discovered that 100 years before one William Jones, who was her great-grandfather, had been Mayor of Stafford, and later on I discovered that Viscount Simon was a grandson of the same man.

By one of the curious chances of life, on one occasion or another I have met several relatives of my wife, none of whom had ever known one another, and none of whom had ever known my wife, until on various occasions I introduced the one to the other.

My most vivid recollection of Lord Simon is not as a great lawyer nor as a great debater in the House of Commons, but as a man whom I saw at 2 a.m. in the Palace of Westminster during the air raids when I was fire-watching. Lord Simon and his wife were then living in a flat in a very exposed part of the Palace of Westminster. During the air raids they proceeded to what they thought was a safer part in that very unsafe building, and during my fire-watching patrols during air raids it was always one of the thrills to see the Lord Chancellor and his lady proceeding in their dressing-gowns to the safer parts. He always seemed just as unperturbed as when he was giving a judgment in the House of Lords, but possibly he would have been a little more perturbed had he realized that in passing from his flat to the air-raid shelter he passed through one of the most dangerous parts of the building.

As I mentioned earlier, the manufacturing of electrical apparatus was then a poorly paid occupation, so when I was offered a job in London as assistant to a consulting engineer I naturally seized the opportunity, and fortunately at the same time my eldest brother had decided to abandon his school for a career at the Bar, so the whole family moved to London and lived in the pleasant suburb of Wimbledon. The consulting engineer whose service I entered, Mr. Lewis A. Smart, was a Scotsman with all the characteristics of his race, and though I was not with him for long he taught me as no one else the enormous value of strict accuracy and infinite patience.

My next change in occupation came about purely by chance, and had, as will be seen, a most important effect on my life. One evening,

while out for a stroll, I went into the public library in Wimbledon, and after reading the news in *The Times*, was looking at the advertisement column when I saw an advertisement over a box number from somebody who wanted, if I remember rightly, a Conservative politician with a knowledge of electrical engineering.

This seemed as if the advertisement had been specially designed for me, so I answered it, and received a prompt reply from Major Norton-Griffiths, afterwards Sir John Norton-Griffiths, who was M.P. for some years for Wednesbury and later for Central Wandsworth. His business was that of a public works contractor, and he had no one on his staff with knowledge of electrical engineering. He had recently been adopted as the prospective Conservative candidate for Wednesbury, and on account of the political situation a general election was likely to come soon. When I went to see him he told me that they would be needing someone with electrical knowledge in a few months' time, and that in the meantime he thought I would be most helpful to him in the campaign he was about to start at Wednesbury.

I accepted his offer and went with him to Wednesbury, where he conducted what was probably the most intensive campaign any prospective candidate ever indulged in. This took place during the exciting period of the last stages in Parliament of the great controversy over Mr. Lloyd George's famous budget of 1909.

Wednesbury, which is in the heart of the Black Country, was a curious, self-contained community which has always taken its politics in earnest, and very frequently in its results has swung in a direction opposite to the national swing. It is a constituency in which there are few people who on being canvassed expressed themselves as doubtful, and the poll customarily ranged round 90 per cent. Norton-Griffiths, who was a most dynamic personality, had spent most of his adult life in South Africa and was a fervent devotee of the cause of Imperial development, but at the same time naturally was not very well informed with regard to other aspects of national politics.

He introduced many novelties into electioneering, one of which was several balloon ascents, and on one occasion took up into the sky with him the leader of the local Liberal Party, with whom he was on terms of personal friendship despite their political antagonism. Twelve years later, when I was the Parliamentary candidate for Wednesbury, this gentleman had become a Conservative and was one of my supporters, but I never knew if it was the balloon ascent that was the beginning of his conversion.

In those days the polling at General Elections did not all take place on the same day, but was spread over nearly three weeks, and after I had finished helping Norton-Griffiths in his successful campaign I went to

Stafford to help Mr. George Lloyd, afterwards Lord Lloyd, who was the Conservative candidate for West Staffordshire.

One evening I was asked to address a meeting at a large village named Penkridge. The Conservative agent explained to me that I was to be the only speaker apart from the candidate, the meeting at Penkridge was the candidate's last meeting of the evening, I was to speak until he arrived, and that he was expected at 8.30. The meeting began at eight o'clock. The local squire was in the chair, and he and I were the only two on the platform facing an audience of some 400.

The squire, though a very good sort, was no speaker, and his introductory remarks consisted in reading some paragraphs from the leading article in that day's *Times*. In order to allow a margin for emergencies, I planned to speak for about 40 minutes, and devoted an appropriate amount of time to each of the main subjects of the day, so as to occupy the 40 minutes that I had anticipated. However, at 8.45 there was no sign of the candidate, so I continued to do my best, and at 9.45, when I had been speaking for 1 hour 40 minutes, I turned to the chairman and asked him whether he could not read a bit more out of *The Times*. At that moment my anxiety was brought to an end, for I heard cheers at the back of the hall and Mr. Lloyd had arrived.

I have made an incredible number of speeches since, but never, by design or accident, for as long as 1 hour 40 minutes. I have often wondered what the audience thought of it. The fact that hardly any of them left I did not regard as due to any merit of mine, but as an example of their regard for Mr. Lloyd, whom they had come to hear.

The night's adventures, however, were not quite at an end, for driving back to Stafford in Mr. Lloyd's car in the days when cars were not as reliable as they are now, the car broke down, and nothing the chauffeur could do would make it go. On this occasion it was the chairman who came to our rescue, who, though not very effective on the platform, had a carriage and pair that conveyed Lloyd and myself safely back to Stafford.

The following night I went to speak at another village, and was driven there by a gentleman who some 20 years later, at the age of well over 60, inherited his father's peerage. He drove the car, and beside him sat an elderly family retainer with a long white beard. It took us nearly an hour to travel the six miles to the meeting. When we arrived there I asked the driver whether he was coming into the meeting, and he said that he thought he had better have a look at the car because there was something wrong with it, so he crawled under it and I went in to address the meeting.

An hour and a half later, when I was leaving the meeting with

the chairman, who had asked us to go round to his house for a drink, I found that the driver of the car was still underneath, but he said he had better look after his car, from under which he did not crawl until I returned half an hour later, when we travelled back to Stafford again at six miles an hour. The General Election being over, I returned to London and resumed electrical engineering work, this time in connection with the construction of an L.C.C. sewer which ran from Battersea to Deptford, in which I installed a miniature tramway system for the purpose of hauling the soil to the various shafts from which the construction work was being operated. No doubt it may seem strange to many people to think that a sewer sufficiently large in diameter should contain a miniature tram, run by a trolley pole from overhead wires.

I now had ample opportunities for taking an active part in politics in and around London, and in particular in connection with the Junior Imperial League, of which I became a member some two years after it was first founded. In those days women had no votes and the League was a League of young men, and we were far more concerned with the political activities than we were with the social activities of politics, which is such a characteristic of all political associations today, irrespective of party. We were great devotees of the orange-box, and I think during that period I spoke in the open air in every park in London, and at the street corners in every constituency in London.

On one occasion a good memory coupled with an abnormal piece of luck afforded me quite a triumph when addressing an open-air meeting in East Hill, Wandsworth. The subject-matter of my speech was largely Tariff Reform and Imperial Preference, but most of my heckling was coming from Socialists.

I expressed some surprise that a Socialist should be opposed to Tariff Reform, having regard to the fact that Karl Marx in his book *Das Kapital* had expressed himself in such strong opposition to Free Trade. This very much surprised my heckler, who obviously did not believe me. I said I was not in a position to quote the precise passage, but I asked them to accept my word for the accuracy of my statement.

Two weeks later I was speaking at the same place, and at the end of my speech, when it got to question-time, the heckler of the previous two weeks referred to my statement, handed me up Karl Marx's thick volume, and demanded that I should prove my statement. I pointed out that the book contained so many hundreds of pages that I was not certain whether I would be able to find the paragraph, but that I would do my best.

All I could recall was that the paragraph I had in mind was halfway down a right-hand page about the middle of the book, so I opened the volume at about the middle with a view to turning over the pages to find the paragraph, and on this occasion Fate was kind. I opened it at

the right page, read out the paragraph, and handed the book back, still open, to the astounded Socialist.

In the good old days—or the bad old days, according to the way in which one looks at them—a good deal of money was spent improperly for the purpose of influencing votes, and though the Corrupt Practices Act had done much to reduce it, the pressure by the electorate on members and candidates was ceaseless. Today, of course, anything in the form of direct bribery has ceased almost entirely, not necessarily through any growth of virtue but through the fact that electorates are now so large that no real effect could be produced by the improper expenditure of money, and it is almost without doubt the fact that electorates now seem to enjoy having the privilege of extending hospitality to a Member of Parliament or a candidate rather than receiving it from them.

Wednesbury, however, had always taken a rather thirsty view of politics, and I well remember going with Norton-Griffiths to a friendly society meeting in the clubroom of a certain inn. He had been seen going in, and when he was passing through the bar on leaving quite a number of hopeful people had collected and greeted him very cordially, and he invited them to have one with him, and asked me to arrange with the publican to settle the bill the following morning. When I did I was frankly surprised to discover that the landlord from that moment until closing-time had provided free drinks at the M.P.'s expense, not merely for those present when Norton-Griffiths left but everyone else who came into the pub until closing-time.

At the meeting at which Norton-Griffiths was adopted as the prospective Conservative candidate for Wednesbury he was supported on the platform by Mr. Laming Worthington-Evans, who afterwards became the Rt. Hon. Sir Laming Worthington-Evans, Bt., M.P., and held many high offices with great distinction. He and Norton-Griffiths had long been friends, and in introducing Norton-Griffiths to the audience he said, "I will call him Jack—Empire Jack, and I am certain you will all soon do the same."

The reason for the nickname was of course the great interest which Norton-Griffiths had always taken in Empire affairs, particularly in South Africa, where he saw military service on many occasions, firstly in the Mashonaland War. It was not long before Norton-Griffiths's nickname had an Empire-wide fame, which illustrates the value of an apt phrase.

Shortly after he was elected a Member of Parliament he decided to do something to assist the very grave unemployment problem which prevailed in the Wednesbury district by founding a body known as the Wednesbury Imperial League, the purpose of which was to assist suitable men to emigrate to the Empire countries, and more particularly to

Canada. I became the honorary secretary of this society, and found the work fascinatingly interesting because of the great knowledge it gave me of the lives of the people through the investigations we made before recommending and assisting those who desired to go overseas. Altogether, under the auspices of the society, we assisted about 300, most of whom did very well.

On one occasion, however, we got ourselves into some trouble because we were advised of very suitable openings in a certain part of Canada, and arranged for a number of men to take up this employment; later we discovered to our horror that they were being sent out to act as strike-breakers in an industrial dispute. The committee of the League had acted in complete ignorance, but it taught all of us the great lesson that it is very necessary to find out all about anything before coming to a decision.

The most unpleasant experience I had was when seeing a party off at Liverpool, which included a man and his wife and three children, the youngest a boy of six. The Canadian migration authorities insisted that everyone should be medically examined before leaving England, and it was discovered that the child of six was suffering from ringworm, so the medical authorities refused to give him permission to embark. The parents decided to entrust the boy to my charge, requesting that I was to take him back to his granny for treatment, and that he was to follow the parents as soon as he was well.

I was a bachelor in those days, and to find myself acting *in loco parentis* to a boy of six was a big responsibility. However, three weeks later we sent him out in charge of another party, and in due course he reached his parents safe and happy. I must say I felt flattered that a father and mother had sufficient faith in me to leave their small boy in my custody.

During some of the industrial troubles between 1910 and 1914, when the authorities were confronted with the possibility of rioting, an appeal was made for people to join up as special constables, and I was one of those who did so, but was never involved in any duties. Nevertheless, I was the recipient of a grateful letter of thanks from the authorities. When war broke out in 1914 there was again an appeal for special constables, but this time for duties of a more specific character, and there was a very large response from those who, because of their industrial occupations, were discouraged from joining up in the Services.

In those days the idea of Air-Raid Precautions did not exist, but everybody was very terrified of spies and sabotage. We did not use the word "sabotage", as at that time it was not part of the English language. The group to which I belonged was given the task of guarding the local telephone exchange after dark. No spies ever materialized and it was all

rather dull. I used to spend part of my time watching a telephone operator play chess with another operator at an exchange 50 miles away. We used to do four hours once a week at this arduous task, and one night, on the way home, when I was on the eight-to-midnight turn, I ran into a regular policeman who registered great relief at my arrival. He was standing outside a burgled house, and under the rules he could not enter it until he was accompanied by another person. Of course, we did not know whether the burglar was still inside or not, so the constable opened the door of each room very quietly, with no result until he opened the door of the principal bedroom. Facing the open door was a mirror in a wardrobe door, and the policeman in the light of the mirror saw his own face, at which he exclaimed, "Oh, my God!" I am never quite certain whether it was because he saw his own face or thought it was someone else's.

For the first time I discovered the technique of burglars. Every drawer in the room had been opened, and all the underclothes were lying scattered on the floor. When thrown up, all the heavy things fall out. Apparently burglars have realized that many ladies think a good place of security for jewellery they are not wearing is to put it in their nighties in the drawers of their wardrobe. It was a matter of regret to me that I was not permitted to take part in capturing a burglar.

Some weeks later, during a Zeppelin raid, I had been sent out on patrol with another special constable, and at about 3 a.m., while on Wimbledon Hill, we saw a human form lying on a bench, and we proceeded to wake it up. It turned out to be a young Belgian girl sleeping out because she had nowhere to go, and explained that she had not slept indoors for about three nights.

We took her to a near-by coffee-stall and from there, after having provided her with some nourishment, to the police-station, which was near by. We reported the incident to the officer in charge of the specials, who referred us to the Superintendent of the regulars, who, when I took the girl into the charge-room, said, "Stand away from her, she is as lousy as ——!," which was rather discouraging to me as a special constable who had unwittingly made his first arrest. Next morning she was brought before the Children's Court, which handed her over to the Committee for Belgian Refugees. My colleague and I had, without realizing it, rescued the girl from what might have been a dreadful fate, namely that of developing into a street-walker.

My only other adventure when I was a special constable was of quite a different character. I had invited Dr. A. E. W. Hazel, the Liberal M.P. for West Bromwich, who was a voluntary member of the Ministry of Munitions, to lunch with me at the Constitutional Club, Northumberland Avenue, so that we could discuss a matter affecting the Priority Department of the Ministry. I would like to point out that the word

"priority" was invented in the war of 1914–18—or rather the scheme was —by Sir William Larke, and a department to administer it set up under Sir Edgar Jones, M.P., whose chief deputy was Dr. Hazel. The scheme worked admirably, and if it had only been applied properly in the Second World War it would have enabled many of the controls to operate with a very much smaller proportion of the staff than was actually used. I was one of the many people who tried to persuade the Governments of '39–'45 that the priority scheme was very much better than any controls, but unfortunately we did not succeed.

As Dr. Hazel and I left the Constitutional Club I saw a big man hitting a small boy. I thought this was a bad idea, so I told the big man he should not do it. He asked me what business it was of mine, so I told him I was a special constable and that he would soon find out what business it was of mine. He said, very aggressively, "How do I know you are a special constable?" at which I produced my warrant-card, which had the most extraordinary effect. His whole spirit of aggressiveness vanished at once; he apologized, and cleared off. It was a great lesson to me of the instinctive law-abidingness which characterizes the British people. The ordinary man in the street frankly accepts the fact that it is the right and duty of the police to keep order.

It is a somewhat curious thing that this fact has not always been realized by Governments in this country, with the result that troops instead of police have sometimes been used for dealing with riots, and on a number of occasions this has resulted in the troops having to use their weapons and civilians being killed.

In 1893, with a Liberal Government in office, people were killed at the riots at Featherstone, in Yorkshire, and again in 1912, with a Liberal Government in office, troops were used to deal with strike riots in Liverpool, in Belfast and at Tonypandy, in South Wales, and people were killed when the troops had to fire. On the other hand, a Conservative Government in 1926 conducted the nation through the General Strike without ever using the troops to preserve order. I have not the slightest doubt that in this country rioting ought to be invariably handled by the police and not by the military.

Just before I went to live in Wimbledon, the late Mr. Henry Chaplin had been elected M.P. for that constituency at the by-election in 1907. Mr. Chaplin, a Lincolnshire man, had for many years represented the Grantham division in Parliament, but in 1906, like many other Conservative leaders, he lost his seat, apparently to the sorrow not merely of his supporters but equally of his opponents, because of the great affection with which he was held in his native county. He was generally known by his nickname of "The Squire".

My activities in connection with the local Conservative Association

brought me as a young man in touch with Mr. Chaplin when he was already an old man, but it was an outstanding pleasure to have some association with somebody who had been prominent in the political life of this country for such a long period, and who had held important Cabinet offices.

Of course, he belonged to a bygone age. From my point of view he affected a style of oratory of which there were few exponents left, but nevertheless his magnificent presence and charm of voice made it a pleasure to listen to him, even though the material lacked the punch of the rising politicians of that day. He was a tall man and he had become a very heavy man, and I remember one evening when he came to address a public meeting which was held in a large hall on the first floor. The Conservative agent and I met him on arrival in his car, and then proceeded to help him up the stairs, each of us putting a shoulder under each buttock; but one must not be led to believe that because of that he was physically incapacitated, for it was only three weeks later he broke three ribs while out hunting.

Old men are inclined to think that all the great men lived in their generation, and that the young men are a poor lot. I always found the old gentleman singularly kind towards the young men, but nevertheless he had some contempt for them, for one day, in my hearing, he described them as "nothing less than a lot of barley-water boys".

In 1916 he ceased to be a Member of Parliament on being elevated to the peerage as Viscount Chaplin, and I never had the pleasure of meeting him again. Normally when a man is made a peer the invitation is conveyed in a letter from the Prime Minister, and in any event the peerage is created on the advice of the Prime Minister, but in this particular case the invitation, I understand, took the form of a direct letter from King George V to Mr. Chaplin, and said what a pleasure it was to invite one of his father's oldest friends to become a peer. He certainly was that type of man of whom it is said we shall never see his like again, because he was typical of a generation that has passed away.

His son, the present Viscount, and I are both officers of the Empire Economic Union and so I still have a link with "The Squire".

That able and charming woman, the Marchioness of Londonderry is his daughter.

CHAPTER IV

MY FIRST ELECTION

WHILE living in Wimbledon I took an active part in local affairs and became a member of the Wimbledon Borough Council. This was the first occasion I had become an elected person, and I wish it had been as easy on every subsequent occasion. One of the councillors for the ward in which I was living had been made an alderman, so there was a casual vacancy. I suggested to the local leaders that I would like to stand, and as nobody else wanted to stand I got in unopposed. My election expenses, I remember, came to 1*s.* 9*d.*—1*s.* for a list of the electors and 9*d.* for nine penny stamps to put on the letters I wrote to friends about it.

About a year before that some four or five of us had formed a Ratepayers' Association in the part of the town in which we lived. We had as our president a distinguished city gentleman who had no municipal ambitions, and within two years the rest of the members of the organization had become members of the Borough Council.

In those days there was not much party feeling on the Council, though there were three Socialist members. The four of us from our end of the town acted as a team, and had the pleasure of shaking things up, rather to the resentment of what I will call the "old gang", who had run things quietly in their own way for years. Two out of the four in due course became mayors of the borough, so I think one could describe our Ratepayers' Association as being a most successful body.

Shortly after I became a Town Councillor, a leading suffragette wrote to the Press to protest that because she was not an elector she could not serve on the Borough Council. At that time I was living at home with my mother, had not qualified for a lodger vote, and therefore was not an elector.

I was able to stand because a few weeks before I was elected an Act had received the Royal Assent which provided that twelve months' residence was in itself a qualification, and I pointed this out in the newspaper. This produced another letter from the suffragette lady to the effect that I had missed her point, namely that under Common Law all married women were still debarred from having controlling power.

It may be of interest to know that she was wrong, because under an Act passed as early as 1907 it was laid down that a woman was not to be disqualified by sex or marriage from being elected as a Councillor or an Alderman of the Council of any county or borough. I took part in the

controversy not on sex grounds, but because by chance I was one of the first people to be elected under the provisions of the Act of 1914, and it is interesting to remember that for 11 years before women had qualified to be electors they had qualified to be elected persons so far as municipal affairs were concerned.

Incidentally, my services on the Wimbledon Borough Council produced what I have always regarded as one of the nicest compliments ever paid me, namely the following paragraphs in the *Wimbledon Gazette* for January 16th, 1915:

> "That Councillor H. G. Williams, one of the newest arrivals on Wimbledon Town Council, and representing St. Mary's Ward, is rapidly rising to fame there.
>
> "That he has given proof of unusual ability, and that his opinions and advice are already eagerly sought in important matters.
>
> "That he is one of the best and most trenchant debaters in the council chamber, and withal possessing the uncommon gift of common sense."

The writer of those words was the father of Mr. Guy Eden, the well-known Parliamentary correspondent of the *Daily Express*.

As one who is an ardent opponent of nationalization, and also thinks on balance that private enterprise is more efficient at running public utilities than municipalities, I found myself somewhat amusingly serving on the Borough Electricity Committee, which naturally interested me because of my training as an electrical engineer, and though I am not going to say it is because of that fact, many years after I ceased to be concerned with the Electricity Supply at Wimbledon I took part in a debate in the House of Commons on Electricity Supply and had to protest against the fact that the Central Electricity Board had done a deal with Wimbledon Corporation, which appeared to infringe the principles of the Electricity Act of 1882, that there should be no undue preference in supplying electricity to any customer. The deal in question had been made with the Wimbledon Corporation largely because of its high efficiency, and the Corporation were successful in coercing the Central Electricity Board into a bargain, the legal propriety of which was open to question.

During my service on the Borough Council I was made Chairman of the Works Committee, an office, however, which I did not hold for a full year, and felt compelled to resign because of the policy pursued by other chairmen of committees which I thought involved undue expendi-

ture of public funds at a time when economy in all public expenditure was the great need.

About a year afterwards, on account of change of residence, I had to resign from the Council, and received a very pleasant tribute from the local Press, including the following paragraph:

> "His knowledge of statistics combined with unusual oratorical ability enabled him to tackle his Socialist opponents in a manner to which they were unaccustomed."

In the early stages of the First World War the arrangements for paying the allowances to the families of Service men were in a very unsatisfactory condition, and, to overcome the difficulty, the Incorporated Soldiers and Sailors' Help Society was called upon to undertake their payment.

On the invitation of the then Mayor of Poplar I accepted the Honorary Secretaryship of the Poplar branch for a short period, and, so far as other duties would permit, attended the weekly meetings at which payments were made to the wives of Service men. I remember being very horrified when I asked a lady what her husband was in, and she said he was serving on H.M.S. *Hogue*, and she was apparently completely ignorant of the fact that this ship, together with the cruisers *Crecy* and *Aboukir*, had been torpedoed and sunk with the loss of nearly all hands off the Belgian coast some three weeks before. Apparently she had not had any communication from the Admiralty, did not read the newspapers, and did not know that her husband was probably dead. I made no comment because I felt it wiser not to do so, but it always stuck in my mind as a tragic example of how some people completely fail to follow public events.

Though I had written many articles, it was not until after the First World War that I attempted to write anything of a serious kind, but in the summer of 1919 I published a small statistical volume entitled *The National Income*, giving an estimate of the aggregate income of the people of the United Kingdom and showing how that income was distributed amongst the various economic classes.

Most of the efforts on these lines had previously been published by people who in politics were either Liberals or Socialists, and this was more or less the first attempt by one who was a Conservative, and I had the advantage over all the previous writers of having available the results of the census of production of 1907 and the investigation of the Board of Trade Enquiry into wages which related to the year of 1906, though of course in both cases the information based on these two en-

quiries was not published for several years later. In that book I also made an attempt to estimate not merely for the year 1907, but using that as the basis for a number of earlier and later years, and also related the national income to the amount taken for national and local taxation. This book, though short, represented a great deal of investigation, and I was fortunate enough to receive complimentary reviews in a number of journals.

The one, however, that interested me most was one published in *John Bull* on June 21st, 1919, which read as follows:

> "If you would know all about this, and see many popular errors corrected, get the book just published by the British Commonwealth Union, at 25, Victoria Street, London, and written by Mr. Herbert G. Williams—who, by the way, ought now to be sent by the Government to Germany to find out the truth about that country's finances."

This, of course, was highly complimentary, but I think a little biassed.

Some weeks before I had been invited to address a mass meeting in Birmingham under the auspices of a society which was conducting a campaign urging the necessity of greater efficiency of production in industry. At the present time a similar campaign, of course, is being conducted by His Majesty's Government, and it shows how after big wars history repeats itself.

At this meeting the chairman was Mr. Horatio Bottomley, M.P., and the other speaker was to have been the then Bishop of Birmingham, the Rt. Rev. Russell Wakefield. The Birmingham Town Hall was packed, but the Bishop pleaded absence because of a confirmation. I sometimes thought he did not wish to speak under Mr. Bottomley's chairmanship. That left Mr. Bottomley and myself. I had never met him before, but we got on very well, and that probably explains the nice review of my book in his famous journal.

On arrival at Birmingham we were met and taken to the Queen's Hotel, where there was an adequate collection of sandwiches and two or three bottles of champagne, a beverage of which Mr. Bottomley had more knowledge than I, for when the first bottle was opened he condemned it as corked; however, the other two bottles were all right, and as there were only four of us to consume them we arrived at the Town Hall ready for our task.

I was, of course, in no sense a public figure, whereas Mr. Bottomley was very much so, and he was recognized by the people standing outside, one of whom addressed him as "Bucket Shop", which my stockbroker friends tell me is a term of reproach.

We had a very good meeting. Mr. Bottomley's share was ten minutes

of introduction, mine an hour's speech and then answering questions. In acknowledging a vote of thanks, for some reason I mentioned the fact that neither my wife nor I played any musical instruments, and therefore our home was very unmusical, and if I had only been well off enough to buy a pianola our home life would have been much cheered. This led Mr. Bottomley, in concluding the meeting, to say that he had a pianola he never used, and that he proposed to present it to me. I am afraid that this was one of the many promises which that remarkable man failed to redeem.

Curiously enough, I never saw him again till many years afterwards, on the platform at Waterloo Station some months after he had come out of prison. He was immaculately turned out in a grey topper and grey morning suit and engaged in an altercation with some people whom I imagine had been the victims of his enterprise which had led to his sentence of penal servitude.

CHAPTER V

A NEW JOB

In 1911 my career was again affected by an advertisement in *The Times*. The newly formed Machine Tool Trades Association wanted a Secretary. Naturally they wanted a man with engineering knowledge, and also with some measure of administrative experience, and as the prospects with Norton-Griffiths's firm did not seem at the time very good because there was not much doing on the electrical side, and as the Machine Tool Trades Association was offering a larger salary, I naturally accepted it when I was offered the job.

One of the reasons for the formation of the Association was that too many engineering exhibitions were being promoted, with the result that members of the industry found themselves being coerced into exhibiting their products too frequently. It is obviously difficult to keep out of an exhibition in which your competitors are participating, and if one prominent firm agreed to take part in an exhibition, then before long most of the others found themselves coerced to enter.

Exhibitions are fundamentally a form of advertising, and to be successful and attract visitors every exhibition should contain new designs, and in the ordinary way new designs sufficiently interesting to attract buyers are not likely to be produced every year. Accordingly the Association adopted the policy of exhibiting once every four years, and all the members signed an agreement not to participate in exhibitions anywhere without the approval of the Association.

This policy, of course, was not very popular with the firms who promoted exhibitions, but it certainly suited the industry and I think also prospective buyers, because they knew that when the Association ran an exhibition it would be worth while visiting. The first exhibition was run jointly with a firm of professional exhibition organizers, but subsequent exhibitions were run by the Association itself.

As a result of my experience in this direction I came to certain very definite conclusions, namely that exhibitions should not be too frequent, that they should be run for a limited period of time, because otherwise none but the very largest firms can possibly staff their exhibits properly. The exhibits of machinery to be effective must show the machinery in motion, and there must be first-class technical experts in charge, to explain to prospective buyers the important features of the exhibits. I also came to the conclusion that the most successful kind of exhibition is the specialized exhibition devoted to one industry, provided that the

industry is sufficiently large to fill a hall. In the case of some smaller industries an exhibition should comprise a group, the diversified products of which are likely to interest the same class of buyers.

The long-period exhibitions which run for six months and cover every industry are never likely to be successful, because the cost is so very heavy in relation to results, and, quite apart from that, a very large number of firms cannot exhibit because of the staffing problem, and accordingly the long-period exhibition cannot be representative. Every now and then some high-minded people suggest some great Imperial and international exhibition to run for six months. Industries are bully-ragged into participating, almost invariably to their regret, by the promoters of the exhibition, who are certainly high-minded persons with very little knowledge of exhibitions or industry.

It was in the light of this opinion that when the British Exhibition at Wembley was being promoted I attended the inaugural meeting at the Mansion House, and after the speeches of the Lord Mayor, the late Lord Milner, and the late Sir Robert Horne, I opposed the project, predicting that all concerned would lose money in the enterprise, but when it came to a show of hands I had only one backer. Nevertheless, the event showed me to be right.

I now observe that similar high-minded people have proposed to have a great exhibition in 1951,[1] and this presumably is to be a long-period exhibition. All the world will apparently be asked to participate, and I am going to make the prediction that hardly any firm which participates will do other than lose money, and that those that guarantee the enterprise will almost certainly be asked to make good part of their guarantees.

My desire to serve on public bodies having been stimulated by my experience at Wimbledon, I thought I would try and venture into a new field, and in due course was selected as one of the prospective candidates of the London County Council for South Poplar at the time when South Poplar was regarded as a possible win for the Municipal Reformers. On account of the First World War the London County Council election which should have taken place in 1916 was postponed and did not take place until 1919.

Certain difficulties had arisen internally in the South Poplar Conservative Association, difficulties with which I was not in any way concerned, but as they seemed likely to prejudice the contest I withdrew my name and instead, in March 1919, stood for the other part of Poplar, namely Bow and Bromley, with the late Mr. M. Campbell Johnson as my colleague.

[1] Now postponed to a later date.

Prior to the First World War, Bow and Bromley had been regarded as a safe seat from the Municipal Reformers' point of view, and none of us realized the great political change that had come over the district, with the result that my colleague and I were not a little surprised when we had a thorough good beating. I suspected things were going badly because the aggregate audience at all our meetings, and we had a meeting nearly every night, was less than 250, but the local people told me not to worry about that and everything would be all right on the night. It was not.

It was a long time before I had any further ambitions for the London County Council, and on the next occasion in 1940 the process was a very simple one, because owing to an aldermanic vacancy I was elected an Alderman straight from the start without previously serving as a Councillor.

The London County Council has one good point, namely that it frankly recognizes the Party system in the same way that it is recognized in the House of Commons. The composition of all committees is *pro rata* to Party strength, and the same applies to the aldermanic seats. It was, however, a dull experience during the five war years I served on the London County Council; there was very little controversy and the bulk of the work was routine administration without any developments.

At the time when I became the Secretary of the Machine Tool Trade Association the words "machine tool" conveyed virtually nothing to the general public. In fact the ordinary person seemed to think it had something to do with hammers. The machine tool is defined as a power-operated metal working machine, and is the basis of all modern industries. Machine tools are used to make other machine tools. They are also used to make every other kind of engineering product.

At the time I became Secretary of the Association I very much doubt whether there were more than 20,000 people employed in the whole industry. When war broke out in 1914, however, the importance of the industry began to be realized, though only slowly at first, because it had not appeared to occur to the Admiralty and the War Office that the immense needs for munitions could be provided without going outside the Royal Arsenals, Dockyards and the comparatively small numbers of firms that had been in the practice of making munitions.

It was the shell scandal of 1915 that brought matters to a head, and the late Lord Kitchener, then Secretary of State for War, set up the Armaments Committee of the War Office under the chairmanship of Mr. George Booth. It was realized that four things were necessary if there was to be great expansion in munition production, namely the adequate provision of machine tools, an area organization for the purpose of getting the engineering industry throughout the country engaged

on munition production, the organization of the supply of labour, and the organization of the supply of the necessary materials.

Mr. (now Sir) Alfred Herbert, who was the President of the Machine Tool Association, was asked to take charge of the organization of the supply of machine tools, and it occurred to him that the simplest way to start the job was to transfer the organization of the Machine Tool Trades Association to the Armaments Committee of the War Office, and we started in a small suite of rooms in part of the former Hotel Cecil.

Apart from Sir Alfred Herbert and myself there was the late Mr. Arthur Henderson, who had a room and no staff, one gentleman who was similarly situated in respect of materials, another in respect of area organization, and the sixth who was described as the intelligence officer, though I never could discover why he bore that title. I mobilized a shorthand typist in the afternoon, so the organization then had seven people, and within a few weeks we were incorporated into the Ministry of Munitions under the dynamic leadership of Mr. Lloyd George, who brought into the organization all those departments of the War Office which had been previously dealing with the supply of armaments.

I have long held the view that Government departments are completely unsuited for administrative jobs of a commercial nature. The higher divisions of the Civil Service are of great intellectual attainments and of the highest probity. The lower ranks of the Civil Service are also of the highest probity, but they contain an undue proportion of unadventurous people who are attracted to the Civil Service because the initial pay is much higher than in private enterprise, and because it is almost impossible to get dismissed for being incompetent, and there is the certainty of a pension at the end of one's career.

The whole of the Civil Service is terrified by a question in Parliament, and everything is organized to make it perfectly clear that any mistake is the result of many minds which communicate with one another on paper, and as it apparently takes longer for a document to pass from one room in Government departments to another than it takes for a letter to go from London to Glasgow, the period of consultation is prolonged and therefore every decision is dilatory. As a rule the first recommendation on any particular issue comes from someone who is very junior, and as it climbs slowly up the stairs to those in more exalted positions there is a great tendency to say "I concur". The result is that many of the decisions are not only dilatory but not very well informed.

I do not blame the Civil Servants, they are the victims of the system by which they work, and the system will never be improved until the bulk of the Ministers have themselves had practical and commercial administrative experience, and can force on the departments drastic changes in the methods.

One of the great defects of Government departments is that all letters have to be registered in the Central Registry before they are answered. In a commercial office, letters are dealt with before they are filed. During the time I was in the Machine Tool Department of the Ministry of Munitions I resisted the official system of registration. Theoretically there was greater risk of letters being lost, but in practice I do not think we lost any more than the Central Registry, and the proportion of letters that were effectively dealt with promptly was very much higher. Because I was kicking against the pricks I found myself frequently being looked on as a very undesirable person by those who were used to the more routine methods. Years later, when I was a junior Minister, I did not have the responsibility of being in charge of the department, and therefore I never had the chance of trying to put into operation those changes in method which I believe are essential if Government departments are to be expeditious. In all ages and in all countries red tape seems inevitable in Government departments.

Now that the Government is nationalizing so many industries this red tape becomes a real menace to the whole prosperity of the nation.

One most interesting example of red tape on the international level arose in connection with supply of machinery to Italy when Italy declared war on Austria and Germany.

Major General Delme-Radcliffe, who was the British Military Attaché in Rome, came over to arrange for the supply by this country to Italy of a number of machine tools for the purpose of balancing up the cartridge plant in Italy, which was to make the cartridges for the rifles that were to be transferred to Russia.

It was thought it would be better to have the cartridges made in Italy, despite the difficulty of sending to Russia, than to transfer the plant to Russia, because it was felt the Russians in all probability would spoil the plant!

This view, of course, had nothing to do with the political views which then prevailed in Russia, but was based upon the opinion then held as to the attitude of the Russians to machinery generally, and apparently there has not been much change, because the Russian officers who have recently been helping themselves to German watches threw them away when they stopped. They had not discovered they could be wound up!

Arrangements were made by the Machine Tool Department to find all the required machines rapidly, and I was instructed to make the necessary arrangements, so that they should be sent to Italy as quickly as possible.

The Major-General in charge of transport at the War Office instructed a staff captain to attend to my requirements. We made all arrangements

which provided for special labels on all machines which were to be sent to Italy by ship from Southampton to Le Havre, and by rail the rest of the way. Special labels were sent to all the manufacturers, and all the machines reached Southampton by the correct date. After three weeks had elapsed the staff captain at the War Office telephoned me to say that the machines were stuck at Le Havre, and could not be forwarded by rail without the production of "Forme Rouge". I then spent a busy day in trying to find out what "Forme Rouge" was. I consulted about five Ministries and the Department of Customs and Excise; the latter had heard of it, but thought it was not yet in operation!

Eventually the staff captain and I conferred, and came to the conclusion that the thing had got too big for us, and that it would have to be transferred to a higher level. The sequel was that a letter prepared by me was duly signed by Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Munitions, and was addressed to the Permanent Secretary of the War Office, and by this high-level device the staff captain and I thought we had really done the right thing. Five days later, however, the staff captain 'phoned me to the effect that this high-level letter had been sent to him for action, so we conferred again.

The result of our conference was the decision that Havre was in France, and that in France we were represented by an Ambassador who had access to the French Government, so I then proceeded to the Foreign Office, and was successful in getting hold of a bright-minded member of the staff, who arranged that an urgent letter should be sent to the British Ambassador in Paris, who made representations to the French Foreign Secretary, who in turn addressed a communication to the French Minister of War, and ultimately some ten days later, as far as I can find out, a French corporal at Havre felt himself sufficiently authorized to permit the machines to travel to Italy so that they could make cartridges for the Russians!

The Ministry of Munitions was full of distinguished industrialists, who arrived full of enthusiasm, but it always struck me how rapidly those able men got tied up in the customary red tape of a Government department, and later on their unwillingness to fight this red tape when some of them received honours. This had the effect of diminishing the willingness of the rest to kick against the pricks in case they might lose their own chances of appearing in an Honours List.

I think a solution to this problem, if there is another war, when great outsiders undertake voluntary work in Government departments, is to give them their honours when they start, so that thereafter they can be relied upon not to be afraid to express their opinions in the frankest possible manner to the Ministers at the head of their departments.

The Ministry of Munitions followed the example of other Govern-

ment departments by describing the various sections into which it was divided by a variety of initials and numbers, and this prompted an engineer friend of mine, who had been lent to the Machine Tools Department by his firm, when he became thoroughly enraged with the minute system that prevailed, to write a satirical poem entitled "Just a Minute".

It so aptly describes what happened then, and I imagine what still happens, that it is worth while giving it some prominence. I think one of the reasons which stimulated him to write the document arose from the fact that he, a very commercially minded engineer, had as a brother one of the leading Civil Servants in the Colonial Office:

JUST A MINUTE

A Minute came to P.M.1
To tell him something should be done.
He passed it on to B.M.2
And told him what he ought to do.
From him it went to A.M.3,
Who said "It is not meant for me,"
So sent it on to B.M.4,
Who lost it for a week or more.
It next appeared in A.M.5,
Who tried to keep the thing alive
By sending it in quick succession
In alphabetical procession
To B.M.1, and D.D.G.
And thence by way of D.M.C.
To C.M.1, 2, 3, and 4,
Until it reached the panelled door
Of D.M.P., who thought it wrong
To stop it, so it passed along
To D.A.O., till very late
It reached the home of C.M.8,
Who just to have a bit of fun
Sent it straight back to P.M.1.
It now approached its final doom,
For when it entered P.M.'s room
He, thinking there was nothing in it,
Crossed out his name, which killed that blooming
Minute.

Many more skits were written by the distinguished temporary Civil Servants about the methods of the regular Civil Servants.

The best of these which received wide publicity was one about

rations for a cow. The controversy went on so long that the conclusion in the file was, "unfortunately the cow died".

Occasionally there were gibes in the other direction, and a very interesting letter came into the possession of the Machine Tool Department of the Ministry of Munitions chiefly because Sir Alfred Herbert was the head of the Department, and a letter of complaint addressed to his firm by the British Thomson-Houston Co., Ltd., was widely circulated by Sir Alfred amongst the staff. Though it is slightly technical, it is sufficiently clear that non-technical people can understand the point, and the letter is a really effective description of life as it was in industry in the First World War, and I think equally applicable to the Second World War.

Letter written by Mr. H. F. Hemmings of the British Thomson-Houston Co., Ltd., to Alfred Herbert, Ltd.

"Yours of the 17.1.1916 re Module Cutters for Fellows Gear Shaper, reference WD/H/LA.

"During this great war we have done many things that aforetime we had considered almost impossible. We have turned our ploughshares into swords. Made night as day. Made bricks without straw. Turned water into wine, and ale into cutting-compound for the refreshing of labour.

"We have resurrected Lazarus-like machine tools and taught them to rise up and sing. We have imported proud Americans. We have salvaged destitute Belgians.

"We have gathered in and utilized Barbers, Circus-proprietors, Evangelists, Aboriginals from the Antipodes, and some of the 'Best People'.

"We have made women into mechanics and mechanics into supermen, such as may be found at the Ministry of Munitions.

"We have 'diluted' our labour, both male and female, until we have workers of the combined sexes, and of neither sex.

"We have praised God, honoured the King, and strafed their common enemies, but we stand today hopelessly cast down before your suggestion that we should cut 2-Module pitch Aeroplane Engine Gears with a 2½-Module Cutter—Ichabod!

"Yours in chastened spirit.

(*Signed*) "H. F. Hemmings."

CHAPTER VI

FIRST PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION

In the year 1918 the Representation of the People Act was passed, and under this the Combined English Universities, which then comprised Durham, Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Sheffield, Birmingham, and Bristol, were created a University constituency returning two members to Parliament. Since that date Reading has received a charter, and by a special Act of Parliament has been included in the constituency. As I had long had Parliamentary ambitions, and as this constituency was not likely initially to have a large electorate, I came to the conclusion that it would be a good constituency for me to contest in the Conservative interest. I made enquiries at the Conservative Central Office and found that in those days it was not their practice to intervene in any way in University elections, largely, apparently, on the ground that the University graduates regarded themselves as being above too active an association with political parties. Nevertheless, those then in control of the Conservative Central Office expressed full sympathy with my ambition, and I then considered what to do in the matter.

At that time there was no register of electors. I busied myself in trying to prepare a list of many of the people who were qualified to be electors, and did this by perusing the *Medical Register*, *Crockford's Clerical Dictionary*, and the membership of various societies such as the Institutions of Civil, Mechanical and Electrical Engineers. I also approached a number of my friends whom I knew to be Conservatives.

Through a friend I obtained an introduction to the late Sir Maurice Abbot-Anderson, the distinguished surgeon, who was a graduate of Durham, and ultimately a number of us met and formed a body that we called the Combined Universities Conservative and Unionist Association. This was all done before any register of electors had in fact been prepared. That Association then circularized the three or four thousand people whose names and addresses I had secured, urging them to register themselves as electors, and inviting them to join our Association. The result of which was that we go ttogether a membership of some two hundred, and we formed small branches in the various cities in which the Universities had their headquarters, and also in London. We then proceeded to ask the members of our Association for nominations of persons to be prospective candidates.

The constituency was to return two members elected under the system of proportional representation, and we thought it wise to put forward

only one candidate, because we had heard the rumour that the Rt. Hon. H. A. L. Fisher, M.P., who was then Minister of Education, and who had been provided conveniently with a constituency in Sheffield when Mr. Lloyd George appointed him to this office, intended to offer himself as one of the candidates, and we felt that in view of the popularity he had obtained in connection with his Education Bill he was bound to be elected, and accordingly it was no use running two candidates. A number of names were considered, and the executive committee decided to recommend me to the members of the Association. By a postal ballot their recommendation was generally approved with a small measure of dissent, the bulk of which came from Liverpool graduates. I think this proves that the Scriptures were right when they said that "no Prophet is without honour save in his own country and amongst his own people".

At the time of my adoption I was serving in the Army Ordnance Corps, now the Royal Army Ordnance Corps, as a lieutenant, and was stationed at Woolwich but living at home. The position of Parliamentary candidates who were in the Forces was then a little ambiguous, but I took my chance and got into no trouble.

When the election came very shortly after the Armistice in November 1918, the Coalition of Conservatives, Liberals and Socialists, under the leadership of Mr. Lloyd George, decided to endorse the candidature of approved persons by means of what became known as the "coupon". As soon as I learnt of this decision I consulted the Conservative Central Office and also the Conservative Whips Department in the House of Commons, and was assured by both that the "coupon" system would not apply to the Universities, a decision with which I was content.

Some weeks before the election some of the senior graduates at Manchester had formed a Manchester University Conservative Association under the leadership of the late Sir William Boyd-Dawkins, and apparently at their meeting the view was expressed that I was much too young and unimportant to be a University Member of Parliament, and they proceeded to choose as their candidate Sir William Martin Conway, the celebrated explorer, who for a short period had been Professor of Art at the University of Liverpool, though he was not a graduate of that University but of one of the older ones. When the election began, to my surprise, despite the assurance given me, "coupons" were issued to Mr. Fisher and to Sir William, with the result that I was described in the Press as an Independent Conservative candidate, though I was the first in the field.

The electorate was very small, and when we came to count the votes Mr. Fisher was elected with a majority, I was second on the list, Sir William was third, and Professor Hobson, the Socialist candidate, was at the bottom of the poll. Mr. Fisher's surplus votes were distributed in

accordance with the principles of proportional representation, with the result that more of them went to Sir William than to me, and in the second count I was second on the list, Mr. Hobson was then removed, and the bulk of his votes went to Sir William, so I was bottom in the third count, and Sir William was elected as the Conservative Member of Parliament for the constituency.

The interesting thing is that though the majority of Conservatives had given their first preference to me, the decision as to who was to be the second member was accordingly made by the Liberals and Socialists, an amusing example of the effect of proportional representation when the choice between the two Conservatives was not made by Conservatives but by their opponents.

I was naturally very angry about the "coupon" incident, and made every effort to find out why the pledge to me had been broken. As the decision referred to above with the Conservative Central Office and the Conservative Whips Department had been confirmed to me in a letter by the late Mr. Bonar Law, who was then leader of my Party, I wrote to him and asked him for an interview. He was then in Paris at the Versailles Peace Conference, and I was fobbed off and never learnt the truth.

I always thought that somebody had indulged in a dirty intrigue, and with some satisfaction I learnt it was not Sir William, because when I discussed the matter with him some years later, when we were both in Parliament, he told me that when he accepted the invitation of the Manchester University Conservative Association he was not aware that I was already in the field, and if he had known he would not have accepted.

The result of all this was that the graduates of the seven modern Universities decided to elect two graduates of the older Universities, and it is a curious thing that they have proceeded in this course ever since —example of an inverted "old school tie".

After I came to live in London in 1909, and before I got into Parliament, I had many varied experiences in addressing public meetings in one part of the country and another, and on a good many occasions took part in debates with political opponents.

One of the most interesting of these was a debate at Cinderford, in the Forest of Dean, where my opponent was Mr. Herbert W. Booth, the leader of the coal-miners in that area, on the subject of the nationalization of the coal-mines. My task was not an easy one because the audience consisted mainly of coal-miners, but they were a very fair audience. The speeches are curiously reminiscent of what is now being said on both sides in the same controversy. I see that I pointed out that the output of coal at the time, 1920, was 20 per cent less than in 1913. This produced a very strange reply from Mr. Booth. "Mr. Williams has referred to a decreased output. What interest had the miner in output? (Applause.) The only

thing that interested the miner was wages, just as profits were all that interested the owners." It seems a strange thing that a man who was the leader of the miners in that district should not realize that both wages and profits in the long run must depend upon output, and it indicated a complete lack of appreciation on his part.

I find that I suggested that it would be a good idea if the Miners' Federation of Great Britain had used some of the £4,000,000 they then had to buy up a colliery in order to teach everybody else how coal-mining really should be run, and I went on to point out that the miners might very easily have bought out the whole industry. According to my calculations, the cost of one pint of beer per day per employee in the coal-mining industry would have been sufficient in ten years to buy out all the collieries in Great Britain. This produced laughter, and the irrelevant interruption, "What about the breweries?" Curiously enough, in reply to my argument Mr. Booth said that as far as the question of the miners buying a mine for experimental purposes was concerned, everyone knew that in that the miners would be beaten by capitalistic concerns. This seemed to me to give away the whole show.

I have never met Mr. Booth since. I hope he won't think I have quoted him unfairly, but the debate occupied three and a half columns in the *Dean Forest Mercury* of March 19th, 1920, and I have quoted from that.

I had a very interesting illustration of the vital importance of being precisely accurate when I went to listen to a speech on Socialism by the late Mr. Pointer, who was the Labour M.P. for one of the divisions of Sheffield. In the course of his eloquent speech he made a reference to the change of wages and prices over a certain period of time.

I felt certain his figures were wrong, and I happened to have with me a copy of the Abstract of Labour Statistics, which in those days was published by the Board of Trade. When we came to question time I challenged Mr. Pointer's statistics. He asserted I was wrong. I then said that I had with me an official document proving I was right, so he asked to see it. I took it up to him on the platform and he studied it, and afterwards, with great honesty and courtesy, admitted I was right and he was wrong. The interesting thing is that it completely killed all the rest of his arguments. It taught me the great lesson of taking every possible trouble to be accurate, and I think I must have been fairly successful because Lord Baldwin, on one occasion when addressing a meeting in Reading after I had ceased to be Member for that town, paid me a compliment by saying, "He is the one and only man in the country, on either side of the House, whose figures I would accept without examination."

On another occasion I had an interesting debate in Northampton in May 1911. It was the result of a challenge to me at an open-air meeting

by Councillor Slinn, one of the leaders of the Northampton Labour Party. The debate took place in the open air in the market square, not a very good venue for a debate, but we were fortunate in our chairman, Mr. A. J. Darnell, who was so highly esteemed in the world of Association football that he was accepted as completely impartial by both the Socialists and Conservatives of that town. The form of the debate was a speech each, then Councillor Slinn was entitled to cross-examine me for 15 minutes, and I to cross-examine him for 15 minutes, and then there were brief winding-up speeches. I think I must have got the best of it because at the end of the report in the *Northampton Daily Echo* on the debate there was a letter from Councillor Slinn proposing another debate, but on this occasion without the cross-examination! Ever since that, whenever I have taken part in a debate, I have done my best to try to arrange things so that the cross-examination formed part of it.

So many speeches consist of declamations of fine phrases which generate enormous enthusiasm amongst the audience, and very often mean very little. There is nothing like a cross-examination to destroy the eloquence of meaningless phrases.

Looking through my scrapbook one day I came across an interesting souvenir on the Coronation of King George V and Queen Mary. Because of the connection I had with Wednesbury during the period when it was represented in Parliament by the late Sir John Norton-Griffiths, the Mayor of the town invited me to be present at the celebrations of the Coronation in that town.

I travelled up to Wednesbury by an evening train and had dinner in the third-class dining saloon of the London & North-Western Railway, and I found in my scrapbook the menu illustrated by coloured pictures of Their Majesties. This is the menu:

MENU

DINNER 3/-

Clear Oxtail Soup.
Cold Salmon, Sauce Verte.
Calf's Head à la Poulette.
Roast Lamb. Mint Sauce.
New Potatoes. New Peas.
Strawberry Ice.
Cheese, Watercress, Butter, Biscuits, Etc.
Coffee or Tea, per cup, 3*d.*

21st June, 1911.

When I read this I felt inclined to send it with my compliments to Mr. Strachey.

CHAPTER VII

WEDNESBURY

DURING the First World War, Norton-Griffiths, who had been knighted for his variety of services, including in particular his brilliant work in destroying the Roumanian oil-wells before the Germans could get at them, had decided not to stand for Parliament again,[1] and accordingly the Wednesbury Conservative Association had to choose another candidate, and they selected Mr. Arthur Maconochie, who had previously served from 1900–6 as the Conservative Member for East Aberdeenshire. He was an exceedingly well-informed politician, but he lacked the personal charm of Norton-Griffiths, and in addition, the attitude of the Conservatives had undergone a considerable change as a sequel to a strike amongst the unskilled workers in the Midlands, which had the effect of switching the affections of many of them from the Conservatism and Liberalism which they had previously supported.

I have not the slightest doubt that Norton-Griffiths could have held the constituency. Mr. Maconochie, in 1918, lost it, and for the first time, in the person of the late Mr. Alfred Short, it returned a Labour M.P. Mr. Maconochie decided not to continue as a candidate, and the Association looked round for someone to take his place. When I heard of this I at once decided to offer myself, but I was really too late, because they had virtually decided on a young man, who though not a resident, had local connections.

Within about a year he gave up the candidature, and in the spring of 1920 I was adopted as the Conservative candidate for the constituency. It was a great pleasure to me because of the large number of friends I had in the district. On the other hand, the Conservative Party was in a very derelict condition, except for three Habitations of the Primrose League that had succeeded in maintaining their organization with considerable efficiency.

Shortly after my adoption my wife and I planned to go for a motor holiday in a borrowed car, as I did not then own one of my own, to the Lake District, and as she had never visited Wednesbury I planned to travel through Wednesbury, and on a Saturday afternoon we visited the three Conservative Clubs in the district, and a good many of my friends were at each to meet me and my wife. Up to then she had never addressed any kind of public meeting, and I thought this would be a good oppor-

[1] Nevertheless in 1918 he stood for and was elected as Member for Central Wandsworth.

tunity of starting her on that unpleasant task, as she still regards it. So at the first club we visited, after I had spoken to those who had gathered there and said what a pleasure it was for me to appear before them as the prospective candidate, I introduced my wife and announced that she would speak for herself.

Much to her surprise, but not so much to mine, she accomplished the task with great success, and to the satisfaction of those present. We then proceeded to the next club, which was the most unpleasant journey of my life, not because of the road, but because of what my wife said to me about my brutal treatment, and she made me promise I would never do such a thing again. A quarter of an hour later we went through the same thing at the second club, my promise being broken. My wife again accomplished the task with great success. Another unpleasant journey followed, this time I made no promise, and so she made the first three speeches of her life within two hours, and without preparation.

I believe the major secret about being able to speak successfully is to cultivate the habit of thinking while standing up. My wife happens to possess this quality. I am certain most people could acquire it, and on every occasion when I have given talks on the art and practice of public speaking I have asked people merely to think that they were taking part in a normal conversation, and to do on the platform what they would do without difficulty when talking to friends in a room. Of course some people think very slowly, even though they may think with great accuracy, and this explains why many people indulge in that trying "ahem, ahem, ahem," which makes some speeches so weary to listen to. But most of these people could be cured if they would submit themselves to the criticism of the family circle, and were to practise on the family, if it would put up with them!

In order to be heard, it is not necessary to shout. Actually this is a mistake; shouting tires the vocal cords and makes people hoarse, whereas if people would speak naturally the vocal cords hardly get tired at all.

I am one of those who think that the practice of installing microphones in public halls is a regrettable practice. The ordinary human voice properly used is a pleasant thing to listen to, but frequently when amplified by the microphone lacks a good deal of its music, and it has the disadvantage that when people deliberately drop their voices a little they naturally drop their heads at the same time, with the result that the microphone produces the maximum noise when it should be producing the least.

Personally I do not think there is a hall large enough in Britain to need the use of a microphone, provided the speaker knows how to use his or her voice. I put this to the test once at the Albert Hall when speaking with Mr. Stanley Baldwin and Mr. Walter Elliot, both with good speak-

ing voices, and both of them very experienced public speakers. They both used the microphone and I deliberately did not, and on consulting a number of friends afterwards I was told that on balance I was more audible than they. I do not claim this as a credit to myself, but merely as a statement of a fact which I believe to be generally true.

Coming back to Wednesbury from this diversion on the subject of public speaking, my first task was to try to build up the organization, which was not too easy, because the bulk of the ward committees had ceased to exist, and most of the subscribers had given up subscribing, and in addition the popularity of the Lloyd George Coalition, in which my Party was the large part, was diminishing, and many people were restless on the subject of policy. This led me to undertake the most ambitious political effort of my life, namely a series of ten lectures, and not speeches, on the major problems of the day. I have always preferred making speeches to delivering lectures, and the difference between the two is that a speech should be something based on notes and where the words are produced by the speaker as he goes along, while a lecture, of course, is based upon a manuscript.

I indulged in lectures because I was anxious to get adequate reports in the Press, and therefore furnished the Press with copies of what I was going to say. Unfortunately I do not appear to possess a complete set of these lectures, but my subjects were:

The Fundamental Causes of Unemployment.
What is Socialism?
Social Reform.
Foreign Policy.
Imperial Relationships.
Currency and Banking.
Liberty.
Constitutional Principles.
National Defence.
National Trade Policy.

Naturally on all these subjects I said things that were controversial, but I found, on the other hand, that because the series were primarily intended to be instructional rather than controversial I had an exceptionally good hearing from my opponents in a district which was full of good hecklers.

At the lecture I gave on "Currency and Banking" a supporter of mine put me the question, "Why do bankers have such impressive premises?" I replied that, not being a bank director, I did not know, but I imagined that it gave customers a sense of security. At the end of the lecture he came up and told me he had asked the question because of an experience

which had befallen his son, who was a cashier at a bank in Nottingham. One day, just on closing time, an elderly, grey-whiskered farmer came up to his desk and said, "Young man, is this a good bank?" and of course he was assured that it was. So the old farmer said, "Well, I have been all round the city, and this is the best-looking one." He then put a bag on the counter which contained some £1,500 in notes and coins of various denominations.

When my friend's son had finished counting it the old farmer asked how he could get some of the money out if he wished, so he was shown a cheque and furnished with an explanation as to how to fill it in, which he quickly understood. The cashier then asked him if he would like to have a book of cheques, to which the old farmer replied, "Nay, Missus might get hold on it."

In addition to the series of lectures at Wednesbury I did a great deal of street-corner speaking. I have always taken the view that a street-corner audience is entitled to the best speech a man can make, and that he should devote as much attention in preparing himself for an open-air speech as to a ceremonial one in a great hall. This apparently rather surprised my Socialist opponents and must have been the subject of some comment amongst them, because some eighteen months after I had started my campaign Mr. Alfred Short, the sitting Labour M.P., held a public meeting at which the visiting speaker was Mr. Ernest Bevin, who in the course of his speech remarked that he understood that the Tory candidate made speeches at the street corner about the Bank Rate, and then put to the audience the question, "What has the Bank Rate to do with the working man?"

Curiously enough it was Mr. Bevin's fate many years later to be forced to learn that the Bank Rate had a great deal to do with the working man when he was appointed a member of the Royal Commission under the chairmanship of Lord MacMillan, which enquired into the question of currency and banking policy and other financial matters. I understand that when Mr. Attlee was forming his Government in July of 1945 Mr. Bevin really wanted to become Chancellor of the Exchequer and not Foreign Minister. At least I have newspaper paragraphs to that effect. I rather wish he had been, because I could have sent him an affectionate telegram:

"Congratulations, Ernest. What about the Bank Rate now?"

Prior to my adoption as the Conservative candidate, and prior to Mr. Short's election as the Socialist M.P., all the candidates who stood for the Wednesbury division had been rich men, and there was a tradition dating back for decades that it was the electors' duty to make sure that the candidate or M.P. spent as much as possible. It was an evil practice, and

though no doubt previous Acts of Parliament controlling expenditure had much reduced it in the early years of the present century as compared with the bad old days, nevertheless some traditions die very hard.

I thought, therefore, that it would be polite for my wife and me to entertain a few of my leading supporters to tea. As I had no house in the constituency I asked one of my friends if she would provide the tea-party at her house, but at my expense, which she cheerfully agreed to do. So in due course my wife and I went to her house and greeted the guests, some forty in number, and then sat down to what used to be described before the days of rationing as a good Black Country tea. After the meal my wife and I both addressed our friends and then left to fulfil another engagement.

When I left I asked my hostess to let me know the cost of the entertainment, and was a little surprised a few days later to be sent a rather detailed bill, which worked out at over 10*s*. per head. The explanation was simple; after I left a very considerable quantity of port, whisky, sherry and beer appeared, which had been bought at my expense, without my knowledge, and the party did not break up until it was all consumed.

The members of the constituency, irrespective of Party, gave to a prospective candidate the status almost equivalent to that of an M.P., with the result that I was always receiving official invitations to all civic ceremonies, including in particular the visit to the Parish Church at Wednesbury by the Mayor and Corporation on the Sunday following his election. We used to walk in procession from the Town Hall preceded by one of the local bands. The Mayor and Aldermen and Councillors robed, then followed Mr. Short and myself, and the rest of the procession was built up of the fire brigade, the police, the Company of local Territorials, the British Legion and the citizens.

The citizens were always invited by the Mayor in the course of his speech acknowledging his election. The word "citizen" was defined as any local inhabitant who possessed a silk hat, and silk hats, anything up to a century old, were the proud possession of people of every kind. On the other hand, if you had not got a silk hat you stood on the pavement to see the procession go by!

After the service the procession re-formed and returned to the Town Hall, where the Mayor thanked us for our presence and regaled us with sherry and biscuits. The rector as a rule always used to express his appreciation of the fact that the Mayor and Corporation had once again visited the Parish Church. In my day the rector was the Rev. W. H. Crick, now the Lord Bishop of Chester. I always thought that Mayor's Sunday was properly appreciated by the people of Wednesbury, and I

only wish the people in the South of England would accord the same respect for this English religious service as is always shown by the people of the Black Country. My experience in the South of England is that not more than half of the members of the Corporation turn out to support the Mayor on Mayor's Sunday.

As the schoolteachers who were University graduates used to wear their academic robes in the procession I thought it was a good idea to follow their example, so I always accompanied Mr. Short wearing the hood of my engineering degree, which is yellow, and happened to be Mr. Short's political colours. The local inhabitants never could understand why it was on Mayor's day I turned out dressed as a local Socialist.

When at last the time came for the election, which was precipitated by Mr. Lloyd George's resignation following on the decision of the Conservative Party at the Carlton Club to withdraw from the Coalition, I telephoned to my agent to say by what train my wife and I would be arriving, and he took what he and my supporters decided were the appropriate steps. We were met at the railway station by fifty decorated cars, and escorted to the house which I had rented for the period of the election. This may seem surprising to people who are more familiar with the quietude of many of the elections in the South of England. There were very few neutrals in Wednesbury.

At a previous election one enthusiastic Conservative butcher driving some cattle to his slaughter-house turned them into a Conservative procession by decorating them all with red ribbon, our colour. This led an enthusiastic Liberal lady to drive a flock of geese through the street, all the geese having been carefully blue-bagged.

We used to have five or six meetings every day, two in the afternoon and three or four at night, and from the last evening meeting there was invariably a procession to our Party H.Q., at which it was my function to stand on the roof of the car which I was using, and the rest of the procession sung the various Party songs of the moment. Occasionally our procession used to meet the procession of the other side, and this sometimes led to incidents.

On the eve of the poll we had a larger procession than usual, and some of my supporters obtained some torches. Our procession and Mr. Short's procession met in a very narrow street going in opposite directions. The police had expected trouble that night, with the result that the blinds of my car had been drawn as it was probable that the windows might be broken, and there was a policeman on the running-board on each side. I, as usual, was on the roof, a safe place, because the many stones thrown at me only hit me about the middle. There were a few people inside my car, including my wife and Lord Pembroke, who had been the principal speaker at my last meeting. When the two processions

met there was a certain amount of disorder for a minute or so, and the car was brought to a standstill, which was rather disturbing for those inside, who could not see what was happening, so Lord Pembroke lowered the blind and opened the window, and asked the constable what was happening. The constable, who was an enthusiastic Conservative, replied, "It is all right, my Lord, we are winning." Unfortunately he was only implying that we were winning the right to proceed to our H.Q., not winning the election, for when the votes were counted late the following night there had been a poll of about 90 per cent, but 105 more people had voted for Mr. Short than had voted for me, so for the second time I had failed to get into Parliament.

We did not leave the town to go home until three days later, and on this occasion we were accompanied to the station by a procession three times as large as the one that had welcomed us on our arrival. There were thousands outside the station, and the platforms were packed with people to bid us farewell. It was not easy to get into the train, but when we entered our compartment we found it packed with flowers, very much to the surprise of Dame Caroline Bridgeman, now the Dowager Viscountess Bridgeman. She had not had time to study all the election results, and so she congratulated me on my victory. I explained to her I had been beaten. At which she said, "Good heavens, what would have happened if you had won?"

The kindness of the Wednesbury people did not finish with that, because I heard a few weeks later that they were proposing to make a presentation to us, and in due course at a meeting at the Wednesbury Town Hall we were presented with six hundred pounds' worth of gifts contributed to by over twelve thousand people, many of them unemployed. Trade at the time was very bad, and many had only subscribed pennies because they could not afford any more.

On one ceremonial occasion when speaking in Wednesbury I referred to the golden hearts of the Black Country, and it really did describe the bulk of them, though there were a few opponents who were so enthusiastic politically that they threw brickbats and not roses at me.

On two or three occasions my wife had great quantities of some sticky fluid thrown over her, and on another occasion during a procession another lady was the victim of an assault intended for her when a female Socialist ran out of the crowd at a time when the cars were stopped and, using some instrument, slashed this lady's wrist. She had to have several stitches put in. The lady had been mistaken by this enthusiastic Socialist for my wife.

Another assault took an unusual form. As a procession was travelling slowly a lady sporting the Socialist colours rushed out from her house carrying the supper beer, which she threw, jug and all, at our car. Fortunately

it fell underneath and no harm was done. The lady was identified, and the next day my wife called to see her, and after a very pleasant conversation said to her: "Have you heard what happened last night? Somebody threw the supper beer at us, and I was told it was you, but I am certain a nice woman like you would not do such a thing." At this the lady blushed and confirmed this inaccurate impression, and said she "could not understand how anybody could do such a thing to such a nice lady". As a rule, people thought they were entitled to be rude to me because I was the candidate, but that they ought to be very polite to my wife.

On one occasion during the election I called to see the proprietor of a public-house, and while I was enjoying his hospitality he told me I ought to have been with him last night because Mrs. —— had come in and said that Mrs. Williams had been to see her, and what a nice lady she was, but he could not understand why she had ever taken up with that dreadful fellow Williams. There are times when my wife likes to repeat this story to me.

My defeat at Wednesbury was frankly a great disappointment to me. For the two years I had been prospective candidate I had been successful in building up an exceedingly good Conservative organization in the borough, and in addition to committees in every ward we had three very large and efficient Habitations of the Primrose League. My defeat was certainly not due to any lack of effort on the part of my supporters, but to the fact that we did not succeed in influencing as many minds as we imagined.

My most enthusiastic supporter was a young man who was the proud possessor of a bugle. He appointed himself my trumpeter and travelled round the constituency in my car and performed on the bugle when we were approaching any place where I was to address a meeting. He was convinced I would be elected. He made the solemn declaration that if I were not then he would enlist in the Staffordshire Regiment and join the band. He kept his word, and for many years I used to receive letters from him from the different parts of the world in which the battalion happened to be stationed.

I continued to be the prospective candidate, and though my wife and I did not put in quite so much time as we had done during the twelve months prior to the election of 1922, nevertheless we were amongst the people fairly frequently.

It will be remembered that at the election of 1922 Mr. Bonar Law, who led the Conservative Party, had urged upon the nation that what it wanted was a period of legislative tranquillity after the enormous glut of legislation during the previous four years, and though there were many things that had to be done, Mr. Bonar Law quite deliberately pursued a

somewhat "go slow" policy. After he had been Prime Minister for about six months he was stricken with cancer of the throat, and as soon as he knew what was the matter with him he resigned and Mr. Baldwin took his place.

It will be remembered that this was much to the surprise of the late Marquess Curzon, who thought he was likely to be selected as Prime Minister. Lord Curzon was one of the very large number of people who had underestimated Mr. Baldwin's qualities. The King's invitation to Mr. Baldwin apparently was the result of consultation with Conservative elder statesmen who had favoured the invitation going to Mr. Baldwin.

Both were men of great intellect. Lord Curzon was a man of greater industry than Mr. Baldwin, but lacked the capacity of delegating duties and responsibilities to others, with the result that Mr. Baldwin was an easier man to work with. In addition, Mr. Baldwin was a very much greater scholar than had previously been realized, and was able to say a great deal in comparatively few words. In my first Parliament, 1924–29, if we knew Mr. Baldwin was going to wind up a debate for the Government we all went in to listen to what he had to say, whereas if Mr. Churchill was winding up we went in to hear how he would say it.

Mr. Baldwin's Government had continued to pursue the various policies invented by Mr. Lloyd George's Government for the purpose of endeavouring to reduce the burden of unemployment. Mr. Baldwin soon came to the conclusion that those methods had outlived their usefulness, and that a material part of the unemployment of this country arose out of the importation of foreign competitive goods coupled with the lack of any comprehensive system of Imperial Preference, and he determined, in consultation with his Cabinet colleagues, to announce the decision of the Government to seek the approval of the country for the adoption of a comprehensive system of protection and preference. About a week before he made his famous speech at the 1923 Conservative Conference at Plymouth on this subject I had submitted my name for a by-election for what was regarded as a safe Conservative seat, but actually someone else was selected.

The night before Mr. Baldwin's speech at Plymouth I had been at a committee meeting of a society at which Mr. Amery was presiding, and at the end of the meeting he remarked to me that I need not be disappointed at not being selected for this by-election, because he was convinced that Mr. Baldwin's speech the following day would bring about a marked change in the situation, and that a General Election would take place much sooner than was expected.

Gossip had already indicated the line Mr. Baldwin was likely to take, and I told Mr. Amery that what he was implying was an election in six months' time, and with this he agreed. Mr. Baldwin's speech the next day

created a great political sensation. His free trade opponents urged with great subtlety that if he took the view that the adoption of preference and protection was the right thing to reduce unemployment then he had no right to delay in giving the electorate the opportunity of pronouncing judgment. I have never really discovered what the real facts were, but I have always presumed that Mr. Baldwin, who was always exceedingly sensitive on any kind of moral issue, was caught in this trap of his opponents, with the result that he advised a very early dissolution of Parliament, which was most unfortunate from the Conservative point of view.

For eight years very few people had either written articles or made speeches on the subject of protective policy. Most of the Conservative M.P.s and candidates, though by instinct in favour of it, were not very familiar with the arguments. I happened to be one of the few that were. I wrote virtually the whole of the "Notes for Speakers" on the subject, which was issued by the Conservative Central Office. In addition, I was invited by the then editor of the *Birmingham Post*, at the suggestion of either Mr. Neville Chamberlain or Mr. Amery, to contribute a series of articles on the subject. What the editor had in mind was a weekly article for some months, and then something more frequent when it was evident that an election was drawing near. This accordingly made it quite clear to me that those who had prompted the editor of the *Birmingham Post* to invite me to do this work did not anticipate a rushed election.

The Conservative Central Office invited me to give three lectures to their corps of professional speakers, that is to say men and women who in between elections carry out propagandist campaigns. These lectures were to be at fortnightly intervals. The dissolution of Parliament came so soon that I delivered only two of the three lectures. I mention these facts because it has often been said that Mr. Amery and Mr. Neville Chamberlain rushed Mr. Baldwin into an early appeal to the country, and as a result of their precipitancy brought about our defeat.

The evidence I have given above indicates clearly that they realized that there must be a period of political education of the public before the view of the public could be taken, and I think the explanation I have given above is probably the correct one.

I was again adopted for Wednesbury and carried out an intensive campaign with four or five meetings every day, and while conducting this campaign I completed my series of articles for the *Birmingham Post*. It was a tremendous task to write an article a day in addition to dealing with the enormous burden of correspondence which an election brings to a candidate.

In this second campaign in Wednesbury my supporters were even more enthusiastic than ever. I was assured that on this occasion I was

bound to win. This was an optimism, however, not shared by my agent and myself. The canvassing returns as they came in daily showed a small though definite deterioration of the position from the previous election, and my experience is that canvassing returns properly interpreted tell the truth. That does not mean, of course, that the canvassers always successfully abstract the truth from the electors, but that if the appropriate discount is taken from the promises, then what is left does represent the truth. In the end I was beaten by 1,019, as compared with 105 the year before.

In 1922 a large number of Liberals had voted for me. In 1923 many of these swung away from me; on the other hand, on the protection issue I won for myself many who had voted for the Socialists at the previous election. From the national point of view it was an unfortunate election, because it made the whole Conservative Party from the leader downwards exceedingly timid for the future on the subject of protectionist policy, and it took another nine years, including the most awful slump the country had ever had, before we finally obtained assent for a policy which Mr. Joseph Chamberlain had enunciated twenty-nine years before.

After my second defeat at Wednesbury I decided that it was not much use my trying there again, and very much to my regret I conveyed that decision to the local Conservative leaders, with whom I had always been on the most friendly terms, and my break with the constituency was one of great sadness to me because of the innumerable friends I had made amongst the people of the Black Country.

CHAPTER VIII

TRADE UNIONS

DURING that part of my life between 1918 and 1922 which I have been describing I had opportunities of being associated in a variety of ways with interesting aspects of the trade-union movement, and the relationship between employers and workpeople in certain industries. On the invitation of the late Mr. Lee Murray, who was the General Manager of Siemens Brothers' Dynamo Works, Ltd., at the time when I was an apprentice at Stafford, I was given certain very interesting opportunities in this direction.

Towards the end of the First World War certain prominent people in industry on the employers' and the trade-union sides got together for the purpose of trying to promote greater co-operation in industry, and a number of very important gatherings took place under the auspices of the Industrial League, a body which came into being to promote the objects which the founders had in mind.

Prominent personalities in the movement were the late Lord Hirst, Sir Ernest Benn, Sir Robert Young, the Rt. Hon. J. R. Clynes, the late Rt. Hon. George Roberts, and the Rt. Hon. George Wardle; the last three were all Labour Members of Mr. Lloyd George's wartime Coalition Government. Their adherence to that Government accentuated the split which already existed in the Labour Party on the subject of the First World War, and accordingly the Industrial League, while meeting with the approval of many elements in the trade-union movement, came under some major criticism from the more Party-minded members. Nevertheless the movement did a lot of good, because it established a much greater degree of social intercourse than had previously existed between those who held diverse political and economic views.

Not long after the Armistice I was invited to join the executive committee of the League, and this gave me the opportunity of meeting on close terms many of the most prominent members of the Labour Party in this country, more particularly those identified with the trade union side.

Among the activities of the League were a number of very pleasant weekend conferences at which we discussed a great variety of economic problems, and on one occasion I had the privilege of being the leader at a conference that took place at Reading on the complex subject of war debts and reparations.

On another occasion I had the opportunity of leading a conference

held at Oxted through the courtesy and hospitality of Sir Ernest Benn, at which I dealt with the fundamental causes of unemployment. At the same time I was doing a good deal of economic research for a body known as the British Commonwealth Union, which had been founded by a number of industrialists primarily for the purpose of promoting efficiency in industry. This body had been founded by the late Dudley Docker, and was run under the direction of Mr. Patrick Hannon, now Sir Partick Hannon, M.P. Mr. Hannon gathered round him a number of very remarkable young men, of whom the most notable were Mr. Maxwell Fyfe, now Sir David Maxwell Fyfe, who achieved such a triumph in his conduct of the British case at the Nuremberg Trials, and Mr. Harry Willans, who was the first Territorial officer to become a major-general, and who most tragically lost his life through an aeroplane accident in North Africa during the recent campaign in that part of the world. Another of the bright young men in the party was Mr. Russell Wakefield, son of the then Bishop of Birmingham.

In the days when we young men forgathered and argued and discussed there was no subject in the range of human interest on which we were unable to come to final decisions. I regret to say we did not always succeed in converting the rest of the world to the wisdom of our views.

Connected with the British Commonwealth Union was the late Sir Allan Smith, then M.P. for Croydon South, who was the chairman of the Engineering and Allied Employers' Association. His job in life was to negotiate for engineering employers with the engineering trade unions, and though he was a somewhat dour Scot, nevertheless he was on the best personal terms with the leading lights among the engineering trade unionists, of whom at the time in question the leader was the late J. T. Brownlie, President of the Amalgamated Engineering Union.

Through Sir Allen Smith I became very good friends with Mr. Brownlie, though our political points of view were very much opposed, and for a time I had the pleasure of having his daughter in my office.

In 1920 the engineering and shipbuilding trade unions had applied for a reduction in working hours from 47 to 44 hours for the employees in those industries. The employers suggested that the question of hours of labour in relation to production should be investigated by a Joint Committee. This proposal was accepted by the trade unions, and in due course a Joint Committee of six a side was appointed, with two secretaries. After a few weeks' work one of the secretaries had to resign and Sir Allen Smith and Mr. Brownlie jointly invited me to take his place.

For a variety of reasons our work was very much prolonged and

extended over two years. We visited a great number of industrial establishments in this country, collected the usual vast number of questionnaires, and in addition visited industrial establishments in Belgium, Holland and that part of Germany which was in the occupation of Allied troops.

As my colleague, the other joint secretary, was prevented from making the trip I was in charge and had planned the programme, which involved visiting about three factories or shipyards every day, as well as interviews with Ministers, Consuls, and other officials likely to be able to furnish us with useful information.

Within a week I had learnt the lesson of how dangerous it was to overload a programme, because at the end of the week twelve very pleasant and cheerful Britons were all quarrelling, and the quarrels had nothing to do with whether it happened to be employers' representatives or trade-union representatives; they were quarrelling because they were exhausted. I naturally took steps to lighten the burden for the remainder of the tour.

There was, however, one member of the Joint Committee who remained invariably cheerful. He was the secretary of a very important trade union. He had never been abroad before. He wanted to see all there was to see, and he had a natural instinct for finding out everything.

I remember on one occasion we had no sooner signed the register at the hotel where we were going to stay than this trade unionist led a small procession of the other trade unionists out of the hotel with unerring instinct to the best bar in the city, though he had never been there before and did not know the language. At this bar he induced the oldest member of the party, the secretary of another trade union, to try the drink known as Advocat, which is a mysterious mixture of egg and brandy. The old gentleman was delighted. He had several, and finished up by buying a bottle of it. Apparently before retiring to bed that night he pulled the cork and had another sample. The next morning he packed the open bottle with his pyjamas, with unfortunate results, as he discovered when he arrived at Cologne!

One of the factories we visited was situated in Düsseldorf, a city I had never visited before. We travelled from Cologne, and when I arrived at the station I summoned the requisite number of taxis and showed to the first driver the address of the factory we wanted to visit. He expressed surprise and some reluctance. Unfortunately, though I could read a little German, my ability to speak it was very limited, and so I explained with gestures that we wanted to go to the factory indicated, at which the taxi-driver gave up the argument, and slowly drove us round the station square and halted a hundred yards away at the factory gate.

We were travelling that evening to Amsterdam, and when I got to the booking office to buy the tickets for the party a man whom I did not

know thrust a parcel under my case which bore on it the words "Herr Parker aus Herr Williams' Partie". I could not make out what it all meant except that Mr. Parker was a member of our party, and that I was in charge of the party; however, an English lady standing by acted as interpreter and I discovered that the hall porter at the Dom Hotel, Cologne, had sent one of his assistants specially by train to Düsseldorf to await us at the railway station in order to present Mr. Parker with a pair of boots he had left in his room.

The journey on that occasion from Düsseldorf to Amsterdam taught me a lot about currency, banking and foreign exchange. We had lunch on the train in Germany, dinner on the same train in Holland, the same compartments, same waiters, and the luncheon and dinner menus were of equal value. The lunch in Germany was paid for in marks, and the dinner in Holland in guilders, and at the then exchange rates it cost twice as much in Holland as in Germany.

Through a mistake on my part our passports had only been endorsed for occupied Germany, and the frontier was situated in unoccupied Germany, so the whole party was in very considerable trouble, because the young German lieutenant who was in charge wanted to run us in, as we had entered a part of his country for which we had no visas. The procedure of granting us our freedom was to stamp our passports with a rubber stamp. While I was arguing in my indifferent German with the young lieutenant Mr. Brownlie solved the problem for himself by endorsing his own passport with the officer's rubber stamp.

I was the treasurer of the party, but most of my assets were in the form of bank credits, which caused no difficulty. The trade-union officials had equipped themselves with a supply of £5 notes, and the German officials took these notes. However, I understand they returned them by some diplomatic process some weeks later.

The result of this trip and the investigations we carried out in the United Kingdom produced a completely unanimous report to the effect that a reduction in the hours of labour from 47 to 44 per week would be uneconomic. What I learnt in connection with that investigation has been of the utmost value to me ever since, and I have come very clearly to the conclusion that there is a length of the working day, which of course may vary with the individual and equally vary with an industry, which gives maximum output, and any change of the working day above or below that results in a reduced output.

It always amazed me that after our evacuation at Dunkirk and the nation went out for its maximum drive for munitions, people were made to work 60 or even more hours per week. It was a great mistake, and ignored the conclusions of the enquiry into the fatigue of munition workers during the First World War. The result of abnormal overtime

was not an increase in output but a reduction in output, and consequently higher costs.

This was not my only contact with trade unions. Just about the time I became a member of the Wimbledon Borough Council I thought it might be useful to learn more about trade unions, and I looked round for a union to join, but there did not seem to be any union which would fit in with my job as secretary of the Machine Tool Trades Association. I therefore came to the conclusion that a secretary was a clerk, and as there was a National Union of Clerks I joined that organization through its branch in Poplar, where I was the prospective Municipal Reform London County Council candidate, and I used to attend the branch meetings quite regularly, and one year was chosen as branch delegate to the Annual Conference.

The N.U.C. had no qualifications for membership other than being a clerk, that is to say it had no standard of proficiency, and thus differed very much from the Amalgamated Engineering Union, which, in those days at any rate, accepted as members only those who had been properly trained.

The Union had a minimum wage programme which did not impress me very much, because the minimum was too high for unqualified clerks, and as far as I could make out was quite inoperative. I was a little surprised, therefore, when a Socialist member of the Wimbledon Borough Council, who was a member of a union which had definitely refused to pay its clerks according to the scale of the National Union of Workers, suddenly proposed that the Wimbledon Borough Council should adopt this scale.

This seemed to me to be entirely immoral, because this Socialist Councillor was demanding that the ratepayers of Wimbledon should do something which he as a member of his own union was declining to do, and I said so, and because in some respects I am a little too honest, I mentioned that I was a member of the National Union of Clerks. This brought about a most friendly invitation for me to attend the next meeting of the Wimbledon branch, but though the invitation was friendly the reception was very much the reverse, and the branch passed a resolution that I should be expelled, and this in due course was confirmed by headquarters. The chairman of the Wimbledon branch at that time was Mr. T. Braddock now Socialist M.P. for Mitcham.

The sequel was that on many occasions thereafter when I was standing for Parliament some prominent heckler used to raise the issue in a manner that was calculated, according to the heckler's point of view, to be most disadvantageous to me.

Later on my friend Dr. Crowley, whose opponent I had been at the Home Rule Debate at Stafford some years before, told me that he was

president of a trade union known as the Society of Technical Engineers, the secretary of which was a very bright ex-Irish Nationalist M.P., and on Dr. Crowley's invitation I became a trade unionist for the second time.

Here circumstances were very different from the National Union of Workers; all the members were so highly qualified technically that they could not possibly be graded, and everybody's remuneration in his different job was quite properly based on merit. I was an M.P. at this time, and so when Dr. Crowley had to give up the presidency the committee thought it would be a good idea to have a Conservative M.P. as the president of their trade union, an office which I accepted with pleasure, and from which I resigned when I became a Junior Minister of the Crown.

My next contact with trade unions was of a very different character. I had, on the suggestion of a prominent constituent, become the president of a trade association of an industry in which I had no personal interest, but where they wanted to have someone as president who could from time to time bring an unbiassed mind to bear on some of the problems that arose, and during the war from 1939-45 I was consulted by the council of the association as to whether it would be desirable for them to have some proper relationship with some trade union, as there existed no arrangements for dealing with the employment problems affecting their employees.

I advised them at once that it was a great convenience to have such an arrangement, and they then asked me what trade union they had better deal with. I was not in a position to answer the question offhand, but I said I would make enquiries. I accordingly discussed it with a great friend of mine who happened to be a Labour M.P., and a prominent official of a very important trade union. He promptly suggested that in these matters competition was a good thing—a little strange, having regard to his Socialistic views—and suggested two trade unions that might well be approached.

Accordingly, on my advice, the trade association in question, which had not been started as an employers' organization at all, but as an organization dealing with the commercial side of their industry, approached the two trade unions, and an early sequel was that I as a Conservative M.P. found myself presiding at the request of both sides at a meeting representative of the employers and of the trade unionists.

The meeting was held in a very ornate committee room at Transport House, part of which is the headquarters of the Labour Party. Everything went very well, and as a result of subsequent negotiations an agreement was entered into, and I am glad to say that up to the time of writing the Joint Industrial Council of this industry has succeeded in

the most amicable way in dealing with every problem that has arisen between the employers and their workpeople.

The agreement in question recognized quite frankly that every employer is free to stay out of the trade association, and every worker to keep out of the trade union, while both sides recognize the practical advantage to the individuals of being members of their respective organizations. It is the case that many employers find it a great advantage to deal with all their collective problems in this way. In short, most people know that conscription for trade unions has many demerits, and incidentally destroys a man's liberty, and makes it exceedingly difficult for people to pass from one industry to another.

I remember on one occasion a very energetic manufacturer of my acquaintance who ran his business most efficiently, and was obviously a very considerate employer, wrote me a most indignant letter about the way the members of a certain trade union were canvassing his employees during work hours to join the union.

I expressed to him the view that while canvassing during work hours was improper, nevertheless there were great advantages in dealing with a trade union, and for the second time I advised an employer to write to the appropriate trade union to be asked to be "recognized".

As a rule the traffic runs the other way. Strikes are threatened, and strikes take place, because a body of people demand from their employers the recognition of their union. In the case to which I am referring the local committee of the trade union concerned were so shocked at getting a request from an employer for recognition that it took them two meetings before they could think out the proper way to acknowledge the letter.

There is no doubt that the proper agreements honestly run between organized bodies of employers and organized bodies of workpeople have many advantages. When trade is good, and higher wages can properly be paid, they can be arranged without dispute, and equally if the trade circumstances are adverse, and a reduction is unfortunately necessary, such a reduction can also be arranged without dispute. It is, however, a misfortune when the existence of agreements between the employers' trade union and the workpeople's trade union come to be regarded as a substitute for those naturally friendly relationships which should exist and in the main do exist in the ordinary factory, whereby a small individual grievance can be more expeditiously handled by the workman putting his case to the management. It is always stupid to use a steam-hammer to crack a nut.

CHAPTER IX

BALDWIN AND THE AMERICAN DEBT

DURING the First World War we borrowed about a thousand million pounds from the United States of America, and lent about twice as much to our Allies, and in addition we had a claim on Germany for reparations. I think that the popular view of reparations held at the time of the General Election of 1918 was a false one. I had a good deal of argument on the subject with my election committee because of the paragraphs I had in my election address. Later on, public opinion, ever fickle, swung violently in the opposite direction, and grossly underestimated what Germany could have paid.

In the Autumn of 1919, because of the disturbing trade and financial situation, there was an all-round agreement that all these matters were to be left in cold storage for three years, but that in the meantime interest was to be added to the principal.

Our borrowing from the United States Government had been arranged by the late Marquis of Reading, who was our special Ambassador in that country, and the terms were 5 per cent interest and repayment on demand. In the early part of 1922 the American Government reminded us that the three-year period was nearly up, and that they expected a definite debt-funding agreement to be arranged. Mr. Lloyd George's Government accordingly provided in its estimates for the year beginning April 1st, 1922, enough money to provide interest at 5 per cent from October 1st, 1922, and to arrange for a financial mission to visit the United States to negotiate an agreement.

Because of the situation the late Earl Balfour, the Foreign Secretary, sent a despatch in similar terms to all of our Allies to the effect that we were willing to cancel all our claims on our Allies and on Germany if the United States would do likewise, but if the United States were not prepared to do this we sought to obtain from Germany and our Allies sums equal to what we had to pay to the United States.

The United States were not willing to play, and therefore in due course we had to proceed to negotiate agreements with our Allies in respect of their debts to us.

On October 16th, 1916, we made our first interest payment to the United States, calculated at 5 per cent. Three days later Mr. Lloyd George's Government resigned, and instead of the mission to the United States being headed by Sir Robert Horne, who was the Chancellor

The Author's father

The Author

The Author's son, Robin, at the West Sussex Trials, 1938

"BERTH" CONTROL.

Cartoon by Low in the *Evening Standard*, January 17, 1928

of the Exchequer, it was headed by Mr. Baldwin, the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the new Conservative Government of Mr. Bonar Law.

Negotiations took place with the body known as the American Debt Refunding Commission, set up by an Act of Congress, which had laid down the principle that all debts had to be repaid in not more than 25 years, and that the rate of interest was not to be lower than 4¼ per cent.

Mr. Baldwin succeeded in persuading the Commission to recommend to Congress that the period of repayment should be 62 years instead of 25, and that the rate of interest should be 3 per cent for the first 10 years and 3½ per cent for the next 52 years. This, of course, was most satisfactory to us, and Congress agreed.

Three days after the facts were published in the Press I was walking down St. James's Street and I ran into Sir Robert Horne, who had been on a visit to the United States for private reasons, and had actually been there while Mr. Baldwin was negotiating the settlement. I expressed the view to Sir Robert that as a whole it was a very satisfactory settlement, with which statement he agreed, but added there had been just a sporting chance of getting the interest fixed at a ½ per cent lower.

That my recollection of this conversation is right is borne out by what Sir Robert said in a debate in the House of Commons on December 14th, 1932. For reasons which I have never understood for years it was common form, not merely in circles politically hostile, but in Conservative circles too, that Mr. Baldwin had made a bad settlement, instead of which he had achieved a great triumph, and for some reason the old gentleman would not defend himself.

Following on the American Debt Settlement, steps were taken with regard to the other side of the problem, namely what we were to collect from our other Allies and from Germany. On Mr. Baldwin's suggestion an Independent Commission was set up, under the chairmanship of the American, General Dawes, to investigate Germany's capacity to pay. By the time the Commission had reported, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald was Socialist Prime Minister for the first time, and presided over the conference which ultimately fixed Germany's maximum annual liability.

When Mr. Churchill became Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1924 he proceeded rapidly to deal with the debts due to us from our various Allies, and over the next three years he came to satisfactory agreements with Roumania, Italy, France, Portugal, Greece and Jugoslavia, but there was never any settlement with Russia, the largest debtor. The result of all these transactions, including the arrangements with certain Dominions, provided us each year with receipts which were in excess of our current

payments to the United States, but which over the whole period would have left us neither in nor out of pocket, having regard to the fact that we started paying the United States two years prior to the dates on which we commenced to receive effective payments from our Allies and from Germany. In short, the combined efforts of Mr. Baldwin, General Dawes and Mr. Churchill had achieved the aim outlined by Lord Balfour in his dispatch of August 1922.

When the economic crisis which commenced in the autumn of 1929 reached its climax in the summer of 1931, Mr. Hoover, then President of the United States, suggested a debt holiday, namely that everybody should cease paying to everybody for a period of a year.

I always thought it was a mistake, because in fact the trade of the various countries had adapted itself to these definite payments, and the sudden cessation acted as a gravely distressing and not as a stabilizing factor, and incidentally impoverished our budget to the tune of about seven millions a year.

When the year was up, and our situation was clearly as distressing as it had been in the June of 1931, we made a token payment to the United States to indicate that we were not repudiating any obligation, and we did this on two or three succeeeding half-years, though nobody else resumed any payments to us.

I mention these facts because of the popular opinion throughout the United States, and widely held elsewhere, that we repudiated our debt to the United States. The truth is we stopped paying under certain conditions for a period of one year on the suggestion of the President of the United States, and we felt we could not resume full payments until the other conditions which had been suspended were restored. Britain had never had any reason to be ashamed of these transactions.

Negotiations with the United States were spread over a long time, and at last they reached a rather critical state. A financial debate was taking place in the House of Commons on June 13th, 1933. The word had been passed round that Mr. Neville Chamberlain, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, was going to make a statement on the problem of the American debt at 5.30 p.m. That time had been fixed because he was awaiting a telephonic communication from Washington to enable him to make his statement. Naturally, in accordance with the customary practice in those matters, the Whips of all Parties were informed, and the news spread round the House, and as 5.30 approached the Members swarmed in from every part of the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. J. M. Horabin, who had the floor, knew of the arrangement and was ending his speech at 5.39, and I was standing at the Bar of the House listening to him. As he sat down I was walking to my seat, which was in the second bench behind the ministerial bench, and when

I was about five yards from my seat I suddenly realized that no one else had risen to continue the debate though the Chancellor of the Exchequer was not in his seat, and that Captain Bourne, M.P., the Deputy Speaker, was looking round rather anxiously and was already half on his legs. I at once realized his predicament, namely that as no one else had risen his duty was to put the question, in which event the sitting would have been terminated and there would have been no House of Commons to which Mr. Chamberlain could have made his statement.

So while walking along the bench to my seat I started to make a totally unprepared speech, and the somewhat hysterical House of Commons, which had then realized the situation, cheered me and then declined to listen to me, as everybody engaged in conversation with his next-door neighbour.

However, I thought my job was to go on talking until someone else showed a willingness to do so, or until Mr. Chamberlain materialized. I do not think anyone heard what I said except the Hansard reporters, and when I read it next day I thought it was rather a good speech to listen to, and I was upset when the late Captain F. E. Guest[1] interrupted me to say it was rather a farce to go on like this, and could not the sitting be suspended, but his point of view was not supported, so I continued my impromptu oration until at 6.10 I saw Mr. Chamberlain coming in.

I have always thought the House of Commons in the main an exceedingly kindly place, but nevertheless it always contains a small element of people who have been infected with the green monster, for later in the evening I was told by a friend who had been discussing the matter in the smoke-room that when somebody indulged in a compliment to me for having intervened, somebody else made the comment, "Why, anybody could have done what Herbert did," to which my friend was graciously pleased to reply, "Certainly, that is quite true, but only Herbert thought of doing it."

Between the period of the Churchill Settlements and the Hoover Debt Holiday a further commission of independent experts of the Crown, presided over by an American, Mr. Owen Young, considered the question of the period during which Germany should pay reparations. This independent commission presented a report which was very unfair to us, and this led to a further international conference, at which Mr. Philip Snowden, then Socialist Chancellor of the Exchequer, was our chief delegate.

Mr. Snowden made very robust speeches, and succeeded in getting for us about three-quarters of the difference between our claim based on the Balfour Note and what the Young Committee recommended, but because he was very rough in his speech at the conference at the Hague

[1] He wrote a charming apology the next day.

and left us in a substantially worse position than that established by the joint efforts of Lord Balfour, Mr. Baldwin, and Mr. Chamberlain, he was highly praised, and a little later on was made an honorary freeman of the City of London!

I always think one of the great troubles in politics is that nobody seems to have a memory which extends beyond about two years into the past, and most of the people who think they are progressive are merely repeating the mistakes made by a previous generation about which they have never troubled to read.

CHAPTER X

READING

AFTER I had made up my mind not to stand again for Wednesbury, and had informed my friends there accordingly, I decided to look round for an opportunity in another constituency. Because I had spoken at meetings all over the country my name was fairly well known in Conservative circles, and as I was no longer tied to Wednesbury I had a number of approaches. In one week I was invited by the chairmen of the respective constituencies to consider offering myself for Central Leeds, Smethwick, and one of the divisions of Nottingham.

At the same time I had a communication from a very old friend of mine, Mr. F. G. Pyne, with whom I had been for many years a colleague on the Executive Committee of the Junior Imperial League, who asked me whether I would consider my name coming before the Conservative Association of Reading, where he was Conservative Agent.

The sequel was that a few weeks later I had a call at my office from Mr. F. A. Simonds, who was the chairman of the Reading Conservative Association, and we had an interesting chat about the situation, but I did not seem to be making much progress, until my wife turned up, and I then discovered that many a man's progress in life is not based on his own merits but largely upon the estimate of his merits judged by the lady who has honoured him as his wife.

The outcome was that not long after my wife and I both met the selection committee and then the executive committee, and finally I was presented to a general meeting of the Association, a very large assembly, because Reading was very well organized from the Conservative point of view. When the fact that I had been recommended as the prospective candidate was announced in the local papers, the *Berkshire Chronicle* in the course of some biographical notes referred to a conference at which I had been the conference leader some 18 months previously, and wrote of me in the following pleasant terms:

> "Mr. H. G. Williams is well known in Reading, as he was the chief speaker at the Conference of the Industrial League and Council held in Reading in October 1922, and presided over by Mr. Hugo Hirst (afterwards the late Lord Hirst) of Foxhill. In our report of the proceedings we said, 'Mr. H. G. Williams, M.Sc., A.M.I.C.E., gave a very informative and thought-provoking address on "Great Britain's

Present Financial Position", illuminating his remarks with many figures, which he lucidly explained.' All who attended that Conference were greatly impressed by Mr. Williams' ability in the handling of figures, by his wonderful grasp of European problems, and by his interest in social questions. His sympathy with the toiling masses was most conspicuous.

"It is a happy omen that this visit of his to Reading was associated with an organization formed for the improvement of relations between employers and employed, consisting of great employers of labour engaged in all the chief industries, as well as the officials of the big trade unions. Amongst the representatives of Labour present were Mr. Robert Young, O.B.E., M.P., Mr. T. E. Naylor, M.P., Mr. F. Smith, Mr. L. E. Quelch, etc."

Incidentally, the Mr. Robert Young referred to is now Sir Robert Young, M.P., former Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means in the House of Commons.

At my adoption meeting in Reading, attended by about a thousand people, I had a very good opportunity of stating my views on all the various problems then exciting public interest. It has never been my practice to prepare speeches verbatim, but always to speak from what the late Lord Balfour used to call "Notes on a half-sheet of notepaper." By a curious chance I still have this half-sheet of notepaper, and the interesting thing is that I could quite easily make a speech today with the same notes, and it would still be quite up to date. The following are my notes:

NOTES OF ADOPTION SPEECH AT READING, APRIL 14TH, 1924.

Not usually nervous, but like a man seeking father's approval.
Dominant fact—failure of Socialists to provide a policy—six weeks' warning of office.
Broad Statement:
Liberty and Loyalty.
Democracy with duty and discipline.
Reforms with responsibilities.
Progress in Education—personal effort.
An idealism capable of realization. Help lame dogs over stile.
My previous defeats no disgrace.
Protection and Preference.
The Shadow on the Pacific. The need for Singapore base.
Foreign Affairs, International debts.
Housing.
Unemployment.
Egypt, India and Ireland.

A Member's Responsibilities.
Political and Personal—Remedy injustices due to ignorance.
Socialism binding mankind in chains.
Liberals' abandonment of historic role of defending Liberty.
Invent a phrase is not to solve a problem.
Conservatives alone can lead people back to freedom, discipline and prosperity.
My wife.

My speech was very well received, and at the end my adoption as candidate was proposed by the late Sir Stewart Abram, President of the Association. This was seconded by Mrs. F. A. Simonds, who was the chairman of the women's branch of the Association, and making a reference to what had happened at the General Election in 1923 she referred to a poster issued by the Labour Party entitled "The Battle of Hastings is Won". The next election, she said, would be won by "Williams the Conqueror".

My adoption was unanimous, and then began a most strenuous six months both at meetings indoors and on the orange-box, at street corners, and, in the case of my wife, at the door-knockers.

In Reading I was fortunate in that one of the local papers, the *Berkshire Chronicle*, was an unqualified supporter of the Conservative Party, and therefore the activities of my wife and myself in connection with the Party were generally very fully reported. But I must say that the other paper, the *Reading Standard*, which, without being hostile, was Left in its attitude, was also very fair, and was very complimentary to me in its issue which followed my adoption. This is what it said:

"*The Tories' 'Trojan'*"

"The Tories have at last secured a candidate, and they have thus quietened, to some extent, the unrest that was beginning to unsettle the minds of the rank and file of the Tory Party. Judging from the time they have been searching for a suitable representative we suppose that the candidate they have at last obtained is a paragon of all the virtues necessary in a politician, and the supposition seemed to be borne out on Monday night, when the Tory supporters took Mr. Williams to their hearts.

"To give him credit, we must say that he has every appearance of being a true politician. Without a trace of nervousness, and a convincing manner, he seems to be a gentleman who can sway an audience to his point of view, and make everything he says appear the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. It was not so much the remarks he made which told on Monday night, but the convincing manner with which he made them. His address was

a good one, from a Tory point of view, and a clever one from any point of view. He outlined his beliefs fearlessly and without malice or favour. Some of his points were threadbare from long and hard usage; particularly so was this the case with his remarks on the Safeguarding of Industries Act, when he gave an instance of the benefits accruing from this Act—the advantages gained by the motor-car trade. This motor-car trade has been talked out already and now merely provokes loud laughter.

"The giving of the one example continually and without any supporting instances, so far from proving the strength of the argument at stake, rather tends to weaken it. With this weak point and a few points a little stronger, Mr. Williams' address was a model of what a political address should be, and we prophesy a hard fight for Dr. Hastings at the next election."

It had not been the practice of Conservative M.P.s or candidates to take to the orange-box, but I have always been a convinced believer in the open-air meetings, and accordingly tried it on the people of that town and found that it was a great success, because it gave opportunities of meeting many of those who in the ordinary way would not have attended indoor Conservative meetings. These meetings were well publicized, as will be shown by the following:

OPEN-AIR CAMPAIGN

MR. HERBERT G. WILLIAMS

(Prospective Conservative Candidate)

Who is a forceful speaker and an authority on financial and industrial questions

Will address the Electors:

MONDAY NEXT, 26th MAY, 8 p.m.:
Near "Blue Lion", Coley.

FRIDAY NEXT, 30th MAY, 8 p.m.:
Tram Terminus, Wokingham Road.

Electors!
Politics concern your daily life
COME AND HEAR
"The Man with the Punch"
Knock the Bottom out of Socialist Arguments.

I must just say in all modesty that I did not draft the terms of this leaflet. The phrase "The Man with the Punch" took on very well. It was coined by the *Berkshire Chronicle* on their poster the week after I had been adopted, and it proved an admirable slogan.

Open-air meetings have one disadvantage. When question time arises, and sometimes question time starts at the beginning, opponents frequently never let you answer a question properly, because before you have finished the answer to it some other critic starts off with another one. I find that at one of my meetings I was asked if I supported the Fascisti, to which I replied that "this was a foreign revolutionary movement, and I was not a member of the Fascisti because I was quite able to look after myself without their help".

It amuses me the way the Communists today denounce their opponents as Fascists without apparently realizing that the Fascists in Italy based themselves very largely on the brutality of the Communists in Russia.

Within five months of my adoption the Government were defeated in the House of Commons by a combination of Liberals and Conservatives, on a vote of censure of the Government on the ground that the Cabinet had interfered improperly in judicial proceedings in the prosecution of Mr. Campbell, a prominent member of the Communist Party. Just about this time the Government had concluded a Trade and Loan Agreement with Russia, which was regarded as gravely detrimental to British interests, and accordingly our relationship with Russia became a very prominent feature of the election campaign.

Towards the end this feature became much more intensified because there came into the possession of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, who was Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, a copy of a letter written by Mr. Zinoviev, which urged upon the Communist Party the desirability in this country of bringing about mutiny in the armed forces. There is no doubt that the publication of this document had a marked effect on public opinion, and helped to bring about the heavy defeat of the Socialist Government at the General Election.

For years since, however, the Socialist Party have tried to pretend that the Zinoviev letter was a forgery produced by the Conservative Party. This, of course, was totally untrue, but it has been said so frequently that quite a number of people have come to believe it. They seem to have forgotten that the document was published to the world not by the Conservatives, but by Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, who had taken what steps he thought fit to verify its accuracy before publishing it.

My campaign vigour, of course, brought me a good deal of trouble because the heckling at my meetings at times became so severe that orderly speaking became exceedingly difficult, and in addition I was a victim

of the whispering campaign which took many forms, one of which was that my wife and I had been found drunk in the street at 2 a.m. On one occasion I attempted to trace one of these rumours, because I was informed that an assistant at a certain shop had told a customer something of a disreputable character about me. I went to the shop, and was told that the statement had been made by a customer, whose name and address I was given. I went to the customer's house, who said that she had not said it but that she had heard it, and then I came to a dead end. At one of my election meetings the situation became very unpleasant, and I had to act as a chucker-out. The following is an account of the incident taken from the London *Evening News* of October 21st:

> "As Mr. H. G. Williams, Conservative candidate for Reading, was leaving his car last night to address a meeting, a man endeavoured to strike him with a heavy stick. The blow was warded off by Mr. Williams, and the man was hustled away by his comrades. At an inside meeting, Mr. Williams left the platform and taking an interrupter by the scruff of the neck, put him out of the meeting."

One of the curious stories put round about me was that I was a bigamist, and had altogether not less than six wives. This story my wife killed by ridicule, as shown by the following report from the London *Daily Express*, October 24th, 1924:

> "Mrs. Williams, who is one of her husband's most effective workers, is a charming woman whose personality has been able to subdue even the rudeness of the Socialist hecklers.
>
> "'I have learned a wonderful lot about my husband since I have been in Reading,' said Mrs. Williams to me today, 'and was especially surprised,' she added, 'to learn that he has six wives. I should be delighted to meet the other five, but so far none of them has accepted my invitation to appear.
>
> "'One thing that the Socialists omit to say, however, is that my husband is the right man for Reading.'
>
> "Mr. Williams expects a close fight."

These things were very exciting at the time, but of course they are dull in retrospect, but I have always felt there is something rather disgusting about electioneering in that people think it is fair game to insult a man when he is a candidate, even though when elected he becomes just as much their representative as the representative of those who elected him. At this election for the first time I had the support of my mother, then 84 years of age, who came specially to support me on the platform at one of my big meetings.

I saw recently that certain eminent members of the Conservative Party were very wisely using the phrase, that "what we want in this country is a Property Owning Democracy". This, of course, is not very novel to me, because I find that in my election address in Reading in 1924 I included the following, and I think most people will agree that these phrases are just as up to date now as they were in 1924:

My Ideals.

"Everyone a capitalist."
"Man the free worker."
"Lover of my country."
"What service can I render to the State?"
"Peace among Britons."

The Socialist Ideals.

"Nobody a capitalist."
"Man the slave of the State."
"Love of every country but his own."
"What can be got out of the State?"
"Class warfare."

In due course the strenuous campaign came to an end, and I found myself an M.P. for the first time with a majority of 3,001. Everybody I met in the street next day explained to me that of course he had been the person who had provided the extra vote.

One of my most ardent supporters was Mr. Henry Hawkins, J.P., who had run away from school in Wiltshire as a small boy and had come to Reading, where he got a job which he lost at the end of a week, and then got another job with Huntley & Palmer's, and in my time was a foreman of their cream-cracker department. In the evenings he used to let off Conservative wisecracks at public meetings. He was a stalwart supporter.

My predecessor, Sir Edward Cadogan, had been defeated at Reading the year before in a three-cornered contest, but in 1924 the Liberals did not contest the constituency, and many of them voted for me, though a great many quite clearly abstained.

The new Parliament met on December 2nd, which happened to be my fortieth birthday, and which for me was a pleasant omen.

I discovered on reaching the House of Commons the strange fact that after a General Election anybody with enough cheek could walk in and take his seat, because the elected person has no documentary evidence that he has been elected. I had been a frequent visitor to the House of Commons before I was an M.P. and was known to many of the police and officials, but if I had been a complete stranger, and had walked in, as

far as I can make out all that would have happened would have been a query from the policeman, "New member, sir?" to which the answer would be "Yes", coupled with the name of someone not likely to be known to the police, and the possibility of bluffing my way in, with no consequences as far as I know.

On the other hand, when a Member gets in at a by-election he has to obtain from the Clerk of the Parliaments a certificate which has been received from the returning officer, and then he is introduced by two sponsors, who bring him ceremoniously up to the Table, where he takes the Oath, signs the Roll, and is greeted by the Speaker. It is curious that so much care is taken when the risk of a bluff is almost impossible, and none taken on the occasion when there may be 300 or more new Members arriving for the first time.

CHAPTER XI

MY FIRST PARLIAMENT

As soon as I became a Member I thought I would try to learn all about procedure, and commenced the study of Standing Orders, which I have always regarded as a somewhat badly arranged document because it has grown up bit by bit, and never in my judgment been turned into coherent order. Accordingly I decided the best way to learn about procedure was to take part in the proceedings, and as a start I decided to watch what everybody else did and to ask a number of questions. The latter had the advantage that I got accustomed to hearing my voice in the Chamber, even though the words I uttered were, "Mr. Speaker, I beg to ask No. 43 of the President of the Board of Trade." I got reproved, however, for my first activities, because on the first debating day I started heckling, which was thought very bad manners on the part of an entirely new Member. The episode was reported in the *Reading Standard* of December 13th as follows:

> "Reading's new Member, Mr. H. G. Williams, got into his stride at once in the House of Commons this week. On the first day of the debate on the Address he gave notice of three useful questions and pulled up Mr. Neil MacLean, the Socialist, in the midst of a burst of oratory with an interjection so pertinent that the frizzy-headed Clydesider lost his temper and was rebuked by the Chair."

I am glad to say the episode has not prevented me from being on good personal terms with Mr. Neil Maclean during the many years that I have known him.

The House of Commons is a very easy place in which to slip up. Once one is in the Chamber proper, one has to be seated, unless addressing the House. On the other hand, within that physical part of the building which is not technically part of the House Members can stand up, and frequently do.

One cold night, in 1924, just before we broke up for Christmas, I had been attending an engagement outside. I was anxious to find out what was happening in the House, and I walked into the Chamber wearing my overcoat, which happened to be rather a light-coloured one. A couple of hours later I was reproved, in the most tactful way, by a rather senior Member, a Socialist Privy Councillor, who explained to me in the best Etonian manner that it just wasn't done!

In those days the Red Clydesiders of 1922 had only been in the House for two years, and they were still very much in their Red condition, but as the years went by they steadily became more and more rigid upholders of the traditions of the House, and I am certain that if I were ever to go in again in a light overcoat the reproof I would receive from some of the Clydesiders who were still there would be very much more severe than what I received from the Socialist Privy Councillor.

When the House resumed after the New Year in 1925 I thought I might just as well get myself properly established by making my maiden speech, and accordingly I consulted some of the seniors on the matter. Nearly all of them told me it was most undesirable for a new Member to raise his voice until he had been there for several months. I was not impressed by this advice, and I thought I would watch for my opportunity, and it occurred to me that a debate on housing might afford that opportunity.

Unfortunately, on the day of that debate I had undertaken to give a lecture in Reading at seven o'clock, and this meant that I should not be back in the House until some time after 9 p.m. However, while in the train I thought over the line I might take should the debate still be on when I returned. I walked into the Chamber at about 9.20 and I found the late George Hardie, the brother of the famous Keir Hardie, addressing the House in Committee, with Captain Fitzroy in the Chair.

Mr. Hardie was a man with considerable technical knowledge. I heard him make a number of statements which I was quite satisfied, from my own technical knowledge, were inaccurate, so I turned to the Member I was sitting next to and told him I had never made a maiden speech and I would like to reply to Mr. Hardie. To which he replied, "If you have anything to say go and say it," and on his advice I spoke to Captain Fitzroy, and said I would like to follow Mr. Hardie, with the result that less than ten minutes after I had walked in the door I was on my legs making a maiden speech.

One of the things I had not learnt was that it was regarded as proper when you made a maiden speech to ask Honourable Members for their kindly consideration while you went through this trying ordeal. The consequence of doing this is that you have no interruptions and the following speaker always says nice things about what you have said. I knew nothing about this procedure. Mr. Hardie did not know it was my maiden speech, so he proceeded to interrupt me on purely technical matters, but on which, by good fortune, I was better informed than he, and as a result my maiden speech, which lasted less than ten minutes, was a great success. The *Daily Mirror*, February 18th, 1925, was kind enough to say:

"One of the best maiden speeches of the session was made by Mr. Herbert G. Williams."

The Times was even more complimentary, and said:

"The best contribution to the debate was made by Mr. Herbert G. Williams, who urged that people should be financially assisted to build their own houses."

There are some merits in political consistency, because as far as I can make out exactly the same statement would be just as apt today as it was in 1925.

A few days after my maiden speech I went to Walsall to speak in support of my friend the late William Preston, who was candidate at a very strange by-election. Mr. Preston both lived and had a factory in Wednesbury, and I had frequently met him when I was the candidate for that constituency. His business was not a limited company, but a partnership, and he was the principal partner. They were manufacturers of certain electrical specialities, and for years they had supplied the Post Office with about one hundred pounds' worth per year of some particular article.

Under our electoral law no one who is a contractor to His Majesty's Government can be nominated as a candidate for Parliament. Just after Christmas 1924 Mr. Preston had a telegram to the effect that the Prime Minister, Mr. Baldwin, wanted to see him at 10 Downing Street. This surprised Mr. Preston as he had never actually spoken to Mr. Baldwin, though he was one of his strong supporters. However, he duly turned up at 10 Downing Street at the appointed time, and in the passage met Sir Douglas Hogg, Attorney-General (now Lord Hailsham), who somewhat surprised him by saying, "Preston, I am sorry to tell you you are not an M.P."

Preston was somewhat startled because he seemed to recollect having heard the Mayor of Walsall on the previous 29th of October declare him as the Member for Walsall, and for the moment he wondered whether it was he or the Attorney-General who was no longer quite sane. Sir Douglas asked him whether he had a contract with the Post Office, and whether the firm in question was not a limited company, and, on Mr. Preston agreeing, Sir Douglas explained what the law was, and that he had not really been elected M.P. because he was not in fact a person qualified to be nominated.

That was bad enough, but worse was to follow. There is a penalty of £500 a time for anybody who votes in the House of Commons who is not qualified to vote, and Mr. Preston had

apparently voted 40 times, so he was liable to a fine of £20,000, and when Sir Douglas explained this to him Preston was even more disturbed.

However, he was somewhat reassured when he was told that they were proposing to introduce an Indemnity Bill into Parliament to let him off the fine, and Sir Douglas also added that if he gave up the contract he would be free to stand at the by-election. The William Preston Indemnity Act was duly put on the Statute Book, and Mr. Preston was duly re-elected as M.P. for Walsall. I always thought it was rather mean of his opponents to force a contest so that he had to go through the whole business of another election.

I find that in the course of my maiden speech I urged the importance of building steel houses as a supplement to the then still inadequate supply of other kinds of houses, and this proposal was resisted in the strongest possible way by many Socialist M.P.s at the time, who apparently were not aware that some two or three hundred thousand Britons regularly live in steel houses of the kind known as ships. However, even the Socialist Party can modernize itself, and today we have Mr. Aneurin Bevan so busy in encouraging the building of steel houses that there will not be enough sheet steel to make the motor-cars that are needed. This is, of course, what they call scientific planning.

My second speech in the House of Commons was on a rather different subject. I have related how I went to the Mansion House in 1921 to oppose the project for the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley which was held in 1924. Apparently, with a view to redeeming the losses, it was proposed to renew the Exhibition in 1926, and the matter came up for a debate in the House of Commons on February 25th. The following is a short extract from a report of the debate in the *Daily Express*, February 26th, 1925:

> "Sir Robert Hamilton took the gloomy view that the year's Exhibition would result in a loss of ten shillings in the pound, and then came a remarkable speech from Mr. H. G. Williams, the Conservative Member for Reading.
>
> "He laid it down that no long-period exhibition in any country had ever been anything but a failure, and then went on to say:
>
> " 'Ninety-nine per cent of the people who see the Palace of Engineering are attracted by the shining exhibits and are mere curiosity-mongers. They ask useless questions and belong to the category of literature-snatcherswho are no use at all from the commercial point of view." '

This speech produced a very pleasant comment from the *Reading Standard*:

ON GUARD

The Watch Dog . . . "GR-R-RR!"
MR. H. G. WILLIAMS

From *Punch*, May 22, 1935

THE CROYDON WAG

MR. H. G. WILLIAMS

From *Punch*, December 15, 1937

The Author, his wife and two children outside the Constitutional Club, Croydon, during the General Election, 1935

"Mr. Herbert Williams made another lightning incursion into debate this week, leaping—I speak metaphorically—into a debate on trade facilities on Tuesday evening, giving four previous speakers a good dialectic knock apiece, and resuming his seat amid applause from the House."

When Mr. Baldwin formed his Government in 1924 the late Lord Birkenhead was appointed Secretary of State for India. Not long after his appointment he commenced writing a number of articles on political matters for one of the Sunday newspapers. This led to a number of questions being asked in the House of Commons as to the desirability of a Cabinet Minister being paid for articles on matters that would come before him in his capacity as a Cabinet Minister. There were really two issues in mind: one, whether such articles might not lead people to believe that Cabinet Ministers in so writing were divulging Cabinet secrets; the other, whether it was proper for a Cabinet Minister to have a source of income of this kind.

In due course the Prime Minister in answer to a question announced that in future Ministers of the Crown would not write such articles, but that they were not debarred from writing articles on matters outside those which would be regarded as of definite political concern. If, for example, a Cabinet Minister was an enthusiastic bee-keeper, there was no particular objection to his writing an article as to the lines he took to secure a good yield of honey, or, equally, if he was an enthusiastic follower of Association Football, there would be nothing to stop his reviewing the probabilities of the result of the Final of the F.A. Cup.

Personally, I always thought Mr. Baldwin was right. On the other hand, I have not the slightest doubt that Lord Birkenhead wrote the articles because when a barrister his income was far greater than that of a Cabinet Minister, and moreover his income when Lord Chancellor was much higher than his income as Secretary of State for India, and that accordingly he was only too glad to add to his income by articles which attracted no doubt a high fee because of the political eminence of the author.

I felt the reaction of this decision in a minor way some years later. The weekly journal *John Bull* had invited me to write an article on some economic and financial matter, and therefore clearly a matter of political interest. Very many weeks went by, after I had written the article, without it being published, but within two or three days of my appointment as Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade the editor informed me that they were proposing to publish it at an early date, and sent the article back to me for any revision I might wish to make; quite clearly they thought that an article by Herbert Williams, M.P., Parliamentary

Secretary to the Board of Trade, was likely to be of greater interest to their readers than one by Herbert Williams, M.P.

I was accordingly somewhat perturbed, and asked my secretary to speak to Mr. Baldwin's secretary as to what the Prime Minister's wishes were. His reply was the sensible one that as I had written the article before I had been appointed a Junior Minister he could not object to its publication, but on the other hand it would be a convenience to him if I declined to have it published, and in the light of that I explained the matter to *John Bull* and the article did not appear, though I should have been very grateful for the 25 guineas, the fee offered me.

The problem came to me in a rather different way about six months later, when I had a telephone communication from the B.B.C. asking me to do a broadcast on a political subject. I explained to the B.B.C. official how I felt about it, and refused the offer, which again deprived me of what would otherwise have been some very acceptable guineas—how many I do not know, because we did not get to that stage. Mr. Baldwin always took a rigid view of all financial matters affecting a Minister, because, of course, quite clearly a Minister should be a servant of the Crown exclusively, apart, of course, from his general duties to his constituency, and clearly must not be the servant of any outside interest, however respectable that outside interest may be.

In the days when taxation was low, and the value of money far higher than it is now, Ministers were really well paid. Now they are very badly paid, despite recent changes and even despite the fact that they now have, if in the Cabinet, free use of a large and expensive motor-car.

I am not quite clear what the present practice is, but during the period when I was a Junior Minister the whole salary was assessed to income-tax subject to the usual personal allowances, and not one penny piece could be claimed for expenses. It seems to me I became a Minister much too young!

The present free cars of Ministers, if they were paid for out of their ministerial salary and if their net annual income was to be unaffected, would involve an increase in the salary of Cabinet Ministers from £5,000 a year to about £9,200, the extra £4,200 being what is necessary to leave such a Minister with a net income in order to pay for the free motor-car service which he now gets, which costs the State about £1,030 per annum.

At the present time, when we are constantly seeing the strange performances of the Communist Party in this country, and the equally strange behaviour of the Russian delegates at International conferences, I find from reading some remarks I made at a meeting in Reading in May 1925 that very much the same situation prevailed then. I was taking part in a discussion which followed a lecture given by a clergyman who

had lived in Russia for some 19 years. This clergyman had been there at the time when the revolution took place. I commented on the attitude of British Socialists to Russia, and remarked that sometimes the Socialists reached out their hands to Russia and sometimes they turned away from Russia, and I added that it seemed to me the whole Russian regime was the most gigantic hypocrisy in the world, and that it would remain a grave danger because of the elements of violence in the Communist outlook, even though the Communists were only a small section in this country.

The above is a brief summary of the Press report of what I said, and it is quite clear that the general situation today is much the same as it was in 1925. I mention this fact because I find history repeating itself so frequently that I am inclined to remind the enthusiastic youth of the present generation that there are advantages in considering the past. I find, however, that when I do so I am frequently accused by the young of being non-progressive and out of date.

At this time, with one or two others, I used to write a political broadsheet every week which was sent out to a great many newspapers. I was invited by a Chamber of Commerce to give a lecture on the Gold Standard, and by a curious chance a copy of the broadsheet I had written that week reached the local newspaper the day after I gave my lecture. My article on the Gold Standard did not bear my name. The local newspaper of the district reported my lecture and also wrote a leading article on the subject of the Gold Standard, and the leading article curiously enough consisted of a few words of pleasant comment on the speech I made, and the rest of the leading article was taken entirely from my article in the broadsheet. The first time, I think, I have ever had a leading article on my views written by myself.

Having taken part in nine Parliamentary elections as a candidate, and having helped a great many others in their elections, I have long been of the opinion that our election methods have called and still call for a good deal of overhaul.

During the time I was a Member for Reading I found that there were a very considerable number of commercial travellers living in the town, who were to a large extent disfranchised because, unless polling took place on a Saturday, they were generally away from home. I think the real cure for this is that any person who has reason to believe that he will be unable to vote, either because he is unwell or because he will be absent, ought to be able to vote by post, provided he gives sufficiently long notice to the registration officer after an election has begun to enable the necessary steps to be taken to send him the papers for a postal ballot.

I first had an opportunity of urging this during a Private Member's

Bill which was considered in the House of Commons in May 1925. Unfortunately, this Bill was defeated by three votes.

I had a better opportunity of urging this cause in 1944 when I was one of the Conservative Members of the Speakers' Conference to consider Electoral Reform. I failed to persuade the majority to go the full length, but, as mentioned earlier, much has been done in the Representation of the People Act, 1948.

On January 7th, 1928, I had a very interesting and flattering letter. It came from Mr. Stanley Baldwin, who was then Prime Minister, offering me the job of Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade, which he was kind enough to suggest would be both interesting and one in which I should be useful. He asked me, however, not to mention the matter until the King approved and the appointment had been published.

At that time I was Secretary of the Machine Tool Trades Association, of which the chairman was Sir Alfred Herbert. Naturally I could not accept the office without being released from that job. It was on a Saturday morning when I heard from Mr. Baldwin. I had not intended to go to my office that morning, but in view of Mr. Baldwin's letter I decided to do so and was proposing to call at the House of Commons to collect some papers. When I reached Vauxhall Bridge I found the road was blocked, because that night a great tragedy had occurred. The combination of heavy flood waters, a strong tide and an easterly gale had so piled up the water of the River Thames that it had overflowed at many points, and had flooded the basements of a number of houses on the embankment of the west side of the Houses of Parliament and 16 people were drowned.

I telephoned Sir Alfred Herbert to ask him if I could go and see him that afternoon in Hampshire about an important matter, and as I drove down I was speculating whether I should get through, because the Christmas snowstorm of 1927 had completely blocked many of the roads to the west and south; however, I managed, despite the fact that on both sides of the roads in many places there were drifts many feet high.

When I saw Sir Alfred and showed him Mr. Baldwin's letter he said, "Of course you must take the job," so I wrote Mr. Baldwin my acceptance next day, despite the fact that it reduced my income substantially, and my appointment was duly announced the following weekend.

Reading was a constituency which had been frequently represented in Parliament by persons who had received office. For example, the late Marquess of Reading was M.P. for Reading when he became Solicitor General. Sir Leslie Wilson was M.P. for Reading when he obtained his first office. But from my point of view even more interesting was the case of the Rt. Hon. G. Shaw-Lefevre, later Lord Eversley, who when Liberal Member for Reading had been appointed Parliamentary Secretary to

the Board of Trade 60 years before my appointment. He was then still alive, but I never had the pleasure of meeting the old gentleman.

A few days after I got to the Board of Trade the President, Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister, now Viscount Swinton, asked me to go to his room to witness the ceremony of my formal appointment. The Board of Trade is a mysterious institution. It was originally the Committee of the Council for Trade and the Plantations. Plantations was the original name for the Colonies, and all sorts of people were appointed to this Committee, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, who had the job of selecting chaplains for the Plantations.

I was able to surprise the present Archbishop of Canterbury very much, when he came to my flat shortly after his appointment to meet the M.P.s of his diocese, by asking his permission to propose the health of the Board of Trade, to which I asked him to reply, as he was a member of the Board. I had mentioned, incidentally, that the Board had not met since 1868, so when he replied to the toast he remarked he was glad that the job was apparently so light, and he was not previously aware he had got it, and that as he thought both the Archbishop and the Archbishop's wife should be properly apparelled, and that as he was a member of the Board, Sir Stafford Cripps ought to set him right with regard to the coupons. I am afraid he never asked Sir Stafford, and I expect the Minister for Austerity would have refused if he had asked.

When I got into Sir Philip's room he was standing with the seal of the Board of Trade in front of him, because he and the seal constituted the whole effective Board of Trade. He accordingly signed the necessary document, sealed it, and gave me a duplicate as a keepsake. I had not realized before what a complicated job it is to become a Junior Minister. The Prime Minister proposes, the King approves and the Minister appoints.

Two or three days later my secretary told me that the Prime Minister wanted to see me at 10 Downing Street at noon, and as I was shown into the Cabinet Room Mr. Duff Cooper was coming out, as he had just been appointed Financial Secretary to the War Office. Mr. Baldwin gave me a cordial greeting, wished me the best of luck, and then proceeded to give me some sound advice. He said that the duty of a Minister, so far as the House of Commons was concerned, was to get his business through as expeditiously as possible, and not to think primarily of making impressive speeches. As he knew I liked making speeches he consoled me by saying that of course there would be opportunities when I would be able to spread myself.

He then impressed upon me the great importance of taking trouble in answering questions in the House. He said that the officers of the department would prepare the suggested answers, which I should have

to approve; but he said it was not merely necessary to be able to read out the answer. "You must familiarize yourself with the whole of the facts connected with the question." He said a question might relate to some quite remote part of the world, and that after I had given the answer there might get up some almost completely unknown Member of Parliament who was familiar with that part of the world, and would put to me a most awkward and impossible question so that I should be completely sunk if I had not studied all the facts.

I was careful to take his advice, and in my case it was not very difficult because as a rule I only answered questions on the light days, when as a rule there would not be more than three or four, while the President answered on the heavy days; but there was a period when I had to answer on every day because Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister was away ill for about six weeks.

I often think that private Members do not realize how much work is imposed on the department and on Ministers in preparing the answers to questions, and on the Minister in particular in preparing himself for the necessary supplementaries. A good secretary is a great help in these matters, because when in connection with the draft reply the Minister is furnished with several fat files of documents a good secretary peruses them and draws the attention of the Minister to the matters with which he has got to familiarize himself.

Questions are most important things in protecting the public against the actions of the State, but in order that questions can be answered it means that everything done in a Government department has to be put on record in such a way that it can be found easily at any time in the future, and therefore questions do add somewhat to the red tape of Government departments.

I remember on one occasion a draft answer came up which I thought was hopelessly inadequate and somewhat misleading, and I accordingly returned it to the officials concerned with the request for a redraft and further information, and I ultimately got the reply in a form which I approved. This happened on the morning of the day I had to answer the question in the afternoon. It happened by chance that that day a friend of mine was lunching with an official of the Ministry of Health, which shared a luncheon-room with the Board of Trade. My friend could not help overhearing the conversation at an adjoining table between two officials of the Board of Trade, one of whom remarked to the other: "Do you know what the old b—— did? He actually sent the reply back to be rewritten." My friend, who was rather high-minded, never told me what the word "b——" stood for.

CHAPTER XII

STANLEY BALDWIN

REVERTING to Mr. Baldwin, the next episode which stands out in my mind was on the occasion when we had a debate in the House of Commons on Safeguarding, which was the limited form of protection which the Conservative Party was then urging. It was a debate instituted, if I remember rightly, by the Socialist Party, and as the then President of the Board of Trade, Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister, was absent through illness, the Prime Minister was on duty as the chief representative of the Government, and I as Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade was there to support him.

After the debate had been in progress for some considerable time, the Prime Minister said to me, "If this debate becomes one of detail you will have to reply, because you are more familiar than I am with the detail, whereas if it becomes one of high policy naturally I had better reply, so we had better both dine early and see how things go on." After dinner the Prime Minister said: "Well, it looks as if I shall have to reply to this debate. I will go to my room to prepare a few notes, but let me know if anything important is said to which I ought to reply."

He came in after about an hour in time to hear Mr. Philip Snowden, who was, of course, a most redoubtable debater, wind up for his Party; and then Mr. Baldwin, who had no intention of speaking until about two hours before, wound up for the Government. It was a most brilliant intellectual effort, in the course of which he completely demolished Mr. Snowden's case, and though I do not suppose he converted any of the Socialists, nevertheless neither they nor we had the slightest doubt who had had the best of the debate.

I had first met Mr. Baldwin in 1919 at a private discussion club known as the 1900 Club, at a time when I was Secretary of the Machine Tool Trades Association which was promoting an exhibition at Olympia to be held in 1920. We found that the entertainment tax was to apply to this technical exhibition if we had a band playing, but not otherwise. The object of the band was not to attract the public, but to relieve the tedium of the engineers in charge of the various exhibits.

It seemed to me absurd that an enterprise designed to expand British trade, and in particular British export trade, should be penalized in this way, so I asked Mr. Baldwin, then Financial Secretary to the Treasury, if I could come and see him on the matter, with the result of him asking me

to go and see him at the Treasury in Whitehall. At that time, of course, he was hardly known to the public, but he was even in those days very fond of what subsequently became his famous pipe, and he told me to put on mine as well.

I explained to him the problem and he at once said: "I fully understand. I have been in charge of a stand at Olympia and I know what a dreadful job it is." I found that it was because "S.B.", as everybody called him, had knocked about the industrial world before he became an M.P. that he had the capacity of interpreting to the general public the Conservative faith, which he held so strongly, in a manner which was possibly more acceptable to the public than that of any Conservative leader since the famous Marquess of Salisbury.

This interview with him took place a few days after a strange letter had appeared in *The Times*, in which the anonymous writer, who had signed himself "F.S.T.", had expressed the opinion that the magnitude of our National Debt was a great peril to the nation both financially and economically, and went on to add that he had made an estimate of his possessions, and as an example to others he had decided to give a quarter of it, namely £125,000, to the State in the hope that many others would follow his example.

Personally I think the idea was a wrong one, because if a vast number of people had done that the Stock Exchange would have been flooded with sellers. There would have been no buyers, and a financial crisis would have been precipitated—in other words, "F.S.T." had a better heart than his head on this occasion. Many years later it was revealed that "F.S.T." stood for Financial Secretary to the Treasury—in other words, Mr. Stanley Baldwin.

Some day somebody will write his biography properly. I am certain they will have a very difficult task. He dominated everybody whom he met, and yet he was a curiously shy and timid man in his social relationships. He had none of the almost boisterous *bonhomie* of David Lloyd George. This strange man, 30 months after I met him at the Treasury, had become Prime Minister. I am told that part of his social timidity was due to his childhood, because, although he was brought up in a wealthy home, apparently it was not a very cheerful one.

When he precipitated, or was caused to precipitate, the General Election of 1923, and suffered a bad setback, he became a little timid politically, because having burnt his fingers once he did not want to burn them again; but after he had his great triumph in 1924 he had an incredibly firm hold on his Cabinet, on the House of Commons and on the country, but even that still left him timid in his social relationships. For example, if he passed a private Conservative

Member in the corridor of the House of Commons he never dreamt of speaking to him, although this was not due to any lack of courtesy on his part.

I well remember that on one occasion when I was walking along the corridor with my wife he passed me without a greeting, and then when he was five yards farther on he suddenly swung round with the most charming smile, apologized to my wife, and said to her: "I am so sorry I did not see you at first. I never talk to Members, because if I did it would take me so long to get along the corridors."

It is impossible to interpret Baldwin without thinking of his late wife. It never seemed to me that she knew much about politics. On the other hand she knew a great deal about politicians, and she seemed almost ruthless in her determination to back up her husband in his great position.

What he was as a performer at cricket I do not know, but he was a tremendous cricket enthusiast, and at the height of some great political crisis I have seen him avidly studying the tape in the House of Commons to see how England was getting on in the Test Match. His wife was also a very great cricket enthusiast and a star lady cricketer. I believe she played in some quite remarkable cricket matches at Rottingdean, which was her home. When in 1942 they were celebrating their golden wedding I sent her a telegram phrased something as follows:

> "Test match scores Rottingdean versus the World, opening batsmen 50 not out,"

which brought from her a most charming letter of appreciation, because she was very delighted that I had known of her prowess as a girl.

Mrs. Baldwin was, I think, probably the best hostess I have ever met. During the period he was Prime Minister she used to give many tea-parties at 10 Downing Street. Conservative M.P.s and their wives had more or less an open invitation to go as often as they wished and to take with them leading constituents. In addition, she always used to ask prominent figures in public life, quite irrespective of politics. On these occasions she always made sure that nobody was lonely, and all sorts of people had opportunities of interesting chats with great people whom they had never previously met.

It was in recognition of Mr. Baldwin's great interest in cricket that some years later he was elected President of the M.C.C. This, I always thought, gave him the most intense pleasure, and possibly he was prouder

of being President of the M.C.C. than Chancellor of the University of Cambridge.

Referring to the M.C.C., a good many years later I met another gentleman who was President of that august institution. About five years ago I was elected a director of the Licenses and General Insurance Co., the chairman of which is Mr. Stanley Christopherson, formerly chairman of the Midland Bank. Mr. Christopherson is about the youngest looking man for his age that I have ever met.

One day in 1944, at the time when he was President of the M.C.C., he came into the board-room for the fortnightly meeting seeming very happy and pleased with himself, so I said to him, "Mr. Chairman, why are you so pleased?"

"Oh," he said, "a curious thing happened at Lord's Cricket Ground yesterday; a very old man came up to me and said, 'Is your name Christopherson?' I said, 'Yes.' 'Ah,' he said, 'I saw you playing here in the Test Match sixty years ago!' "

Baldwin was a man of tremendous energy, and also a man with a great capacity for dilatoriness and great detachment of mind. I well remember during the most difficult period of his leadership between 1929 and 1931, when there was almost a weekly crisis in the Conservative Party, I was speculating to my wife as to what he was probably doing at that moment in respect of one of those major crises. My wife's comment was, "Oh, I expect he is reading Virgil," which was probably true.

It is, of course, a very important asset for a man who has great responsibilities to be able to detach himself and become absorbed for the passing moment in something quite different. While he had an enormous grasp of fundamental principles, yet, like a great many other very eminent men, it never seemed to me that he was a steady student of political problems in the sense of always absorbing knowledge for the general purpose of being better informed rather than absorbing knowledge for a particular speech or debate.

I found it difficult to understand his attitude on the Government of India Bill. This was an issue which divided the Conservatives very badly indeed. The Coalition Government apparently found themselves committed to a certain line of policy as a result of the Simon Report, and the subsequent developments, including the Round Table Conference.

If there had been a purely Conservative Government in office I very much doubt if any Bill similar to the Government of India Bill would have been introduced. I was one of the fairly solid block of 40 or 50 Conservative M.P.s who opposed the Bill at all stages in the House of Commons. At the Conference in 1934 the women unionists had passed a resolution in opposition to what was known as the Government White

Paper on India. It looked very much as if the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations was likely to adopt a similar course. Baldwin and the other Conservative members of the Government made extraordinary efforts to secure the approval of the Party for the White Paper, and I well remember Baldwin's triumphant statement in which he said that if we did not give effect to the White Paper we should lose India in 20 years. The White Paper was incorporated in the Bill, the Bill became an Act, and 12 years later we see the Act in ruins and India going we know not where.

I have always regarded this as one of the cases where Baldwin was wrong; but then on the other hand, as I described elsewhere, I think that his settlement of the American debt was a great success and not the failure which has so often been attributed to him.

Another of the measures in which he got involved was the Bill which set up the traffic monopoly known as the London Passenger Transport Board. I was one of the strong opponents of this Bill, which incidentally was opposed by nearly all the Conservative M.P.s in London who were concerned with the problem. Whereas with regard to the Government of India Bill those of us who opposed it were treated with every consideration by the leaders of our Party, those who opposed the London Passenger Transport Board Bill were regarded as "bad boys", though I am quite convinced now, by results, that we were right.

I was speaking in support of an amendment on the Bill when a certain M.P. came and sat down beside me, and when I had finished my speech this Member said, "I have just been talking to Stanley Baldwin in the library, and he said, 'You ought to tell that young man' " (that was me) " 'that he is doing himself no good.' "

I thought that was a poor line for a great man to take, as I was merely concerned in trying to destroy a very bad Bill. Whoever writes his biography will, I am certain, come to the conclusion that "S. B." was a very great man, who served his country splendidly, and his conduct of the Government during the General Strike of 1926 and during the Abdication crisis ten years later has earned for him the undying gratitude of the British people.

The General Strike was an attempt at a revolution, but it was defeated without bloodshed. The Abdication was a constitutional revolution. It was passed through without damage to that vital institution of the British Empire, namely our monarchical system, which incidentally has made it possible for democracy to work in this country when it has failed in so many others.

After his retirement Lord Baldwin took little part in public life, and his last appearance at the Council of the Conservative Party was rather pathetic. It was the occasion when we were making a presentation in

honour of his leadership after he had retired from that position. For 15 years he had carried a heavier strain than any other person in this country. The reaction on him was a strange one, for he suddenly became partially crippled with arthritis, and it was a strange Baldwin to whom the presentation was made on that day at the big meeting at the Friends House in the Euston Road. However, the next time I saw him he was in much better form, but we were all worried about him on that occasion 10 years ago.

A most interesting comment on Baldwin was made to me in 1942 by Lloyd George. The House of Commons at that time was very restless about the conduct of the War. In the course of a debate I made some critical remarks about Winston Churchill.

About an hour after Lloyd George spoke to me, praised my speech and my courage in criticising my leader. He then added:

"You Tories should have Baldwin back, he was the only chap of whom this fellow was afraid."

CHAPTER XIII

NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN

No man in my judgment has been more improperly traduced by his opponents and to some extent by Conservatives, than the late Neville Chamberlain.

After he had ceased to be Prime Minister, but was still a member of the Government and still Leader of the Conservative Party, he came to address the executive of the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations on the political situation, and at the end of his address the chairman invited questions. I was one accepted by asking him a question about the great dilatoriness of Government departments in dealing with correspondence.

I found his answer rather inadequate and snappy, so that evening I wrote him a note of protest which produced a very courteous answer suggesting that I should give him a number of examples. I accordingly searched my files, and gave him about 20 very bad cases, which he acknowledged and said he would have investigated.

Before the investigation was complete the illness which proved fatal had stricken him down, so I never received his answer; but I did receive one from his secretary. I was interested to note that the departments concerned regarded each case as one to be explained away instead of being the symptoms of disease. It is fortunate our doctors do not treat us like that when they find on our bodies the rash which indicates a fever.

Neville Chamberlain's career was markedly different from anyone else who had become Prime Minister. He had been an active business man in Birmingham, and had taken little or no part in national politics, but had been prominent in the municipal life of Birmingham.

In 1917, when it was learnt that the Germans had set up a Ministry of National Service, Mr. Lloyd George thought he ought to have one as well. So at a Cabinet meeting one morning it was decided there should be one, and it was decided to ask Mr. Neville Chamberlain to be the Minister. His brother, Austen Chamberlain, was at the meeting and said that he knew his brother was leaving Euston at about 2.30 for Birmingham, so he was commissioned to find him, make him the offer, and endeavour to induce him to accept, so that the appointment could be announced in the House of Commons at 3.45.

Everything went according to plan, so Mr. Neville Chamberlain became Minister of National Service without a Ministry and without a policy. The announcement apparently brought many hundreds of letters at a time

when he had no one to deal with them. He did not hold the office for long, which is not surprising, and he was unjustly regarded as having been a failure. He first became a Member of Parliament in 1918, and from then until 1922 was a Back Bencher.

It was not long after he was elected for Parliament that I first met him at a meeting of a certain committee to which we both belonged, and I got to know him fairly well during the four years before he first attained office in Mr. Bonar Law's Government of 1922.

On one occasion when I was giving an address to the 1900 Club among those who turned up was Neville Chamberlain, and he paid me the compliment of saying he had come solely because I was talking, so as to hear what I had to say on that year's budget. The sequel to this was that in 1923 he became Chancellor of the Exchequer. I wrote to congratulate him, and in his reply he was good enough to flatter me by saying that he wished he knew as much about the subject as I did.

He had, I think, four different offices in seven months, three of them being the result of his rapid success in each previous office. It was largely due to his wise legislation that house building was put on a proper basis with remarkable results, as compared with the failure during the previous four years under the auspices of the Coalition Government. The present Minister of Health might with advantage study the cause of Neville Chamberlain's success. His final office in that Government was that of Chancellor of the Exchequer, which he did not hold very long because of the General Election on Protection which resulted in our Party's defeat.

When Mr. Baldwin had his great victory in 1924 the Party had become fairly well united, and there were many persons available for the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer; but I believe it is true that though Neville Chamberlain was offered it he deliberately chose the Ministry of Health because of his deep interest in the housing question and all matters of local government, and during the four and a half years he held that office he was responsible for many important additions to the Statute Book.

In 1930, at a difficult period in the Party's history, when there was great dissension, he took on the job of head of the Conservative Central Office, that is to say, Chairman of the Conservative Party Organization, in addition to the chairmanship, which he already held, of the Conservative Party Research Organization.

In 1925 I wrote a book entitled *Politics and Economics*. The book was published by John Murray and Sons, Ltd. The late Sir John Murray wrote to me shortly before the book was published that he had read the proofs during his Easter holiday, and he was delighted that he was publishing the book because it had incorporated all the fundamental ideas in which

he had always believed. Mr. Neville Chamberlain was good enough to write a foreword for the book, so it came out under good auspices in every respect. It had splendid reviews, but I learnt for the first time how small is the sale for books of that type, for the total sale amounted to only 1,200 copies.

In 1937 it became known that Mr. Baldwin was going to retire from the premiership after the Coronation, and that his successor would be Mr. Neville Chamberlain, so naturally his views on all subjects became a matter of interest to everyone.

Early in the year he was invited to dinner by the Surrey Conservative Club, a discussion club, its members being drawn from all the Conservative Associations in the county. Much to our surprise he devoted the whole of his speech to Foreign Affairs, a subject on which he had not previously spoken much in public.

His speech was followed by a discussion. I was the second to take part in the discussion, and as there were certain things in his speech that I disagreed with, I said so. This had a very disturbing effect on the dinner-party, and the chairman, the late Earl of Midleton, promptly closed the discussion after I sat down. I think this must have been one of my indiscretions, because about a month before someone in close touch with Mr. Chamberlain had said to me, "When Neville becomes Prime Minister he will want to strengthen his Government, and I was wondering whether you would serve if invited." I said that it would give me great pleasure to serve under Mr. Chamberlain.

I expect my speech on Foreign Affairs completely spoilt the invitation. Nevertheless, when he became an outstanding figure in Foreign Affairs I backed him to the full because I thought he was pursuing the only possible course, and I still think so.

The only criticism I would make was that he was too slow in his effort to rescue Mussolini from Hitler's clutches. If we had never broken with Italy I believe the war of 1939 could have been avoided, and it certainly would have been over in half the time. The idea of any war was a nightmare to Neville Chamberlain. He had realized before most people not only the appalling casualties it would cause, but the terrible economic loss that would be inevitable.

At Munich-time nobody knew how politically immoral Hitler was. Everybody judges Hitler in the light of subsequent information, but even in the light of that it would have been folly for us to go to war in 1938, as I think our defeat would have been inevitable.

There was no hesitation, however, about Neville Chamberlain's action after Hitler repudiated the Munich Agreement. The *tempo* of rearmament was rapidly increased, a limited measure of conscription was introduced for the first time in peacetime, a large part of our forceswere mobilized in the

summer of '39; but it was all in vain, and despite all his efforts, war started on September 3rd, 1939.

What happened between then and March was called the "Phoney War". This phrase was invented by people who lived 3,000 miles away from it and at the time when they forbade their ships to enter British ports. Whether it was phoney or not, that part came to an end abruptly on the German invasion of Denmark and Norway. Great efforts were made to help the Norwegians, and of course mistakes were made. The result was a demand for a debate. Two days were allotted for this purpose. No motion was put down by the Socialist Opposition, and it was arranged that the debate should take place on the motion "That the House do now adjourn". This, of course, is not the character of a vote of censure, and on the first day of the debate there was nothing to indicate that the debate was to be treated as a vote of censure debate.

Looking at the matter in retrospect, it seems evident to me that a good deal of intrigue had been going on in many quarters, because when on the second day it was announced by the Socialist Party that they were going to treat the debate as a vote of censure the debate became heated and violent. Many unexpected people took a part hostile to the Government.

I was one of many who was worried about the want of drive in many of the departments of State, and I found many others held the same view. The Conservative Back Benchers were having their usual meeting that afternoon, and at that meeting I expressed the view that we ought to eliminate those Ministers who were not doing their job to the maximum efficiency.

This point of view was widely supported, and the chairman was commissioned to see Neville Chamberlain to advise him as to the view that had been expressed. Many of those present at the meeting were irritable not for the reason I was, but because in his speech Neville Chamberlain had made an appeal for support on grounds which were purely personal, and not on grounds of policy. It was an unfortunate phrase which actually did him an immense amount of harm.

The Chairman of the Back Benchers duly saw Mr. Chamberlain, and received a message an hour and a half later to the effect that he would be glad to see me and any other members I cared to bring with me the following afternoon. From my knowledge of him I knew that meant that he was willing in the most serious way to consider our representations. I advised those who had been more definitely associated with me, and we agreed in the circumstances that it was our duty to support him in the lobby and to induce as many others as possible to do the same.

I happened to meet him as he was leaving the dining-room and told him what I had done, and to this he expressed appreciation. In the end

the Government had a majority of about 80, and I think but for the action of myself and my friends it would have been about 40. There were, however, many deliberate Conservative abstentions, and a very substantial number of Conservatives who voted with the Socialist Party.

The following afternoon we met him in his room at the House of Commons. It was a pathetic interview. He had been terribly shaken both by the debate and by the voting. It was as if he had been struck a severe blow, because as we walked into his room he seemed unable to get out of his chair. We stated our case and he listened with great care, and by the time we had finished he was in much better form. He thanked us for coming and said he would give full weight to what we had to say. In addition to the group I took with me there was also present Mr. Kenneth Pickthorn, who had made independent representations.

I do not know for certain, but I think he had already decided to resign, because on the nine o'clock news next night he announced his resignation, and he introduced his successor, Mr. Churchill.

Some day I suppose somebody will write the history of the intrigue which pushed out of the premiership one of the ablest administrators who has ever held that office.

On the Sunday that Mr. Chamberlain was coming back from his visit to Italy, in January 1939, I asked my young children whether they would like to go to Victoria Station to see him arrive. So the three of us went along, and though the platform was closed to those who hadn't tickets I persuaded the policeman in charge to allow us on.

After Mr. Chamberlain had been greeted by his wife I went up to welcome him, and presented my children, the girl being the one that had been the subject of inspection in Mrs. Chamberlain's presence a good many years before at the age of a month. Mr. Chamberlain seemed to be rather pleased that a couple of children had turned up to welcome him back, and the Press photographers thought that the Prime Minister shaking hands with a small boy and girl was news. The sequel was rather interesting. For the rest of the evening the telephone rang continually from newspapers and journalists wanting to know who the children were and why they were there, and the evening finished up with a Press photographer taking my children in bed. People sometimes ask me how to get publicity. This is an example, though it was not intentional.

CHAPTER XIV

OUT OF PARLIAMENT, 1929–32

MANY members of the general public are inclined to believe that politics in this country is a very remunerative occupation. Most Members of Parliament find that it is the reverse.

When I became a Junior Minister in January 1928 I received the salary of the office but, of course, ceased to receive my pay as an M.P., and had to give up all other income-earning activities. The result was that I was never so hard up in my life as during the 18 months I was a Junior Minister. When we had a General Election in May 1929 I was defeated at Reading, and the Conservative Government lost its majority, so Mr. Baldwin resigned and his resignation carried with it naturally that of all his Ministers, so within a few days of the declaration of the poll I found myself without a seat in Parliament, without a job and with virtually no income, which was very unpleasant because I had a wife and two children to maintain.

However, the late Mr. George Balfour, M.P., who was very prominent in the electrical supply industry, invited me to undertake some engineering consultant work for his firm; and then I had a letter from the Rt. Hon. L. S. Amery to the effect that it was proposed to form a society to study the problems of Empire Trade, and that he had suggested I should direct its research work, and asked me not to commit myself for the moment to any other whole-time job.

The late Lord Melchett, who, as Sir Alfred Mond, had for the bulk of his life been a prominent Liberal and Free Trader and at one time the Hon. Treasurer of the Free Trade Union, had come to the conclusion that with the economic development of the world there was likely to be an American group of great strength naturally centred round the United States of America, a European group of great strength centred round Germany, and that Great Britain to her detriment would be asked to join one or other of these groups unless there was a proper development of Empire Economic Unity, which was obviously impossible without the adoption of a protectionist policy.

Shortly after I had heard from Mr. Amery, Lord Melchett took the initiative and formed the Empire Economic Union primarily as a research organization designed to work out the proper solution of the problems which presented itself to him, and I accepted the invitation to become the Secretary. This was most congenial work to

me, because I had always been a firm believer in Protection and Imperial Preference.

The late Lord Melchett was a man of great genius and personality. As a public speaker he had a bad voice, bad delivery, and yet had a capacity for holding his audience which was quite remarkable. Like many men of his type, he was impatient of detail, and though he was convinced as to the rights of the policy to which he had been converted, he was in no sense an expert.

Just about the same time Lord Beaverbrook, who had always been a great supporter of the policy inaugurated by Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, launched a new movement under the attractive title of the "Empire Crusade", but with the unfortunate slogan of "Empire Free Trade".

Those of us who had studied the problem in detail realized that while it was vitally important we should encourage Empire agriculture by giving Empire products a substantial preference over foreign products, it was equally important to give British agriculture in respect of many commodities some advantage over competing Empire products, and this was impossible if effect were to be given to the policy embodied in the slogan "Empire Free Trade".

With a view to seeking to resolve the differences, Lord Beaverbrook asked Lord Melchett to have lunch with him one day to talk the matter over, and Lord Melchett invited me to accompany him to Lord Beaverbrook's house near Leatherhead.

We had a very good lunch. Lord Beaverbrook is an admirable host. We then retired to another room where the two noble lords discussed the question of high policy. Somewhat unusually for me, I was a listener nearly the whole time. Neither of them was sufficiently well informed with regard to the details to come to a really satisfactory conclusion, but at the end of two hours Lord Beaverbrook said, "Well, Alfred, I think we are agreed." "Yes, Max, that is so," replied Lord Melchett, though quitefrankly I was not at all clear what it was they were agreed about.

Lord Beaverbrook then suggested we should go into the adjoining room to have tea, where we found a number of other guests. At the end of tea Lord Beaverbrook suggested a game of bridge. Lord Melchett agreed, and so did Mr. Joseph Schenk, the well-known American film magnate. Nobody else offered, so Lord Beaverbrook said, "Herbert, won't you join in?" which I agreed to do, though I rarely play bridge because I find that I dislike the inquests which so frequently take place at the end of each hand.

When we sat down Mr. Schenk proposed terms of play which seemed to me rather astronomical and even shocked Lord Melchett, who suggested something lower, and I suggested that I should be in

and out at a tenth of the terms on which the others were proposing to play. We had a very good game. I thought the calling was fantastic on the part of the other three, but as I had never played cards with three multi-millionaires I played carefully, and when we came to settle up I had won 5*s*. from Lord Beaverbrook, and Lord Melchett had won £5 from Mr. Schenk. The only inquest was when we had finished the game, and the conversation suddenly revealed to me that we had been playing contract bridge, whereas up to that date I had only graduated in auction bridge, which of course explained why I could not understand the calling. When two years later I met Culbertson, the American who has made a fortune out of teaching people to play bridge, I thought it might be for the good of his soul if I told him how I had once won 5*s*. while totally uninstructed!

Unfortunately, the results of the conversation between Lord Beaverbrook and Lord Melchett with regard to policy did not turn out as successfully as I had hoped, and Lord Beaverbrook continued to use his slogan of "Empire Free Trade", which was the cause of a good deal of difference of opinion between him and many others who had the same ultimate object.

Lord Baldwin, who was naturally somewhat timid on the subject as the result of his electorate defeat in 1923, took the view that it would not be possible to carry the electorate too far in one step. Lord Beaverbrook, on the other hand, was anxious that the Conservative Party should commit itself to a full policy of Protection without any limitations of commodities, and particularly without any limitations in respect of foodstuffs.

In the meantime the late Lord Rothermere had joined in by starting what was called the "United Empire Party", having very much the same purpose, and between Lord Rothermere and Lord Beaverbrook there appeared to be a somewhat uneasy alliance. Lord Beaverbrook decided to carry the war into the constituencies, and seized the opportunity of a by-election in South Paddington to run a candidate, now Admiral Taylor, M.P., in opposition to the candidate who had been selected by the local Conservative Association, the late Sir Herbert Lidiard.

Lord Beaverbook, who really ran the campaign with all that vigour and ability which characterizes him, overwhelmed Sir Herbert, who though a much respected public man in Paddington was not a good election candidate, and the result was that Admiral Taylor won.

By that time Mr. Neville Chamberlain had become Chairman of the Conservative Party Organization, and on his behalf it was suggested to me that I might consider standing for South Paddington at the General Election in opposition to Taylor, with whom I had always been on friendly terms. I held that the policy of Preference rather than Empire

Free Trade was the right one, and accordingly I accepted the invitation to be a prospective candidate, and with my wife's support started an active campaign in South Paddington, and was clearly making considerable progress through meetings both indoors and at the street corners.

Feelings are always bitter when there is a conflict between people who belong to the same Party, and at the last meeting I addressed, which was an open-air meeting, one of Admiral Taylor's supporters was so violent in his attitude and language that I told him that unless he behaved better I should turn him out of the meeting, which of course is a somewhat difficult thing to do when the meeting is in the open air! However, as he continued to be recalcitrant I decided to carry out my threat. This was not difficult because several of my supporters joined in, and at the end of a few minutes the opponent was in the gutter and sitting on him was one of my very large supporters!

An episode like this was news in the district and apparently the subject of comment in most of the pubs that evening. The result was that Lord Beaverbrook heard of it and came to the conclusion that the incident was likely to lead to Taylor's defeat, so next morning, I believe, he went to see the authorities of the Conservative Central Office and told them that if I stood as the official Conservative candidate in South Paddington the whole influence of the *Daily Express*, the *Sunday Express* and the *Evening Standard* would be used against the National Government which had just been formed.

This so intimidated the authorities of the Conservative Party that I was invited to the Central Office and asked to be self-sacrificing, and persuade the executive of the South Paddington Association that they should agree to the withdrawal of my candidature. I agreed to undertake this somewhat difficult and unpleasant task. I was told that steps would be taken to find me another constituency, and two or three days later my friend Sir R. Burton Chadwick, who was M.P. for Wallasey, told me he was willing to withdraw in my favour, and would do his best to induce the people of Wallasey to adopt me as their candidate.

As Wallasey was only eight miles from my native place I was not a stranger. Unfortunately Sir Robert announced that he did not propose to stand without making it conditional of my adoption. The sequel was that I was not selected, but the Wallasey people chose in my place my friend Colonel Moore-Brabazon, now Lord Brabazon, as their candidate, and he was duly elected.

This decision of the Wallasey people was a disappointment to me. A few friends suggested I should again stand for the Combined English Universities, which I did at short notice, but I had no organization behind me and I was again beaten. When the House of Commons met after the General Election of 1931, I was not an M.P.

Had I been elected in 1931 I think it is quite probable that I should have been invited to take up one of the junior offices, though, frankly, I am doubtful if I should have been willing to do so.

My wife and I had been staying in Lincoln for the weekend, August 22nd, 1931. We had heard on the wireless of the rapidly growing crisis, but we left our friend's house on August 24th before the newspapers had arrived. We were able to buy a newspaper on the way and learnt that it was probable that the Socialist Government would resign, and that a National Government would be formed. My wife and I both thought it would be very much better to have a Conservative Government rather than a Coalition, because we both took the view that Party Governments are a much more efficient instrument than Governments consisting of people who differ on many fundamental principles.

When we reached London I lunched at the Constitutional Club and discussed the matter with the many people I met, and found an attitude of objection to a National Government. In the afternoon I went to the headquarters of the Conservative Research Department in Old Queen Street, which was also used by Mr. Baldwin as his headquarters. The first person I met was Mr. Neville Chamberlain, and I expressed the view that a National Government was a great mistake. His only comment was the somewhat cynical remark, "We shall soon see." I then went and had a chat with Mr. Geoffrey Lloyd and Mr. J. P. L. Thomas, who were then active as Mr. Baldwin's unpaid Private Secretaries, and expressed the same view to them. They seemed very surprised that anyone should not agree with the idea of a National Government.

On leaving the building I ran into Lord Hailsham and said the same to him. He said, "Well, I shall not be a member of the Government, but I think it is a good idea." I said that a National Government would fail to effect the economies that were necessary, and would also make a mess of the system of Protection and Preference which I regarded as vitally necessary. Lord Hailsham was kind enough to say he attached importance to my views on these issues, but that he thought it was right that a National Government should be formed.

By that evening it had been formed, with Mr. MacDonald as Prime Minister. Much to his surprise, only about 12 of his former supporters followed him, and with the exception of Mr. J. H. Thomas none of them were people of working-class origin or connected with the Trade Union Movement.

During the next two or three days there was much discussion, because there were many Conservatives who held the same views as I did.

The members of the Empire Industries Association were very perturbed because they thought the principles of Protection and Preference

were going to be sacrificed just at the moment when it was clear that the public at last were in favour of the adoption of the proposals originally made by Joseph Chamberlain 28 years previously. However, certain assurances were given, with the result that when we had a Party meeting on the Friday, Sir Henry Page Croft (later Lord Croft), the Chairman of the Empire Industries Association, agreed to second the motion approving the action of the Party leaders in joining the Coalition. This was a difficult meeting for Mr. Baldwin, because only a month before, in a speech at Hull, he had made a declaration against a National Government unless such a Government was willing to adopt *in toto* the Conservative Party's policy in respect of Protection and Preference.

The fact that I was agitating strongly against a National Government was, I think, known to many prominent people, and did not make me very popular, but of course as I was not in Parliament my position was a weak one.

I have described earlier in this chapter what happened to me at the General Election which shortly followed the formation of the National Government. It was a very bitter blow to me not to be in the Parliament which I am certain would have been compelled to deal with our trade situation by the adoption of a comprehensive policy of Protection and Preference.

I resumed my political activities outside the House of Commons, and with others took an active part in the agitation that the new Government should adopt a Protectionist policy. Nothing pleased me more than the kindly tribute at that time paid me by my old friend Mr. W. A. Wells, who for many years has been the News Editor of the Empire Industries Association. He presented me with a remarkable poem, beautifully written in his own hand, which still stands on my dressing-table. I always think it the most delightful tribute I have ever received. I reproduce it below.

FOR ALL THAT

H. G. W. 1931

When the black curtain of ill-fate
  Falls on the part that a man has played.
When the path he had fancied straight
  Twists and he finds he has been betrayed.
When the great canvas he had planned
  Stares with a barbarous daub of paint,
When he finds that his eye and hand
  Fail and his spirit is sick and faint;

When the fabric of faith wears thin,
  When the promise of hope grows less,
When the friends he had gloried in
Fade in the shadow of ill-success,
When the seed that his hand has sown
  Lies in the furrows of time decayed,
When he finds that he stands alone,
  Honour and loyalty unrepaid;

When he has built, it seems, in vain
  And the twisted girders mock his worth,
When he's ready to start again
  Brick by brick from the mother earth,
When you see he's as clear of eye
  As at the moment the fight began,
His back as straight, his head as high—
  Then you can tell that a man's a Man.

CHAPTER XV

GETTING A SEAT

THE population of the United Kingdom is about 50 million. There are at the moment 640 M.P.s, so obviously to get a seat in Parliament cannot be very easy. As there are only about 12 people in this country who have fought more Parliamentary Elections than I have my readers will understand I have had much experience.

In the Conservative Party, local associations quite properly have always emphasized the fact that they have complete autonomy, and accordingly in those cases where the leaders of the Party want somebody adopted, by no means does it follow that effect to their views will be given by any particular Conservative Association that is seeking a candidate either for a by-election or for a General Election.

After my defeat in 1931 for the Combined English Universities I was keen to get back into Parliament, and so about six weeks after the General Election of 1931 I asked Mr. Baldwin if he would be good enough to give me an interview. One day in November 1931 I went at his invitation to see him in his room at the House of Commons. I told him that I was very keen to get back to the House of Commons, but in the existing circumstances my prospects seemed rather thin. I know he had not been too pleased about my activities when the National Government was being formed; nevertheless he was most sympathetic, and made the comment that he knew of one or two vacancies that were likely to materialize and he would bear me in mind.

Shortly before Christmas my mother, then over 91, died at my brother's house in Bradford. While I was there for the funeral I had a telephone message from the late Sir William Mitchell-Thomson, then M.P. for Croydon South, to the effect that he wanted to see me urgently on my return to London. I met him a few days later and he told me that he would be made a peer in the New Year's Honours List, and that there would be a by-election in Croydon South. He was kind enough to say that he hoped I would be chosen as his successor.

I do not know, but I presume that Mr. Baldwin had made the suggestion, though actually I had always been on most friendly terms with Sir William and had spoken very frequently at large meetings in his constituency. He said that the fact that he was about to be made a peer was not known to anyone in the constituency except the Chairman, Mr. Henry Berney (now Sir Henry Berney), and the Conservative agent, and he asked me to invite Mr. Berney to come and see me. I did so, and at the

end of a very pleasant discussion Mr. Berney told me that he was hoping to secure my adoption. He acted very promptly after the Honours List appeared on New Year's Day, and the Executive of the Croydon South Conservative Association discussed the problem in my absence, and paid me the very high compliment of inviting me to submit myself to the General Meeting of the Association with a view to adoption without an interview with the Executive Committee.

I had the advantage that I was personally known to all the members of the Committee. Shortly afterwards the General Meeting took place, and I was adopted as the candidate for the forthcoming by-election.

The contest was a very dull one, because a great many people said, "We voted for Sir William only the other day, why do you want us to vote again for you?" The weather was unpleasant. Nevertheless the ladies of the Grantham Primrose League Habitation worked magnificently, and with some support from some of the male Conservatives they canvassed the constituency thoroughly well. Though the poll was a much smaller one than it had been at the General Election a few months previously, I was elected by a majority of nearly 10,000.

It was the dullest contest in which I have ever taken part, for the reasons I have indicated, and I remember when after lunch my wife and I were touring the constituency for the second time in the day, my wife remarked to me, "I think five people have voted up to now, I believe three for you and two for your opponent." The poll was counted that evening, and after I had been declared elected my wife and I went to a celebration party which had been arranged by Mr. Berney and our supporters.

I was startled when half an hour after I had become M.P. I was presented with an attractive souvenir of the election in the form of a statuette, on the base of which the result of the election had been inscribed. I discovered afterwards that Sir Henry had ordered the statuette some days before, and had the inscription completed except for the figures of the majority, which were quickly put in. Sir Henry repeated this with another presentation in 1935, when the majority was much larger—17,071—and again the presentation was made within half an hour of the declaration of the result. He never told me whether he had made similar preparations in 1945 when there was no victory to celebrate, though neither he nor I anticipated the sad result the day before the count.

I have described what happened on the occasion when I obtained a seat in Parliament with the minimum of effort on my part, but, as anyone who has ever been a Parliamentary candidate knows, it does not often happen quite so easily. There is also the problem of political finance, which used to have far too important a bearing on the issue.

One of the problems that faces every political organization is that of raising voluntary subscriptions. The Labour Party, of course, have less

difficulty than any other Party, because through the trade unions they have built up what is virtually a compulsory system of subscription for trade unionists, irrespective of their political point of view. The Conservative Party, on the other hand, and equally the Liberal Party, have to raise the necessary money for their constituency organizations by voluntary subscriptions or by money-raising efforts such as whist drives, bazaars, concerts, etc.

In the days when there were many people who had large net incomes it was regarded as right and proper that the Conservative candidate or Member should as a privilege pay the bulk of the cost of running the constituency organization. This was a bad system, because it so restricted the choice of suitable candidates, but it has always been true that in some parts of the country such demands were not made on the candidates because of the great efforts the local people made to raise the necessary finance for their constituency organizations.

I remember on one occasion receiving an invitation from the Chairman of a North of England constituency to meet him and the Conservative agent with a view to my being adopted as the prospective Conservative candidate. After discussing various matters about policy, the Chairman raised the question of finance, and said, "We shall not ask you to contribute anything towards the election expense, but we should like you to subscribe £50 a year to the association, if and when you are elected as our M.P."

I expressed some surprise at the generous nature of the proposal, and asked him why it was he was in a position to propose terms so much more favourable to a candidate than those that generally prevailed. He said, "It is quite easy; we still have £7,000 left over from our last bazaar." This very large sum of money had been raised in a constituency which had passed, and was still passing, through a period of very difficult trade, and where at the moment of my conversation there were about 15 per cent unemployed!

Money is raised for politics in many strange ways. My elder child, a daughter, was born in 1927, when I was M.P. for Reading. Shortly afterwards, the Conservative Association was having its annual bazaar, which was opened by Mrs. Neville Chamberlain. It was suggested to my wife that it would be rather an attraction if the baby were brought to the bazaar, so this was done, and after the opening proceedings had been successfully concluded the Chairman announced that the baby could be inspected by all present on payment of a small fee, with the result that for two hours a procession of my constituents paid homage to Her Majesty the Baby. I told her the other day I did not suppose she would ever raise as much money for politics as she did when she was a month old.

The prospective candidate is a very important person, particularly among the members of the Association, but, as he frequently learns, he is exceedingly unimportant up to the moment that he is finally adopted.

I remember on one occasion, after I had been defeated at Reading, being invited to submit my name for adoption in a certain constituency, and I was given to understand that Mr. Baldwin, then leader of our Party, had expressed to the local leaders that he would be pleased if I were selected. In addition to myself there were two others under consideration, Mr. R. S. Hudson, now the Rt. Hon. R. S. Hudson, M.P., and Mr. E. H. Keeling, now M.P. for Twickenham. I had only one or two acquaintances in the constituency and by chance I happened to meet one of them the week before. He told me he was a member of the local Conservative Executive and so could advise me as to the line I should take when addressing the Executive Committee, and expressed the hope that I should be adopted.

I do not know what happened to the other two candidates, but my interview with the Committee, when I was accompanied by my wife, was a somewhat strange one. It was quite obvious that members of the executive had already taken sides, and certain members of it who were partisans of one or other of the possible choices made it their business to ask as many rude questions as they possibly could. The result of this partisanship was that when they came to vote on the matter Keeling was adopted, I was second, Hudson was third, but the opinion was so sharply divided that the Committee started to look round again, and ultimately my friend Mr. Robert Perkins was adopted, and in due course elected M.P.

The sitting member, who was ill, and for this reason was willing to resign, was so annoyed with the way the executive had behaved that he decided not to resign, and held the seat until Parliament was duly dissolved in 1931.

On another occasion somewhat earlier in 1924, after I had given up Wednesbury, a vacancy occurred for the Abbey division of Westminster through the death of General Nicholson, the Member. As I lived in the division, and my wife and I were both members of the executive of the local Association, I thought I would offer myself as the candidate. Altogether there were six in the running, one of whom was Mr. Otho Nicholson, who was ultimately chosen. He was the nephew of the previous Member. Another was Mr. Winston Churchill, who had recently left the Liberal Party. There were about thirty members on the executive.

Even before Mr. Churchill had been mentioned the forthcoming by-election was attracting a good deal of interest, and one member of the executive appeared to have taken a report and supplied it to the newspapers. Something that I said in private was reported, which certainly did

me no good. I imagine that the gentleman in question thought that somebody else should be adopted. Mr. Churchill's friends were annoyed with the very cavalier way in which he was treated, for he was not even asked to address the executive, so they induced him to stand as the Independent Constitutional candidate. I took the view that all the members of the executive were in duty bound to support whichever candidate was chosen by the executive, and accordingly I supported Mr. Nicholson against Mr. Churchill, but quite obviously it would have been wiser if the Association had chosen Mr. Churchill.

On another occasion I received an invitation to be considered as candidate for what always has been a very safe Conservative seat. The invitation came from a former Cabinet Minister, who was President of the Association, but he explained to me that a number of others would be considered as well, and he informed me, somewhat to my surprise, that my wife might be a disability. I found that this was not out of any disrespect to her, but because the Liberal candidate was a very attractive young bachelor who had done very well at a previous election, and had captivated the flappers of the constituency, and they thought the Conservatives must put up another attractive young bachelor! The result was that because I was married I was not selected.

The attractive young bachelor was duly selected and became M.P. Unfortunately he became too attracted by a married lady in the constituency, with the result that divorce proceedings followed and he was not selected as candidate at the next General Election.

When I met the wife of the President of the Association at a Downing Street tea-party, some little time after the divorce proceedings had taken place, I expressed the view to her that in future when that constituency was choosing a candidate they would probably ask them to produce their marriage lines. Though she was a very good friend of mine she took a poor view of my cynical remark.

On another occasion a very important industrialist, who lived in a certain Midland constituency where a by-election was about to take place, suggested to me that I should offer myself as a candidate. He advised me to consult the President of the Association, a very well-known and highly respected peer now deceased.

I took his advice and saw the peer in question. He told me quite frankly that he was sorry but he could not give me his own support, because he had already promised to support the candidature of another person, but he assured me that he thought I would be a very good candidate if selected, and that he would bring my name before the executive when they met to consider the question of the adoption of candidates. People of the utmost probity sometimes act very strangely, for in this case when the meeting was held to select the candidate he made

no reference to me, as I discovered from a talk I had subsequently with the Conservative Central Office agent for the area.

The people who choose candidates are, of course, the members of the Selection Committee of the Local Association, and in turn the Selection Committee refers to the Executive Committee and the Executive Committee in due course to the general body of members, so obviously a great many personal factors have a bearing on the matter.

It has been alleged with some truth that in the Conservative Party what is called the "old school tie" exercises an undue influence. This is partly but not entirely true. For example, I do not think Disraeli, who though not the greatest was probably the most remarkable Prime Minister, had an "old school tie" advantage. In the Labour Party it is not the "old school tie" but the trade union tie which dominates the issue.

At the beginning of the 1923 election the President of the Walsall Conservative Association, who lived in Wednesbury, invited me to his house to meet one or two of his friends from Walsall, and explained to me that they had no candidate, and were very anxious to find somebody quickly, and did I know of a suitable man who belonged to the Black Country. I was in a position to tell them that a suitable man lived in the Wednesbury Division, that he was a young man, exceptionally well-informed, a brilliant platform speaker, and his job that of a clerk employed by a public utility company. The result was the next night I took him to meet the Walsall people. They decided he was the right man, offered to provide the whole of his election expenses if he would stand, which he agreed to do.

That election, of course, was not a good one for the Conservatives, and though he put up a splendid fight he did not get in. But consequences for him, however, proved to be unfortunate, because the public utility company in question told him that they could not have their employees taking any active part in controversial politics, and gave him notice. I set to work to try and find him a suitable job, but things were not easy in the district.

Ultimately Mr. Amery, who in these matters is always most kind, took steps to help him. These were proceeding well when suddenly I heard from my friend that he had found a job for himself as manager of a cinema, but this was not before many weeks had gone by and in the meantime he and his wife had had a most difficult time. It always seemed to me a strange thing that his previous employers should have been so shortsighted. However, time brought its revenge, because in the year 1938, with 1,000 other people, I had the honour of being received by him and his wife at a great banquet at Grosvenor House, London, over which he presided in his capacity as President of the Cinematograph

Exhibitors' Association of the United Kingdom. His name—Mr. S. K. Lewis. I have had no opportunity of seeing him since that banquet. He was still a good robust Conservative, but he had come to the definite conclusion that standing for Parliament was not in his line.

One of the problems which worries employees in connection with politics is that they have some hesitation in seeking election to public bodies without first obtaining the permission of their employers, and obviously an employer is clearly entitled to the full-time services of his employee during working hours.

Not much difficulty arises if an employee seeks election on a municipal body, because the bulk of the work of such bodies is now done during the evening. On the other hand, if an employee is adopted as a prospective candidate for Parliament during the period when he is carrying out a campaign as a prospective candidate a conflict may arise between his business obligations and his constituency duties.

When I was adopted as the prospective candidate for the Combined English Universities I was at that time the Secretary of the Machine Tool Trades Association, but no problem arose because the Combined English Universities is not a geographical constituency and the bulk of the candidate's activities was conducted by post. I did not even mention the possibility to the Machine Tool Trades Association until I had been adopted.

Not all those who were my bosses were Conservatives; nevertheless they were all very nice about it, and no particular problem arose.

When later on I was adopted as the prospective candidate for Wednesbury the circumstances were different, and I asked the Committee of the Association whether they would grant me a reasonable leave of absence when I went to take part in meetings at Wednesbury, and also leave of absence when the contest came on. They agreed.

Between the 1918 and 1922 elections I was approached by the then agent for Kettering, Captain W. Strickland, who later became M.P. for Coventry, who enquired whether I would consider offering myself as the prospective candidate for Kettering, a constituency in which I had spoken on many occasions. The fact that this approach had been made to me apparently became known in Kettering, and this had a somewhat strange result, because one day one of the members of the Committee of the Machine Tool Trades Association, the late Charles Wicksteed, called to see me.

He was a typical Cobden-Bright Liberal. He had always been very friendly to me, and on one occasion when I was giving a lecture at the Conservative Club in Kettering on economic matters he came to listen and actually proposed the vote of thanks to me. He was a dear old

gentleman, some 30 years older than I was, and was kind enoug to say that he hoped that I would in due course become a Member of Parliament, but he made a strong appeal to me on personal grounds not to consider standing for Kettering, because if I did he would have to oppose me.

It was a somewhat embarrassing position, and I promised to consider what he had said. I thought my chances of getting in were slim, and as I wanted to oblige the old gentleman I informed Captain Strickland that I did not wish my name to be considered.

Mr. Wicksteed was a very remarkable man. His business was the manufacture of wood-working machinery, and his hobby the manufacture of novelty toys for children's parks, swing-boats, and merry-go-rounds of the hand-operated variety. He gave a park to his native town and equipped it with everything that could delight the heart of a youngster. He had a celebrated brother, a Nonconformist Minister, the Rev. Hartley Wicksteed, who enjoyed a national reputation as an economist, and was the author of many books on the subject.

During the period when I was M.P. for Reading and also Secretary of the Machine Tool Trades Association I was treated with the utmost courtesy by the Committee of that Association, and not for one minute did I ever find myself in any difficulty in connection with my political activities, though my employers were a mixed bag of Conservatives and Liberals.

Once upon a time it was thought that all Conservatives were very rich men, and accordingly the main question that Constituency Associations put to people when they were interviewed was would they pay all their election expenses, and would they subscribe handsomely to the local Association.

Today, as a result of heavy taxation, those people who are rich in capital are not rich in income, and accordingly there is no one who is willing to make the generous offers that came from Liberals, Conservatives and even a few Socialists in the past.

Largely as a result of the activities of Sir Derrick Gunston, Bt., formerly M.P. for the Thornbury Division of Gloucestershire, the Conservative Party has adopted a new policy whereby no candidate will be regarded as an official candidate unless he promises to subscribe not more than £100 a year to the local Conservative Association, and provided he promises to pay not more than one half of the election expenses; in other words, the rank and file of the Conservative Party are now required to make their proper financial contribution in support of the political faith which is theirs.

I mentioned earlier on that I have stood at nine Parliamentary Elections, and it was not until I came to the eighth that I had any local

financial help, though it is true that Central Party funds did help me on one or two earlier occasions.

When the General Election of 1935 was in sight my friend Alderman James Marshall, who afterwards became Mayor of Croydon, and is now the leader of the anti-Socialist Party on the Croydon Borough Council, expressed the view that he did not see why I should bear the whole cost of the election expenses. His remarks were very gratifying and comforting to me. Many of the older members of the Association did not think it quite right that a Parliamentary candidate should be subsidized by the local Association; however, they agreed that Alderman Marshall should do his best, and his best was very good, because as a result a large proportion of my expenses were defrayed.

When the election of 1945 was imminent he asked me and Mr. Percy Holt, the Chairman of the Croydon South Conservative Association, to lunch, at which he expressed the view that a substantial part of my election expenses ought to be provided locally. He and Mr. Holt, as bait, promised each a handsome contribution. Alderman Marshall was most successful, and on this occasion the local funds bore seven-tenths of my election expenses.

I want to put this on record as a tribute to Alderman Marshall and Mr. Holt, because they had anticipated what has since become the approved policy of the Conservative Party, which means that today a man of the right qualities can seek an opportunity of serving the State in Parliament even if he may not, up to the time of his adoption as a candidate, have been successful in earning an income large enough to enable him to pay his own expenses.

CHAPTER XVI

SOME HOUSE OF COMMONS INCIDENTS

JUDGING by speeches I have heard and articles I have read, a large proportion of the public seem to regard the average back-bench M.P. as being "Lobby fodder", that is to say, they exist solely to go into the Lobby to vote with their side. They frequently seem to imply that if an M.P. is seated in the House of Commons listening to somebody else making a speech he is working, and that if he is not in the Chamber he is idle.

Though it is true that the fundamental activity of the House of Commons is based on what happens in the Chamber, nevertheless a very large proportion of the essential duties of a Member takes place outside the Chamber. Members endeavour to be in the Chamber when the subject under discussion is one in which they are particularly interested, or on which they desire to obtain information.

At other times Members are attending one of the almost innumerable meetings which are taking place in various committee rooms. Some of these meetings are official, and are part of Parliamentary proceedings; the bulk are unofficial, namely meetings of groups of members to consider what action they propose to take with regard to some subject in which they happen to be collectively interested.

Then, at any moment, there are hundreds of visitors in the Palace of Westminster who have come to see one or more M.P.s, and it sometimes happens that a very considerable part of a Member's day is devoted to discussions with constituents and others, and of course all the time there is the burden of correspondence, and very frequently the study of documents in the Library with a view to the preparation of matter to be used in debate.

On most issues the ordinary Member has no difficulty in making up his mind as to how he wishes to vote, whether he has actually heard the debate or not. On other issues a Member is instinctively inclined to vote with his side, being reasonably certain that he would have voted in exactly the same way had he heard the whole debate. On the other hand, when a group of Members are dissatisfied with the line being taken by their own side the representations they make to their own Party Whips frequently influence the attitude of their own leaders, and the popular idea that the ordinary M.P. is a Whip-driven slave is so remote from the fact as to be ludicrous.

When a division takes place in the House of Commons Members are summoned to the Chamber by the ringing of bells, and by the voice of the police calling "Division", and if a division takes place at a moment when the bulk of the Members are at dinner (for the House sits throughout meals without a break) those who vote are often ten or fifteen times more numerous than those who are in the Chamber at the moment the division is called, and this frequently gives to the proceedings in the House an appearance which completely deceives the public who may be in the Gallery.

From the moment when a division is called six minutes will elapse before the entrance doors to the division lobby are locked. This is to allow adequate time for Members to reach the Chamber from all parts of the Palace of Westminster, and even from places outside where division bells have been installed.

I remember on one occasion when I was dining with a party there were eight divisions during dinner, and altogether I walked nearly two miles in voting eight times. Sometimes, of course, there is a great rush to get into the division lobby before the doors are locked, and on one occasion during the small hours of the morning I saw a Member vote who had arrived after the doors had been locked. It was Lord Hartington, now the Duke of Devonshire. He had miscalculated his time, and arrived about five seconds late. He is slight in build, so a group of members lifted him up and passed him through the oak grille which surrounded the doors in the old House of Commons.

The visible record of this adventure has since been wiped out by Hitler, because when pushing Lord Hartington through the grille a piece of oak was broken off, and this trace of the episode was destroyed when the House was burnt out.

I well remember another strange episode in the small hours of the morning. The Socialist Party were contesting very strongly the progress of a Conservative Bill through the committee stage. They were using every device for delaying the process as much as possible. As many Members as possible would speak on every amendment, and everyone spoke as long as they could without getting out of order. The proceedings on each amendment were brought o an end by the Government Whip moving the closure, and the vote on this would take about ten minutes, and then we all voted on the subject-matter of the amendment.

In order to prolong the proceedings the Socialists were as dilatory as possible in passing out of the voting lobby, and finally at about 3 a.m. a number of them decided not to come out at all. They had passed the clerks who marked the register, but they had not passed the tellers outside the exit door, and the tellers could see that there were a number of Members in the lobby who had passed the clerks and not left the lobby.

They could not proceed to the Table to report the result of the division, so for about half an hour the House of Commons was paralysed. Ultimately the Chairman of Ways and Means instructed the Sergeant-at-Arms to enquire into the cause of delay in bringing the division to an end. In due course the Sergeant-at-Arms reported that 13 Members had passed the clerks but had not come out of the lobby. The Sergeant-at-Arms was then instructed to obtain their names, and these were reported to the Chairman, who then announced that he would send for the Speaker and report the 13 Members for obstruction.

As it was an all-night sitting with the House in Committee, the Speaker was in bed, so some little time elapsed before he arrived. The Chairman of Ways and Means reported the 13 Members: and it was then proposed that they should be suspended for obstruction. So another division took place for the suspension of the 13 Members, and we all had to pass through the lobby in which the 13 Members were still engaged in their obstructive procedure, the leader among them being the Rt. Hon. Hugh Dalton, M.P., later Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The division for the suspension of the Members was carried, and they were then escorted in accordance with regulations outside the Palace of Westminster by the Sergeant-at-Arms. The period of suspension lasted a week.

In order to prevent a repetition of this form of obstruction the Speaker gave orders that if the lobby in future was not cleared by a reasonable time the Chairman was to send for the tellers, so a new precedent was created, and this is the way in which the House of Commons from time to time adjusts its practice in order to insure that public work shall always be carried on. On the occasion in question, during the period when we were taking steps to suspend the 13 Members they amused themselves by singing to the tune of "John Brown's Body" certain phrases which are part of the day-to-day procedure of the House of Commons, but this did not save the 13 Members from being turned out.

Obstruction takes many strange forms, and I remember one unusual form in 1928 of which Mr. Thurtle was the hero, if that is the right description. I reminded him of the incident at the King's Garden Party in the July of 1946, which was an appropriate occasion to do so.

On the day of the King's Garden Party in 1928 the business set down for consideration was the report stage of the Companies Bill, which was a Board of Trade Bill. The Minister in charge, who was then President of the Board of Trade, was Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister, now Lord Swinton, and I as Parliamentary Secretary was there to assist. At the end of questions, that is to say at 3.45, a motion was carried to enable us to sit as long as was necessary to complete the report stage. After the division several hundred Members left the Palace of Westminster in order to go to

Buckingham Palace, and those who were left behind were Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister, myself, our Parliamentary Private Secretaries, some of the Government Whips, and on the other side the Rt. Hon. A. V. Alexander, who was leading the Socialist Party, one or two of their Whips and Mr. Ernest Thurtle, who for some reason took the view that Members of the House of Commons should stay in the House and should not go to the Garden Party.

At about 4.15 Mr. Thurtle got up and drew attention to the fact that there was not a quorum present. When this happens the Speaker orders a count, and if at the end of two minutes there are less than 40 Members in the Chamber the House is adjourned. On this occasion it was quite obvious that there were not 40 Members in the whole building, and the Speaker, Mr. Whitley, pointed out that only a few minutes before over 400 had voted, and he really could not on such short notice put them to the trouble of coming back into the Chamber to show their presence.

The Chief Whip, Captain Eyres-Monsell, sent off one of the other Whips in a taxi to Buckingham Palace to collect as many Members as he could, while Mr. Thurtle retired to the library for the purpose of studying the rules of procedure, and when his studies were completed he came back and again drew attention to the fact that there was no quorum. The Speaker had also been studying the rules of procedure and discovered no reason why there should be a count. Within a few minutes Members started to trickle back to the Palace of Westminster, and when there were more than 40 in the building, but not in the Chamber, the Chief Whip drew attention to the fact that there was no quorum present. On this occasion the Speaker ordered a count, and very much to Mr. Thurtle's surprise over 40 members were present.

There is a convention that a count is not called more frequently than once an hour, so the Members returned to the Garden Party and the business continued. In the meantime Mr. A. V. Alexander, by arrangement, had been making a very long speech on the first amendment, to which Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister made a very long reply, so that by the time we came to vote on the first amendment both parties were represented in strength, and the division which took place was a properly representative one.

It was rather silly in a way, and I have always thought that if there is some public ceremony at which Members quite properly should be present, then the sitting of the House ought to be suspended for the required period. When I reminded Mr. Thurtle of this episode he seemed to have forgotten all about it, but referred to it in his weekly article in the *Sunday Express* the following Sunday.

A curious episode happened to me in the House in the summer of

1925. Mr. Walter Womersley, now the Rt. Hon. Sir Walter Womersley, Bt., had introduced a Bill to amend the Public Health Act of 1875. In the main the clauses of this Bill were clauses that had been collected from private municipal bills that had been enacted from time to time. The object was to confer on local authorities the powers already obtained by some. One clause, however, excited a good deal of controversy, because it proposed to confer powers, which were thought too wide, on all municipalities in respect of the provision of theatrical entertainment. The proprietors of theatres were objecting to the wideness of this clause, and had asked certain of their friends in the House of Commons to table an amendment when the report stage was being taken on the floor of the House, the committee stage having been taken before one of the standing committees. The three Members who had tabled amendments were all connected with the theatre: Sir Walter de Frece, Sir Alfred Butt, and Mrs. Hilton Philipson.

The report stage was being taken on a certain Friday. On the Thursday Sir Walter de Frece came to me and said would I mind adding my name to the amendment so that I could take charge of it the following day, as unfortunately neither he nor Sir Alfred Butt nor Mrs. Hilton Philipson could be in the House on the Friday, and he told me in his own particular case it was because his wife was far from well.

In due course this amendment was reached on the Friday, and I proposed it. During my speech I was interrupted by a member of the Labour Party asking me what I knew about the theatre, and why was I proposing it instead of the three well-known theatrical people whose names appeared above mine. I explained that I was proposing this amendment because of the absence of Sir Walter de Frece, whose wife, better known to the public as Miss Vesta Tilley, was seriously ill. Actually I had rather misunderstood Sir Walter, because she really was not seriously ill.

The sequel was amusing. When Sir Walter and his wife returned home that afternoon from the races they were greeted by some friend who had arrived at their house with the remark, "Oh, Vesta, I am delighted to see you have now recovered." She said, "From what?" and the reply was, "Your serious illness in the *Evening Standard*."

In the course of this book I have made a number of comments as to what constitutes news, and I did not realize when I was making my remark in the House of Commons, which was in fact an exaggeration of what Sir Walter had said to me, that I really was creating news by saying Vesta Tilley was seriously ill.

That very attractive person, Sir Walter de Frece, has passed from us, and therefore I must be kind in my criticism, but I must say I think he rather led me up the garden on that occasion!

CHAPTER XVII

MATTERS ECCLESIASTICAL AND LEGAL

BEING neither a parson nor a lawyer, I have led a fairly normal life on these fronts, but there have been one or two interesting incidents. In 1920 the late Mr. Twining, then the Vicar of St. Stephen's Church, Vincent Square, Westminster, asked me if I would be one of the churchwardens. I explained to him that because of business and politics I was frequently away from home over the weekend, and therefore would not be able to discharge the job properly. But he pressed me very strongly to take it on as he wanted me to look after the accounts throughout the year owing to the fact that my colleague, the late General Black, for health reasons, had to spend the winter abroad.

About a year after my appointment Dr. Winnington-Ingram, then Bishop of London, appointed me with some others to serve on a commission to consider the situation which existed in Vincent Square owing to the fact that there were two churches there and the population had dropped in a comparatively short time to half what it had been.

The commission consisted of four persons: myself; the Rev. Staunton Batty, who afterwards became Bishop of Fulham; Mr. Wickham-Legg, whose brother was then Archdeacon at Reading; and a fourth whose name I have forgotten. The meetings were held at my flat, and we ultimately recommended that St. Mary's Church should be demolished, the same should apply to St. Stephen's Vicarage, and that the sites of both these buildings should be sold and that the two parishes should be amalgamated. We provided a good stipend for the Vicar of the combined parishes, were able to make ample provision for the previous Vicar, and we provided enough for a good pension for Mr. Twining when he came to resign.

The report had to receive the approval of Parliament, which in due course it did. The Ecclesiastical Commissioners bought the site of St. Mary's Church and the L.C.C. the site of St. Stephen's Vicarage. The Ecclesiastical Commissioners apparently granted a lease to some builders, with the result that the site of St. Mary's Church is now occupied by a large block of flats.

The L.C.C., who have been in possession of the site for over a quarter of a century, had at the time when war broke out put up the steel structure for an extension to the adjoining technical school, and that is as far as they have got. This is interesting as showing the comparative speed of private enterprise and municipal enterprise. The

capital sums raised from the sales of the sites were to be used for the building of a new church somewhere else in the diocese of London.

When Mr. Twining resigned, Mr. Shepley-Smith was appointed as the new Vicar, and as one of the churchwardens I attended the induction service by Dr. Winnington-Ingram, whom I had not previously met, and for the first time in my life I had to act as clergyman. The Archdeacon was ill and could not attend for the purpose of presenting the new Vicar, so the Bishop appointed me as "acting Archdeacon" with instructions to present "this Godly and learned man" as the new Vicar.

In 1927 I found myself on the fringe of a curious minor ecclesiastical and constitutional crisis. The late Rt. Hon. Ian Macpherson, M.P., afterwards the first Lord Strathcarron, desired to have his child baptized in the crypt of the Palace of Westminster by the late Dr. Fleming, minister of St. Columba's Presbyterian Church. Objection to this was raised by the late Canon Carnegie, who was the chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons, on the ground that the crypt was reserved for Church of England services. Mr. Macpherson, former Cabinet Minister, challenged the validity of Canon Carnegie's contention, and the ultimate result was that the matter was referred to the Law Officers of the Crown to report on the ecclesiastical status of the crypt.

It is alleged that at one time Cromwell stabled horses in the crypt. It is also alleged that one Speaker used it as his dining-room. It is also suggested that this is the place where Guy Fawkes was discovered with his barrels of gunpowder. The Law Officers ultimately reported that it was very dubious if the crypt was in fact a consecrated building. The Palace of Westminster is under the charge of the Lord Great Chamberlain, an hereditary office shared by three families. The holder of this office acts on behalf of His Majesty in administering the building.

As a result of the report of the Law Officers, advice was tendered to His Majesty, which was accepted, that the crypt should be placed at the disposal of any Member of either House who made application to the Lord Great Chamberlain for the use of the crypt for a Christian service.

In June 1927 I applied for the use of the crypt for the baptism of my daughter Rosemary. A short time before a similar application had been made by my friend Sir Ernest Shepperson, who had arranged for the Archdeacon of Hertfordshire to baptize his child. Neither Canon Carnegie nor Dr. Winnington-Ingram, then Bishop of London, were at all pleased about the decision which had been arrived at as a result of the report of the Law Officers. At the moment Dr. Winnington-Ingram was on a world tour, and the then Bishop of Willesden was in charge of the diocese of London, and Dr. Winnington-Ingram had apparently left certain instructions with regard to the crypt chapel. The Bishop of

Willesden had been informed that the Archdeacon of Hertfordshire was going to perform the baptismal ceremony.

The Archdeacon was much surprised when he received a telegram from the Bishop of Willesden forbidding him to come into the diocese of London for the purpose of performing an illegal ceremony, namely a private baptism, not on grounds of urgency. According to the Book of Common Prayer, children are to be baptized publicly, that is to say, in open church. As the crypt had been deemed not to be a consecrated building the baptism in the crypt would not be a public baptism, but a private baptism.

The Archdeacon of Hertfordshire at once informed Sir Ernest Shepperson, who consulted the then Speaker, Mr. Whitley, who advised Sir Ernest to go and see the Bishop of Willesden.

Precisely what happened I do not know, but I gather there was some very plain and unecclesiastical speaking; but the Bishop would not give in, so Sir Ernest reported the matter to the Speaker, who said, "Well, you had better see the Archbishop of Canterbury," and telephoned at once to Lambeth Palace and fixed an appointment for Sir Ernest. When Sir Ernest explained the matter to the Archbishop (Davidson), the latter remarked: "What has it got to do with the Bishop of Willesden? The crypt is the King's private chapel, and is accordingly extra-diocesan and not within the jurisdiction of any bishop whatsoever."

The baby was duly baptized by the Archdeacon of Hertfordshire, and my daughter Rosemary a week later by the late Canon Gilmore, of Reading. While the controversy was in progress I hesitated to tell Canon Gilmore, who was an Anglo-Catholic, because I was afraid he might withdraw his acceptance to the invitation I had offered him. When it was all over I told him the facts, and he said, "Well, it is not often a parson is asked to perform a ceremony in the ancient crypt, and not all the bishops in the world would have stopped me."

The Law Officer principally responsible for the decision was Sir Douglas Hogg, now Lord Hailsham, who was then Attorney-General, whose grandson Douglas was baptized in the crypt on VE-Day. The ceremony should have been performed by Canon Don, the Speaker's Chaplain, now the Dean of Westminster, but VE-Day was a very busy day for Canon Don, on account of the special service for the House of Commons in St. Margaret's, and he was prevented from performing the baptismal ceremony, so at short notice the duty was undertaken by the Chaplain of the Savoy, who might have been prevented from baptizing young Douglas but for the action taken nearly twenty years before by old Douglas.

When my daughter Rosemary became engaged to Mr. Ian Mactaggart, I asked the Bishop of Portsmouth, Dr. Anderson, who had

previously been Suffragan Bishop of Croydon, if he would perform the wedding ceremony. He promptly consented, and asked my wife and me to go over and have tea with him at Fareham and take the young couple to meet him. Bishopswood at Fareham is presumably the only Bishop's palace in Britain with a thatched roof, and incidentally it has a very nice garden. On being taken round the garden we saw some Chinese geese, a particular kind of goose that we had not previously seen, so I asked the Bishop about them, and he then told me this rather amusing story.

He and the Admiral in command of Portsmouth had been advised that these Chinese geese were very good egg producers, so the result was that the Admiral bought three and the Bishop bought three. As the months went by neither the Admiral nor the Bishop could report any eggs. However, after some months a Chinese general who had come over to this country for a military mission had been invited to Portsmouth to see the dockyard, and someone suggested to the Admiral that if the Chinese general were to speak to the Chinese geese in their own language it might have the desired effect.

Next morning the Chinese geese were duly paraded, the Chinese general made some remarks to them, and that evening a miracle happened, because one of the geese laid an egg. This much raised the hope of the Bishop, who thought that he would probably get some eggs; but the weeks went on and still no eggs, so in despair the Bishop consulted the leading poultry expert of the district, who came up, submitted the geese to a full inspection and then said, "The trouble, my lord, with your geese is they are all ganders."

This had an unfortunate effect on two of the ganders, because the Bishop and his family ate them. He then bought two real geese, with the result that a most adequate supply of eggs was obtained.

I had a somewhat similar experience with a different kind of animal. Shortly after I was married I was presented with a tom kitten. My wife thought that it would be a nuisance when it grew up to be a wanderer, and she suggested that I should take it to the local vet. in order that it should be subjected to a slight operation calculated to destroy its normal desire to be a wanderer. The local vet. charged me 2*s.* 6*d.* The operation does not appear to have been very successful, because nine months later the tom cat gave birth to a litter of kittens.

So far as legal experiences are concerned, those of the greatest interest were two in which my sole purpose was the protection of the liberty of the subject.

A good many years ago, not long after I became M.P. for Croydon, I spent a very busy Christmas Eve, which fell on a Sunday, dealing with the important constitutional problem relating to release on bail. The employees of a certain office in the City were given the Saturday

off before Christmas, and on leaving on the Friday night patronized some of the local hostelries not wisely but too well, with the result that some took part in a rag on London Bridge Station, in the course of which the proceedings became somewhat animated, and a young man who lived in Croydon knocked out a Southern Railway policeman. He was locked up for the night, brought before the magistrates the next morning, and was remanded in custody for a week, which meant that he could not take part in the Christmas festivities at his home.

The young man was employed by a gentleman who is now an M.P., and his father appealed to him to see if something could not be done to get the boy released so that he could be home on Christmas Day. The employer spoke to an M.P. with whom he was friendly and who was a distinguished lawyer, and the latter in turn rang me up because he thought it better for me to handle the case as the boy was a constituent of mine.

My first step was to find out who was the Vacation Judge, which I succeeded in discovering from another judge whom I had known very well when he was an M.P. By good fortune the Vacation Judge was living only three or four miles away from me. I rang up to say I wanted to bring before him that evening, if possible, a case for consideration, and he agreed to hear the case at 6.30. I telephoned the boy's father, who came over and saw me. I got in touch with a solicitor friend, Mr. H. Garland Wells, and he in turn on the telephone briefed a barrister, while I got in touch with the police-station where the boy was being held.

The sequel to all this was that at 6.30 a sergeant, a constable, the father, a barrister with me, as the solicitor's runner to hand the brief to the barrister, were all duly received by the Vacation Judge. The barrister asked the Vacation Judge if he would override the magistrate's decision and grant bail, so that the boy could be released to go home for Christmas Day. The Vacation Judge had only recently been appointed, and was not very well acquainted with criminal practice, and he informed us that he did not think he had any power to override the magistrate's decision, so that was the end of all my efforts.

I remember that the Judge asked me to stay behind with him in his study for a minute to ask me if I was the brother of the late Charles T. Williams, a barrister, and when he found that I was he said, "Well, I am sorry I cannot do anything in this case, but if I had been able to do so, I am not going to commit myself as to the course I would have taken; but on the other hand, I want to say that I think it is a very good thing that M.P.s act as you have done in seeking to protect the liberty of the subject."

When I returned home I had a further telephone conversation with the M.P. who raised the matter, and who is now a well-known judge.

He told me he was uncertain as to the legal position and the same had been true of the barrister. He suggested to me that as an M.P. I had access to all Cabinet Ministers, and why not try the Lord Chancellor? I accordingly telephoned Lord Sankey. I explained the facts, and he remarked, "It is not for me to disagree with the learned judge, but if his view is right then there is a gap in our Criminal Law." On this I commented, "If the judge was right, then if one could get hold of the Prime Minister of the day on some minor offence and remand him in custody, then it would be quite easy by repeated remands to keep the Prime Minister in gaol for ever." Lord Sankey asked me to pursue the matter with him after the Christmas holidays, with results which I shall mention later.

I then telephoned to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate to find out from him who was the magistrate who had remanded the young man in custody. He was good enough to give me his name and his telephone number. I spoke to him, and he said he remembered the case perfectly well. He did not, however, think young men should hit policemen, and that it would do the young man a lot of good to cool his heels for a week, but that on the following Friday he would discharge him without a conviction being recorded.

This was rather startling to me, because it really meant that a man had been punished for a crime for which he had not been proved to be guilty. In due course I wrote to Lord Sankey, and about a month later he asked me to go and see him in his room in the House of Lords. He told me that he had put the matter before the late Mr. Justice Avory, whom he regarded as our greatest criminal lawyer, and showed me the letter he had written to Avory. Avory's reply was quite clear, namely that a judge of the High Court could always override a magistrate in the matter of bail; but he added that he was familiar with the practice of certain magistrates in remanding people in custody for a short period and then discharging them without a conviction, and he thought that this practice had advantages.

I said to the Lord Chancellor that as one judge and two other eminent barristers were not familiar with the law with regard to bail, it would be a good thing if the attention of judges generally could be called to the matter, though I realized that it would hardly be dignified for a Lord Chancellor to send a circular to judges telling them their powers. He then told me, to my great satisfaction, that he had already spoken to several High Court judges and in due course he would see them all.

Althongh I did not succeed in getting the young man home for his Christmas dinner, nevertheless it was worthwhile to have had such an arduous Christmas Eve in clearing up an important point about the liberty of the subject.

From a recent decision I have learnt that a judge has no power to

grant bail where a person who has been convicted has exercised his right to appeal, but where the magistrates have decided not to grant bail pending appeal.

My next legal experience related to the Battle of the Beaches, but not quite those to which Mr. Winston Churchill referred when on June 4th, 1940, he made that rallying speech to the nation which did so much to raise the morale of Britain when France had fallen out of the war. His historic words were, "We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing-grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills." This chapter relates to a much smaller battle, though of considerable constitutional importance, which took place on the beaches of Sussex in the summer of 1944.

For some years I had a house on the Sussex coast at Rustington. When I went there with my family at the end of July 1943 I received representations from a number of the local people to the effect that there were some two miles of the beach on which no landmines had been sown and on which everybody who happened to wear a uniform was bathing quite freely, but that on the other hand the civilian population were prevented from bathing.

I learnt from Mr. Beaumont Price, J.P., the Chairman of the local District Council, that they had made representations to the Regional Commissioner that the prohibition might be lifted, so that not only inhabitants but visitors to the district might be free to swim in the sea. It appeared that the local council were irate at the communication they had received from the Regional Commissioner's office.

A few days later I asked a question in the House of Commons on the matter, and received a very unsatisfactory answer, which was to the effect that if there was any evidence of a local desire to make use of the beaches the matter would receive favourable consideration.

It clearly was not the fault of the Home Secretary that he had been supplied with what was in fact misleading information, because the correspondence which had taken place between the local authority and the Regional Commissioner made it perfectly clear there was the necessary local demand. However, nothing happened that summer.

A year later I again had representations from the local people, and was told that while everyone in uniform was bathing without challenge, the local constable had been instructed to take the names of all civilians who were bathing with a view to prosecution for disobeying the regulation which debarred everybody access to the beaches.

I made representations to the War Office and to the Home Office, and as the *Daily Mail* was conducting a campaign on the matter I communicated also with that newspaper. Some days later I received a telephone message from the *Daily Mail* asking me to delay my bathe on

that particular afternoon until their photographer, who was already on the train, had arrived.

I informed some of the local inhabitants who had made representations to me of the forthcoming visit of the photographer, with the result that a number of us were photographed on the beaches, and the photograph appeared in the *Daily Mail* the following morning.

The authorities regarded this as a challenge to what they were doing, and in due course police officers came to interview my wife and myself, and later on we were summoned to appear at the Arundel police court.

The facts of the situation were that this particular stretch of the beach had apparently never been mined at any time whatsoever, but, on the assumption that it had been, many people said to me it was all right for the military to bathe there because they knew where the mines were. This, of course, was a stupid statement, because the only people who would have known where the mines were were the Royal Engineers or others who had planted them in the shingle. One of the mistakes was planting mines in the shingle on certain stretches of the coast, because at high tide the waves detonated many of them, and shifted the location of others that were not detonated. The idea that anyone who wore a uniform would know where the mines were was, of course, quite inaccurate.

I defended the case in person. My wife decided not to go at all, but wrote a letter to the Court to say that I would represent her. The case attracted a good deal of interest, all the more so because the previous week a High Court Judge had been fined 5*s*. for having broken the alleged law.

It is no disrespect to the four or five very pleasant magistrates that they were not quite the right tribunal to deal with a case which raised certain important constitutional issues. All M.P.s had been issued with military identity cards in order to facilitate their movements for public purposes into prohibited areas, and the first point I raised before the Court was that in any event, even if the law was valid, it did not apply to an M.P.

The privileges of an M.P. are not privileges for his personal benefit, but privileges to enable him to perform his public duty. I pointed out in my speech that when Mr. John McGovern, M.P., had wished to go to Southern Ireland the Home Office had refused him an exit permit. Mr. McGovern accordingly travelled to Northern Ireland, a part of the United Kingdom to which he was entitled to go, and then proceeded over the border and then to Dublin to see Mr. De Valera, so Mr. McGovern had clearly challenged the decision of the Home Office, and it was of constitutional significance that he was not prosecuted, for he had in fact successfully challenged the right of the Home Office to prevent the free movement of an M.P.

I then went on to point out that when certain parts of the South Coast were made a prohibited area for the proper purpose of preventing a large accumulation of people in a part of the country which might have been a centre of invasion, they made no reference to M.P.s. Later on the ban was lifted because the danger of invasion passed away. The ban, however, was restored some months before D-Day, the object of this action being to prevent the presence of large numbers of additional civilians at the time when the district would be much affected by troop movements.

In the Order imposing the ban for the second time it was specified that it did not apply to M.P.s. I argued before the magistrates that these additional words did not confer any new privilege on M.P.s, but merely stated what was a fact, namely that the Crown could not properly prohibit the free movement of an M.P. to any public place. The magistrates were against me on this point, whether rightly or wrongly I cannot say, because the matter never went before a higher tribunal of a kind competent to deal with such a high constitutional issue.

My next line of argument raised an entirely different constitutional point. Under the Emergency Powers Act, which was passed on August 24th, 1939, to give the Government the necessary powers to deal with the situation when and if war broke out, as it did a week later, enormous powers were conferred on the executive to advise His Majesty to make Orders in Council which virtually entitled the Government to do what it liked by Regulation except to impose taxation or conscription. Under one of these numerous Orders in Council powers were conferred upon Ministers to make subsidiary Regulations, one of which in due course authorized Regional Commissioners to make subsidiary Orders.

By the Rules Publication Act of 1893 it was laid down that when Orders are made they have to be numbered, printed and published by His Majesty's Stationery Office. In due course the Regional Commissioner made an Order under these Orders prohibiting access to the beaches. This Order was not numbered, printed or published as prescribed by the Rules Publication Act, and I argued before the magistrates that it was accordingly invalid. This, of course, was rather a poser for the magistrates because it raised constitutional issues with which they were not familiar, and rightly or wrongly they decided against me.

The police attached such importance to the case that they did not prosecute themselves, but briefed a barrister, bearing the name of Harmsworth, to conduct the prosecution for them. This, in a way, was rather amusing, because if it had not been for the *Daily Mail*, founded by the Harmsworth family (whether he was a relation or not I do not know), the prosecution would not have taken place.

Having lost on these two grave constitutional issues, we now come

to the facts of the case, namely as to whether I had been on the beach or not. As I have indicated above, of course I had been, but the prosecution had to prove that. Apparently the police did not think that the photograph in the *Daily Mail* was evidence, and incidentally they never thought to prosecute the photographer of the *Daily Mail*, but they produced two witnesses, a gentleman and his wife, whose names I have forgotten, whom we met when we were coming back from the beach.

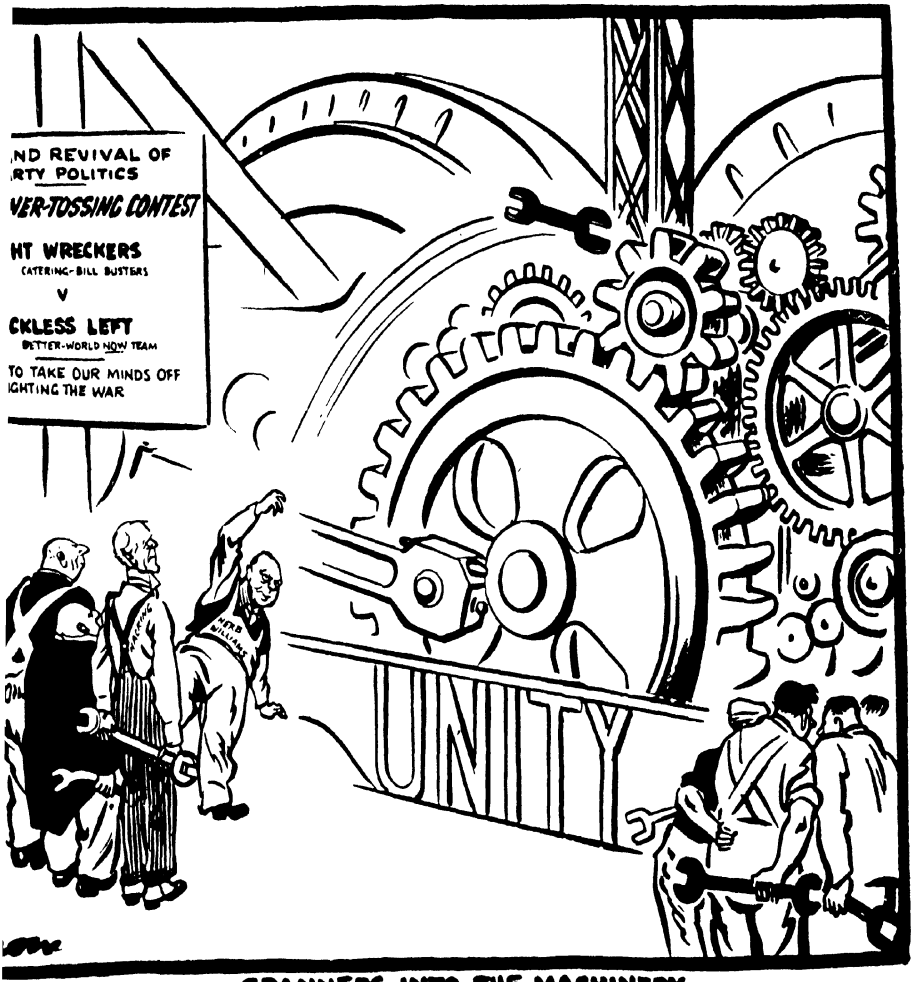
I had some conversation with him, and he told me he thought it a very unwise thing to go on the beach. I explained it was not unwise at all, because there were no mines. Nevertheless, he informed the police that he had seen me come up, and was brought up from the West Country, where he was having a holiday, to give evidence against me.

The prosecuting counsel did everything they could to get me into the witness-box, because if I had been asked the question, "Were you on the beach?" I would have had to say "Yes," being an honest person. I foiled endeavours in that direction, but nevertheless the magistrates were satisfied I had gone on the beach, and as "my case was a very bad one", fined me ten guineas.

Then came my wife's case. According to legal procedure in this country, if one is unable to defend oneself, one must be represented in Court either by a solicitor or a barrister. Very much to my surprise, the Court completely forgot about all this and let me act as my wife's solicitor.

The witnesses as to her presence on the beach were the same two as mine. I cross-examined the male witness and asked him whether he had ever seen my wife before; he answered "No." I asked him if he had seen her since; he answered "No". I then asked him how he knew it was my wife; he answered, "Because I heard someone address her as Lady Williams," which I think must have been improbable. I consulted her afterwards and she said the people with her on the beach all called her by her christian name. On this rather thin identification my wife was fined 5*s*.

The matter was widely publicized. I received a large number of letters, 90 per cent of which praised my sense of public duty, and 10 per cent abused me because as an M.P. I had broken the law. Personally, I do not think I did break the law; but that is only my opinion, because a higher tribunal never had the opportunity of dealing with the high constitutional issues I raised. In the end I was justified, because the ban on the particular section of the beach concerned was raised many months before other sections of the beaches were open to the public. I have no twinges of conscience in the matter at all. It was merely one of the many battles against bureaucracy now being fought which play such an important part in public life. It cost me a few votes at the General Election,



SPANNERS INTO THE MACHINERY

[Reproduced by permission of the "Evening Standard"

Low's cartoon in the *Evening Standard*, March 25, 1943.

GAD, SIR— MOST UNEDIFYING, IN MY OPINION

[Reproduced by permission of the "Evening Standard"

Low's cartoon in the *Evening Standard*, June 23, 1947

however, because some of my constituents in South Croydon thought it very wrong that their M.P. should have broken the law.

If the decision of the Court was right, that valid law could be made by an unpublished regulation, the logical consequences might be very grave. Their decision meant that a Regional Commissioner could write out an Order prohibiting people walking along a road in his area. He could have then sent for a policeman, shown him the Order, and told him to arrest anyone whom he found walking along the road, and he could then have folded up the so-called valid document in his desk and locked it up. No one would know of its existence except the policeman and himself. This would have been the methods of the Gestapo *in excelsis*.

In December 1947 there was an interesting case which came before Lord Justice Scott affecting the right of the owner of a house at Blackpool to live in his own house, which had been requisitioned by the Corporation. It would appear from the Press reports that the Corporation had acted under powers which had not been published, and accordingly Lord Justice Scott gave a decision against the Corporation and in favour of Mr. Locket, the owner of the house.

I am inclined to think that this case has a direct bearing on my case referred to above. In that case, as I have indicated, the Order had not been published, and therefore if I had in the public interest proceeded to appeal I think I should have won.

CHAPTER XVIII

PRIME MINISTERS AND OTHERS

In a book of reminiscences it is possible that the parts that are most interesting are those in which the writer comments on important people he has met, but it is a form of vanity for anyone to write about important people on the basis of his friendship or acquaintance with them. In my 63 years there have been thirteen Prime Ministers of this country, eight of whom I have met. The five I never met were Salisbury, Gladstone, Rosebery, Campbell-Bannerman and Asquith.

Salisbury first became Prime Minister when I was six months old, and resigned when I was 18, so naturally I did not have much chance of seeing him. But I have heard many stories of him, particularly from the late Lord Midleton, who at one time was his Parliamentary Private Secretary and was later his Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and later on still a Cabinet colleague.

I think it is probably true that, of the thirteen, Salisbury was the ablest, both as an administrator and as a statesman. It is true that Bismarck once said he was a wooden lath painted to look like iron. It is also alleged that he was so absentminded that on one occasion he asked, when standing on the stairs of the Foreign Office, "Who is the ruddy-faced gentleman who nodded to me as he walked out?" He received the reply, "Only one of your Cabinet colleagues, Mr. Walter Long."

In 1895, shortly after he had formed his third Government, an emergency Cabinet meeting was called because of an important despatch from our Ambassador at Washington about a critical dispute that had arisen between the United States and this country in connection with the Republic of Venezuela. In those days there was no Secretary of the Cabinet. As Lord Salisbury did not live at 10 Downing Street but at his own private house in Arlington Street, the Cabinet meetings were held in his room at the Foreign Office.

The members of the Cabinet had received copies of the dispatch from Washington, all of which were numbered, with the request that they should be handed back at the end of the meeting. When the Cabinet meeting came to an end the appropriate official came in to collect the copies and everyone produced theirs except Lord Salisbury, who was not only Prime Minister but also Foreign Secretary. It was not on the table, and he could not find it in his pockets. He then remembered he had changed his coat before leaving Arlington Street for the Foreign Office, so the official took a hansom to Arlington Street to consult the butler.

They searched the Prime Minister's study, they searched the pockets of the coat he had been wearing before he changed, and then at last the butler had a bright idea. He said, "I think I know where it is"; and there it was—behind the lavatory seat!

Many years ago I was talking to an old gentleman, now dead, who was President of the Conservative Association in the district in which he lived, and he was indulging in a criticism of the Conservative Central Office and the Party management, and related to me this story, which I will put into inverted commas:

"In 1886 I was the Honorary Secretary of the local Conservative Association. I had a letter from the late Marquess of Salisbury asking me to have tea with him at the Conservative Club in St. James's Street. I was only 21 years of age, so naturally I was very flattered. I turned up punctually, and was shown up to a private room, and when I entered the great Marquess of Salisbury, Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, said: 'So kind of you, Mr. So-and-So, to spare the time to come and see me. I want to talk to you about . . .' I was amazed at how much he knew about the constituency, and at the end of an hour the great Marquess of Salisbury, Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, got up and said, 'Mr. ——, it has been most kind of you to spare the time to come and see me; what you have told me is most interesting, and if at any time you want any help, do not hesitate to let me know.' " The young man of 21 was very flattered, and he implied to me that the then leader of our Party and the then Conservative Central Office were not quite up to the standard of the "great Marquess of Salisbury, Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary."

I have also been told that every afternoon when Parliament was sitting Captain Midleton, the celebrated chief Conservative agent of those days, would be seen going along to the House of Lords to discuss with Lord Salisbury matters affecting Party management. If a by-election occurred Lord Salisbury would ask Captain Midleton what the prospects were of winning it, and if the prospects were good he would then ask Captain Midleton what good candidates he had in view. Then apparently the Marquess and Captain Midleton used to discuss how much the victim would have to pay for the privilege of being the candidate, in other words they sold the seats in order to raise money for Party purposes.

The interesting thing was that so great was the influence of Lord Salisbury with the rank and file of the Party that he could always be assured that they would adopt the candidate of his selection; whether it was democratic or not is open to discussion, but it does describe the immense faith the Party had in their leader.

On one occasion he was addressing a great meeting at Oxford, and one of the professional Party speakers was given the task of making

sure that the glass containing whisky-and-soda which Lord Salisbury liked to consume during the meeting was full and replenished. This Party speaker was an ardent teetotaller, and he filled up the glass with neat whisky and forgot the soda. When during a pause in his speech the great statesman took a robust swig, two minutes elapsed before he found himself able to speak again; the audience never knew why. Those were the days when people used to make very long speeches. I believe that Disraeli, his predecessor in the leadership of the Conservative Party, fortified himself on port with the assistance of the same teetotaller. It is alleged that during his great speech at the Crystal Palace in 1871 he consumed a whole bottle.

I wish I had had the privilege of meeting Lord Salisbury; but I am not surprised that he is described as a competent administrator, because it is quite obvious that his son, whose recent death we all deplore, had a splendid training in that direction.

In Liverpool at one o'clock a gun is fired automatically which leads the residents of Liverpool to adjust their watches. On one occasion Lord Salisbury was addressing the business community of Liverpool on the Exchange flags which lie immediately behind the Town Hall. This meeting started at 12.45. At one o'clock he was a little disconcerted to see everyone in the audience take out his watch, so he decided to draw his speech to a close. The chairman remarked that it was no reflection on him, as it was part of the local life of Liverpool that everyone looked at his watch at one o'clock.

In the 'nineties, when I was just beginning to think about politics, Gladstone, who had then been in public life for over 50 years, seemed a permanent part of the landscape. He was universally referred to as the "G.O.M.", the Grand Old Man, or as Billy Gladstone.

Like many distinguished politicians he changed sides, for he was once a Tory Minister and later in life was three times a Liberal Prime Minister. I never met him, but two or three years ago I had some correspondence with his son when I wrote to ask him to grant facilities to an author to examine some historical document in his library. The last letter I received from him reached me on the morning that his death was announced in the evening papers.

Rosebery always seemed to me to have been rather a spoilt child of fortune. He was probably the youngest Prime Minister since Pitt. He is alleged to have had three ambitions: to win the Derby, to marry the richest heiress in Britain and to be Prime Minister, all of which he achieved, but he does not appear to have been a successful Prime Minister. He was probably the greatest orator of modern times, and his influence continued long after he withdrew from active participation in politics. He took part, however, in the controversy on the Lloyd George Budget of

1909, and made a lengthy and hostile speech in Edinburgh in the summer of that year.

Those were the days when statesmen did not hand out to the journalists in advance a copy of what they were going to say. So much importance was attached to this speech that every newspaper office in London had a relay of writers at Edinburgh and hired the service of a telephone line, so that they could have the speech as it was delivered, and I well remember several editions of the London evening newspapers coming out with verbatim reports of the speech as they reached London, and those were the days, of course, when there were plenty of evening newspapers in London. The interest of the speech lay in the fact that an ex-Liberal Prime Minister was attacking the proposals of a Liberal Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Balfour was the first Prime Minister I ever met. It was at a great meeting under the auspices of the Junior Imperial League addressed by him at the Lambeth Baths in London. It was the first time I had heard him, except from the Gallery hearing him answer questions in the House of Commons.

He had a curious hesitancy of delivery, because he paused in order to find precisely the right word. He always seemed to me a curiously shy man. On that occasion the vote of thanks to him was proposed by a young man of 21, who acquitted himself very well, and at the end of the meeting I saw Lord Balfour hesitate for nearly a minute before he could draw up the requisite social courage to congratulate the young man on his speech.

Balfour had both devoted friends and devoted enemies in his own Party. The enemies arose because of his apparent selfishness of attitude, and in particular his indifference to the interests of others unless they were his particular cronies. That perhaps is true of all eminent persons, but he seemed to possess it more definitely than others. Shortly after I was first elected to Parliament I was, with a number of other new Members, invited to a dinner-party by Lady Fitzgerald (widow of the Knight of Kerry) in order that we should meet Balfour.

It was an interesting occasion, and of the dozen or so young men asked on the suggestion of the late Sir Robert Horne nearly all have since obtained office in one government or another, so Horne was evidently a good picker.

Lord Balfour was then Lord President of the Council, and as such responsible for all matters affecting Universities. The University of Reading had some months before applied to the Privy Council for a charter, and I was anxious to find out what the prospects were, so I asked Balfour. He said, "Oh yes, it has been granted," which somewhat surprised me, because the fact had not been published, and he, curiously

enough, was not aware that no publicity had been given to the fact as to the advice he had tendered to the King. This curious form of abstraction was also to some extent true of Baldwin. When I was a Junior Minister sitting beside him on the Treasury Bench he asked what decision his Cabinet had made two years before on what was in fact a matter of great importance.

The last time I met Balfour was not long before he died, when he came to address a lunch-time meeting at the Constitutional Club in London, and before the meeting was entertained to lunch by the political committee of which I was a member. I remember two things he said. He declined a cocktail and accepted a sherry, and said, "I am too old to start drinking cocktails"; and the other: "I suppose I have addressed more public meetings in more parts of England than anyone else living. I always had the loudest applause when I made some remark which embodied a truth with which everyone in the audience was previously familiar, and it had the effect of everyone turning to his neighbour and saying, 'I told you so.' " In other words, he had correctly assessed the vanity of all of us. We like to have our views confirmed by those in authority.

Campbell-Bannerman I never saw, but I think he must have been a very great man, because after a long period of unpopularity he attained during the two years he was Prime Minister a position of complete domination over the House of Commons and over his colleagues.

Asquith I never met, though I heard him from the Gallery on one or two occasions in the House of Commons.

Bonar Law I only knew very slightly. He appeared to be a very difficult man to talk to, because he was so incredibly shy. On the other hand, those who served under him during the short period of his Premiership rated his judgment and ability very highly. In this respect he was a complete contrast to Lloyd George, who of all the great men I have ever met was the easiest to talk to. He seemed to take a cheerful view of life, and loved to talk to people.

There are two schools of thought with regard to the conduct of business; some people prefer to do most of their business in writing, and I think they are right, because in the long run it is much more expeditious. In conversation there is always a waste of time in the preliminaries, and also in making the appointment. So much apparently was Lloyd George a believer in the personal contact and talking to people about things, rather than writing about them, that it is alleged that at the Peace Conference in Paris in 1919 Lord Curzon said to Balfour, "Can the Prime Minister read?" to which Balfour replied, "I think he can, but I am certain he never does."

I well remember the day of the famous Carlton Club meeting at

which the Conservative Peers and M.P.s had assembled to discuss whether or not the Conservative Party should withdraw from the Lloyd George Coalition. There had been a great strain over much of the legislation during the period from 1918–22, which the modern Socialist calls a Tory period. In particular the Irish situation had increased the strain, and things were reaching their climax over the flare-up with Turkey which looked like another war.

At the meeting by a substantial majority the decision was made to withdraw from the Coalition, largely influenced by the willingness of Bonar Law to come back from his retirement and lead the Party independently of the Coalition. Lloyd George resigned that afternoon and Bonar Law became Prime Minister. A few days later Lloyd George went to Manchester to speak at the inaugural meeting of this Coalition, and had the most rapturous reception. Nevertheless, the Liberal Party was completely beaten and he never held office again.

No politician must judge his political prospects by the crowds that cheer him. There are always far more people absent than there are present. Many books have been written about Lloyd George, but I don't suppose a good biography will be written until he and all those who knew him are dead. That, I think, is probably true of all eminent persons. He appeared to me to be ruthless when dealing with his colleagues, but in the main his ruthlessness was due to a desire for efficiency, and he was quite willing to appoint to high office people who had been violently opposed to him in political controversy.

In 1913, when speaking at a meeting at Bedford in connection with the Lloyd George Land Campaign, he referred to a certain gentleman as the "Duke's lackey". He was referring to the land agent of the Duke of Bedford, Captain Prothero, afterwards Lord Ernle, whom, three-and-a-half years later, in December 1916, he chose as Minister of Agriculture. In other words, such malice as he had was temporary.

His ruthlessness, however, is illustrated by the episode of his dismissal of Mr. Hayes-Fisher, afterwards Lord Downham, from the office of Minister of Health. He was apparently not satisfied with the work being done by Mr. Fisher. He invited Sir Auckland Geddes to take his place, and, if the story is true, asked Geddes to deliver to Hayes-Fisher the letter containing the latter's dismissal.

Baldwin's rise to fame and power was perhaps more meteoric than that of any other person who has held the post of Prime Minister of this country. He was 18 years in Parliament as a virtually unknown Back Bencher, but when the Asquith Coalition was formed Bonar Law, who was the Leader of the Conservative Party, became Colonial Secretary, and I believe on Lord Beaverbrook's advice Bonar Law invited Baldwin to be his Parliamentary Private Secretary, a somewhat amusing fact in

view of certain subsequent controversies between Baldwin and Beaverbrook.

Later Baldwin became a Whip holding the office of one of the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury. After the General Election in 1918 he was appointed Financial Secretary to the Treasury, and again was virtually unknown to the public, and apparently was not of much influence in the House of Commons. About three years later he became President of the Board of Trade, his first Cabinet office, and shortly after it became rumoured that he was one of those Conservative Ministers who was opposed to the Lloyd George Coalition, and I remember an occasion when he came to address a meeting at the Constitutional Club and lunched with the committee. Sir Edward Goulding (afterwards Lord Wargrave) remarked to me, "This is one of the men we have got to watch, for he may bring about the fall of the Coalition," and I think in the long run it was largely due to him that the Coalition did fall.

At any rate, he was the only Cabinet Minister in the House of Commons in Lloyd George's Government who held Cabinet office in Mr. Bonar Law's Government, which followed the Coalition. When, to many people's surprise, he became Chancellor of the Exchequer it was in that capacity that he had to visit the United States in 1923 to negotiate the settlement of the American debt, to which I have referred in another chapter. I believe he did very well, and not very badly, as most people thought; but for some reason he never troubled to defend himself when he was criticized, largely, I imagine, because he had forgotten what it was he had done!

When Bonar Law had to retire because of the illness which soon afterwards led to his death there was great speculation as to who would succeed him, and this was one of the occasions when the decision had to be that of the Monarch. King George V, after appropriate consultations, decided to invite Mr. Baldwin to form a Government, and this greatly surprised Lord Curzon, who was very disappointed. So within two and a half years a virtually unknown Financial Secretary became Prime Minister.

Subsequent events I have described earlier. His second period of office, 1924–29, was probably one of the best of modern times, and his Government's defeat at the General Election of 1929 was due to the unexpected intervention of a very large number of Liberals backing the Lloyd George plan for solving unemployment. This had the effect of bringing Ramsay MacDonald back to office again, with a much larger House of Commons support than he had during his short Government in 1924.

Ramsay MacDonald is a difficult man to interpret. I never knew him very well, but I did not like him very much, and I think the feeling was

mutual. On the other hand, there is no doubt he was a remarkable personality and dominated his colleagues, though many of them disliked him. I suppose Philip Snowden disliked him more than most, despite the fact that they were closely associated for a long time. Philip Snowden was a much more decisive character than Ramsay MacDonald, and he very much disliked MacDonald's lack of decision on many critical issues.

MacDonald had charming manners, and took a great deal of trouble to please people, and he had a wider outlook than the ordinary trade union Labour Member of Parliament. His later years in Parliament were rather distressing, because he had become more and more indefinite and vague. On ceasing to be Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald was made Lord President of the Council, and in that capacity was Chairman of the Coronation Committee, and I remember someone saying: "He doesn't seem very clear about it all. He will probably crown himself and forget about the King," but under the guidance of the then Archbishop of Canterbury this eventuality was averted!

One of the most interesting Members of Parliament whom it was my privilege to know was the late James Maxton. He was first elected to Parliament in 1922, and was a well-established Member when I was first elected two years later. He was one of the group of Socialists elected for divisions in Glasgow and Clydeside at the Election in 1922, largely as a result of the agitation on the subject of rents, and this group enjoyed a hectic career during their first session when the Conservatives were in office, but a rather quieter period during the next session when their own Party was in office, when one of their outstanding members, the late Rt. Hon. J. Wheatley, was Minister of Health.

Of this group Wheatley undoubtedly was the ablest from the point of view of administration. Maxton had an extraordinary character and amazing brain, but I think anything from the administrative point of view completely bored him, and I am certain that as a Minister he would have been quite ineffective.

It is alleged that he started life as a Conservative while an undergraduate at Glasgow University. On leaving the University he became a schoolmaster, and I should be inclined to guess that it was the unsatisfactory housing conditions in Glasgow that turned him into a Socialist. It is quite possible that if he had realized that Scottish housing conditions were largely bad because of the Scottish system of rating, he might have decided to agitate for a reform in the rating law instead of becoming a Socialist!

Temperamental, like all Socialists, he was inclined to be very excitable, and accordingly somewhat violent in his speech. On the other hand, he was so kind that however violently he hated capitalists he found it very difficult to hate individual capitalists, and ultimately became the

most popular Member of Parliament. He was a most persuasive speaker, and had the advantage of a cultural training far in advance of that of many of his Clydeside colleagues. He could never have been a real revolutionary because at the most critical moment of a revolution something would have made him laugh.

I remember one Friday afternoon in the days when private Members had the right (I hope they will soon get it again) of proposing the second reading of Bills on a Friday afternoon, in the early part of the session. On this particular Friday there were three Bills down for consideration, one a rather lengthy, important and non-controversial Bill on which a large number of Members wished to speak. The second Bill was unimportant and also non-controversial, and therefore nobody had any particular desire to speak beyond the proposer and seconder. The third Bill was one to which Mr. Maxton was violently opposed.

Everyone thought that the first Bill would occupy the whole of the time from 11 a.m.–4 p.m., but just after 3.30 the debate came to an end, and the Bill was read a second time without a division, and accordingly the promoter of the second Bill got up to propose its second reading. Mr. Maxton at once realized that there was some danger of the third Bill being reached, so he rushed out to get a copy of the second Bill, studied it very hastily during the brief speeches of the proposer and seconder, and then got up to express the hope that the House of Commons would not be too hasty in disposing of it.

He then explained how heavy was the responsibility of an M.P. in respect of legislation, and while he was talking he was doing his best to read the Bill about which he knew precisely nothing. After two or three minutes of generalities he was running dry of matter, so he proceeded to read the first clause of the Bill. His purpose soon became evident to the other Members, and at that moment some of the Members of the House of Commons began to heckle him, at which, with that most delightful and disarming smile of his, he remarked, "All interruptions are most gratefully received."

With that assistance he managed to keep the debate going until four o'clock, with the result that the Bill he hated died a natural death because of the automatic adjournment of the House at four o'clock.

Maxton was a theoretical republican, but this in no way prevented him taking the oath of allegiance to His Majesty, nor would he change the monarchical system in this country so long as it worked on its present admirable lines; but from time to time he liked to express his theoretical republican views, and I remember hearing him do this on the occasion of the Abdication Bill of King Edward VIII. His speech was in perfect taste and in beautiful English, and though nearly everyone differed from what he said, he was listened to in respectful silence.

Later on in the debate another of his group was also taking part in a debate, but without Maxton's charm of phrase. I happened to be sitting next to the late Sir Austen Chamberlain, and I remarked to him, "This is not being as well done as Maxton did it," to which Sir Austen said to me, "Ah, but Maxton is a very great gentleman." Two hours later I made Mr. Maxton blush with pleasure when I related this private conversation to him, and he remarked, "That is indeed a great compliment from someone I regard as a very great gentleman." In truth, each had described the other accurately.

In the war of 1914–18 Maxton thought we were wrong in fighting Germany, largely because, in addition to being a theoretical republican, he was also a theoretical pacifist. On September 3rd, 1939, I was standing by the tape-machine in the House of Commons reading the news when Maxton came up. I said to him, "I do not suppose on this occasion you will do what you did in 1914–18." His reply was quite simple. "Herbert, I shall not rock the boat," and he never did. Whenever it happened in the House of Commons that there was a debate on some resolution which implied the determination to prosecute the war to a successful conclusion, Mr. Maxton always made sure that the motion should be voted upon by opposing it, and this used to annoy some Members who never quite understood him.

I remember on one occasion I said to him, "Jimmy, I am glad you have forced a division tonight." He said, "Yes, I think it is a good thing that the rest of the world should know how few supporters I have got on this issue."

Before the House of Commons was destroyed on the night of May 11th–12th, 1941, we had used the alternative building experimentally on one or two occasions, and on this occasion we had no option. On the suggestion of Mr. Churchill, we went into secret debate to discuss the future arrangements for the meetings of Parliament. In the course of the discussion Mr. Maxton made the suggestion that the House of Commons might possibly use the Chamber of the House of Lords, and, as their attendance was much smaller than ours, that they could be accommodated in some other room in the Palace of Westminster.

This suggestion bore fruit, and when a few days later we had another secret session Mr. Churchill reported that the House of Lords, with the approval of His Majesty, had offered the House of Commons the use of their Chamber, and the House of Lords was proposing to use the room known as the "King's Robing Room".

In the course of his remarks Mr. Churchill said that the suggestion had originated with Mr. Maxton. After some discussion, Mr. Churchill proposed a motion expressing grateful thanks to the members of the House of Lords for their courtesy. In the House of Commons a motion

does not require a seconder if it is moved by a Privy Councillor, but despite this, Mr. Maxton got up immediately following Mr. Churchill, saying that on this occasion he would like to have the opportunity of seconding the motion, and remarked that he found himself very surprised indeed in seconding a vote of thanks to the House of Lords, and he was exceedingly grateful it was taking place in secret session so that nobody knew what he had done! Had he been alive I would have asked his permission to tell this story, and I am inclined to think that he would have given it.

He was seriously ill towards the end of the last Parliament, and was ill again from the early stages of the present Parliament.

When my wife was issuing the invitations for my daughter's wedding in June 1945 she said, "I must send an invitation to Mr. and Mrs. Maxton, they are such dears." He was already on the bed of sickness from which he never rose, but his letter of regret that he could not come to the wedding was one of the most delightful and most charming communications my wife had ever received.

British public life was certainly the richer for the life and career of James Maxton.

I recollect with considerable pleasure a luncheon party to which I was invited many years ago by Lady Selborne, now the Dowager Countess of Selborne, who was always kind and encouraging to young men in politics. I had frequently addressed women's meetings under her chairmanship and I accepted her invitation with great pleasure.

There were, I think, about six of us there, the then Bishop of Manchester, afterwards Archbishop Temple, and one or two others whose names I have forgotten. Conversation between Lady Selborne and myself turned to the question of drink. I think it was because she had provided her guests with some very good hock. I made the comment how very few eminent persons there were who were teetotallers other than those who are what I call professional teetotallers. She replied, "I suppose you mean bishops and people like that," so I agreed with her definition, and then she remarked very emphatically, "I think they are all much better for a drop," which impressed me all the more, bearing in mind the fact that we had a Bishop at the table, and that her brother was the then Bishop of Exeter.

CHAPTER XIX

THE M.P.'S VARIED TASKS

THE duties of a Member of Parliament are much more varied than many people realize. They rarely consist of kissing the babies at election time, because kissing babies is really a nasty habit. An important part of a Member's duty in modern times is endeavouring to solve the innumerable problems of one's constituents, most of which arise out of the growing participation of the State in our daily lives.

During the Second World War I wrote on an average 250 letters a week in connection with various problems affecting my constituents. Many of these related to the difficulties of Service men and their dependants. A Member of Parliament is, in fact, an amateur lawyer, a commercial traveller and employment agency for his constituents.

A very large proportion of the cases naturally involve representations to Government departments, and, as every M.P. knows, the machinery of Government departments works very slowly. This has the disadvantage that one might easily have 150 to 200 cases outstanding at any given moment. To do the job properly means a great deal of clerical work, and every M.P. is bound to spend a large proportion of his Parliamentary salary on secretarial help, postages, telegrams, telephones and stationery.

On the other hand, a great many problems were solved, and much gratitude shown. I was always impressed with the frankness with which people are willing to disclose their personal affairs to their M.P. Naturally most of the cases involved personal difficulties. I have not yet had a communication from a constituent who had been left a fortune and wanted my advice as to how to spend it. There are many tragic cases, but some of them are a mixture of tragedy and comedy.

I remember in 1924, when my wife was canvassing in Reading, she heard of the case of a woman whose husband had mysteriously vanished. He had had a bad face wound in 1917, and had been sent to Sidcup, where they were performing facial surgical operations at that time. In 1918 he was allowed to go home for a weekend to see his wife, and cheered her up by threatening to commit suicide. She saw him off on the Monday morning and some days later had a communication from the hospital to ask where he was, and from that day till the time when my wife was talking to her no trace had been found of the man, though she had taken up the case through three successive M.P.s for Reading.

After I had been elected I wrote to the Ministry of Pensions to try

to get a widow's pension for the wife, but the Ministry of Pensions explained that this was impossible, because in the eyes of the War Office he was a deserter. I therefore applied to the War Office, who confirmed that to them he was a deserter, but suggested he might have committed suicide. I instituted enquiries through Scotland Yard and through the Reading Police to discover whether a man suffering from his facial injuries had been found dead anywhere, but no information was forthcoming.

One day I discussed the matter with the late Sir Laming Worthington-Evans, who was then Secretary of State for War, and he said that in certain cases he had power to presume death, and asked me to write him a note marked "Personal" giving him the information, and he would look into the matter and see what he could do. The reply was startling.

Two weeks later I heard from Worthington-Evans that the missing man was being paid a pension by the War Office, and that he had married a lady who had a good job at a West End store, that she had had four children by him, and that she was keeping him and the family with the supplementation of his pension and his earnings as a newspaper seller. I was then in a predicament. The Board of Guardians in Reading had been helping the legal wife, and I then wrote to the relieving officer to suggest that she should get in touch with the Guardians in Marylebone, where he had established his other home.

The result was he had a visit from the Marylebone relieving officer, and this stimulated him to go and see his legal wife. In the meantime, as a matter of courtesy I had informed both Scotland Yard and the Reading police that I had discovered the missing man, and it happened by chance that at the moment he called to see his legal wife the Chief Constable was also paying her a visit, with the result that the Chief Constable took him into custody and charged him with bigamy. He was convicted and received 12 months' imprisonment. The legal wife then wrote me a letter expressing the deepest gratitude for what I had done, and added that now she knew the truth she was happy.

Another strange case was of a war widow who had a problem because the apprenticeship of one of her children was somewhat irregular and it was doubtful whether the pension in respect of the child could be continued until the end of the apprenticeship. I asked her to come and see me at the Conservative Offices in Reading. She turned up, not alone but with six children, including the eldest, a boy who had himself got a pension for a war wound.

She was an Irishwoman, and after she had addressed me for half an hour I was not at all clear what it was all about, so I consulted the secretary of the local Guild of Social Service, who told me they knew the lady very well, and that if I got hold of her sister, who was very

sensible, I should be able to get a coherent statement. I made an appointment to see the sister one Friday, but I happened to be in Reading on the previous Wednesday when I had an unexpected call from the original lady, who this time was unaccompanied. She asked Almighty God to bring blessings down upon my head, then she threw her arms round me and embraced me. She was not sufficiently attractive for this procedure to impress me. On the Friday morning, as arranged, I met the sister, who greeted me by saying, "They took my sister away." I said, "Where to?" and she said, "To the asylum."

This was a tragic business, of course, but it did seem a little strange to me that the only constituent who had voluntarily kissed me was admitted to an asylum the following day!

Another case had very strange developments. A lady living in Reading had lost her husband, who had died of tuberculosis, which she claimed was due to his war service. His original service had started in Ireland as a boy in the band; a good many years later he got a commission. When he left the Army he opened a shop with his gratuity in a small town in Ireland. He had, after the end of his military service, joined the Black-and-Tans, and this fact was known in the small town, with the result that he was boycotted and his business ruined, so he decided to leave Ireland and come to live in Reading. He was in a distressed state of mind, twice tried to commit suicide, and then died of tuberculosis. The Ministry of Pensions turned down the wife's application for a pension on the ground that his death was not due to military service.

She applied to the Tribunal, and I accompanied her in order to help her plead her case. She was quite unfit to plead herself because after a few kindly questions from the chairman about what had happened she had a fit of hysterics, and I had to present the whole case.

In connection with this procedure the applicant is furnished with a lengthy *précis* of everything to do with the military service of the deceased. I noticed that in the year 1895, and again in the year 1905, he had been stopped from playing in the band because of chest weakness, and I also noticed that though he was a regular serving officer he was not sent out to the front until the March of 1918. I put it to the Tribunal that the reason a regular serving soldier had been held back was clearly because it was known he was not fit for service because of his chest trouble in the past. It was only just by chance that I observed these three facts.

The Tribunal sat up and took notice, with the result that the applicant was given the pension of a captain's widow, together with the allowances for the children while they were under age, and though this happened over 20 years ago she has never since missed sending me a Christmas card.

A strange thing happens sometimes about the way in which correspondence to an M.P. or to an ex-M.P. is addressed. I had a letter the other day on the envelope of which had been written my name and nothing else. It had been posted in Croydon, so somebody in the post office added after my name "South Croydon". This piece of enterprise on the part of the postal official was not much help to the postman who was trying to deliver the letter, so he put it in a Returned Letter envelope, which he sent not to the gentleman who wrote the letter, but to the House of Commons. Though I am no longer an M.P. the postal officials know my address, so I duly received it. In the letter the writer said he had thought of writing to Colonel Rees-Williams, M.P., who is my successor, but he did not know his address, so in these circumstances he addressed it to me without any address.

People who don't write letters frequently do not know how to find people's addresses. They do not realize that as a rule the telephone directory will supply the information, and that if a person has any prominence in life full particulars can be obtained in *Who's Who*.

The strangest letter from that point of view that I ever had was addressed to Thomson Mitchell, Esq., M.P. for Croydon South, House of Commons. This was delivered to me after I had been the M.P. for Croydon South for 12 months. Thomson Mitchell was the best the writer had been able to do in describing Sir William Mitchell-Thomas, my predecessor, who by that time had become Lord Selsdon. I asked the writer why he had addressed the letter in this strange way. Apparently he had been into a local post office to enquire and they had expressed the view that a man named Thomson Mitchell was the M.P., which was rather shattering to my self-esteem after I had been a very active member for a year.

It is not only M.P.s who sometimes find themselves given all sorts of jobs to help their constituents. The same thing frequently happens to prospective candidates, and this was true to a very large extent to me when I was prospective candidate for Wednesbury, and there is one episode arising out of this form of activity that always sticks in my mind.

One of my enthusiastic supporters asked me to go and see a family in a rather poor street with a view to finding out whether anything could be done for a crippled boy. I found a very slummy house, with the father, mother and six children, all of them defective in some way or another. It was one of those cases where it would have been better if the parents had never married. The particular problem was that of a boy aged about eight, who had never walked in his life, and crawled about on his hands and knees.

A local manufacturer, who was a generous subscriber to a hospital

in Birmingham with an orthopaedic ward, kindly provided me with some tickets, and arranged to have the boy sent over in his car to Birmingham. The report was that the boy could be taught to walk, but that it meant the provision of special boots, and then a lot of trouble in training him to walk. What was necessary was done. The parents expressed great gratitude, but most tragically they had not the persistence to go on teaching their crippled boy how to use his legs, so my effort was wasted.

The brightest child in this family was about 12. He was a hunchback, but despite his physical disability very intelligent, good-mannered, and attractive. His people lived in a part of the town where the bulk of the electors were very hostile. During the election when I was canvassing I had the unpleasant experience of being followed down a street by at least 100 rough women booing and shouting, and, as it appeared to me, working themselves up into the condition of "man-handling" me. I was by myself and the situation was not pleasant. Suddenly I felt a tug at my coat, and turning round I saw the little hunchback, who took my hand to show me that I had an ally. He might have been a hunchback, but he had great courage.

Apart from the innumerable new problems that come to an M.P. there are a great many public functions he has to attend, of which as a rule I think the smaller proportion are political in character; and equally the wife of an M.P. has to carry a heavy burden because she is expected to attend as well at the functions where her husband plays a part.

In addition, there is the usual spate of church and other bazaars, and after she has opened the bazaar with a few well-chosen words is expected to visit every stall and make a purchase at each one of them. For some strange reason, stallholders think it an act of courtesy to keep on one side the most expensive article on their stall in order that she may have the privilege of purchasing it.

The idea still prevails that an M.P. and his wife have a private mint at home, and can meet all demands. After the experience of several hundred bazaars, my wife has now developed an appropriate technique and generally gets through on the basis of about five guineas. If, however, the wife is a good bazaar opener she is worth far more than what she spends herself because she draws a good attendance of other people able to spend, and as my wife has always been a very good draw I have not grudged the five guineas!

Reverting to correspondence, a very considerable portion frequently consists of letters which concern the local authorities. This is particularly true in connection with housing. The M.P., of course, is only concerned with national policy, and so far as houses are built municipally the responsibility lies with the town councillors. In general practice the

M.P. seems better known to the people than the councillors for their Ward, with the result that the M.P. gets the correspondence. I once urged in the House of Commons that under the name of each street there ought to be inserted the names of the local councillors.

In another chapter I have drawn attention to the very false view that many members of the public have with regard to an M.P.'s work at the Palace of Westminster, and pointed out that a great many useful activities are not connected with the Chamber itself. May I quote, for example, the work of the Select Committee on National Expenditure?

During the period of the war, the work that occupied the greater part of my time arose out of my membership of this Committee.

After continued pressure from Private Members of all Parties, the Government towards the end of 1939 decided to set up a Select Committee to enquire into expenditure in connection with the war. This followed the model of the Select Committee which was set up in the middle of the 1914–18 war. I was one of the original members of this Committee, the Chairman of which throughout its existence was Sir John Wardlaw-Milne, who rendered the most magnificent service in respect of which he has had neither thanks nor appreciation.

The work was spread out amongst a number of Sub-Committees, and I was Chairman of one of these Sub-Committees from 1939–44. These Sub-Committees were given the same powers as the full Committee, namely that of sending for persons, papers, and records, which of course is a very drastic power to be accorded to a Committee consisting of four or five M.P.s.

In order that there should be no disclosure of information to the enemy all our evidence was taken in secret, and we were debarred from making use either in debate in the House, or outside, of any information we obtained until we had reported on the matter to Parliament, and it was necessary that our reports had to be worded with the utmost care in order not to disclose information to the enemy.

With regard to matters so secret that even the most mildly drafted report to Parliament would have been undesirable, we were given the power to present a secret report to the Prime Minister for the information of the War Cabinet. To all these reports the Government departments concerned in due course made official replies, and these replies were presented to Parliament with the exception of the replies to the secret reports. One of these secret reports and the Government's reply was published after the war with the assent of the House of Commons.

The Committee and the Sub-Committees had power to adjourn from time to time and from place to place, so that we were able to travel round the country inspecting factories, and taking evidence from any person whom we cared to summon as a witness. Our witnesses varied from

Cabinet Ministers to cabin boys. It would be quite impossible to measure the value of the work of this Select Committee, but I have not the slightest doubt that it stimulated production of many kinds of munitions of war and brought about great economies.

Our work was of the most varied character. In the case of my Sub-Committee, in the early years we covered the whole of the activities of the Ministry of Supply and the Ministry of Works. Later on a different method of work was adopted, and some of the Sub-Committees, in particular mine, were switched on to the examination of particular problems, irrespective of which Department of State was responsible.

My Sub-Committee attracted the somewhat unpleasant title of the "Dust bin". In one particular session, for example, our enquiries covered subjects as diverse as the National Fire Service, home-grown flax, the design of wireless apparatus, the design of certain vessels for the Navy, and the efficiency of passenger road transport. At first sight it would seem almost impossible that five people who started off by knowing nothing at all of the subject-matter were nevertheless able to conduct enquiries that were successful and produce important changes. For a purpose like this the training of an M.P. is very useful, because an M.P. inevitably has to study quickly every subject under the sun, and therefore develops an aptitude for diving down to the essentials of any problem.

The life of the Committee came to an end at the close of each session of Parliament, and had to be reappointed in the next session, but the new Committee was authorized to take over all the records of the old Committee, so in fact the work was continuous, though from time to time considerably changed in personnel. Altogether, I believe nearly 60 members served, though the maximum strength was only 32. On account of pressure of work I had to refuse to be reappointed in the last wartime session, so I did not run the full course.

Whilst it is the case that the Government accepted many of our recommendations, there were some they did not accept in whole or part, and I am firmly of the opinion that if the Coalition Government, and when they came into being the Socialist Government, had taken more notice of the recommendations, many of the distresses that have occurred might have been avoided.

In every political Party there are, of course, a number of groups of Members studying one problem or another, and as a rule they hold their committee meetings in one of the committee rooms, at a time when the House is in session. Very often the meetings of these groups result later on in activities in the Chamber, and in that connection I should like to mention the group popularly known as the A.B.B.s, or, to give them their full title, the Active Back Benchers.

In 1933 the Salford Corporation promoted a Bill, which amongst other

things would have given them very extensive control over billposting. While everyone objects to billposting when it injures amenities, yet everyone makes use of it. On account of the seriousness of the matter, the Salford billposters got in touch with their colleagues all over the country, and the sequel was that a number of M.P.s, at the request of their own constituents, agreed to resist the Salford proposals. Those concerned got together for the purpose of the debate in the House of Commons, and they were good enough to make me the leader for that purpose. Our efforts were successful and the offending clause was struck out of the Salford Bill.

This episode led a number of us to consider whether it was not really important that all the proposals contained in Private Bills should be properly examined.

I must point out that a Private Bill is not the same as a Private Member's Bill; the latter is a Bill dealing with a general subject and introduced into Parliament by a Private Member, and not by the Government. A Private Bill is a Bill promoted by a Municipality, or a Public Utility, or any person or body seeking special powers, which are not general in character. All such Private Bills after they have passed the Second Reading in the House of Commons are examined judicially by a Committee of four members, before whom Counsel appear, and before whom witnesses are called.

There is an elaborate special procedure in connection with this Private Bill legislation, and in the past the House of Commons had not concerned itself very much with Second Reading Debates, for no one had been in the habit of considering the new principles which are sometimes introduced into these Private Bills.

If no one observes a particular Corporation obtaining some new power to control the liberty of the subject, which may very easily happen because no one has taken much trouble to consider the problem, then in the following year every Corporation which brings in a Bill inserts the same clause, and in a very few years a new law has become operative over a very large part of the country without its principles ever having been considered by Parliament as a whole.

Our new group proceeded to examine in detail every Private Bill presented. The bulk of this preliminary work was done by Croom-Johnson (now Mr. Justice Croom-Johnson) and myself. It was a matter of great grief to us when on his elevation to the Bench as a High Court judge he had to abandon these controversial matters. It was an immense help to the group to have a lawyer of his distinction to advise us on the significance of many of the new clauses.

Some of these Bills we challenged in principle with a view to total defeat. In other cases we only challenged individual clauses that we

regarded as undesirable. All those individual Bills are presented to Parliament for second reading at the beginning of February. Immediately after Prayers in the House of Commons the titles of them are read out by the Clerk, and if no one says the magic word "Object" the Bill automatically obtains its second reading, but if one solitary Member says "Object" the matter is postponed till a later day, as it is contrary to the rules of the House to have a vote on these Bills immediately after Prayers. If the objection to a Private Bill is sustained on several occasions the Deputy Speaker in his capacity as Chairman of Ways and Means chooses a day for a debate, and it then comes up for consideration at 7.30 p.m. on the day chosen by him, and it interrupts any other business then under consideration.

Through the activities of our group a great many such debates took place, and we stimulated a great deal of interest amongst Members generally on the subject of Private Bill Legislation.

Sir Dennis Herbert (afterwards Lord Hemingford), then Chairman of Ways and Means, and as such in charge of all Private Bills, irrespective of their merits, came to the conclusion that there should be a general examination of all the clauses which were being put into various Corporation Bills, and appointed a committee of M.P.s, Parliamentary agents, Town Clerks and Officers of the House to consider the problem, and I had the privilege of being a member of this Committee, which was presided over by the late Captain Bourne, M.P., Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.

The result of our work was the production of a volume of standard clauses, which were divided into two classes, namely those that could be admitted into any Bill and those that could be admitted only if special justification was shown. This volume greatly simplified the work of Parliamentary agents and Town Clerks, and it was a triumph for the activities of the A.B.B.s.

In the following session an official committee of the House was appointed to enquire into certain aspects of Private Bill procedure in which Croom-Johnson and I sat as two of the Conservative M.P.s, being chosen, of course, because of our membership of the A.B.B. group. Thus in the course of a little over three years a small group of Members had brought about changes of substantial constitutional significance.

Our informal constitution debarred us from considering Government business, but our other activity was to consider Bills introduced by Private Members and Motions proposed by Private Members. At the early part of the session in normal times one day a week was devoted to Private Members' motions, and there are periodical ballots for the right to move such motions. Another day a week was devoted to Private Members' Bills. We took a very active part in connection with both.

As all the members of our group were followers of the Conservative

Party, naturally innumerable Bills and motions proposed by Members of other Parties were the subject of our attention, but we did not feel tied in any way, and if we thought a Bill was bad we attacked it, whoever proposed it. Naturally the group acquired a high nuisance value, and the great threat of our activities often induced concessions without the necessity of active participation of debate. Occasionally, however, we slipped up, because being an informal group without any office or staff, it was sometimes a matter of difficulty to make sure that nothing was missed.

In one session the Manchester Corporation introduced two Bills, one a General Powers Bill, and the other a Bill to incorporate in the City of Manchester an outlying district, which in the same session Stockport wanted to incorporate. Through a misunderstanding none of the group was present after Prayers at the moment when the Manchester General Corporation Powers Bill came up. We wished to oppose it, but unfortunately no one was there to say "Object", so it got its second reading. About two weeks later there was a debate on the Bill to incorporate in the City of Manchester the outlying district referred to, and this Bill was being strongly opposed by the M.P.s for Stockport and certain others.

Our group was completely indifferent as to which big town stole the little town concerned, but we thought the debate was a good opportunity to regain the ground we had lost through our neglect two weeks before. Our group was present in strong force, so that we were in a position to decide the issue.

We proceeded to blackmail the representatives of Manchester by saying that if they would agree to delete from their General Powers Bill the clause we objected to, we would vote for them against Stockport. Our blackmail was successful, and was conducted under high judicial auspices because the chief protagonist for Manchester was the late Sir Walter Greaves-Lord, M.P., who not long after became a High Court judge.

The great activities of the A.B.B.s had the effect of diminishing the number of occasions on which we had to take Parliamentary action, because our foes began to surrender without firing a shot.

With the outbreak of war in 1939 our activities for the time being came to an end, but it became necessary to revive them in 1942 because of the oppressive nature of many of the regulations made under the Emergency Powers Act and other wartime legislation. There were no Private Members' Bills, no Private Members' motions and not much private legislation, so the revived group devoted itself almost exclusively to regulations, which are published under the title of Statutory Rules and Orders.[1] All this, of course, is Government business, so our group was now engaged in work that brought us into general controversy.

These regulations were coming out at a rate of two to three thousand

[1] Now called "Statutory Instruments".

a year. Many of them were both good and necessary, but many of them were ambiguously drafted, and sometimes contained totally unnecessary and oppressive powers. These Orders come into operation immediately they are made, but they can be challenged in the House of Commons by what is commonly known as a Prayer, that is to say a motion taking the following form: "That an humble address be presented to His Majesty, praying that the Order in Council made on such and such a date be annulled." We asked innumerable questions as to what the various Orders meant, we had debates in respect of Orders we did not like, but naturally we could always be beaten in the voting lobbies. The arguments we used had a very considerable effect, not on the Order we were discussing, but on the making of future Orders.

After a comparatively short time the House of Commons generally started to take interest in our activities, and so we pressed for an opportunity for a general debate, and in due course this was agreed to be held on January 19th, 1943, on a motion proposed by Mr. Victor Raikes and supported by Mr. T. Levy, Mr. K. W. M. Pickthorne, Sir Irving Albery and myself. Our demand was that a Select Committee to examine these Orders should be appointed.

Later on there was further debate on a motion by Commander Robert Bower, and then we had a debate on a particular Order dealing with road traffic, when we succeeded in getting everyone in such a state of confusion that ultimately by mistake the Government voted with us and the Order was annulled.

As a result of another debate we secured the withdrawal and the substitution of a new Order in relation to hire purchase. On this occasion Sir Harold Webbe took the lead.

Not long after, as the result of a Prayer moved by Sir Oliver Simmonds and supported amongst others by Sir John Mellor, which related to Government-nominated Directors, we secured from the Minister certain important pledges.

Our next effort was in connection with another general debate on Statutory Rules and Orders, when the motion was moved by Mr. Maurice Petherick and supported amongst others by Mr. Ralph Etherton, Col. A. M. Lyons and Mr. G. Hutchinson, but again the Government refused our proposal to set up a Select Committee.

We had another opportunity when in the summer of 1943 the Annual Motion for the continuation of the Emergency Powers (Defence) Act was tabled. On this occasion, amongst others, the following took part: Mr. Hugh Molson, the late Mr. G. Gledhill and Lieut.-Col. Alan Dower. On most of these debates there also spoke some of the others I have mentioned above. We also secured the withdrawal of two Private Bills promoted by the Kingston-upon-Hull Corporation. On this occasion

those who had not spoken before included Sir Irving Albery, Major A. N. Braithwaite, the late Sir Reginald Clarry, Mr. G. A. Duckworth, Mr. E. H. Keeling, Mr. D. Robertson, Lord William Scott, and Major Charles Taylor.

On May 17th, 1944, we achieved our major success when the House of Commons debated the following resolution proposed by Mr. Molson. In the course of the debate he was supported by many of those I have already referred to.

> "That this House would welcome the setting up of a Select Committee, with the power to send for persons, papers or records, whose duty it should be to carry on a continuous examination of all Statutory Rules and Orders and other instruments of delegated legislation presented to Parliament: and to report from week to week whether in the opinion of the Committee any such instrument is obscure or contains matter of a controversial nature or should for any other reason be brought to the special attention of the House."

The Home Secretary, in reply, promised even more than we had asked, and therefore we withdrew our resolution.

Nothing has given me greater satisfaction than my connection with this group of Members, whose sole object was the defence of the liberty of the subject against what the late Lord Hewart called the "New Despotism".

On account of my defeat at the General Election I have not been able to continue this work, but I am delighted that the A.B.B. group is still fully active under the chairmanship of Mr. Alan Lennox-Boyd, M.P., and I still have the privilege of co-operating with the group from outside.

I have always been strongly convinced that democratic government, or, as I prefer to call it, responsible and representative government, is the best form of government for sensible and civilized people, but unfortunately a lot of the people in the world are either not sensible or not civilized. Democratic institutions, while the best, are possibly the most difficult, but of course they can only work successfully in a country where most citizens feel a sense of responsibility. The interesting thing to realize is that at the present time democratic institutions only exist in the British Empire, in a few countries in Western Europe, and to a lesser degree in the United States of America. The trouble about the United States is that that part of their Constitution which is responsible is not representative, and the part that is representative is not responsible. This phrase I once used when addressing the citizens of Fort William in Canada, and it gave them the utmost satisfaction, because, of course, they are only a few miles

north of the American border, and in Canada they have both responsible and representative government.

In the United Kingdom our democratic institutions in the main work well, because differences of political opinion do not interfere with personal friendships, and I found that in the House of Commons all sorts of people got on exceedingly well, despite the fact that they differed in the strongest possible way about their fundamental views on the political problems of the day. This appears to be somewhat unique, as I have discovered from conversations with members of the legislative assemblies in many foreign countries. I think the real reason is that the inhabitant of Britain can laugh at himself as well as at other people.

We are sometimes inclined to regard France as a frivolous country, and our own as an austere country, but when Monsieur Briand, the then Prime Minister of France, played golf with Mr. Lloyd George, the then Prime Minister of Britain, at Cannes in, I think, 1922, the people of France were so horrified at the frivolity of M. Briand that it brought about his resignation as Prime Minister.

An example of the camaraderie of politics in this country is illustrated by a couple of episodes that happened in 1931.

There was a by-election in Sunderland in the spring of 1931. The Conservative candidate was my friend Mr. Luke Thompson, and the Socialist candidate my friend Mr. J. T. Brownlie, whose daughter for a time had worked in my office. I was asked to go and speak for Thompson.

Travelling up on the train I ran into the late Miss Ellen Wilkinson, who was going to speak for Brownlie. She accepted my invitation to have tea on the train, and in the course of conversation I asked her how she was going to get to Sunderland, because we were on the Newcastle train and it meant a change, and she said she was in some difficulty because she thought it meant two changes. I told her a car was meeting me at Darlington, and I should be delighted if she would come in that car to Sunderland, an offer which she gratefully accepted. When we got out of the train we met the Conservative enthusiasts from Sunderland, who had provided the car, and they were a little surprised when I introduced Miss Wilkinson.

She was very surprised when she saw the car, because it was absolutely covered in Conservative colours. When we got into the town I asked her where her meeting was. She told me that it was at a cinema in the main street, so I asked the driver to proceed slowly so that we would spot it. Through a mischance we overran it by about 50 yards. We saw the rather nervous local "comrades" wondering where "Red Ellen" was. They were even more surprised when I waved to them from the Conservative car to indicate that I had got her.

She duly addressed her meeting, and I, later in the evening, addressed

mine, which was an enormous meeting, containing a large number of people who thought it was undesirable that I should be heard.

However, despite the interruptions, it was reasonably amiable, but at the end of it my voice was rather exhausted, and the gentleman who had provided the car then drove me back to the hotel at which I had had dinner, and I suggested the time had arrived for each of us to have a double whisky and soda. We discovered, unfortunately, that it was two minutes after the hour at which casual visitors could obtain such refreshment in the hotel.

My distress was considerable, but suddenly looking round I saw my friend Jack Jones, who for many years was the celebrated Socialist M.P. for Silvertown, so I went and sat down at his table, and I said, "Hello, Jack. I suppose you have been speaking for Brownlie?" to which he assented. I then asked, "Are you staying in the hotel?" and he replied, "Yes." "What is your room number?" "Twenty-five." I then summoned the waiter and asked for three double whiskies and soda. The waiter asked me, "Staying in the hotel?" and I said "Room 25," at which Jack grinned appreciatively, and the distress of the three of us was very much relieved. I, the Conservative ex-M.P., was breaking the law, he, the Socialist M.P., knew I was and he entirely endorsed my action.

During the 20 years I was in Parliament I found that a vast majority of Members, irrespective of their politics, were only too willing to afford courtesies to other Members, irrespective of their Party affiliations, and I do not believe the British House of Commons system can survive unless this personal toleration continues.

Following my defeat as M.P. for Croydon South in 1945, there came one of the most delightful episodes in my career. A letter appeared in the two local newspapers signed by seven members of the Croydon Borough Council, two Socialists, two Independents, one Liberal and two Conservatives, expressing the view that, apart from politics, I had rendered good service to the people of Croydon collectively, and to many thousands individually, and they thought that this fact should be recognized. As a result of this letter several hundred pounds were subscribed, and at a very delightful tea-party my wife and I were presented with a number of most attractive and useful gifts, including a very beautiful canteen of silver tableware. The presentation was made by Alderman Regan, the leader of the Labour Party on the Croydon Borough Council, who became Mayor a year later.

One of the attractive features of British public life is that political differences do not bar personal friendships.

CHAPTER XX

DAYS AND PERSONS ON THE SOUTH COAST

I HAVE pointed out in other chapters the curious way in which some quite minor incident has an important effect on one's life.

One day in the spring of 1934 I received a circular from a friend of a friend which said that he had turned Findon Manor, near Worthing, into a Holiday Club. As a result my wife and I went down one Saturday afternoon to inspect this attractive old house with its beautiful garden, with the consequence that we took the children there for the summer holidays in 1934. Findon is a most attractive village in the South Downs about seven miles from the sea, and we all had a most pleasant holiday, in the course of which my children had an opportunity of being taught to ride by a remarkable old lady, a Miss Marshall of Ferring, who appears to have taught more young children to ride than any other living woman.

For our holidays in 1935 we took a small house at Rustington. It was while staying at this house that a friend and I found nearly all the nation was out of step except us two on the subject of Italian Sanctions. Up to that time my daughter Rosemary had always been rather delicate. During the period of our holiday she put on nearly a stone in weight, so we came to the conclusion that Rustington was a good place for growing children. This view was shared by others, including the well-known German, Otto von Bismarck, the grandson of the famous statesman, who had a house near by, though I did not meet him, and therefore did not have an opportunity of discussing the international problems which occupied my own mind at the moment.

During this holiday we saw a small modern house which we decided to rent, with an option to purchase. We took possession of this at the end of the year.

We all enjoyed our summer holiday thoroughly because we were only a hundred yards from the sea, and the children had ample opportunities for riding. I joined the Ham Manor Golf Club, celebrated as the golf headquarters of the Crazy Gang, e.g. Nervo and Knox, Flanagan and Allen and Jack Hylton, while a regular performer at this club was the Rt. Hon. J. H. Thomas. I have never achieved any distinction at golf and for that reason took advantage of the fact that golf is one of the few games that one can play alone, and that is the way I generally played, because I find it very difficult to induce anybody to play with me.

I think it is rather a pity that nobody has yet written an adequate life of Mr. J. H. Thomas, the unfortunate termination of whose public career

was regretted by many, including myself. In the August following his withdrawal from public affairs I had several long talks with him at his house at Ferring. One thing was quite certain. He was absolutely convinced himself that he had been the unfortunate victim of circumstances, and it was really amazing the number of people of distinction in all walks of life who took the same view, as I could see by reading many of the letters which he had received.

I always remember that in the great crisis of 1931 he was the only trade union member of the Socialist Cabinet of '29–'31 who was convinced of the necessity of taking the most drastic action to save the country; none of the others appeared to be willing to take the grave responsibility which he and a small number of other Socialists, led by Mr. MacDonald, did at that time.

After we had occupied our house for nine months one of our visitors, Miss Rosalind Cummins, who occupies quite a remarkable position in the Banking World in the City of London, and who in addition is the Honorary Secretary of that splendid institution for Dominion students, namely London House, expressed the opinion that my wife and I would be very foolish if we did not exercise our option and buy our house, "Redroofs".

Being as usual rather hard up, the prospect was a bit disturbing. My wife, however, was all in favour of the project, but said that the house was too small and the garden was niggardly, so in the end I embarrassed myself still further by buying the adjoining plot of land, and with the assistance of a local builder succeeded in putting two dormer windows in the roof and constructed two strange but nevertheless commodious bedrooms. At that time my son and daughter were very small, and they shared one of these two bedrooms.

When my very tall friend, Mr. Alan Lennox-Boyd, M.P., was spending two or three days with us he amused the children immensely by saying "good night" to them looking over the top of the bedroom door. For a long time his nickname was "the man who looked over the bedroom door". Next morning, however, the children had their revenge, because they went and knocked at the door of his bedroom and asked if they could come in. Once inside, the object of the children's visit was revealed by my son asking how far his feet stuck out at the end of the bed.

One of our visitors in the summer of 1939 was the late Miss Ellen Wilkinson, whose Socialist figure of speech, associated with the colour of her hair, gave her the nickname of "Red Ellen", but, like most other people, the longer she was in Parliament the more tolerant she became. Like many very short people, her lack of height was largely due to short legs, the result being that when she was swimming her progress was more

characteristic of the qualities she alleged to be characteristics of Tories than of the more violent faith that was hers.

Naturally, during that summer of '39 everybody was wondering what was going to happen, and the house next to ours that summer was occupied by Mr. Alan Robbins, the News Editor of *The Times*, who for many years before had been *The Times* Lobby representative in the House of Commons. I used to think that because he was on *The Times* he knew all the inside news about the European crisis. He thought that because I was an M.P. I knew all about it, so every morning we used to ask one another if there was any news. As a matter of fact neither of us knew any more than the ordinary man in the street.

On the morning of August 24th we read in the newspapers of the shocking duplicity of Russia in making the treaty of appeasement with Hitler. That morning I went out to have a solitary nine-hole game of golf. When I got back to the club-house the steward said to me: "Have you heard the news? Parliament is to meet today and there will be further information at one o'clock." We were summoned for that evening, and it really was very remarkable that when we assembled at 6 p.m. practically two-thirds of the M.P.s were present. There was a brief but anxious debate on the situation, and then the Government produced the Emergency Powers Bill, which passed through all stages in both Houses and received the Royal Assent that very night.

Five days later we had the shock of the German attack on Poland, and once again Parliament was summoned on the wireless, and again after a fairly brief debate no less than 18 Acts of Parliament were passed through both Houses and received the Royal Assent before midnight. These, of course, had all been prepared long before in anticipation of the crisis, and showed clearly one thing, namely that the Cabinet of the National Government had made the most extensive preparation for the necessary legislation to deal with wartime circumstances.

One of my neighbours at Rustington at that time commanded a London Territorial Battalion, and hearing I was going up by road asked if he could come with me. The journey was rather longer than usual, because many of the roads leading out of London were closed to incoming traffic as they were being used for the extensive movement of children into what were regarded as safe areas. As we approached London we saw the various placards announcing the mobilization of the Territorial Force, with the result that the Colonel was the first man to arrive at Headquarters on September 2nd.

The House met on this occasion without any legislation, but the debate was naturally of a very grave character, and things were brought to a climax by the speech of Mr. Arthur Greenwood, the acting Leader of the Labour Party, by his demand for an ultimatum against Germany. I was

one of those who was still either foolish enough or optimistic enough to believe that the general conflagration could be avoided, and it was with an anxious mind that I drove back to Rustington when Parliament rose about ten o'clock. It was an amazing drive, because when I approached Horsham I saw innumerable flashes in the sky which I thought came from the electric railway, but as I got nearer to the coast I got into the worst thunderstorm I had ever experienced. It rained so heavily I could hardly see, and as there were flashes of lightning over the Downs I took a lower road and felt much happier when I arrived home safely. For some strange reason, though there were plenty of thunderstorms on the Downs, I never remember one immediately over Rustington itself.

We had been summoned for a Sunday meeting of Parliament at noon. As I drove into Palace Yard at about five minutes to twelve I heard a strange noise, which was the siren at the top of Scotland Yard. I did not know that war was already declared because I had left before Mr. Chamberlain's broadcast. I said to several colleagues, as I was walking into the Palace of Westminster, "There goes an air-raid warning." They replied, "Oh no; that is the siren to announce the declaration of war."

When we got into the building the custodians and police were all on duty to direct us to the air-raid shelters, which were in the corridor parallel to the Palace. From here we could hear the sounds of bombs falling and heavy gunfire—at least that was what I thought it was—and my view was confirmed by a distinguished General next to whom I was standing.

After a few minutes, however, orders came that we were to assemble in the Chamber, and just after the end of Prayers we heard the siren again. Half of us thought it was another air-raid, and the rest did not know what it was anyhow. It was, in fact, the unfamiliar all-clear, but at the instant nobody knew for certain what it was. Then there arose amongst the hubbub what I thought was a woman's voice, that of Ellen Wilkinson, saying, "Carry on anyhow."

As the events of May 1941 showed only too clearly, the actual Chamber was the most deplorable place in which to be while an air-raid was in progress. After another debate with regard to the situation and the announcement that Mr. Churchill and Mr. Eden had been invited to join the Government, we passed another mass of wartime legislation.

About a week before, my wife and I had invited a number of people to come to an evening garden cocktail-party at "Redroofs". Just before I was leaving that evening, my wife asked me what to do about it. I said the best thing was to carry on. The effect of the outbreak of war was a curious one; half the people invited did not come, but as far as I discovered those who came consumed as much as if the others had turned up. The emotions of human beings are thus affected in varying ways by the same circumstances.

The air-raid warning which had disturbed us in Westminster had equally disturbed the people on the coast. We did not learn till afterwards that all the trouble was caused by somebody belonging to the French Embassy coming over in a plane which had not been identified, and the whole nation had the advantage or disadvantage of a warning due to such a trifling cause. Many people were bathing at the time of the siren, and fled from the beach to their houses, partly clothed.

A few days afterwards I found myself somewhat in disgrace amongst my neighbours at Rustington.

After the Croydon election of 1935 Mr. Cyril Johnston, the Managing Director of Gillett and Johnston, Ltd., of Croydon, presented me with a bell on which was inscribed my name and the result of the Croydon South by-election. We hung this bell outside my house, with the bell cord inside. The bell was used to summon the children and any guests at meal-times, and we continued to use it for the same purpose after war had broken out. I had been so busy passing laws that I did not know what was in them, and failed to realize that the ringing of a bell meant that the danger from a gas-attack had passed, so I had to take steps to render the bell immobile.

I sold my house at Rustington in the summer of 1947, but kept the bell, which I have presented to the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations so that the Chairman of their Council and the Chairman of their Annual Conference may have a bell to call the Conference and Council to order.

The bell was originally made as a hanging bell, but my friend Mr. Cyril Johnston has been kind enough to provide it with a proper stand, and there has been added to the bell a suitable inscription as to its gift to the Conservative Party.

During the period of the daylight battle of Britain our visits to Rustington were rare, and I think rightly so, because large numbers of enemy machines were brought down in the district. In August my children when riding on the Downs counted 12 wrecked German machines. On the other hand, when the night battle of Britain began, Rustington was a pleasant weekend retreat. Not that we lacked hostile planes, but they did not regard us as worth bombing, but we could see from our garden the repeated air-raids on both Portsmouth and Southampton.

I had arranged with the local builder to construct an air-raid shelter, which I was vain enough to say was better designed than those constructed under the orders of H.M. Government, and of much better economic value, because I have had it turned into the best larder in the district, and, as we were short of bedrooms, on top of it I provided a bedroom for my son.

Our house was twice damaged, though on neither occasion were we

there: once by a small bomb which fell about 50 yards away, and broke all the windows on one side and lifted a lot of tiles off the roof. The next was a more unusual form of damage; a German mine drifted on the beach and one night was detonated by the rough sea, which blew in all the windows on the other side of the house, as well as filling one room with mud. Despite the good design of our air-raid shelter, we used it only twice.

During the period of the war some 25 different units, British, Australian and Canadian, were stationed in the district, and many of the neighbouring houses were requisitioned for the accommodation of the troops. We did what we could at weekends to show such hospitality as was possible to all ranks and thus made a wide circle of new acquaintances.

This led to an amusing incident one night in the winter of 1941–42. One of our neighbours gave a children's party to which many of the parents were also invited. All was going splendidly, when at 10.30 in dashed the Adjutant of the Royal Sussex Regiment, which was then stationed there, to say we had all to go home at once because the Germans had landed and all the streets were being patrolled by troops. The party broke up, and on our way home we were stopped by armed troops, compelled to produce our identity cards, and then went home to await the coming bombardment. Two hours later we discovered that it was an exercise and somebody in his hurry had omitted the cautionary word on the telephone.

The most unpleasant period so far as air-raids were concerned was in the summer of 1944, when we had the repeated tip-and-run raids. At that time apparently the radar installation could not spot enemy planes flying very low. I saw one pass over our house one day; the local A.A. guns fired, and I thought it was hit, and then two minutes later we heard bombs being dropped. We heard a good deal of machine-gun fire, and as our children were playing tennis on the village sports ground, which was the direction of the machine-gun fire, we were naturally alarmed, and drove over as quickly as possible. We found the plane had gone right over the playing-field, and one of the elder boys in the party had pushed all the children into the ditch, so they came to no harm. Before we had gone, however, the plane had again flown back so low over our house that I believe I could have hit it with a rifle. About four people were killed at Littlehampton in this particular tip-and-run raid.

These tip-and-run raids imposed a very heavy burden on the many anti-aircraft units, because they never had any warning. As a rule the sirens sounded after the plane was miles away out to sea on its return home, so the men had to be constantly on the alert during their hours of duty.

The only local objectives of importance were the small shipbuilding yards of Littlehampton, where they were building motor-torpedo boats,

and the large radar installation adjoining the Ham Manor Golf Club.

At the early stages of the war, when I was at Rustington, I bought bicycles for the use of the whole family because of the forthcoming petrol rationing.

One day, shortly after clothes rationing began, I was taking a ride, and was just coming out of our drive when the dog who lived next door was so startled it bit me, tore my trousers and pulled me off the bicycle. I returned home for my wounds to be attended to, and just by chance a newspaper man rang me up for some information, and when I had finished I told him of my adventure, so "Dog Pulls M.P. Off Bicycle" provided a news paragraph. Several letters of sympathy came in, and some clothing coupons from a dear old lady, who was sorry because my trousers had been torn.

CHAPTER XXI

TRAVELS ABROAD

I AM stealing the words of Mark Twain in using "Travels Abroad" for the title of this chapter. He travelled so much that his next book was called *More Travels Abroad.* I only wish that I could have had as many interesting adventures to record as he had. Unfortunately I have never had enough money and enough time to travel as much as I should like to have done, and I was not elected to Parliament in 1945, as now apparently M.P.s can travel wherever they like at public expense! Nevertheless I have had a few interesting trips as an M.P.

In 1928 the Canadian branch of the Empire Parliamentary Association invited the other branches to visit Canada. The British delegation, which numbered 17, was to have been led by Viscount Hailsham, then Lord Chancellor, with the late Earl Peel, the First Commissioner of Works, as the second Government member. Mr. Baldwin, the Prime Minister, however, was ordered by his doctor to take a rest, with the result that Lord Hailsham was appointed Acting Prime Minister, and for that reason had to abandon the visit to Canada.

Lord Peel was made the Leader, and Mr. Baldwin appointed me as the other Government member, as I was then Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade. It was a very great experience, because we visited every Province, and had meetings in the Chambers of the Houses of Commons. In addition to the British delegation there were nearly 50 others drawn from Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the Irish Free State, Newfoundland, Canada, India and Malta.

The team as a whole was a strong one, and most of the members had been, or later became, Ministers in their respective countries. We travelled in great comfort, because a whole train was placed at our disposal, and during roughly half the period we actually slept on the train, "going ashore" as a rule only in the large towns we visited. We were feasted and fêted by Governments, Municipalities, Chambers of Commerce, Rotary Clubs and all other institutions which extend hospitality.

We had a Speeches Committee, which on every occasion chose one or two to be the speakers on behalf of the delegation at the various luncheons and banquets at which we were entertained, and everybody said exactly what they thought fit, with the result that we had speeches expressing every point of view at home and in the Empire overseas. The star turn of the whole delegation was the late Lord Peel, who always

made a three-minute speech on every occasion, and always had something fresh to say.

In the delegation was the late Lord Thomson, who was Air Minister in 1930, and perished in the ill-fated airship R101. I could never quite understand why Thomson became a member of the Labour Party. He was a man of wide experience, had occupied all sorts of responsible positions, but I think suffered from a grievance in that he never quite rose to the rank that he regarded as his right during the First World War. He was a bachelor, and on the voyage across to the United States I asked him one day why he had never married. His reply was a strange one. He said he was too fond of the widow. I asked him what widow. He answered, "Widow Clicquot." This reminds me of a strange incident that happened not on the Canadian trip but at Rustington, on Christmas Day of 1939.

My family had all gone down to spend Christmas there. Just before we left London a very acceptable gift arrived in the form of a case of "Veuve Clicquot" from my kind friend Lord Ebbisham, and I thought that some of this would be most acceptable for Christmas dinner, so I took a few bottles down with me.

We were a large party for dinner, but only two were adults, so I thought two bottles of champagne would be adequate. I put them in the refrigerator to bring them to the right temperature. Just before we started dinner I put them outside the front door, as it was freezing hard, so that when I had finished carving a turkey for twelve I should be able to save a little time. When the great moment arrived I opened the front door, but the two bottles had vanished. I discovered the next day that two gentlemen were going round the district collecting money for the local unemployed. When they came to my front door they decided not to ring the bell, but departed with the two bottles.

To return to Canada. One of the most interesting speeches was the one made by David Kirkwood, M.P., to the Chamber of Commerce in Vancouver. The proceedings had been opened with an interesting address by Dr. Tolmie, then Premier of British Columbia, in which he gave us a very good picture of the economic resources of that most beautiful province. Kirkwood decided to join in the subsequent discussion, but his speech was not very closely related to the subject-matter, because he gave them a dose of full-blooded Socialism, a kind of speech which had never before been listened to by the business men of Vancouver. Instead of being horrified they were amused, and appeared to regard it as a music-hall turn. Nevertheless, David thoroughly enjoyed himself.

Lord Thomson had one minor episode which caused him a little nervousness for the moment. We were staying at one of the holiday resorts in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, and Thomson decided

to take a walk before breakfast. He was somewhat startled and surprised when he ran full tilt into a brown bear; however, the bear was friendly, so Thomson got his breakfast all the same. In Okanagan Valley there is a large lake alleged to be inhabited by a monster similar to that in Loch Ness. This monster has the attractive name of the "Ogo Pogo", but apparently it is only seen by people on their way back from public banquets.

One day while in British Columbia we were entertained to tea at a country club. As I walked in a man came up to me and said, "Is not your name Williams, and have you not got a daughter called Rosemary?" I expressed some surprise at this remark from a man who seemed to me a complete stranger. However, it appeared he hailed from Reading, where I was then M.P., and had read about me and my daughter in the local paper. While I was talking to him I saw a man whose face was very familiar, and I asked the gentleman from Reading who he was, because though I stared at him he obviously did not know me. He told me he was Mr. Godfrey Isaacs, the nephew of Lord Reading. It was strange to have these two Reading contacts 7,000 miles from Reading.

When we were travelling back to the East Coast two South African M.P.s broke away from the party at Calgary because they wanted to see some friends in Chicago, and they were going to rejoin the party when it had got further East.

I broke away in Toronto in order to spend a couple of days in New York, and travelled there by the night sleeper, and at about 10 o'clock the following morning I was walking along Broadway with a friend when suddenly from a taxi-cab I heard a great deal of noise. Inside the taxi-cab were the two South African M.P.s I had left nearly 2,000 miles away four days previously, so I came to the conclusion that New York City was too small in which to get lost.

I rejoined the party at Halifax, Nova Scotia. While I was signing the register at the Earl Beatty Hotel a man tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Hello, Williams, how are you?" It was a fellow undergraduate at Liverpool University whom I had not seen for 25 years.

I had tried to visualize what Canada was like before I arrived, and was generally right in my anticipations except in two respects. I had not read enough about Canada to realize the immense barrier of the almost uninhabitable area of rocks and lakes which separates Eastern Canada from the prairie provinces. Except for the population of the mining centres, the sole occupants seem to be black ducks. The other startling feature was the province of Quebec, entirely dominated by the French-speaking Catholic Church, with an intense dislike for France on the part of most of them, and equal antipathy for the United States. They are anti-imperial in outlook, but firmly determined that the Empire is their

safeguard against American aggression. In outlook they are all exceedingly Conservative, and therefore they all vote Liberal. There is a very high birth-rate, and I met one Minister of the Crown who had only been married once, and whose wife had presented him with 26 children.

At that time Canada had a good deal of semi-dry legislation, but the wettest part alcoholically was the province of Quebec. The capital city of Ottawa is in the province of Ontario. On the other side of the river is the City of Hull, which is in the province of Quebec, and apparently at that time when the people of Ottawa wanted to have a good banquet they crossed the river, because the great offence of Ontario was to drink in public. The result was the deplorable habit of having drinking-parties in bedrooms.

On the afternoon of the day I travelled from Toronto to New York I had a very interesting tour of the city and the University in the company of Mr. Tom Church, M.P., who for several years had been Mayor of Toronto. He seemed to know everybody and they all greeted him by his Christian name. It was Registration Day at the University. As we walked round parties of students were constantly greeting Tom, and the amazing thing was he seemed to know the Christian names of most of them. He thought I might have a dull time in New York, so as he was seeing me off on the train he gave me a half-bottle of whisky to take with me to New York. I was a little worried about this, because of the American Prohibition Law, and I thought the only thing to do was to be as honest as possible, so I put it on top of my clothes in my suitcase.

Before I left London I had secured from the American Embassy a diplomatic visa, which I thought might be of some assistance to me if I went into the United States.

About an hour after we left Toronto we were inside American territory so the Customs gentleman came round and asked to see my bag. Bearing in mind my half-bottle of whisky I produced the American diplomatic visa. He had never seen its like before, because in the ordinary way people travelling into the United States from Britain landed by ship at one of the East Coast ports, so he still pressed to see my luggage.

I then made the statement that I was a British M.P. This impressed him far more than the diplomatic visa, and he said, "I will grant you the courtesy," and put the necessary chalkmark on my unopened suitcase. Apparently, however, things alcoholically were not as difficult in New York as Mr. Church had suggested, because the two South African M.P.s asked a New York policeman where they could get a drink. He pointed with his baton to a near-by building and said, "As far as I know, that is the only building in New York where you cannot get a drink."

Mr. Tom Church still retains his kindly character, because only the other day I had a letter from him acknowledging a book I had sent him, and in his letter, written from the House of Commons at Ottawa, he says:

> "I do hope that you will be able to come out and visit this country again. You have many warm friends in our city and country, and we will be delighted to have you and give you a dinner if you come, and I know that the City Government will do the same."

In view of this letter it looks as if I ought to get back to Parliament as soon as I can so that I can have my fare paid by the present Socialist Government.

There was one disturbing event at Winnipeg which nearly wrecked the tour. A large number of unemployed coalminers from Britain had gone to Canada for the purpose of assisting with the large wheat harvest of that year. This was an interesting experiment, and had been the subject of much discussion in Britain before we went out, and we made a good many enquiries to find out how the experiment was going on.

So far as the majority of the men were concerned I think it was a great success, but there were elements who did not adapt themselves, and these men were being repatriated. A party of them were being sent back from Winnipeg while we were there. They had all been provided with enough money to buy their meals on the train until they could go on board ship.

In Winnipeg, as in all great cities, there is a small undesirable element. In order to protect the men from these the party was put in charge of two Canadian Mounted Police, and went in a group from the hostel to the railway station. There was some mistake over the time of the train, with the result that these men arrived much too soon. They were put in a large underground waiting-room and the Canadian Mounted Policemen closed the sliding door at the top of the stairs in order to safeguard these men from the undesirable women and others who might have endeavoured to take away from them the money with which they had been provided. The fact that these men were in this waiting-room was made known by some of the trade-union leaders in Winnipeg to some of the members of our party, who went to see what was happening.

The sequel was unfortunate. The next day one of the Labour members of our party, who later on became a Cabinet Minister, was the speaker at a public luncheon and protested against fellow subjects from Britain being herded behind steel bars in charge of armed soldiers.

The speech caused a sensation on both sides of the Atlantic. The speech was made in perfectly good faith, but the speaker had been supplied with totally inaccurate information. Every Canadian newspaper carried the story and the same was true of most of the newspapers in Great Britain,

and there was a minor Governmental crisis at both ends. Lord Peel, the leader of our delegation, was very angry, and thought it was quite wrong that any member of the delegation should have made a speech calculated to give rise to political excitement in Canada, and threatened that the whole delegation would have to return unless he could have the assurance against any repetition of a similar incident. Everybody said "Sorry," and the matter was accordingly cleared up without the unpleasant consequences that at one time seemed probable.

In January of 1929 I was sent as the representative of the British Government to attend the annual banquet of the British Chamber of Commerce in Paris. As the banquet was being held at the Hotel Quai d'Orsay I thought it convenient to stay there. The card of invitation said "*sept heures precisement*", so at seven o'clock I went to the room where the banquet was to be held. It was at the top of a staircase which was guarded on both sides by members of the Garde Republicane with fixed bayonets.

When I got into the banqueting room there was not a soul there, which rather startled me and my Chairman from Reading, who had accompanied me, so we retired to the cocktail bar. At about 7.50 a few people, including the Secretary, arrived. I asked him whether the soldiers were on duty because the Foreign Minister of Commerce was attending, and he explained "No," he had merely hired them at 2*s.* 6*d.* a night.

At eight o'clock precisely the British Ambassador, the French Minister of Commerce, the President of the Chamber and all the important people arrived. I did not know that "*sept heures precisement*" meant "*huit heures probablement*". The Minister of Commerce was a dignified gentleman with a long white beard. His wife, on the other hand, was youngish, slim, exceedingly good-looking, and I had the good fortune to be seated beside her. Her English did not exist, and my French was a bit out of practice, but I succeeded in amusing both her and myself by translating English stories into French.

I had to make a speech, in the course of which I thought I would point out to the assembled company, which was half English and half French, that Britain was the most heavily taxed country in the world. This produced indignant protests from all the Frenchmen. Being used to interruptions at public meetings I just reiterated my statement a little more emphatically and peace was restored.

In the next number of the British *Chamber of Commerce Journal*, however, a French senator wrote an article to prove how wrong I was. He showed what percentage of our total estimated income was taken in taxes, and then proceeded to do the same for his own country. His figures for taxation related to one particular year, his estimate for the national income to a period several years previous, and he ignored the fact that

there had been a substantial rise in prices in the intervening period. Moreover, he assumed that the farmers of France in reckoning their income included the cash they received for their produce less the cost of producing them, and ignored the fact that the ordinary French peasant family probably eats half the income of their farms and does not call it income. The French Senator did not answer my reply. In this matter I was very nobly served by the statistical department of the Board of Trade.

In 1933 I was one of a group of M.P.s invited by the Danish organization known as the Union of Twelve Men to visit that country, with a view to studying some aspects of its industry and agricultural organization. The Union of Twelve Men was formed for the purpose of promoting better trade relationships between Denmark and the United Kingdom. Mr. Kronmann, the Secretary, was a most interesting character. He seemed just as much a Dane as all the others. His father was a Dane, his mother a lady from Durham. He had been born in Durham, and was therefore a British subject by birth; at that time he was and probably still is a British subject. He was a most magnificent organizer of hospitality, and we had a most delightful time, and met all classes of the community at factories, in the streets, on farms, in hotels, and in clubs.

The hospitality of the Danes is wonderful. It was the morning after he had kept us out of bed till 4 a.m. that we were taken out to inspect a leading Co-operative dairy. We were all so tired that no one could remember what it was all about.

We were taken to Elsinore, which Shakespeare made the home of Hamlet. The Castle of Elsinore is a fine building, looking across the narrow straits to the Swedish town of Helsingborg. We made enquiries about Hamlet's grave and were taken to a local hostelry, in the garden of which we were shown the grave of Hamlet, which intrigued us very much, as of course Hamlet was a fictional character. We discovered that the grave contained the body of a deceased dog named Hamlet, out of which the enterprising publican had collected much money from foreign tourists.

Our trip had an added interest because at that moment Copenhagen had been invaded by the late Sir Julian Cahn and one of his teams of county cricketers, which he had taken to Denmark.

Amongst one of the pleasant visits we paid was to the residence of the King's brother, who had a most lovely garden, of which he was rightly proud. I asked him where he got his seeds. He promptly replied, "From Suttons of Reading, of course," which gave me considerable gratification because of my friendship with the late Mr. Leonard Sutton, and because I had been for many years M.P. for Reading.

One Sunday afternoon we had tea with a charming man who was

President of the Farmers' Bank, or, to give it its proper title, the Land-Mans-Bank. He also had a charming garden. It was more impressive than that of the King's brother, because he had laid out a vast lawn of which he was very, but not rightly, proud. One of the strange things of life, as far as I know, is that perfect lawns can only be produced in the British Isles. Nowhere else have I seen that beautiful texture of grass which is characteristic of the English lawn.

Next year another party of M.P.s visited Sweden at the invitation of Mr. Karl Kempe. On arrival at Gotenberg we were taken over the famous S.K.F. ball-bearing works by the Managing Director, Mr. Prytz, lately the Swedish Minister in London. Mr. Prytz was born in London of a Swedish father and an English mother, was educated at Dulwich, and only became a Swede when he reached the age of 21. His late sister always remained British, a most charming lady, who was the matron of the Courtauld Hospital at Braintree, Essex.

After inspecting the works we were entertained most hospitably to lunch, and then in a large motor-boat we were taken to an island some 10 miles distant, of which Mr. Prytz was the proprietor, where we all bathed *alfresco*, i.e. without any costumes, then tea, then a walk round the island, and then the preliminaries to dinner. A vast table covered with *smorgesbrot*, lots of lager, concluding with a glass of schnapps. This occupied an hour, then Mr. Prytz announced dinner. I think there were eight courses and eight kinds of wine, and then the loveliest motor-boat trip back to Gotenberg under a brilliant moon.

We joined our host in Stockholm, and were taken on different days to a number of the great Swedish industrial plants. The Swedes, of course, are great engineers. After visiting one of these plants we were invited to a most sumptuous dinner by the Managing Director, and amongst the guests was the Governor of the Province. The leader of our delegation was the late Lord Mount Temple, who was placed at table on the right of our host, and the Governor of the Province on the left.

In private conversation after dinner I expressed some surprise to our host that the Governor of the Province should not have had the place of honour, to which he explained that it is most convenient when they have British guests, because our place of honour is on the right of the host, and theirs is on the left, so both Lord Mount Temple and the Governor were in their right places.

Next day we travelled 300 miles by car to within a short distance of the Arctic Circle, in order that we might have an opportunity of seeing forestry operations and saw-mills. I learnt that in Sweden they do not plant young trees, but when the time comes for felling the timber the Government Inspector of Forestry selects certain trees which are regarded

as good mothers, and which are not cut down, and in this way by self-seeding the forest is maintained. Apparently it was Mr. Kempe's father who was the originator of this method of reafforestation. As far as I can make out it is unfortunate that this method does not work in the United Kingdom, for climatic reasons.

I think the Swedes know more about good food and drink than any other people in the world, though I must say the Danes and the Dutch are good runners-up.

Sweden always has a Socialist Government, but as far as I can make out the ordinary Socialist in Sweden would be called a diehard Right-wing reactionary Tory here.

In many Parliaments there exists an unofficial committee known as the Commercial Committee. These committees consist of Private Members, and consider a variety of commercial problems. They are associated through a headquarters in Belgium which organizes International Conferences held annually in various capital cities.

The 1937 Conference took place that summer in Paris. Apart from general debates, two special subjects were down for consideration: one the problem of Barter in International Trade and the other the problem of the World Situation in Respect of Raw Materials. The British Committee had invited me to prepare a paper on the subject of Barter, and my studies soon convinced me that in effect Barter and Exchange Control were really two aspects of the same method of trading. I assembled in my paper all the information available. My conclusion was that Barter and Exchange Control were evils which interfered with the freedom of trade, which of course is something quite different from Free Trade. Under the systems of Barter and Exchange Control the individual trader can only enter into transactions with traders in other countries provided he attains the approval of his own Government, and it may be the Government of the other country to which he seeks to export or from which he desires to import. On the other hand, under a Protectionist system every trader is free to enter into any transaction he wishes, but of course taking into account such import duties as may exist.

Though I have always been an ardent protectionist, I have at the same time always believed strongly in the principle of Freedom of Trade.

My paper, which was translated into French by the courtesy of the Foreign Office, was available to all the delegates in its original and in its translation. On the night before I was due to present my paper to the Commission de Finance, the late Sir Philip Dawson, M.P., the leader of our delegation, told me that I was expected to move a resolution condemning all systems of Barter and Exchange Control.

The following morning I left early for the Palais de Luxemburg, where the Conference was being held, and I was seated at the top table in

the committee room, where the "Commission" was to meet, trying to turn my resolution into satisfactory French, and I was not being very successful. Shortly after I had started a little man walked in, nodded to me, and sat down at the table. After a few more minutes of vain endeavour I turned to him and said, "Are you a Frenchman?" He answered, "Yes." "Can you speak English?" He said, "Yes." "Can you turn this resolution of mine into good French?" He did so, and when I read it back I knew that it clearly expressed my point of view. I thanked him and asked him his name. He replied, "Paul Reynaud."

When the Commission met I briefly summarized my paper and moved the resolution. It was an interesting discussion in which Monsieur Reynaud joined, but several of the delegation, in particular the Italians and the Poles, said that while they personally agreed with my resolution they would like the decision on it postponed until the following morning. The trouble was the Italian delegates could not vote without getting Mussolini's permission, and the Poles were hesitant and wanted the decision on it postponed until the following morning. The Poles were in the difficulty that though they agreed with my resolution they felt that the economic situation of Poland was such that it would be impossible for them to recommend their Government to give early effect to it.

With regard to the Italians there was a very curious situation, because the paper on Raw Materials had been prepared by one of their delegates, and though his approach to the problem initially was quite different from mine he had arrived at the identical conclusion that the problem of the supply of raw materials would become much easier if Barter and Exchange Control were abolished, but he felt he could not vote for the same idea in another man's words without permission from Il Duce.

Next morning all was well; the Italians voted for my resolution, the Poles did likewise, with a reservation on the lines I have indicated, and we all then proceeded to the residence of the President of the Senate, where we were regaled with champagne.

While we were talking Monsieur Reynaud asked me if I would care to see the ballet at the Theatre De Champs-Élysées with him and his wife and afterwards have supper. This kind invitation I accepted, and we had a very pleasant evening, in the course of which Madame Reynaud acted as the chauffeur. I told her it was the first time I had ever been driven in Paris by a lady, on which she commented that she had created rather a sensation when her husband was Minister of Finance, because she always used to drive him every morning from his home to the Ministry, and it was the first time a Cabinet Minister's wife had ever done anything like that in France.

Monsieur Reynaud had been present at the Coronation in Westminster

Abbey and the next morning's *Le Temps* contained a most magnificent article by him describing the ceremony, all the more remarkable having regard to the fact that Monsieur Reynaud was, of course, a convinced Republican.

We had a long chat about the perils of the European situation, and he repeatedly told me he just could not understand how it was we had not adopted conscription in Britain. I explained to him that despite a great deal of political difficulty the National Government was engaged in a very intensive rearmament programme, but his view was quite clearly that it was only the immediate adoption of conscription by us that would influence the international situation. As will be remembered, it was two years before we reached the stage of the Militia Training Bill, and even that very moderate measure of conscription was strongly opposed in Parliament by the Opposition.

It is not easy to come to a conclusion of a man's qualities as the result of meeting him only three or four times, but I have always felt that if he had become Prime Minister of France earlier in 1940 he might have saved that country from the débâcle of the surrender in the summer of that year.

CHAPTER XXII

THE CRISIS OF 1935

It so happened that I played a rather important part in the episodes which preceded the Election of 1935. This was one of the many occasions when I found myself supporting what I believed to be Conservative principles at a time when the Conservative leaders were supporting other principles.

It will be remembered that Part I of the Treaty of Versailles was the Covenant of the League of Nations, a document which I studied time and again. I could never satisfy myself that it was capable of achieving the object for which it was created, namely the certain prevention of war, and in view of subsequent events it is quite clear that my doubts were justified.

The first shattering blow to the League was the action of Mussolini in ordering the bombardment of the Greek island of Corfu, when some dispute had arisen between Italy and Greece. It was a clear case of aggression but the League failed lamentably in dealing with it, although there was some fairly animated discussion on the matter at Geneva. This, I was told, was a great surprise to Mussolini, because he had never read the Covenant, and therefore did not know that he had acted improperly!

After the rise of Hitler to power in Germany, Italy was just as worried as other countries as to the consequences. In the autumn of 1934 Hitler and Mussolini met for the first time in Venice. Hitler, no doubt, was anxious to separate Italy from France and England. It always seemed to me that it must have been Hitler who incited Mussolini to take action against Abyssinia. There is no doubt that the Abyssinians were indulging in slave-raiding into the surrounding territories, some of which were Italian colonies, and therefore the Italians had a measure of legitimate grievance, and they were also anxious to wipe out the memory of their defeat by the Abyssinians at Adowa in 1894.

In January 1935 there was a Conference at Stresa attended by representatives of Britain, France, and Italy for the purpose of taking steps to restrain Germany from an aggressive policy. I have always been led to believe, though I cannot prove it, that on that occasion Mussolini explained to the British delegates that he was determined to stop the malpractices of the Abyssinians. Apparently the British delegates either did not appreciate sufficiently what he had in mind or alternatively Mussolini was not sufficiently explicit. It is evident that he thought he had received the approval of both Britain and France to what he had in mind. In the summer of that year there developed an acute situation between Italy and Abyssinia. The general mass of the British public were not familiar with

the problem and there was naturally much conflict of opinion on a subject about which there was little accurate information.

In September the League of Nations was having one of its periodical meetings in Geneva, by which time the situation had become acute. Sir Samuel Hoare, now Lord Templewood, who was the British Foreign Minister, made a speech of a strange character, urging the League to take strong steps against Italy in respect of this crisis.

At this time I was on holiday in the country, and a friend who was staying with us who had bought an early edition of the *Evening Standard* remarked to me when I came home after a walk: "Have you seen this speech of Sam Hoare's? It seems to me very stupid, and is likely to run us into trouble." I read it and came to the same conclusion. We both thought that the National Press the next morning would attack Samuel Hoare's speech, so we went out and bought copies of all the London newspapers, and were amazed to find the National Press full of praise for his speech, and not one word of condemnation.

Two or three days later I went to speak at Chatham in support of my old friend the late Sir Park Goff, M.P. He and I both made some critical remarks about the policy which was being pursued by His Majesty's Government, which at that time was a Coalition of Conservatives, Liberal Nationals and National Labour.

Two or three days before I had written a letter to *The Times* in criticism of the lines we were taking with regard to Abyssinia. After my Chatham meeting I stayed the night at the house of my friend Mr. Morris Wheeler, at Horton Kirby, Kent. *The Times* that morning contained a letter from Mr. Hugh Molson, M.P., severely criticizing my letter. I wrote a reply on the notepaper of my friend, which duly appeared in *The Times*. It had an interesting sequel, because for years after I received letters from all over the world addressed to me at Mr. Wheeler's house, so a letter to *The Times* has an international significance which I had never appreciated before.

When I returned to London from my holiday I happened to write a letter to Mr. L. S. Amery on a certain matter in which we were both interested. In his reply to me he implied that he could hardly think of anything else but of the danger of the policy we were adopting with regard to the Italo-Abyssinian dispute. In my reply to him I said I had discussed the matter with all the M.P.s I happened to meet and they all appeared to take the same view. As a result, we decided to convene a meeting of Peers and M.P.s who shared our views.

The result was that about a fortnight later some 30 or 40 of us had a meeting at the Constitutional Club in London. The invitations had been sent out by me with the statement that Mr. Amery would take the chair, and the letters of invitation were marked "Private". But there are in this

world strange people who will disclose anything, however private it is supposed to be. The leading article in the *Daily Mail* on the day of our meeting quoted textually a part of my letter and an announcement of the meeting. The result was that when I arrived at the Constitutional Club shortly before the time of the meeting I found some Press photographers hanging around. The hall porter told me that they had come there to photograph Mr. Amery and myself. As they did not know us by sight we both got in without being photographed.

We had our meeting, passed what we thought was an appropriate resolution, which included a request to Mr. Baldwin, then Prime Minister, to receive a deputation. Apart from our meeting, another group of Conservative M.P.s had also been active, and had made a similar request to Mr. Baldwin, who agreed to receive the two deputations jointly.

The meeting with Mr. Baldwin was a private one except that an agreed statement was issued to the Press, and accordingly it would be improper of me to attempt to quote what anybody said on that occasion, but I can remember one sentence I used, something as follows:

> "If we go forward with the present policy of the Government it means war, and if we do not it means humiliation. I like neither course."

A sequel to our deputation was that a few days later Mr. Baldwin, in the course of a speech in the country, made it perfectly clear that this country had no intention of going forward to the point of war. Parliament met the next week and I remember a well-known journalist saying to me, "You fellows have completely changed the situation."

Parliament met in an atmosphere of crisis. The bulk of the Socialists and Liberals wanted to go to war with Italy. A vast majority of the Conservatives thought that war would be a mistake, and many of us took the view that if we went to war with Italy Germany would certainly intervene on her side.

When Italy commenced military operations against Abyssinia the League met and decided to impose commercial Sanctions against Italy. These were ineffective because Austria, Hungary, Albania, members of the League, refused to apply them. Germany, of course, was not a member of the League, and did not come into the picture, and the same was true of the United States of America, so the policy of Sanctions was bound to fail. For their operations the Germans needed lots of petrol, which Russia obligingly supplied on a commercial basis in exactly the same way as Russia obligingly supplied Germany with various raw materials, during the period from September 3rd, 1939, until June 22nd, 1941, when Germany attacked Russia. The situation drifted on in a very

unsatisfactory manner until ultimately Mr. Neville Chamberlain brought the whole thing up short by his declaration that the policy the League of Nations was pursuing was nothing but "midsummer madness". Abyssinia was completely overrun and turned into an Italian province. Earlier on Sir Samuel Hoare had met the late Monsieur Laval, then Foreign Minister of France, and they had agreed on certain proposals which would have preserved the independence of Abyssinia, but would have transferred certain disputed areas to Italy.

For a time it looked as if the Hoare-Laval proposals would go through. There was, however, a sudden *volte face* on behalf of the British Government, and the Hoare-Laval proposals were repudiated, despite the fact that the British Government through Mr. Eden, who was Acting Foreign Secretary, had urged the Emperor of Abyssinia to accept them.

In writing the above I have passed over the period of the General Election of 1935. That election was fought amongst other things on the Sanctions against Italy, but the Conservative Party and sections of the Liberal and Labour Parties were all in favour of the policy of Sanctions, whereas in my election address I opposed the whole policy. My position was not too easy, and my difficulties were aggravated by the fact that Croydon is in the diocese of Canterbury and Archbishop Lang was strongly supporting the policy of Sanctions. I had trouble with my own supporters, but I refused to budge an inch, and ultimately had the pleasure of being elected by a majority of 17,471 over my Socialist opponent, and a majority of some 12,000 over both my Liberal and Socialist opponents combined.

In this matter my sole object was to avert war with Germany. We were in no position to fight. I am certain the French would not have fought, and if the policy of Sanctions had been carried to its logical conclusion a general war would have been inevitable, in which I think we would have been defeated. As I have mentioned elsewhere, Mr. Neville Chamberlain, after he became Prime Minister, did what he could to restore the situation by his visit to Mussolini in Rome. Unfortunately, however, that visit took place too late.

CHAPTER XXIII

SOCIAL CHANGES IN SIXTY YEARS

We often hear the phrase "the good old days". To a very large extent the phrase is entirely deceptive, because the alleged "good old days" never happened, if by "good old days" one refers to a period long since past. On the other hand, of course, mankind does suffer from temporary setbacks, and therefore quite recent days may be more prosperous than present ones.

At Hooton, where I was born, the generality of the district suggested a purely rural community, but actually a substantial proportion of the residents were people who travelled an eight-mile journey every morning to the great city of Liverpool, the other side of the River Mersey, and accordingly we were a mixed community of farmers, agricultural labourers, and a substantial number of rather rich Liverpool merchants, shipowners, etc.

In those days the bulk of the children running about the streets of Liverpool wore neither shoes nor stockings,* a state of affairs which came to an end a good many years ago, though it was common at one time in most of the towns in the north of England. The agricultural labourer in the district appears to have been paid about 21*s.* a week, while female domestic servants who lived in were paid £12 to £14 a year. I should be inclined to suggest that possibly no class of the community has raised its standards of living more than the indoor female domestic servant during the last few years.

There was a much more marked difference in those days between everybody's best suit or best frock and the rest of their garments. The best suit and best frock were, of course, both worn on Sundays or on occasions like weddings. It was always the ambition of the young ladies of the parish to have a smart new frock on Easter Sunday. It was the height of ambition for a young man when he first went to church in a tail coat and silk hat, while the older men on Sundays invariably wore silk hats and frock-coats, which for the benefit of those who have never seen one looks very much like an overcoat with silk fastenings. Frock-coats and silk hats, as I discovered when I came to London, were the invariable wear all day by prominent persons, including all M.P.s.

I think I have mentioned earlier that in the 'nineties income-tax was 8*d.* in the £, the best whisky was 3*s.* a bottle, and whisky that had not

*Mr. Harold Wilson, the President of the Board of Trade, was about 20 years wrong in his recent speech on this subject.

been sufficiently matured was, I think, 2*s.* 6*d.* a bottle, and Martell's Three Star brandy was sold at the monstrously high price of 5*s.* 6*d.* a bottle.

There appeared to have been in Liverpool the system of apprenticeship in the merchanting and shipping houses, whereby the young people who had had a fairly good education agreed to serve for a period of five years at a salary for the whole period of £100, so that the young man of 16 or 17 probably started at about £10 a year, and received £30 in his last year before he got some proper appointment.

Amongst the manual working community there were certain unusual habits of dress. The young man's Sunday suit always had very blue trousers. I never discovered the reason of the popularity of bright blue for trousers, but it seemed to be the universal custom.

Taking them generally, ladies were not nearly so smart then as they are now, though no doubt they were just as good-looking. The hairdressing was abominable, especially if you happened to be in a position where you could look down on top of a lady's head. From this point of view it looked like a tangled mass, instead of the beautiful *coiffure* of today.

Even worse were the condition of most ladies' shoes and stockings. The universal habit was long skirts so that the feet were invisible, but as the roads were in nothing like the condition of the present day every lady had to hold her skirt up when she was out, otherwise it would get covered in mud. This was the only occasion on which it became obvious that women had both feet and ankles, and presumably legs.

Because the feet were so rarely seen most women wore ugly shoes, and most of their stockings appeared to be of thick black wool. There were, of course, a few rare women who did wear nice shoes and stockings, and who whenever they mounted a bus always lifted the skirt delicately so that the various males near by could see the beautiful ankles and well-shod feet. I think it was the First World War that had such a profound effect on women's clothing habits. The ladies' hair-dress became the dominant feature of many women's lives, and making an appointment with the hairdresser's is now one of the outstanding features of the week.

All old ladies and many of the young ladies in the 'nineties carried their purses and belongings in a linen bag, which was tied round the waist under the skirt. This had advantages and disadvantages. It left their hands free, instead of being cumbered as they are now with the beautiful bags which all classes of society now seem to possess in great variety.

In these days the main use of whales is to supplement our supply of margarine and cooking fats. But in my day the main purpose seemed to be to supply the necessary bone for the very rigid corsets which all women wore, so that when you were dancing you appeared to be dancing with a human being cased in steel. It was the ambition of every woman

to have a tiny waist, and for that they were willing to incur pain and discomfort all day long.

There were, of course, no cinemas, but in Liverpool, and in the small adjacent towns of Birkenhead and Chester, there were good theatres visited by touring companies, so the programme changed every week, and the great actors of the day after producing their plays in London toured the provinces in the autumn, and every important city had the honour once a year of a "personal" visit by Sir Henry Irving and the other great actors and actresses of the day.

I never quite understood what would have happened if Sir Henry Irving had made a visit which was not "personal", though I still see this phrase often used in theatrical advertisements, using the words "the personal appearance of ——". It is also used in a strange way by people in offices, when telephoning a request to speak to Mr. —— "personally". I do not understand how one can speak to anybody impersonally.

In those days no women smoked; the odd girl who occasionally smoked a cigarette had the reputation of being very fast. However, one did have the opportunity on the Shropshire Union Canal of seeing some of the bargee women smoking clay pipes, which for some reason they always held upside down.

A great many people used to get drunk in those days, and in general people did not seem to be very shocked at seeing a drunken man. Today it is rare to see anybody really drunk in the street. My general impression would be that men drink less now and women drink more. The public-house is regarded as the appropriate resort for both, and it is probably the fact that women do visit public-houses that has done more than anything to raise the standard of behaviour there.

To young people one of the great events of the year was to be taken to one of the local pantomimes. Nearly all the theatres in the country put on pantomimes for about six weeks from Christmas onwards. Pantomimes were all based on much the same subjects as today, but when the pantomime proper had come to an end there was always the magnificent transformation scene, when curtain after curtain went up revealing more and more brilliantly illuminated scenes, and then at the end of the transformation scene we had the harlequinade, which was always a great joy to the youngsters.

As a rule, pantomimes were the only entertainment that youngsters were ever taken to, with the result that when on one occasion a young boy in the district was taken to the opera *Faust* he plaintively asked, after two hours, when the clowns were coming on!

I think there was a very much greater contrast in those days between social life in London and that in the provinces, and in particular the social life of the more rural parts. Except for train journeys, few people ever

travelled more than four or five miles from their homes, because there were no motor-cars. The safety bicycle was not known until I was about 10 years of age, and the means of transport for middle-class people was, in the case of the wealthy, the carriage and pair, and in the case of the less wealthy the pony and trap. Visiting always seemed to me very ceremonial and very dull.

All the ladies who thought they were rather smart had a regular monthly "at home" tea, and the other ladies of the district called on her and drank tea and did not stay too long.

A private dance was a very formal affair. The first half-hour was spent by the young men fixing up their programmes, so that the whole evening was fully planned by the time the first dance had begun, and it was of course the duty of the young men of the house at which the dance was being held to make sure that all the plain girls had plenty of partners. It was always better fun to go to someone else's dance than to be present at your own. It was improper to ask anyone to dance unless there had been a formal introduction.

Despite all these formalities there was one curious feature which has quite gone out, namely that at every dance the hostess thought it her duty to provide a vast number of screened places where between each dance partners could go and sit out and hold hands. As a rule there were not enough screens to go round, so the rest used to sit on the stairs.

In very primitive times I believe that the young men when they wanted to get married used to go and raid the nearby village and find the best-looking girls. This caused a good deal of wear and tear, so dances were invented as a more suitable alternative.

For a boy to dance more than three times with the same girl was regarded as monstrously bad taste, whereas in these days the idea is to dance with the same girl all evening. Personally I think the old custom had something to be said for it. At least it meant that at any kind of party everyone made additions to the number of their friends. The present system does not have this sensible and desired result.

A very strange sequel to this was that the card of invitation also named a later date on which the hostess would be "at home" to all those who had been guests at her dance. Everybody turned up to the "at home", drank tea, and thanked the hostess for the dance she had provided about ten days before. I never quite understood why any hostess, in order to be hospitable, had to be hospitable twice to the same people!

I did not really go to anything in the nature of a public dinner until I was about 25 years of age, except for the kind of supper-parties we used to have at the University of Liverpool.

It was not until after 1918 that women ever attended public dinners, but on rare occasions when there was some great feast the wives of some

of the important guests were permitted to sit in the gallery and watch the proceedings. Personally, I think the present system of mixed dinners is much the better.

Amongst the children of the manual workers there was in those days a much poorer standard of dress than there is today, and the idea of a manual worker or his children having a bath seemed to be quite fantastic; in short, no one had a bath! When the cold weather came little Tom would be stitched up in thick woollen undies for the winter, so quite obviously he could not be bathed. What Tom looked like when he was undressed at the beginning of the summer I don't know, but I can guess.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE STORY OF A WAR CHARITY

WHEN the war started in September 1939 all sorts of war charities were formed to deal with the various aspects of wartime problems. It occurred to Miss Frances Day that none of these charities actually dealt with the problem of enabling the men and women in the Forces to amuse themselves. She discussed this matter with a number of friends, of whom at that time I was not one, because up to then she had only been to me a distinguished artiste on the other side of the footlights. Ultimately they agreed that it would be a good thing to start a fund to provide games for the troops, and it was also decided to call it the Frances Day Penny Fund.

The scheme was launched at a lunch given at the Dorchester, to which my wife and I were asked by Colonel A. M. Lyons, K.C., M.P. It was a very good lunch and there were some very good speeches by Frances Day and Gracie Fields, who had come against her doctor's orders as she was recovering from a serious illness. Symbolic of the title of the fund there were three very large bottles, like those displayed by chemists, filled with pennies. When Colonel Lyons had asked my wife and me to the party we thought it was merely to make up the crowd, but at the end of the proceedings Lyons asked us to stay behind. The sequel was a discussion amongst a few of us as to the methods of running the fund.

I forget who took part in this discussion, but there were certainly Miss Frances Day, Colonel Lyons, Sir Patrick Hannon, my wife and myself. As a sequel I suggested that we ought to lunch together at an early date at the House of Commons, when the company also included Lady Hannon. I pointed out that the charity must be properly run and that we ought to draw up a constitution, and be registered as a war charity. Before the luncheon Miss Day had made a very generous contribution to the fund, and a great many of her friends had also done likewise. At the luncheon, after we had discussed the question of the constitution, it was decided to hold a general meeting of the subscribers, and this Miss Day thought could most conveniently take the form of a cocktail party at her flat.

The sequel was that the Marchioness of Carisbrooke was made Patron and the Duke of Sutherland President, Lady Louis Mountbatten Vice-President, Miss Frances Day Founder-Chairman, my wife Acting Chairman, I was made Acting President, and Lady Hannon Honorary

Treasurer. Sir Patrick Hannon, Colonel Lyons, the late Lord Decies, Sir Raymond Evershed, Lady Hambro, Mr. Cyril Hicks, and Captain Peter Steward, now the Secretary of the Carlton Club, were members of the Committee. Messrs. Barton Mayhew undertook to be Honorary Auditors, and were represented by Sir Harold Barton and Mr. Maurice Barker. The Honorary Solicitor was Mr. Sydney Block. Messrs. Pawley and Malyon were the Honorary Accountants and gave their services voluntarily for the whole period. I was made Acting President, as the Duke of Sutherland was frequently out of London in the course of his duties as Lord Lieutenant of the County of Sutherland. My wife was made Acting Chairman because at that time Miss Frances Day was away a good deal touring the provinces.

We were fortunate in getting some Honorary Landlords, Messrs. Way and Waller, who provided us with offices for most of the period free of charge at 7 Park Lane. The result of these arrangements was that our expenses were low in relation to our activities. As Secretary of the fund we took over Miss Frances Day's private secretary, Miss Golda Kay, who throughout was paid a very modest remuneration for the splendid work she did. She was the only paid person.

We had committe meetings whenever necessary, but the real work of running the fund was done by Lady Hannon, Miss Kay and my wife.

We discovered at a very early date that one of the great needs of the men and women in the Forces was an ample supply of playing-cards, dartboards, halma sets and the like. It is interesting to note that after the retreat to Dunkirk, Lt. Hambro and some comrades were passing through Auchies, and came across a derelict orchard in which they saw swinging on a tree in the breeze a "Frances Day Penny Fund" Dartboard—which had a tremendous psychological effect upon the boys!

In those days it was not difficult to buy these things and we had no difficulty in finding plenty of customers for our gifts. We established cordial relationships with the various welfare organizations for the Army, Navy and Royal Air Force, and at no time did we fail to meet any demand made in some form or another. I have put in this qualification because the time came when it was becoming steadily more difficult to obtain supplies of all the things that were in demand, but every unit that applied at least got something that helped them to provide self-amusement.

The activities of the fund rapidly became well known throughout the Forces, and a great many requests came in through the Welfare Organizations. However, a great many also came direct from the Forces, sometimes from the officer commanding-in-chief and sometimes from a humble corporal in charge of a searchlight unit in some isolated part of Britain.

The fact that the fund was associated with the name of an individual had both advantages and disadvantages. One of the chief advantages was that a great many people who knew Miss Day well supported the fund at its inauguration and continued to support it generously throughout its existence. On the other hand, that fact made it much more difficult to get financial support from a wider public. On the other side, as a vast number of those in the Forces included Miss Day as one of their "Pin-up Girls", the fact that they received gifts from her fund was a popular feature.

As I have indicated above, the activities of the fund increased rapidly, and soon the problem arose of increasing the income of the fund. The first step in this direction was the production of a short talking film between Miss Day and Mr. Oscar Deutsch, which the latter agreed should be shown at many of the cinemas in his circuit. At each cinema in turn where it was shown Miss Day attended and made a short speech describing the work of the fund, and there was then a collection. This effort was very successful and was started at the time when the daytime "blitz" was taking place on London.

During one week Miss Day visited some thirty cinemas in London. My wife and I accompanied her on many of these visits, and at some of them all three of us spoke. When the night "blitz" came there were no more audiences in the cinemas and this effort automatically came to an end, but in the meantime it had brought in enough to see us right for a considerable period.

When the "blitz" came to an end and the theatres resumed their normal activities Miss Day was fortunate in getting the loan of the Palace Theatre, Shaftesbury Avenue, where we had an all-star matinée and an auction of many gifts that had been sent in. One of the gifts was a silver casket from H.M. the Queen. The auctioneer was Colonel Jack Trevor. We were lucky with the auction because many people had come to spend money, and two of the most generous supporters of the auction were Lord Mountevans (Evans of the *Broke*) and my late friend Dr. Henry Dreyfus, Chairman of British Celanese. His presence gave my family some luck.

Amongst the gifts auctioned was the offer of a portrait to be painted by Mr. Joseph Oppenheimer. Dr. Dreyfus was very active in the bidding for this and ultimately bought it. He then decided he did not want to have his portrait done, and offered the canvas to my wife, who in turn presented it to my son, so we now have a most attractive portrait of him at home.

Amongst those who helped with the matinée was Mr. Arthur Riscoe, who took every opportunity he could to help the fund. The matinée was a little expensive for me because Mr. Norman Hartnell had presented

a model evening gown which I bid for without thought of coupons or fit, and which, in fact, I bought. The question of coupons was settled by a generous lady who said she would provide the coupons for the gown that Mr. Hartnell had presented. My wife got the frock.

Another theatrical effort to help the fund came through my friend Mr. Lupino Lane. One of his productions had had a long run at the Victoria Palace and during the whole of that run he had made a nightly appeal for what he called "ship halfpennies", in support of the Merchant Navy Comforts Fund. When he took this show off he and Mr. Jack Hylton arranged a variety show, the leading performers of which were all members of the Crazy Gang, all of whom play much better golf than I do at the Ham Manor Golf Club at Angmering.

I approached both Lupino Lane and Jack Hylton to enquire whether they would permit an appeal for the Frances Day Fund. They both agreed at once to an appeal at every performance for a fortnight, and then suggested that I should discuss with Mr. Bud Flanagan as to who should make the appeal at each performance. He at once suggested his colleague Mr. Chesney Allen, and the latter and my wife in combination prepared the text of the appeal, the central theme of which was the need for doing something for the Forgotten Army, as the 14th Army in Burma was called.

We did not know at the time that my son-in-law, whom we had never then met, was one of those serving in the Forgotten Army. These appeals were so successful that every morning my wife and Miss Kay used to spend about three hours at the Victoria Palace counting the collection. In the fortnight over £1,500 was collected.

One of the most popular gifts of the fund were packs of playing-cards, and as the war continued it became increasingly difficult to get supplies owing to the strict rationing of paper and card. It appeared to me that the only solution was to try to soften the heart of the Board of Trade, and so I asked Sir Andrew Duncan, then the President of the Board of Trade, to lunch with me at the Carlton Grill. I warned him that my wife was coming, and he brought as his large bodyguard Mr. Malcolm McCorquodale, M.P., his Parliamentary Private Secretary. In those days it was still possible to get a good lunch, and at the end my wife told her tale and produced letters of appreciation from most of the eminent commanders. As a sequel we were granted a special ration which solved the problem for the next year or so.

Some time before we had induced Mrs. W. E. Butlin, the wife of the great camp organizer, to join the Committee, and she proved a source from which we were able to get a lot of help, because Mr. Butlin still had many pre-war commodities for use in his camps, and these included playing-cards, as well as other amusement devices.

This unfortunately landed my wife in another job because Mr. Butlin had been appointed adviser on hostels for the Ministry of Supply, and he accordingly asked my wife to join his Advisory Committee, with the result that she had to visit most of the hostels at the great ordnance factories run by the Ministry of Supply. One of her colleagues was Dame Anne Loughlin, who at that time was the President of the T.U.C.

I have referred above to the fact that the fund received many letters of appreciation from the commanders-in-chief, as well as from officers of all the units to which gifts were sent. A great advantage in sending gifts in bulk to officers commanding-in-chief was that they were able to allot them to those units which were the most in need. The punctilious way in which all these leading commanders always acknowledged a consignment of gifts was a matter of comment on the part of all the Committee. An early and most appreciative letter came from Field-Marshal Lord Wavell, then General Sir Archibald Wavell, in command of the troops in North Africa. His letter was in such high terms that my wife had facsimile copies made of it, and these formed the basis of the next letters of appeal. The printers had done such a splendid job of work that many of the recipients in sending their cheques returned the facsimile as well, thinking it was the original. When we had the pleasure of meeting Sir Archibald at a cocktail party before he left to take up his post as Viceroy of India my wife told him of the way in which she had exploited his letter, and he was delighted.

The fund ultimately had a most amazing collection of autographs of the distinguished leaders of all three Forces, including Lord Montgomery, who, on his jeep tours, apparently always had a supply of playing-cards and packets of cigarettes which he had obtained from the fund.

Though it was only a small war charity it gave away about 200,000,000 cigarettes, over 200,000 packs of cards, thousands of pocket chess, draughts and domino sets, and also many thousands of "Penguin" books.

At times there were demands it was difficult to meet. On one occasion the corporal commanding a small gun site near a celebrated trout river wrote to say that the local squire had placed his fishing at their disposal, provided they got some rods. My wife inserted an advertisement in *The Times*, which produced the very generous donation of two splendid sets of rods, to the very great satisfaction of the men on the gun site.

The officers and Committee were in the main a very distinguished team, but as most of them, through their war duties, were very much scattered it was seldom we had a large attendance at our Committee meetings. The rest apparently had faith in those who could turn up, and I think a first-class job was done. When hostilities finished we were all very sad when the decision was made to bring the activities of the fund to an end.

CHAPTER XXV

POLITICS BETWEEN THE TWO WARS

THIS is a book mainly about politicians and other persons, and not one about politics itself, except incidentally, but as I was one of the orphans of the political storm of 1945 I cannot forbear to write at least one purely political chapter.

About 200 of us Conservatives lost our seats in 1945, not because of the then present or of our views about the then future, but primarily because of the most grotesquely false views which existed about that part of the past which lay between 1918 and 1939.

During that period I was a candidate at seven General Elections, and at one by-election. On three out of the eight occasions I was successful, and sat in Parliament for just over 18 years, and either as a prospective candidate or a Member took a very active part during the whole of the period, and as I have one quality which I think is unusual, namely the capacity of remembering the past in the light in which I then looked at it, therefore I think I can give as good a picture of that period as anyone else. Obviously I cannot in one chapter write the whole political history of Britain between 1918 and 1939, and therefore I shall confine myself to the highlights of the economic aspect of the period, which ranges round coal mining, banking policy and unemployment.

During the greater part of that period unemployment was a persistent problem and there were probably more debates in the House of Commons on that subject than on any other, and during the period there were Coalition Governments, Labour Governments and National Governments, and all of them were guilty of the common error of assuming that when there was a debate on unemployment the Minister who had to reply was the Minister of Labour.

The Ministry of Labour is in the main a device to help unemployed people to find out where there are jobs, and to act as a relieving officer for those for whom there are no jobs. It has nothing whatsoever to do with the economic and financial policy whereby there may be jobs for all those who want them. Any debate on unemployment ought to have involved the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the President of the Board of Trade, and the Minister of Agriculture, because these were the three departments whose policy was capable of influencing the sale of sufficient goods or the supply of sufficient services, so that every human being could have a reasonable chance of getting a job.

I believe I was the only Junior Minister not connected with the

Ministry of Labour who ever had the privilege of replying to a debate on unemployment, namely on the occasion of the debate on the King's Speech in November 1928, when Mr. Baldwin invited me to make the official reply to a debate on unemployment initiated by the Labour Party, and on that occasion the outstanding speaker on behalf of the Labour Party was Sir Oswald Mosley.

It is just as well to remind people of the fact that this Fascist Leader was once a member of the Labour Party, and, a little after the date to which I refer, a member of the Labour Government.

It is the practice to refer to the period from 1918 to 1939 as the "period of 20 years of Tory misrule". It is true that for about 17 years out of the 20 there was a Conservative majority in Parliament, but during all but six years of the period the Governments were some variety of Coalition, and the policies were very frequently quite the reverse of what would have been those of a purely Conservative Government.

On the other hand, it is equally true that the period in question was one in which there was a greater measure of economic and social progress than any comparable period in the history of either this or any other country, despite the persistent unemployment problem which prevailed from the end of 1921 until the outbreak of war in 1939.

When the war ended on Armistice Day in 1918 the whole world was short of goods in exactly the same way as it was when the Second World War ended in 1945, and accordingly the sellers' market prevailed until about the summer of 1921, and until then everything that could be produced anywhere had a ready market. We had a period of what might be called full employment after the First World War like we have had after the Second World War. There was currency inflation as there is today, and all the evils that follow from inflation, but fortunately there was a quicker realization then than there is now of the desirability of restoring freedom. It is now suggested that it was this early restoration of freedom that caused the subsequent distresses. This in fact is totally inaccurate.

For some strange reason mankind has little or no economic memory, and accordingly in both wars we made many of the same mistakes. We controlled the coal mines in both wars, that is to say the State became financially responsible and had the major power of policy direction. We did the same with railways. I am certain we should have done very much better if we had left them alone in both wars, and now because the State has muddled up these industries both are to be permanently muddled, that is to say they have been nationalized.

The First World War had very adverse effects on coal production on the continent of Europe, with the result that the British coal that was exported—and there was a margin for exportation then—was sold overseas at abnormally high prices. The time came, however, when these abnormal

prices for exported coal came to an end, and a difficult situation arose. This led in 1921 to a miners' strike, the purpose of which was to demand that the State by means of subsidies should continue to sustain a wage rate which was not justified by the prosperity of the industry. The Syndicalist idea was then very prevalent, that is to say the idea not that industries should be nationalized, but that they should be vested in respect of ownership and control in those who were employed in them.

This Syndicalist idea led to what is known as the Triple Alliance, namely an agreement between the trade unions representing the miners, the railway workers and the transport workers, whereby if any one of them had a major dispute the other two would go on strike in their support. The first test of the Triple Alliance came in April 1921, when the coal-miners decided to go on strike in order to force Mr. Lloyd George's Government to continue to subsidize the industry.

However, on that occasion the railway men and the transport men came to the conclusion that the miners were so unreasonable that they refused to strike in their support, and as the decision was taken on a Friday, that Friday thereafter came to be known in Socialist circles a "Black Friday".

The strike lasted about three months. Mr. Lloyd George's Government took every step they could to resist it, and in the end it collapsed, but out of it came the profit-sharing agreement in the coal mining industry, which everybody thought at the time would produce peace in that industry, which has been responsible for about two-thirds of all the working hours lost by strikes in this country.

In 1923, shortly after we had had the first Conservative Government for 17 years, the French, irritated by the German failure to pay reparations, decided to occupy the Ruhr Valley. The Conservative Government, under their Prime Minister, Mr. Bonar Law, thought the French were unwise, and declined to support them in their effort. The Germans retaliated on the French occupation of the Ruhr by a sit-down strike, with the result that this most important coal, iron and steel district became non-productive for many months.

As a result, there was again an abnormal demand for British coal for export, and the industry enjoyed another period of false prosperity. The miners' unions in 1924 made demands for higher basic wages, which was a stupid thing to do, because the profit-sharing agreement was quite capable of looking after the transient situation. However, the Socialist Government in office coerced the owners into agreeing to the miners' demands, with the result that the basic rates were pushed up far beyond the true economic level, and accordingly when production was resumed in the Ruhr Valley, and the price of coal for export fell to the normal

level, the industry was once again in financial straits, and so another coal dispute was threatened in the summer of 1925.

In order to avert the consequences of a further coal dispute Mr. Baldwin's Conservative Government at the time agreed to subsidize the industry for a short period pending a further enquiry into the economics of the industry. This enquiry was presided over by Sir Herbert, now Viscount, Samuel. The report unfortunately was ambiguously phrased in certain directions, and the debates in the House of Commons were, as a result, of an unfortunate character, but the Government was firmly resolved that the subsidization of an industry was a false economic policy, and when the subsidies terminated the owners announced that they could no longer carry on at the old wage rates, with the result that another coal dispute began in May 1926.

On this occasion the Triple Alliance functioned, and the T.U.C. succeeded in calling out the railwaymen and the transport workers, and certain other workers, in support of a political demand, namely that the House of Commons should continue to vote a subsidy. This political threat was vigorously resisted. The general mass of the public rallied behind the Government, with the result that some ten days later the T.U.C. surrendered in the most complete and abject manner. Unfortunately, however, the leadership of the coalminers was so incompetent and stupid that their dispute continued for several months thereafter. In the end they surrendered, and at no stage during that dispute had they a sound case.

I am not lacking in sympathy in writing this, because none of us likes to see a reduction in our standard of living, but all of us have got to realize that in the long run the standard of living in every industry must be related to the value of its production, and it cannot be maintained artificially by means of the false system of subsidy. In saying this I am not ruling out that there may be exceptional cases when in the wide interest of the State the subsidization of a particular commodity may be justified, provided it does not impose an undue burden on the rest of the community.

The condition of employment up to the outbreak of the General Strike of 1926 was most favourable. The numbers unemployed were being rapidly reduced, and the nation was set fair for a steady and substantial improvement in the trade situation. Much of the mischief caused by the coal dispute was rapidly overtaken, and though there was some setback in the trade situation in 1928 for world trade reasons, which did not have their origin in this country, this reaction was overcome, and in 1929 the situation again seemed favourable.

The Conservative Party lost the General Election of 1929 not primarily because of its own record, but largely because Mr. Lloyd

George came out with a programme in which he promised to solve the unemployment problem by methods which I am certain were fundamentally unsound, but enough Liberal candidates stood to split sufficiently the Anti-Socialist vote so that the Conservative Party found itself after the General Election as the second Party in the House of Commons. As it was clear that the Liberal Party were proposing, for the time being at any rate, to support the Socialist Party, Mr. Baldwin resigned, and Mr. Ramsay MacDonald formed the second Socialist Government.

The trade situation deteriorated with great rapidity. Nevertheless, the Socialist Government foolishly passed into law a number of expensive measures which, whatever merits they might have had in the ordinary way, were unwise at a time when the national prosperity was shrinking. The situation got progressively worse, and ultimately in 1931 the Socialist Government appointed a Committee under the chairmanship of Sir George May (afterwards Lord May) to advise them as to economies which should be effected in order that the budget could be balanced.

This Committee reported in July 1931, by which time the situation was becoming acutely critical, and unemployment had reached the terrible total of $2\frac{3}{4}$ millions, more than two-and-a-half times the figure at which it had stood when the Government took office in the summer of 1929.

Certain members of the Socialist Government were willing to give full effect to the recommendations of Sir George May's Committee, others were unwilling to do so. Consultations took place with the leaders of every political party, and ultimately the Cabinet's situation became so impossible that Mr. Ramsay MacDonald resigned his office as Prime Minister, and his resignation automatically carried with it the resignation of the whole Government.

King George V asked Mr. MacDonald to form an "All-Party" Government, which he agreed to do, with the result that a Government was formed consisting of Socialists, Conservatives and all varieties of Liberals. The number of Socialists who supported Mr. MacDonald were few, and the result was an All-Party Coalition Government with a small majority in the House of Commons.

However, this small majority carried through measures which both increased taxation and made cuts in expenditure, so that the budget was balanced. Some of the cuts affected men in the Services, and an inaccurate version of the cuts reached the Fleet at Invergordon, with the result that there was a mutiny. This had such a deplorable effect on nations outside this country that there was a heavy withdrawal of balances in this country, and the gold standard, which had been restored in 1925, had to be abandoned.

At the General Election in October 1931 the All-Party Coalition had an overwhelming majority and about four-fifths of the Socialists were

defeated. The deterioration of our trade position could not be reversed at once, though the rate of deterioration was checked. The situation was aggravated by an abnormal dumping of foreign goods in this country, because foreign countries had assumed that one of the results of the General Election would be the adoption by this country of a general system of protection. There was, however, substantial objection to a general protectionist policy on the part of that section of the Coalition which accepted the leadership of Sir Herbert, now Viscount, Samuel.

Naturally this abnormal dumping affected the unemployment situation, and so Parliament passed the Abnormal Importation Act. However, the harm had already been done and our recovery was delayed, with the result that the peak of the unemployment was actually reached in the winter of 1932-33.

In January 1932 the Import Duties Bill was introduced, which set up a general protectionist system, but the Bill was not actually as good as it would have been if it had been sponsored by a purely Conservative Government. In the autumn of 1932 there took place the Ottawa Conference, the result of which was the Ottawa Agreements Act, which put Imperial Preference on a permanent basis, though again not on as good a basis as if a purely Conservative Government had been responsible for it.

The various remedial measures began to bear fruit, and unemployment commenced to fall steadily, and by the outbreak of war in 1939 it had been reduced to the figure at which it had been left by the Conservatives when they were beaten in 1929.

In dealing with this review of the economic events from 1918 to 1931 it is also important to bear in mind what happened about currency and banking. The outbreak of war on August 4th, 1914, first forced on us the abandonment of the gold standard, which had been in operation for many years, and for the first time for a very long period this country had a paper currency. The question of the restoration of the gold standard was the subject of an enquiry by a Committee of experts under the late Lord Cunliffe. Their report recommended the return to the gold standard at the old level, that is to say the sovereign was to contain the same quantity of gold as it had prior to 1914.

The recommendations of the Committee were accepted by the Coalition Government of Mr. Lloyd George, who, on one occasion when speaking on the subject, said, "We must make the pound look the dollar in the face." I think the decision to go back to the gold standard was the right one, but the decision to resume the gold standard at the old parity was a mistake. It led to a long period of deflation designed to reduce prices in this country, so that ultimately the rate of exchange between the pound and the dollar could go back to its old level—four dollars eighty-six cents to the pound.

Deflation, that is to say a reduction in the volume of currency and the forcing down of prices, followed. Falling prices always have an adverse effect on trade, because people hold back from purchasing at any given moment in the hope of being able to buy more cheaply a little later on. Nevertheless, all political parties and all the experts seemed to agree that the decision to go back to the gold standard at the old parity was the right one.

Earlier in this chapter I have referred to the collapse in the price of coal as being the cause of the coal strike of that year, and I think it is quite clear from the evidence that the policy of deflation had little bearing on that particular dispute. However, the policy of deflation was continued by the Coalition Government, the Conservative Government that followed it, and by the first Socialist Government which was formed in 1924.

Under the existing legislation the prohibition of the free import and export of gold was due to come to an end on December 31st, 1925. In view of this fact the Socialist Government appointed a Committee of experts to advise them when the gold standard ought to be restored; so clearly the Socialist Government were in favour of the restoration of the gold standard. This Committee suggested that it should operate from the end of 1925. The Conservative Cabinet decided that it would be better to bring the uncertainty to an end at an early date, and Mr. Churchill, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced the restoration in his budget speech on April 28th, 1925, to operate from the next day.

The Socialist Party moved an amendment to the Gold Standard Restoration Bill deploring the precipitancy of the action. However, after they had made their speeches they did not in fact vote against the Bill, so the decision was, in the Parliamentary sense, unanimous.

The effect was to raise suddenly the exchange value of the pound by about ten per cent, and this produced a measure of disturbance which, however, was rapidly overcome, for in the following twelve months unemployment fell by about 200,000.

The late Lord Stamp publicly expressed the view that it was the restoration of the gold standard which led to the difficulties in the coal industry, which became evident in the summer of 1925, but, as I have explained earlier in this chapter, the real trouble was the restoration of coal production in the Ruhr Valley. Though I am certain that he was wrong, a great many people came to think that Lord Stamp was right, with the result that there has been a great deal of misapprehension on the whole subject ever since. In the four years from the date of the restoration of the gold standard to the defeat of the Conservative Government in 1929 the number of people in employment increased by three-quarters of a million, and industrial production by 10 per cent, and this is a fair

refutation of the inaccurate thesis for which Lord Stamp was responsible.

What is called "high finance" is supposed to be a mystery. I do not think there is anything difficult or complicated about it, but in normal times so few people need know anything about it that accordingly the great mass of intelligent people think it is difficult because they are quite ignorant about it. Therefore false views got into circulation, which were not effectively challenged by those who were familiar with the problem.

I hope that this chapter will be of some assistance in removing the extraordinary inaccurate view which has been built up in the present generation as to what happened between the two wars.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE ART OF PUBLICITY

I BELIEVE it was Disraeli who once said, "I do not care what they say about me as long as they say something." I think there is a great deal of truth in this. The more a public person is denounced the more his name is known, and the more his name is known the greater is his influence, unless he is denounced for something that really is so deplorable that it kills his reputation for all time.

Politics was on one occasion defined as the "art of publicity applied to the science of Government". Whether this is a good definition does not matter very much, but it nevertheless embodies a very considerable measure of truth.

My friend Mr. Rupert de la Bere, Member for the Evesham Division of Worcestershire, when he got into Parliament in 1935 for that most attractive and most beautiful of all constituencies, deliberately decided to put the theory to the test. He asked questions nearly every day, and as a rule the maximum every day. Like most M.P.s he was frequently disappointed with the result. He has the merit of a loud voice and a quick voice, and therefore almost invariably before he could be called to order by the Speaker he was ejaculating some expression of opinion with regard to the answer, which was generally to the effect that the answer was a scandal anyhow.

For a long time his fellow M.P.s failed to estimate the intellectual qualities of Mr. de la Bere. They thought he was trying to be the George Robey of politics, or shall we say the Tommy Handley, but behind every question and supplementary question asked by De la Bere there was some fundamental principle. His constituency contains more respectable people to the square mile than almost any other, and his "extraordinary" behaviour in the House of Commons brought down upon him the censure of the leaders of the local Conservative Party.

This did not trouble Rupert—his Christian name well describes him—for an ancestor of his was, 600 years before, a Worcestershire Member, and therefore probably a Crusader, so when the leaders of the local Conservative Association tried to take steps to have him repudiated as their representative he was very wicked. He retaliated, and before he finished there was an entirely new set of leaders of the local Conservative Party, and his position was unchallenged as it remains today.

He fully understood the art of publicity, and he realized that most

of his constituency would prefer to have a Member in whom the public was interested than one who was merely a slightly animated form of mangel wurzel.

De la Bere is not only a Rupert and a Crusader, but in about a couple of years he will be Dick Whittington, that is to say he will probably be Lord Mayor of London, in which respect his publicity will be automatic, without any stimulus from him.

Another friend of mine who is rather good at publicity is Mr. Hore-Belisha. In the year 1934 there was introduced into Parliament, by the Rt. Hon. Oliver Stanley, M.P., then Minister of Transport, the Road Traffic Bill, which on July 31st of that year became the Road Traffic Act.

I was on the Committee that considered the Bill. Some parts of it were good and some bad. I thought the part which reimposed the speed limit was bad, because it led people to believe that in a built-up area everything was all right provided they did not travel more than 30 m.p.h., when often they ought only to have been travelling at 5 m.p.h. By making a speed up to 30 m.p.h. not an offence it made all the bad drivers think they were quite virtuous if they were driving up to 30 m.p.h. What I really wanted to write about was Section 18 of the Act, under which foot-passenger crossings were established.

The pioneer in support of this idea was my friend the late Sir William Brass, M.P., afterwards Lord Chatteram. It was one of the tragedies that this most attractive, energetic and lovable character died within a few weeks of being made a peer. Though Brass was never quite a first-class Parliamentarian he was a most able man with an immense knowledge of every traffic problem, and I often thought if he had been Minister of Transport for a short period he would have brought about more useful reforms than anybody that has held that office.

Though Mr. Stanley was responsible for the introduction of the Bill and its conduct through Committee, he had been transferred to a new office, and Mr. Hore-Belisha had become the Minister before the Bill passed through its final stages and received the Royal Assent, so it fell to Mr. Hore-Belisha to give effect to it. With great rapidity steps were taken to establish the crossings.

The studs when new were easily visible to the drivers of vehicles, but were not so visible to the pedestrians on the footwalk, with the result that it was suggested there should be erections on the footwalk to advise the pedestrians where the crossings were, and though I do not think that Hore-Belisha invented this device, he was sensible enough to see its merits, and with great rapidity gave official approval, under conditions which gave some financial help to Highway Authorities to provide them, and so whatever else happens he will be known as the author of the Belisha Beacons.

I have always had the greatest respect for the energy which Hore-Belisha displayed in this and other matters. Within a month an unknown Junior Minister had become the most-talked-of politician in Britain. He had seized the holiday period of August to do something rather dramatic politically, and he has been on the map ever since, even though, like me, he was one of the orphans of the political storm of 1945.

At the time when he was doing these dramatic things about the Road Traffic Act he was for the greater part of his time holidaying at Angmering-on-Sea, only a couple of miles from where I was staying with my family, and in the middle of August brightened us up when we saw him coming up the beach in a bathing gown which made every one of his Beacons blush.

For the moment he has fallen from high office, but he is steadily climbing back. He is now a Councillor of the City of Westminster, and is a recently converted member of the Liberal Party to Conservatism, a member of the Abbey Division of Westminster Conservative Association, of which the Chairman is Sir Samuel Gluckstein, his old political opponent at Devonport.

I have given two examples of other public persons engaged in advertising themselves, now perhaps I can give a few examples of my own efforts in that direction. About 15 years ago, when I was living in Putney, I got home from the House of Commons to find my household in a very considerable state of distress.

The month of February is not a usual one for thunder, but that day there had been a thunderstorm. It was not thunder of the ordinary kind but one extraordinary flash of lightning, which struck the spire of the church about a quarter of a mile from my home.

According to the investigations I made the next day it had travelled parallel to the earth at a low altitude for at least a mile. As the flash passed over my house it brought down all the soot from the chimney in the room where my children were, and covered them with it, making them into little blacks. My wife, who was in another room, had the most unpleasant experience of what technical people would call an "induced shock", which had the effect of paralysing one of her arms for about two hours.

When I was discussing this matter with the local tailor the next day he told me that one of his assistants had rushed into his office to say that there were sparks round the seat of his trousers.

Lightning is a very mysterious thing. In a laboratory it takes a voltage of 10,000 to send a spark a quarter of an inch long. Photographic records show that a flash of lightning may be anything up to two miles long, so the voltage must be quite fantastic.

A little later that afternoon a newspaper man rang me up to ask me

a question about some Parliamentary matter, and when I had given him his information I told him about the episode of the flash of lightning. The result was that the whole of Britain knew about it the following day.

About a month later my wife and I were driving our car round Richmond Park endeavouring to follow my young daughter, who was having a riding lesson. Something frightened her pony and she was thrown, but fortunately came to no harm. That evening my wife and I were attending a big public dinner in Croydon, in the course of which I made a casual remark about this incident. An enterprising young local reporter left the table to telephone the London newspaper he represented. About half an hour later I was asked to go to the telephone in order that I should give the full details. All Britain knew the next morning that my daughter had been thrown from her pony in Richmond Park.

About a year later I went to open a Boy Scouts' Penny Fête run in connection with a church in Croydon. An enterprising Boy Scout had constructed a gambling contraption comprising three tracks and three mice. On paying a penny each competitor was given a piece of cheese. The idea was to induce the mice to come out of the box and eat the cheese. The person whose mouse ate the cheese first won twopence, so the Scout made a penny each time for his troop.

A reporter who observed this left the ground and informed the police that illegal gambling was taking place, and also the inspector of the R.S.P.C.A. that there was cruelty to animals going on. The official reaction was prompt, and the reporter was able to supply the national Press with the story of an M.P. and mouse-racing.

The incident happened on a Saturday. On the Monday a representative of the *Evening Standard* rang me up for further particulars, which I gave them, and suggested that their tame poet might be able to write a poem on the subject of three blind mice. Their tame poet accordingly obliged, and between two or three million people read the report in the *Evening Standard* of Herbert Williams's mouse-racing.

Turning back from myself to the publicity methods of others, there are, of course, some people in the public eye who automatically breed publicity about themselves, even without necessarily intending it. Perhaps Mr. Winston Churchill is the outstanding case in point. Somebody once said, "I do not care who makes my nation's laws as long as I can write the people's songs." This might easily become, "I do not care who makes my nation's laws as long as I can make the nation's phrases," and, of course, Mr. Churchill is a master of the art of phrase-making, and I am inclined to think that the bulk of them are spontaneous and not calculated. When he makes a speech much care and trouble is taken with the phrases, but the phrases in his daily conversation are essentially spontaneous, and

I often wish that he had in his pocket a small monkey who could write shorthand and who had a small notebook in his pocket so that he could be Churchill's Boswell.

He has always liked, and I do not blame him, good food and drink. I remember on one occasion somebody asking him in the smoke-room of the House of Commons to dine at the House. There was a quick comment: "It would be like dining in the last ditch."

I sometimes think that his phrases are improved by that curious lisp which is his defect of speech. People who listen to him for the first time, of course, notice the lisp more than those who listen to him frequently. I remember the first time I heard him speak. It was at a great meeting which was being held at the London Opera House, Kingsway, now the Stoll Theatre, just after the war of 1914 had started, and for some reason or other I found myself one of those seated on the platform. He concluded his speech with the most "lispy" sentence I have heard him use: "We shall not sheathe the sword until we have achieved a lasting and abiding peace."

Phrase-making, though it has its merits, as it is obvious, also does harm. If I may invent a phrase, "Many people think that when they have invented a phrase they have solved a problem," when all they have done is to have stultified themselves by the impression the phrase has made on the minds of the hearers. Everyone who has taken an active part in either politics or business is familiar with the fact that it is terribly difficult to induce people to give a sustained thought on a subject, and accordingly any quotation which relieves people of the necessity of thinking is in the long run an evil, however attractive it may sound.

Perhaps the next most evil thing is intolerance, which tends to close people's minds to any form of reasoning which may be novel to them. Intolerance suggests another notable phrase, "There is many a man who thinks he has an iron will who only has a wooden head."

Some people when they have made a speech are frequently disappointed at what they regard as the inadequacy of the report which may appear in the Press. That is particularly true of the present time, when newsprint is so scarce.

What we all of us have got to realize is that a newspaper is a paper containing news, which I presume is the plural of new, and therefore the mere repetition of old stuff, however well said, is not likely to attract the attention of the reporters or even of the sub-editor, who has to decide whether the report goes in or not. Lloyd George or Churchill never failed to provide news.

It was, I believe, the late Lord Northcliffe who made the remark that

if a dog bites a man it is not news, but, on the other hand, if a man bites a dog that is news, because it is so unusual.

I have tried to improve on Lord Northcliffe by saying, "If a man gets up, shaves, baths and has his breakfast that is not news, but if he gets up, shaves and has his breakfast in the bath then that is news."

CHAPTER XXVII

THE CIVIL RIGHTS OF A SOLDIER

THE problem of the civil rights of a serving man, whether in the Army, Navy or Royal Air Force, rarely gave rise to much difficulty in peacetime, when the Armed Forces consisted in the past of voluntary professional soldiers, but in wartime, when the general mass of the normal civil population of appropriate ages are conscripted into the Forces, new problems of great variety arise. We all recognize, of course, that it is undesirable from every point of view for soldiers in uniform to take part in political meetings, though of course they have every right to be present at them, and every serving man has a vote, and before he exercises his vote he is clearly entitled to ask the prospective candidates for his constituency what their views are on certain subjects, but from the disciplinary point of view this should be done privately or in writing, and not at public gatherings.

There is another aspect of the problem, and that is the right of the soldier to communicate with his M.P. in respect of matters where he has a grievance or where he wishes to draw attention to some public evil.

The late Lord French, when commanding the British Expeditionary Force, was so perturbed by the supply of shells that he took the extreme step of giving an interview to *The Times* Military Correspondent for the purpose of inducing the latter to raise the matter by means of an article in *The Times*.

This produced a major sensation, and led to the formation of the Ministry of Munitions and later on to the formation of the first Coalition Government during the First World War. I think one can say with truth that Lord French committed a breach of discipline, but he did what he did not in his own interest, but in the public interest.

During the Second World War I must have received thousands of letters from serving men, many of them raising simple matters of grievances with regard to pay and allowances, compassionate leave, and occasionally matters of punishment. The ordinary M.P. took the view that it was only right that serving men should have the opportunity of having their grievances investigated, but equally Ministers took the view that as there was a proper machinery for dealing with grievances Servicemen should make use of that before they complained to their M.P.s. The whole thing, of course, is fundamentally one of common sense. But I was concerned in one most curious case.

A man serving in the Orkneys who came from Croydon and who

had been employed at a Conservative Club in Croydon, wrote a friendly letter to the secretary of the club, in the course of which he commented on discipline in a certain unit then stationed in the Orkneys. The secretary showed me the letter, and I thought the matter was a serious one, so I accordingly quoted an extract from the soldier's letter in one which I wrote to the late Lord Croft, who was then Under-Secretary of State for War.

Lord Croft, who had served as a Brigadier-General in the war of 1914–18, was, of course, very familiar with the routine of military practice, and always urged that M.P.s should advise serving men that they should always take advantage of the normal channels before raising a question of grievance. In this particular case, however, he took the view that the matter ought to be enquired into, and wrote me a letter to ask me to write to my constituent in order to get from him more precise particulars.

I accordingly wrote direct to the soldier in the Orkneys, and enclosed with my letter a copy of Lord Croft's letter. The sequel was a strange one, because when the man came home on leave some weeks later he reported that he had written to me to give further information. He had unfortunately enclosed the letter to me in one of the special envelopes reserved for private communications, which meant, of course, that it escaped censorship in his unit, but as there was a base censorship at Inverness it was opened there, and sent back to the man's commanding officer, who tore the letter up in the presence of the soldier. It was perfectly clear that the man had made a mistake in putting the letter in the "green envelope", but equally it was perfectly clear from the terms of the letter to me that he was writing in response to an enquiry from the Under-Secretary of State for War.

The action taken by base censorship and by the commanding officer seemed to me so improper that I raised the matter by means of a question in the House of Commons, and the answer was of a most satisfactory character, because it laid down quite clearly that a serving soldier had an unqualified right to communicate with his M.P. about any matter of public interest, subject of course to the fact that he was not entitled to disclose information which from the nature of it was secret or confidential.

CHAPTER XXVIII

ODDS AND ENDS

In this chapter I recall in a spasmodic way a few odds and ends of personal experiences. At the time of King George V's Silver Jubilee celebration one of the great episodes was the Naval Review at Spithead. M.P.s and their wives and various other people were invited to see the Naval Review on board the hospital ship *Maine*. This ship had been brought from Malta, and as the bulk of the crew were visiting Portsmouth for the first time they thought they ought to enjoy themselves, with the result that the arrangements were not quite so good as they might have been. Some of the wards on the ship had been turned into buffet luncheon-rooms. There were masses of food, very little service, and no seats.

On information received my wife and I decided that it would be wise to lunch early, and we had a very good lunch. Standing opposite to us was Admiral of the Fleet Sir Roger Keyes, M.P., and his wife. Speaking across the table, I said to him, "Roger, I am a little surprised to find one of the Admirals of the Fleet having a stand-up lunch in one of His Majesty's ships." His comment in reply had a distinctly naval flavour, and he said, "Yes, and it is the last b—— time it will ever happen." He had been invited in his capacity as M.P. for Portsmouth North. In subsequent conversation he was exceedingly indignant that he and the other four Admirals of the Fleet had not been properly invited to see the review from the Admiralty yacht, the *Enchantress*.

Later in the afternoon I was in the well-equipped cocktail bar and was sitting at the same table as Mr. Winston Churchill. I said to him, "How many of the capital ships at this review were built in your time?" and he replied, "Out of the fifteen all but three, and it is twenty years since I ceased to be First Lord." The main reason was that at the Naval Disarmament Conference of 1930 we had agreed not to start building any more capital ships before January 1st, 1937.

I have referred earlier to the occasion when the late Earl of Midleton, formerly Mr. St. John Brodrick, popularly referred to as the inventor of the Army Brodrick cap, was kind enough to suggest that I should be Parliamentary candidate for Guildford. During the last 15 years of his life I was privileged to see a great deal of him, and to learn much from him about the political events of the early part of the present century.

On one occasion he told me the following interesting story. One day, when he was Secretary of State for War during the Boer War,

his private secretary said to him, "There are many thousands of officers' commissions which require your signature, and they ought to be issued." He accordingly arranged a day when he could be away from the House of Commons to have a long session signing these commissions, and he asked his secretary to provide him with a bottle of claret and plenty of sandwiches. It was six o'clock in the morning before he finished, after which he went home for a bath and breakfast, and at eleven o'clock was at a Cabinet Meeting. At the end of it, Mr. Arthur Balfour, then Prime Minister, said to him, "St. John, you are looking very tired," and he explained why.

About two weeks later he had to go to Buckingham Palace for an audience with King Edward VII, and as he was leaving the King's private secretary took him on one side, and said, "St. John, I think you might like to know that His Majesty uses a rubber stamp." I believe it is true that Queen Victoria signed in her own hand every officer's commission during the whole of her reign of over 60 years.

In the war of 1914–18 this became quite impossible for King George V, so the tens of thousands of commissions, as I know from my own, contained printed facsimile signatures.

In 1919, with my friend Mr. E. J. Garmeson and others, we started to rebuild the Junior Imperial League, which the First World War had largely destroyed. We were particularly concerned with the London area, and we used to run a series of weekly discussion classes.

Amongst those who took part in the lectures to the young men and women of those days was the late Bernard Macdonald, whose father, Mr. George Macdonald, some 70 to 80 years ago, was well known as a novelist. Mr. Bernard Macdonald earned his living by lecturing on the art of public speaking and voice production generally, and was one of the lecturers at Queen's College, London. He had long been a member of the Junior Imperial League, and although by then rather over age cheerfully gave his services voluntarily to these classes which Garmeson and I were running in London.

Some of the things he said still stick in my mind. For example, his phrase about "the beautiful speech melody of the English language". He used to emphasize how important it was when speaking to use your diaphragm, and in that connection told an interesting story about the Rt. Hon. L. S. Amery, who in the early years of this century had been one of his pupils. Amery was standing at a by-election at East Wolverhampton, where there were some very rowdy meetings. After one of the rowdiest of these meetings he sent a postcard to Macdonald reading somewhat as follows, "Very rowdy meeting last night—diaphragm won."

Another phrase he used was that every speaker should always

remember to "vary his pitch, his pace and his power". It is one of the curious facts that the human ear gets terribly tired when listening to a speaker who does not vary his pitch, his pace and his power. Apart from the contents of his speech, this capacity to vary "the pitch, pace and power" is probably the most useful thing for a speaker to bear in mind.

I had a very important lesson on one aspect of public speaking from my friend Sir George Davies, who for many years was M.P. for Yeovil. About 10 years ago, after question time in the House of Commons when I had asked a supplementary question, which was rather a flop, he said to me, "Herbert, do you know what is the secret of success of a supplementary question?" I replied, "No." He said: "First of all it should be brief, in that respect you are generally successful; it should be audible, in that respect you are successful, but the vital thing is that the point of the question should be contained in the last sentence and for preference in the last word. If anything is said after the last word you stop your hearers from expressing their approval or disapproval as the case may be."

I pondered over this a great deal, listened to other people, not merely asking supplementary questions in the House of Commons but in making speeches on public occasions, and I came to the conclusion that the same is true of the delivery of a story. A story is successful if the concluding sentence or word comes as a sudden blow to the minds of the audience. I am certain Sir George Davies was right. I have frequently watched and listened to other people who tell stories at public functions, and possibly the two most successful living exponents are Sir George Mitcheson, who was M.P. for South-west St. Pancras for many years, and Sir Frank Newson-Smith, Lord Mayor of London a few years ago.

One curious thing is that no Prime Minister I have ever heard has ever been capable of telling a funny story. The only one who ever tried was Mr. Neville Chamber ain, and I heard him on two occasions and he was a complete failure. There are a moderate proportion of men who can tell funny stories in a speech, and hardly any women. As a matter of fact the only woman I have ever heard tell a funny story successfully happens to be my own wife. Unlike me, she is always fantastically nervous before she makes a speech, but always gets away with it; although in ordinary conversation she has got a quiet voice, she can always make herself heard before an audience of many thousands.

One of our new women orators is my young friend Miss Patricia Hornsby Smith, whom I have known since she was about fifteen years of age. She jumped into fame with her brilliant speech at the Blackpool Conservative Conference in 1946, and she will, I hope, be the M.P. for Chislehurst in the next Parliament. In addition to being a good speaker she is charming to look at, and I was delighted the other day

when I was talking to a very old gentleman of my acquaintance about her, and he said, "I do not want to listen to her, I want to look at her!" Incidentally she is well worth listening to.

I have never been a musician. Under duress as a boy I was compelled to try to learn the piano, but my efforts were pathetic. They then tried to teach me the violin and the result was even worse, but I lived in a rather musical atmosphere. My mother used to play the piano rather well, and so did my father. He was a musical enthusiast, and a very devoted admirer of his former pupil, the late D. Frangcon-Davies. Whenever Frangcon-Davies was singing in Liverpool or near by he always stayed with us, and frequently brought to our house notable musicians of the day, including Mr. Goossens, whose son is well known in the musical world of today.

Amongst those who came to our house when Frangcon-Davies and Goossens were there was an organist at one of the local churches, who earned his living by giving music lessons at the houses of his pupils. This was before the days of motor-cars and bicycles, so this teacher of music had to walk, and devoted his time to the study of foreign languages. On his walks he learnt French, German, Italian and Spanish, but the birds in the hedgerows were not much help to him with regard to pronunciation, so when he tried to speak these languages in the presence of the inhabitants of the countries to which they were related the efforts were pathetic!

Though I was not much use as a musician, my late elder brother, C. T. Williams, played the piano and the 'cello fairly well. My other brother, Dr. J. D. Ellis Williams, was a great success on a special kind of instrument that he had fabricated out of a cigar-box, and both of them were rather successful amateur actors. Ellis, despite the fact that his job in life was being a schoolmaster, was the author of one or two plays, which did not run long. He made more money out of writing a German grammar than he did out of a play which had a successful first night in Cardiff.

One of the most beautiful speaking voices I have ever heard was that of the late W. W. Doughty, who had a small but very prosperous engineering business at Tipton in the Wednesbury constituency. All his relatives had beautiful voices, and his niece was the celebrated Maggie Teyte. She was not born with that spelling, her name being Tate, but as most of her successes in the musical world were attained in France she altered the spelling of her name so that the French people could pronounce it properly! Her brother was a noted musician, but his name was not as well known as hers to the public.

A quarter of a century ago one of the great "turns" on the music-halls was Clarice Mayne and "That". "That" was a brilliant musician, the

brother of Maggie Teyte and "That's" wife. It was a loss to music when he died a good many years ago.

One day in, I think, 1930, I read in *The Times* about the death of the first Lord Craigmyle, whom I had never met, but when I was at the Board of Trade I frequently met his son, Alexander Shaw, who was prominent in the world of shipowning, so I made a note to write Alexander Shaw a line of sympathy. Through an inadvertence I mislaid this note and did not write the letter of sympathy until a week later, by which time I presumed that the funeral had taken place, so instead of addressing him as "Dear Shaw" I addressed him as "Dear Craigmyle".

A few days later I received a friendly letter signed "Craigmyle", and the writer expressed some surprise that I should have written him this letter, having regard to the fact that his father died in 1868. I then proceeded to examine the back numbers of *The Times*, but I could find no reference to the half-column biography, which I can still see in my mind's eye. I was still not satisfied, so I rang up *The Times* and was told that the last reference to Lord Craigmyle in their paper was six months ago.

I have no explanation of the mystery except that it must have been a dream so vivid that I thought it was the truth, though why I should have dreamt about a man I had never met I cannot understand.

I mentioned earlier that in January 1928 I was appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade. There were certain episodes before that which were rather strange. In the previous November the late Sir Harry Barnston, M.P., the Deputy Chief Whip, congratulated me on my appointment, which rather surprised me because that day Colonel Vivian Henderson had been appointed Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, and I assumed for some reason that Sir Harry was mistaking me for him. Not wishing to upset an old friend, I just smiled amiably.

Three or four days afterwards Sir Thomas Davies, who had been Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury since 1918, said that he was not proposing to stand at the next General Election, and that he would like me to succeed him, provided I was not too firmly attached to Reading. He pointed out that Cirencester was a much better constituency than Reading, and as at that particular moment there were certain difficulties in Reading I said that I would like to be considered.

I thought, however, that in these matters one ought to consult the powers that be, so I discussed it with Eyres-Monsell, now Viscount Monsell, who was the Chief Whip. He said he thought it would be a mistake for me to change constituencies, particularly as the Prime Minister had got his eye on me. Coupling this with what Sir Harry Barnston had said, I concluded I was being considered for some kind of

office, and I accordingly wrote to Sir Thomas Davies a letter of grateful thanks, but asking him not to do anything further in the matter. By a curious chance my letter to him and his to me, stating that the local people did not want me, crossed in the post!

One of the most remarkable men I have ever met was the late Lord Hirst. When he was about 18 his father, who lived in Munich, sent him to Australia on some business visit. He was attracted by the British way of life as he saw it in Australia, and as he did not like the German political system as it existed 60 years ago he decided to come and live in London. He opened a shop in the City to sell the somewhat primitive electrical apparatus of that day. He later founded the General Electric Company Limited to manufacture electrical apparatus. As soon as he could he became naturalized. By the time he died he was the head of a very efficiently-run organization employing about 50,000 people. A few years after he started the organization in London he was joined by the late Mr. Max Railing. They married two sisters, both delightful ladies.

He was always a convinced Conservative, and in addition a keen protectionist, and wa soneo f Joseph Chamberlains earliest backers in his Tariff Reform Campaign. He had a great capacity for friendship, and as an employer was on good terms with many of the leading trade unionists in this country, and as a Conservative was on good terms with the leaders of all political parties.

When he became a Peer I said to him that it must have been a long time since a man born a foreigner had been made a Peer. He said that the matter had interested him and that on checking up he had found that with the exception of the late Viscount Astor, who was born an American, he was the first foreigner to be made a Peer since the days when William III brought many of his Dutch friends to this country.

As his only son died as a result of military service in the First World War, and his only grandson lost his life on service in the Second World War, I made certain representations in high quarters on this matter, and, whether as a result of my representations or otherwise, his granddaughter after his death was given the status of a Peer's daughter. I had lunch with him about a month before his death at Reading, where he lived for many years in the house he bought from the late Lord Reading, who had had it when, as Sir Rufus Isaacs, he was M.P.for Reading. I mentioned to him the representations I had made, of which previously he knew nothing. He was really touched and grateful.

As a result of our talk that day I made further representations, and on a particular Friday evening I heard that things were moving satisfactorily, so I wrote him to that effect and posted the letter at midnight. On the eight o'clock news the next morning I heard the announcement, "We regret to report the death of Lord Hirst . . ." so he never got my

last letter, nor the indication that there was likely to be a special recognition of the fact that he, born at German, had lost in the service of the Crown in wars against Germany both his son and his grandson.

Over the last 15 years I have been privileged to be closely associated with Mr. Henry Drummond-Wolff, whose grandfather and Mr. Churchill's father and others were responsible for founding the Primrose League.

Mr. Drummond-Wolff was for a time M.P. for Basingstoke, but gave up Parliamentary activities because of a disability arising out of service in the Middle East in the war of 1914–18. He has devoted an immense amount of time, thought and money in sustaining the cause of the British Empire and Imperial Preference in the trading relationships of the different countries of the British Empire. He has an exceptional knowledge of the United States, partly because he married a most charming American lady, and partly because he has spent a great deal of time in that country, and knows intimately most of the leaders of thought in the United States and also in Canada. He is a real crusader in sustaining the cause of the British Empire against American economic penetration.

He and I share the common view that the function of the British Empire is to lead, and that if we adopt the right attitude we can properly influence the economic policy of the United States and the political attitude of Russia. In this we both follow the decisive views of Lord Beaverbrook.

When the Rt. Rev. Edward Woods, then Suffragan Bishop of Croydon, was appointed Bishop of Lichfield, I suggested to him that as I knew a lot of Staffordshire people it might help him if he could meet them at dinner before he was enthroned. He was delighted at the idea, and so we had a dinner-party at the House of Commons attended by the Earl of Harrowby, the Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire, the Mayor of Lichfield, the senior Conservative, Labour, and Liberal M.P.s of the diocese, and a number of others, including Archbishop Lang. There were sixteen persons and, I think, sixteen speeches, all brief.

During the general conversation my wife asked the Archbishop whether he knew Queen Victoria well, and on his replying, "Yes," she asked was she a kind old lady, to which he replied, "I can best answer that by telling you the following story:

"When I was Vicar of Portsea, the Queen when she was at Osborne always used to consult me about local matters. One day she sent for me about one or two things, and when we had finished discussing these matters she remarked: 'I hear you are getting up a fund for the widow of the lifeboat-man who was drowned the other night. You know, Mr. Lang, I have had to make a rule never to subscribe for individual cases, but only to organizations; but I am very sorry about this poor

widow.' She then extracted from the leather linen bag up her skirt a small purse in which she fumbled, as she was then short-sighted. She produced a small key and opened a corner cupboard in her boudoir. It was full of dolls, etc., which she said she gave as presents to the children who came to play with her grandchildren. From the back of the dolls she produced a cheap money-box, and then with a smaller key she opened the money-box, which was full of golden sovereigns. She counted five into my hand, and said, 'That is for the widow of the poor lifeboatman, but please do not tell Sir Charles, he would be so angry.' "

This was how the Queen of England and Empress of India asked her parish priest not to give her away in respect of a kindly act which broke her own rules.

The dinner for Bishop Woods was such a success that I decided to repeat it when Bishop Anderson was promoted from the Suffragan Bishop of Croydon to the Bishop of Portsmouth. The gathering was similar in character. Archbishop Lang came again. The wife of one of the Hampshire M.P.s could not come, so at short notice I asked my daughter, then about 15, to balance the party. When my wife introduced her to the Archbishop, she said, "I have asked my daughter to balance you," at which he commented she was a very good balance.

The dinner to Bishop Woods had been a great success, as he told me afterwards, because it gave him an opportunity of meeting a number of useful friends in his new diocese. Bishop Anderson has told me the same about the second dinner. Probably the only person who has a grievance about the dinner to the Bishop of Portsmouth is my friend Sir Dymoke-Whyte, M.P., because as a sequel it landed him in the heavy job of Treasurer of the Diocesan Appeal Fund, a heavy task on which he is still engaged.

On other occasions in the course of this book I have drawn attention to the long arm of coincidence. One of the strangest cases is shown by a letter I received in July 1944 from Alderman Jackson, who was then the Mayor of Wednesbury in Staffordshire, Wednesbury being part of the constituency that I had contested at the 1922 and 23 Election. It is not clear from the enclosed letter whether the document referred to was my election address or not. I expect it was my election address because that would have contained my photograph, which would be the only reason the Burmese head man would have thought it worth while to put the document up in this hut. The following is the letter:

"Mayor's Parlour,
"Wednesbury.
"8th July, 1944.

"Dear Sir Herbert,

"It will probably come as a bolt from the blue to receive a letter from this ancient borough, but the little incident I am about to relate is so closely connected with you that I feel you would find it of some interest.

"A Signaller writing to me from the South-East Asia Command says:

" 'We had taken up a gun position in a village deep in the Chin hills so that we could bring fire on to a party of Japs who had dug themselves well into the side of an adjoining hill. This village, which bore an almost unpronounceable name, consisted of about a dozen fair-sized huts, including one much larger which was obviously the abode of the head man, and the natives had only evacuated a little time before we took the battery in. One of the first things to do after getting the guns into position was naturally to find oneself a safe, dry spot to sleep, and it was during my exploration in this direction that I found adhered to one of the wooden beams of the head man's hut a very old and discoloured electioneering pamphlet asking the good citizens of Wednesbury to vote for Herbert Williams. I could hardly believe my eyes at first, and it was not until I tried to remove this leaflet that I realized how old it must have been. Unfortunately my efforts to remove it were futile as it just crumbled to bits at my touch, but had it been possible I should have contrived to send it to you. How and when it got there I cannot imagine, as in peace-time this particular village would be hundreds of miles off the beaten track and I think it is quite safe to say that we were amongst the first white troops in there; however, I think its condition alone was quite sufficient to show that it had been there a long time.'

"With all good wishes, I am,
"Yours sincerely,
"D. C. Jackson,
"Mayor."

POSTSCRIPT

Many years ago, before the days of electric blowers, a famous organist was giving a recital in one of our ancient cathedrals. It was a great success. At the end the organ-blower said to the organist, "We played that very well, didn't we?"

"We?" said the indignant organist. "*I* played it."

On the occasion of the next recital, just as the organist was about to start, the organ-blower would not begin, and leaning over to the organist said, "Is it 'we' today, sir?"

The organist surrendered.

I never write anything by hand, I always dictate, so may I thank my three organ-blowers, Miss Ladell, Miss Monnington, and Miss Rutherford?

THE END

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