LORD ROSEBERY

THE LIMITATIONS OF EXPERIENCE

by

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ABSTRACT

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On Gladstone's retirement in 1894 his ministry continued, almost unchanged, under the leadership of Lord Rosebery. The new Prime Minister was one of the most promising politicians of his generation. He was supported by the Queen, was brilliant, wealthy, and had a wide appeal to the public, particularly in Scotland. Within his own party he was looked upon as 'the man of the future'. As the first Chairman of the London County Council the new generation of radicals, interested in social reform, looked to him as a guarantee that the Liberal party intended to carry on its tradition of reform.

In his short tenure of office Rosebery proved to be one of the most unsuccessful Prime Ministers in British history. His contemporaries have dwelt on the gap between his promise and his performance; to a large extent this preoccupation has been shared by historians. The concern of this paper is the validity of the expectations of Rosebery's performance as Prime Minister.

There is a large volume of secondary material available on the period of late Victorian England. Official biographies of most of the principal members of the Liberal Ministry of 1892-1895 have been written. Several of the principals have themselves struggled into print. A study of the Liberal leadership from 1894 to 1895 has been published. All of this material was readily available for this paper.

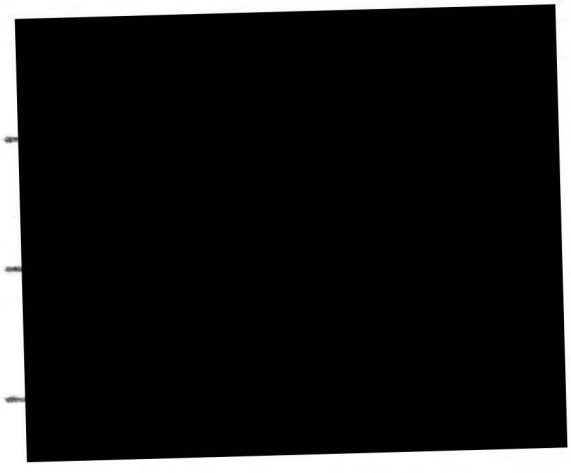
Primary sources available were largely of a public or official nature. These included Hansard, the Times of London, and the majority of the political periodicals of the period.

Rosebery's connection with active politics began when he acted as political and social host to Gladstone during the Midlothian campaign of 1880. He did not accept office until offered one connected with Scotland, but resigned from this when his ideas for the conduct of Scottish affairs were not implemented. He joined Gladstone's second Cabinet after the Gordon disaster. In Gladstone's third Cabinet he replaced Lord Granville as Foreign Secretary. In 1892, despite his wish to disassociate himself from politics and his commitment to Conservative foreign policy, he became Foreign Secretary in Gladstone's fourth ministry--largely as the result of royal pressure.

Gladstone's fourth Cabinet was never united, due partly to the lukewarm enthusiasm of most of its members for Home Rule and partly to Gladstone's almost complete withdrawal from contact with it. The Cabinet rapidly became a group of ministers rather than a corporate body. Rosebery became one of the most isolated of these as he pursued a foreign policy with which few of his colleagues were in sympathy and to which several were actively opposed. Rosebery's policy prevailed however, due to the divided nature of the Cabinet, his threats of resignation, and his own lack of qualms about actively subverting Cabinet policy.

On Gladstone's retirement Rosebery and Harcourt, the acrimonious Chancellor of the Exchequer, emerged as the contenders for the

leadership. Rosebery became Prime Minister largely due to the antipathy of the other members of the Cabinet to Harcourt. Taking over a divided Cabinet, Rosebery continued to carry out foreign policy without consulting his colleagues and proceeded to formulate a policy to unite the party, also without consultation. He was attempting to follow the example of Gladstone and the heroic cause. When he failed to do so he attempted to rally the Cabinet by the threat of resignation. This gave an illusion of success but was also a failure. Rosebery was unable to pursue any other tactic to re-unite the Cabinet and party as these were beyond his experience.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to acknowledge the kind and patient assistance and advice tendered by Dr. S.W. Jackman and Dr. J. Money.

CHAPTER I

ROSEBERY

CHAPTER I

Archibald Philip Primrose was born in 1847. He was the third child and first son of Lord Dalmeny, a Scottish peer and the eldest son of the fourth Earl of Rosebery. His mother was Wilhelmina, the only daughter of the fourth Earl Stanhope. Lord Dalmeny was distinguished only by the complementary traits of hypochondria and an interest, in advance of his generation, in physical education. He died in 1851 of a heart attack. Lady Wilhelmina was regarded as one of the most beautiful and most intelligent young ladies of her generation. She was brilliant, not a little malicious, and was delighted by accounts of social gaffes. In 1854 she married Lord Harry Vane, later the fourth Duke of Cleveland. Dalmeny's step-father was a noted traveller.

Dalmeny entered Eton at the age of thirteen, after a childhood normal to one of his class and position. He demonstrated the Stanhope characteristic of only doing congenial work while at Eton, and became the despair of his masters as a consequence of his failure to realize his potential. He thoroughly enjoyed Eton life and one of the major crisis of his life occurred when his mother desired to remove him from the school and send him to a crammer instead of allowing him to finish his final term. She did not carry out this project but thirty years later Rosebery was to tell his eldest son that he had never forgiven his mother for her attempt to curtail his Eton life.[1]

Dalmeny left Eton a remarkably self-possessed young man. He had undeniable ability, but held himself somewhat aloof to protect a sensitive nature. As additional protection he cultivated a pose of casual flippancy and became a master of 'clever' epigrams. He had access to the great country houses and his financial situation made his admission to the worlds of 'Society' and 'the Turf' almost unlimited. He therefore began to move into a world in which one knew 'everyone', talked freely to ministers, generals, and viceroys and was in touch with literature and the stage.

After an autumn spent with a tutor, Dalmeny went to Christ Church, Oxford, in January, 1866. While at the University he lived the life of a young man of more than adequate means and made good progress academically. In his second year, politics intruded with an offer to become the Conservative candidate at Darlington in 1869. He refused, partly on financial grounds, but also becsuse he felt that "it is not the time for a young man to commit himself either way."[2] This refusal made little difference to Dalmeny's political life as he succeeded to the title of Earl of Rosebery on the death of his grandfather in March, 1868. He inherited the family estates and an income which was probably in excess of £30,000 per annum.[3] One of the first ventures of Rosebery's financial independence was the purchase of a racehorse. He set his heart upon winning the Derby while still an undergraduate. While pursuing this object another distinction came to Rosebery when Lord Granville, the Liberal Foreign Secretary, invited him to second 'the Address' in

the House of Lords. In a rather pompous letter, Rosebery refused due to his being 'in statu pupilari', but he declared that his sympathies lay with the Liberal cause.[4] Rosebery was not to be successful in achieving his primary ambition of the moment, for the authorities at Christ Church informed him that he must choose between his horse and the College. Rosebery's choice was unhesitating. He announced it to his mother in direct words, "Dear Mother, I have left Oxford, I have secured a house in Berkeley Square; and have bought a horse to win the Derby. Your affectionate Archie."[5] It was, as his modern biographer has stated, "an impulsive and stupid action."[6] His horse came last in a field of twenty-two in the Derby.[7]

Rosebery spent his youth indulging himself in the exploration of the opportunities open to him. He enjoyed society, took part in the debates of the Lords, raced with increasing success, travelled, made speeches, and became involved in working-class organizations--but all in moderation. In politics he turned down an opportunity to join the government as a junior minister in 1872, but accepted the non-political post of the Lord Lieutenancy of Linlithgow in 1873.[8]

The event which marked Rosebery's transition from a dilettante to a politician was his election as Lord Rector of Aberdeen University in 1878. He had accepted an invitation to stand for the post as the Liberal candidate only to be presseed to withdraw in favour of Lord Aberdeen, a young peer who had not yet publicly declared his allegiance to the Liberal cause. Rosebery refused to withdraw and beat the Conservative

by three votes after a 'desperate struggle'.[9] Another indication of his growing seriousness was his marriage, in March, to Hannah, only daughter of the late Baron Meyer Rothschild. Rosebery followed his success at Aberdeen by playing a major part in inducing Gladstone to stand as Liberal candidate for Midlothian. Gladstone had been looking for another constituency and the idea of a victory in Scotland, in a marginal seat held by a Conservative, appealed to him.

The Midlothian election campaign of 1880 was of the nature of a crusade. Much of the manoeuvering was accomplished before the campaign in the creation and control of 'faggot voters',[10] however, Gladstone's speaking campaign became a triumphal progress. Everywhere he addressed enthusiastic multitudes. His host, Rosebery, had added many innovations to the election campaign, including torchlight parades and speeches from Pullman cars, based on his observations of American electioneering practices.[11] Gladstone was successful and the campaign itself gave Rosebery a great reputation in Scotland--one which he was never to lose. The Liberal party won the election and Gladstone's victory at Midlothian brought him once again to the leadership of his party.

With the Liberal success it was generally expected that Rosebery would take office. Gladstone offered him the post of under-secretary of the India Office, but Rosebery, stung by Conservative charges of self-interest in his sponsorship of the Midlothian campaign, refused, "it would look as if Mr. Gladstone had paid him for what he

had done."[12] Later, in a candid letter to Mary Gladstone, her father's confidante, Rosebery gave his reasons for refusing office as: "1. Annoyance at not being asked to join the Cabinet. 2. Dislike of hard work. 3. Passion for the Turf. . . ."[13] Rosebery's protracted convalescence due to an attack of scarlet fever gave him a further reason to refuse a renewed offer of the post at the India Office. He continued his involvement in politics, devoting himself to the subject of Scottish administration. At this time the administration of Scottish affairs, as far as the central administration was concerned, came under the Lord Advocate. Rosebery proposed to Harcourt, then the Home Secretary, that some ministerial post, greater than under-secretary and less than that of secretary of state, be established to supervise Scottish administration.

Harcourt was impressed by Rosebery's arguments and was even more taken by their advocate. The Home Secretary began to urge Gladstone to appoint Rosebery to some office. Gladstone was preoccupied with the Irish Land Bill at this time and took no action.[14] Rosebery began to feel neglected and bored and consequently declined to discuss Scottish affairs with Harcourt, saying that he had "now no relations of any kind with the Government."[15] The result of this petty and childish sulk was a short period of misunderstanding between Rosebery and Gladstone--the latter being an 'umbrageous' person--but this was eventually resolved. When the position of under-secretary to the Home Office fell vacant in July, 1881, it was offered and Rosebery accepted it, on

the understanding that he would have a special responsibility for Scottish business.[16] This was not truly satisfactory to him as the Lord Advocate still had control of Scottish affairs, but Gladstone indicated to Rosebery that the arrangement would not "last very long in its present form."[17]

Rosebery's departmental and Parliamentary duties were light, and he was able to give a series of speeches in Scotland which added greatly to his standing there. He became disturbed over the government policy in Ireland and began to prepare a memorandum on it for Gladstone. However, the memorandum was never to be completed as Rosebery's feelings of misgiving were overwhelmed by the news of the Phoenix Park murders. "Of course this event cleared my course completely, . . . All hands are wanted at the pumps."[18] Rosebery hastened to assure Gladstone of his sympathy and support.[19]

Rosebery was soon to return to his concern with Scottish administration. This concern was accentuated when two radicals, Dilke and Chamberlain, were promoted in the Cabinet, but no new arrangement for Scottish affairs was made. Rosebery was "grievously disappointed" at not getting Cabinet office--he felt that it would be thought in Scotland that he had been tried and found wanting.[20] Gladstone answered his complaints tactfully but ended his letter by saying, "your prospects are brilliant as well as wide, but even you cannot dispense with much faith and patience."[21] Rosebery continued to press the claims of Scotland; Gladstone continued to answer these as if they

represented a personal claim. The correspondence between the two men was marked by a certain degree of aggrieved petulance on one side and a distinct lack of sympathy on the other. However, through Lord Granville's mediation the misunderstanding was healed by December 1882.[22]

This reconciliation was not to last, as Rosebery despaired of any action on Scotland being taken. He hardened his attitude to the point where he became absolutely determined to accept only a separate Scottish Ministry. Gladstone refused to grant this. An attempt at compromise was made when the Cabinet decided to advance a scheme for a local government board for Scotland. Rosebery, however, was becoming more and more agitated and was showing signs of the insomnia which was henceforth to engulf him in periods of stress. Reports in the newspapers of his imminent promotion, particularly the one in the Morning Post on May 9, aggravated Rosebery's feelings to the point where he was ready to seize on the first occasion to resign.[23] The opportunity came on May 31, when there were complaints in the Commons on the lack of an under-secretary from the Home Office in the House. Rosebery tendered his resignation which was reluctantly accepted.[24] Gladstone attempted to retain Rosebery by offering him the position of head of the Scottish Local Government Board in the unlikely event that the new bill passed. Rosebery refused on the grounds that to accept would leave him open to charges of self-interest. He went on to state his position:

> I am convinced that for me there is no middle term of usefulness between that of absolute independence and Cabinet office. As absolutely independent I hold a position in Scotland, of which I do not think so highly as some others may, but one which I greatly cherish. As a Cabinet Minister I should hold a position in Great Britain which it is an honour to covet. But by accepting office outside the Cabinet I lose both positions.[25]

Rosebery then left England for a tour of Australia.

The circumnavigation of the globe which was entailed by Rosebery's Australian tour gave the peer a vision of Imperial unity. He soon proclaimed himself a Liberal Imperialist and became a member of the Imperial Federation League.

On his return to England Rosebery was met by tentative offers to induce him to re-join the government. He was reluctant to accept, firstly because he was not satisfied with the Egyptian policy of the government and secondly, because there was no suitable vacancy in the Cabinet. He used his opposition to the Egyptian policy as the reason for refusing the post of First Commissioner of Works in November of 1884.[26] The Cabinet kept the offer of office open in anticipation of an alleviation of the difficulties in Egypt. The news of Gordon's death reached Britain on February 5. Rosebery immediately wrote E. Hamilton, an intimate friend and Gladstone's private secretary, to offer to "stand by the Government", and "put my shoulder to the wheel."[27] However, he did not send this letter but, after three days of re-examination of the situation, wrote another to Gladstone: "My only call of duty is plain and simple--to place myself at your disposal in the

hour of difficulty and disaster."[28] Gladstone accepted Rosebery's offer[29] and the peer became Lord Privy Seal and First Commissioner of the Board of Works.

Rosebery joined a Cabinet which was in an advanced state of disintegration as a result of internal and external forces. His very apt reply to Granville's question as to what he "thought of us all?" was, "More numerous than the House of Lords and not quite so united."[30] The Cabinet meetings were marked by bitterness and a certain petulant childishness which seemed to extend to all of its members. The majority of these wished to resign but none wished to disassociate themselves from Gladstone. Therefore the Cabinet stumbled from crisis to crisis. Its last few weeks of life were marked by threats of resignation from all sides; Childers, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, resigned almost daily. In the midst of such farcical scenes, Rosebery showed his interest in and knowledge of foreign affairs and played an influential part in dealing with Bismarck and in formulating the policy of opposition to Russia in Afghanistan. Gladstone wrote of Rosebery that it was almost impossible to get anything out of him "but a clever, and indeed brilliant, reply."[31] The government was finally defeated by twelve votes on the subject of beer duties.

During the year of 1884, when the problem of Irish demands again came to the fore, Gladstone became converted to the policy of Home Rule for Ireland, but in doing so left his followers in ignorance

of his aims and in consequent confusion. It was a time when a candid explanation could have cleared the air but Gladstone, in his usual rather irritating manner, kept his own counsel, partly in the hope that Salisbury would do his duty as Gladstone saw it and bring in a Home Rule Bill.[32] Once the ministry announced their intention to introduce a coercion bill, Gladstone went to Harcourt and informed him of his intention to defeat the government and form a Home Rule ministry himself. He was prepared, he said, "to go forward without anybody."[33] The government was defeated, but thirteen Liberals, including Lord Hartington, voted with it. In the formation of the third Gladstone ministry Rosebery became Foreign Secretary, much to the delight of Queen Victoria but to the discomfiture of Lord Granville who was eased into the Colonial Office to give Rosebery the place.[34]

Rosebery's brief tenancy of the Foreign Office was not marked by great events. He followed a policy of maintaining the continuity of British policies in foreign affairs. He won praise for his handling of the Albanian problem but was not as successful when he took a strong line with Russia over one of the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin. His general deportment was such that Gladstone was to proclaim him, in an election speech at Manchester in July, as "the man of the future" for the Liberal party.[35]

In opposition, Rosebery continued to speak in favour of 'Liberal Imperialism'. His position was one of being "an Imperialist among Liberals and a Liberal among Imperialists."[36] In quite another

realm of politics, Rosebery, in 1887, stood for election in the City of London for the London County Council. He did this to demonstrate his belief that men of "thought, leisure and business capacity . . . should come forward to give their best energies to this noble work."[37] An independent member of considerable prestige,he became the first chairman of the Council despite vigorous opposition from the socialist members. His speech of acceptance was adroit: "Of course, my thanks are due to the majority on the division, but (after a pause) my sympathies are entirely with the minority."[38] Rosebery's main contribution to the Council was the use of his prestige. Some Council members had felt that "Lord Rosebery would be an ornamental chairman."[39] He was more than ornamental, however, and his modesty and wit helped to smooth the first tumultuous years of the Council's existence.[40] In this position as head of the new experiment in government, Rosebery exerted a strong appeal to the new generation of radicals which was interested in social reform.[41] He was re-elected to the chairmanship in November, 1889, but resigned from the Council in 1890.

In 1890 Rosebery suffered a great loss in the death of his wife.[42] Rosebery was often impatient with his wife and disposed to make her the butt of his witticisms.[43] However, he relied heavily on her sympathy and loyalty--to an extent which it is unlikely that he realised until her death. He withdrew from public life for the year 1891, and continued to mourn his wife's demise until his death.[44]

During the year of Rosebery's absence from politics, the National Liberal Federation adopted what became known as the 'Newcastle programme'. This was not so much the expression of a coherent policy but rather to bring about much needed reform over the entire spectrum of national life. Home Rule, local veto, triennial parliaments, disestablishment, employers' liability, abolition of plural franchise, etc., all were included. Gladstone appeared to endorse the programme at the Federation's annual meeting, but he did not doubt that he possessed the option of picking and choosing from the grab-bag of policies which the programme represented. However, the Federation, and the country, regarded the party as bound to the programme.

Rosebery's actions towards politics in 1892 were equivocal. At John Benn's insistence he stood as a Progressive for the London County Council in March. However, he did not actively campaign. On his election, he agreed to act as an interim chairman of the Council pending its reorganisation. He resigned on June 27. He felt committed to Gladstone and the Liberal party to assist in the general election campaign but also felt that at its e d he would be at liberty to withdraw from politics. He therefore informed the Liberal Whip, Arnold Morley, that he would speak in May and June for the party "if I can do so on the distinct understanding that I am not committed thereby . . . to be considered as a possible candidate for office."[45] In his first speech on May 13 in Edinburgh, he publicly stated that he was not sure of his intentions with respect to a return to political life.[46] He

continued to take part in discussions of policy with the Liberal leaders,[47] however, and partly for this reason and partly because they did not wish to believe that Rosebery would retire from political life, the party leaders did not take the peer's protestations seriously.[48] Rosebery himself reinforced their belief by declaring in a speech in London on June 23 that:

> we [the Liberal party] intend to try the experiment of having a continuous Foreign Policy. . . . I cannot doubt that Mr. Gladstone's Government and Mr. Gladstone's Foreign Secretary, whoever he may be--I am told in the newspapers this morning that the point has a peculiar and morbid interest for myself--will continue Lord Salisbury's Foreign Policy.[49]

Rosebery again acted as host to Gladstone for his election campaign in Modlothian. This year was not to capture the evangelistic, exuberant air of the previous campaigns. In this aspect it echoed the mood of the country--the election results gave 273 Liberals, 81 Irish Nationalists and 1 Labour to 269 Conservatives and 46 Liberal Unionists. The Unionist government decided to meet Parliament and accepted their inevitable defeat on August 11. Rosebery had refused to be drawn into policy discussions with Gladstone during the campaign. He wrote shortly after that, "Mr. Gladstone did not make me an offer of any kind at Dalmeny[50]--indeed, he hardly had the opportunity of doing so. I was anxious that he should not. . . ."[51] Immediately after the campaign, Rosebery disappeared for a holiday on a yacht and was not to reappear until the end of July.

On July 31, Rosebery wrote Gladstone to inform him that he intended to retire from public life. He returned to Dalmeny the following day to find a mass of letters from his party colleagues urging him to join the government. His reply to Harcourt was typical: "The eightee months that I have spent in seclusion have convinced me that I was not intended or fitted for political life. . . ."[52] At this point, Morley was deputed to bear a letter from Gladstone to Rosebery at Dalmeny. To Morley's personal appeals on arrival was added the information that Gladstone felt that Rosebery's leadership of the House of Lords would carry with it the jus successionis. Gladstone's letter largely reiterated his previously expressed contention that Rosebery was too far committed to withdraw and that his duty was clearly to join the government: "the nation would not tolerate your refusal."[53] Morley extracted from Rosebery the promise to return to London and, on his own return, stated that "Rosebery would now, in all probability, join."[54] Rosebery came to London, but immediately went to Paris "to clear the cobwebs out of his brain."[55] On August 11, Rosebery repeated his refusal to take office; this, after an interview with Gladstone which left both men almost in tears.[56]

Again Rosebery received a deluge of mail urging him to reconsider. He also faced the personal representations of his cousin and of G. E. Buckle, the Tory editor of the Times. There was no appeal from Gladstone who, it would appear, was planning to ask the Queen to request Rosebery to join the government.[57] The Queen, at one point, had actually

wished to call on Rosebery to form a government, not trusting that "dreadful old man".[58] She later decided that if she were obliged to call on Gladstone she must insist on Rosebery as Foreign Secretary.[59] Rosebery's resolve was finally broken by an appeal by the Prince of Wales, who implored him to accept office, "for the Queen's sake and for that of our great Empire!"[60] On August 15, Gladstone wrote Rosebery that he was going to see the Queen and, as she had made known her anxiety that Rosebery should become the Foreign Secretary, he was going to submit his name to her.[61] After a period of agitation and indecision, Rosebery telegraphed Gladstone, "So be it."[62]

On the face of it, the adherence of Rosebery to the Cabinet does not appear to be the victory which his colleagues felt it to be. The new minister had accepted Cabinet post only as a result of royal pressure. He was a man who had decided, after eighteen months of soul-searching, that he was not suited for politics. Rosebery was about to take over the post of Foreign Secretary, despite the fact that he was publicly committed to the foreign policy of the Conservative party, albeit on the contention that that policy should be apolitical and continuous. This was an ingenuous simplification which hardly concealed the fact that Rosebery was in favour of a 'forward' and mildly expansionist policy whereas the majority of his colleagues were committed to a curtailment of foreign commitments. On every occasion in which he took office, Rosebery had had to be wheedled and cajoled into doing so. Once in office, he had demonstrated that he was unwilling to compromise

his ideals or to make allowances for difficult circumstances in which his colleagues might find themselves.

The factor which compensated for his every fault was the fact that Gladstone was near retirement. The party urgently desired a new hero--a man to calm its doubts and lead it forth to new triumphs. Rosebery, with his overwhelming popularity in Scotland, his brilliance, wealth and social position, and his identification with the new forces for social reform, appeared to be the 'man of the future'. For Rosebery to have remained outside the Cabinet would have meant the destruction of the hopes of the party. He was therefore almost as essential to the Cabinet as Gladstone himself.

Footnotes

[1]R. R. James, Rosebery, London, Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1963, p. 36.

[2]Rosebery to the Duchess of Cleveland, 27 Oct., 1867, Lord Crewe, Lord Rosebery, 2 vol., London, Murray, 1921, vol. 1, p. 39.

[3]James, Rosebery, p. 47.

[4]Granville to Rosebery, 29 Jan., 1868, Rosebery to Granville, 31 Jan., 1868, Crewe, Rosebery, vol. 1, pp. 41-2.

[5]James, Rosebery, p. 52.

[6]Ibid., p. 52.

[7]The apocryphal story that Rosebery had proclaimed that he had three ambitions in life: to win the Derby, marry an heiress, and become Prime Minister, probably had its origins at this time.

[8]Crewe, Rosebery, vol. 1, pp. 84-8.

[9]Crewe, Rosebery, vol. 1, p. 109.

[10]Voters acquired by a party by subsidising accommodation to the minimum value necessary for registration. See Ibid, pp. 95-7.

[11]Ibid., p. 97.

[12]Crewe, Rosebery, vol. 1, p. 134.

[13]Ibid., p. 135.

[14]Granville to Harcourt, 16 Apr., 1881; Lord Fitzmaurice, The Life of the Second Earl Granville, 2 vol., London, Longmans Green, 1905, vol. 2, pp. 297-8.

[15]James, Rosebery, p. 115.

[16]Crewe, Rosebery, vol. 1, p. 144.

[17]James, Rosebery, p. 121.

[18]Ibid., p. 130.

[19]Ibid.

[20]James, Rosebery, pp. 135-6.

[21]Ibid., p. 138.

[22]Ibid., pp. 135-44; see also Crewe, Rosebery, vol. 1, pp. 153-60.

[23]See the estimate of the situation and of Rosebery by E. Hamilton, an intimate friend, in E. Hamilton to Ponsonby, 1883, A. Ponsonby, Henry Ponsonby, London, Macmillan, 1943, p. 277.

[24]James, Rosebery, pp. 147-50.

[25]Ibid., p. 153.

[26]Rosebery to Granville, 12 Nov., 1884, Crewe, Rosebery, vol. 1, pp. 212-3.

[27]James, Rosebery, p. 164.

[28]Rosebery to Gladstone, 8 Feb., 1885, Crewe, Rosebery, vol. 1, pp. 216-7.

[29]Gladstone's comment on this occasion was that Rosebery was one of the ablest as well as one of the most honourable men he had ever known, but that he doubted whether he really possessed common sense. P. Magnus, Gladstone, London, Murray, 1954, p. 322.

[30]Crewe, Rosebery, vol. 1, p. 221.

[31]James, Rosebery, p. 168.

[32]Magnus, Gladstone, p. 340.

[33]J. Morley, The Life of William Ewart Gladstone, 3 vols., New York, Macmillan, 1904, vol. 3, pp. 288-9.

[34]There was also some feeling that Granville was being made a scapegoat for the errors in foreign policy of the previous Liberal administration; see Fitzmaurice, Granville, vol. 2, pp. 480-3. His age was the primary reason for his demotion.

[35]James, Rosebery, p. 194.

[36]Ibid., p. 201.

[37]Ibid., p. 198.

[38]A. G. Gardiner, John Benn and the Progressive Movement, London, Benn, 1925, pp. 101-2.

[39]A. G. Gardiner, John Benn and the Progressive Movement, London, Benn, 1925, p. 101.

[40]Ibid., p. 102.

[41]James, Rosebery, p. 199.

[42]"It is impossible to exaggerate the shattering effect which his wife's death had on Rosebery." James, Rosebery, p. 227.

[43]One of his alleged comments was, "I am leaving tonight; Hannah and the rest of the heavy baggage will follow later." Ibid., p. 88.

[44]See ibid., and Crewe, Rosebery, vol. 2, p. 373.

[45]Rosebery to A. Morley, 5 Apr., 1892, James, Rosebery, p. 234.

[46]Crewe, Rosebery, vol. 2, p. 389.

[47]For examples see ibid., p. 391.

[48]Gladstone refused to consider the idea; he felt that Rosebery was too deeply committed to retire. James, Rosebery, p. 237; John Morley's description of Rosebery's position gives an excellent insight into the feeling that Rosebery was eminently suitable to be a leader in the party and could thus be nothing else. J. Morley, Recollections, 2 vols., New York, Macmillan, 1927, vol. 1, pp. 318-19.

[49]James, Rosebery, p. 235.

[50]Rosebery's country house in Scotland.

[51]Rosebery to Acton, 29 Jul., 1892, Crewe, Rosebery, vol. 2, p. 394.

[52]Rosebery to Harcourt, 3 Aug., 1892, ibid., p. 395.

[53]Gladstone to Rosebery, 4 Aug., 1892, Crewe, Rosebery, vol. 2, pp. 397-9.

[54]L. V. Harcourt journal, Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, p. 181.

[55]James, Rosebery, p. 246.

[56]L. V. Harcourt, journal, 11 Aug., 1892, A. G. Gardiner, The Life of Sir William Harcourt, 2 vols., London, Constable, 1923, p. 181. See Rosebery's account in Crewe, Rosebery, vol. 2, p. 402.

[57]L. V. Harcourt journal, 15 Aug., 1892, comments on Rosebery's joining the Cabinet, "What a relief that it is not now necessary for Gladstone to humiliate himself by asking the Queen to put personal pressure on Rosebery, or for the Cabinet to be in the position of having Rosebery amongst them as the nominee of the Court after declining to join at their and Gladstone's request." Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, p. 182.

[58]Sir Frederick Ponsonby, Sidelights on Queen Victoria, New York, Sears, 1930, p. 217, Queen Victoria to Ponsonby, 26 Jul., 1892.

[59]Queen Victoria to Ponsonby, 10 Aug., 1892, ibid., p. 217.

[60]Prince of Wales to Rosebery, 14 Aug., 1892, Crewe, Rosebery, vol. 2., pp. 400-01. See reply Rosebery to Prince of Wales, 15 Aug., 1892, ibid., pp. 401-2.

[61]Gladstone to Rosebery, 15 Aug., 1892, James, Rosebery, p. 248.

[62]Ibid., pp. 248-9, also Crewe, Rosebery, vol. 2, pp. 402-3.

CHAPTER II

UGANDA: THE PATTERNS ESTABLISHED

CHAPTER II

The difficulty of persuading Rosebery to join the Cabinet was not the only problem encountered in the formation of the new ministry. Early in the consultations which precede the formation of any government, a number of meetings had taken place at Harcourt's house on Brook Street. These received a great deal of attention from the press, which referred to them as the "Brook Street Conferences."[1] As J. Morley was not one of those present at the meetings, speculation held that the conferences had the aim of lowering the priority given by the Liberal party to Home Rule for the coming session of Parliament. Although the meetings were not as sinister in intent as was implied, they had the effect of alienating J. Morley--who eventually became the Irish Secretary--from Harcourt, who eventually became Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Later in the formation of the government, Harcourt was to complain to Gladstone of the high proportion of peers holding major posts in the Cabinet.[2] Gladstone's reply was that the weakness of the party in the House of Lords demanded that the importance of its adherents in that House be enhanced. Harcourt's angry comment, as he gave way to his leader, was: "You might as well try to strengthen the ocean by pouring into it a petit verre of cognac."[3]

Once formed, the ministry was peculiarly Gladstone's, that is, it was made up of a number of men whose common trait was that they

were followers of Gladstone. Gladstone's earlier Cabinets had consisted of disparate groups; the last one was made up largely of individuals, the majority of whom had no particular attachment to a group of party supporters. This situation was due largely to Gladstone's belief in the necessity for an heroic cause with which to rally his party--the rallied enthusiasts rarely had much in common. In previous successful election campaigns, Gladstone had succeeded in igniting the enthusiasms of his supporters. Once having made up a Cabinet, Gladstone had directed the enthusiasm by sheer effort of will. In this last Cabinet the heroic cause was present in the form of Home Rule, but the enthusiasm of the past was absent. The Cabinet would therefore have to rely even more on Gladstone's will as a motivating force, as well as a directing force.

One of the first problems which confronted Gladstone's new ministry was that of Uganda.[4] The Imperial British East Africa Company[5] had been chartered in 1888 by the Salisbury government as insurance against German and Italian advances in East Africa. Capitalized at £240,000 by philanthropic missionary interests, the Company had pushed rapidly into the interior and, despite the non-committal attitude of the government,[6] had quickly overextended itself.[7] Lugard,[8] a servant of the Company, had penetrated as far as Uganda by December 1890, and had found it on the verge of violent conflict between different tribes, religions and missionaries. At the same time, the Company, having discovered the tremendous costs of

transportation to Uganda, called on the government to live up to the intent of the Brussels Agreement (anti-slavery) by guaranteeing the interest on £1,250,000 to build a railway. Although Salisbury personally favoured this, he was forced to limit his support to a grant of £20,000 towards a preliminary survey, the Company to pay an additional £5,000. He was forced to withdraw, temporarily, even this small measure of aid by a House of Commons mindful of the lessons of the Gordon adventure. This set-back led the directors of the Company to contemplate evacuating Uganda, but a public contribution of £40,000 deferred this action by twelve months and the Company went ahead with the survey.[9] The sum of £20,000 was voted for the survey in the House of Commons on March 4, 1892, but only after a passionate two-day debate in which the Liberals, led by Harcourt, opposed this apparent extension of British responsibilities.

Through the early months of 1892 rumours of civil war in Uganda and of the atrocities allegedly committed by Lugard began to find their way to Europe. These rumours inspired a public debate on Uganda, fuelled by scraps of information and misinformation culled from private letters. Reports of Lugard's activities made by French Roman Catholic missionaries and printed by the French press there had led, by May of 1892, to a demand by the French ambassador for an official enquiry into the Captain's conduct.[10] On May 5, the directors of the Company ordered Lugard to withdraw his forces from Uganda.[11] At the same time, they notified the Foreign Office of their decision to

evacuate.[12] Salisbury formally accepted the Company's policy and also agreed to the French demand for an enquiry. Captain Macdonald, R.E., in charge of the railway survey, was to conduct the enquiry. This was an unfortunate choice as Macdonald was junior to Lugard, both in service and in experience in Africa and was also, although of this Salisbury could not have been aware, harbored a personal animosity towards Lugard.[13]

The position of the Liberal Cabinet on Uganda was equivocal. Liberal policy since 1884 had been opposed to the retention of Egypt; moreover, several members of the Cabinet were publicly committed to an evacuation. Uganda was seen as part of the Egyptian situation. All of the Cabinet were alive to the dangers of another Gordon affair. However, even Harcourt had come to admit to the French ambassador in 1890, that "the [Egyptian] question is very difficult; if we retire we leave chaos behind us; it is very difficult to take such a responsibility."[14] During the Commons debates on the Uganda railway survey in March of 1892, Gladstone had made the somewhat enigmatic statement that he was "determined for one to exempt myself, . . . from every jot or tittle of responsibility connected with the undertaking; and yet, at the same time, I do not go so far as to deliver a final judgement."[15] Liberal opinion was generally unfavourable to further commitments in Africa but Rosebery's imperialist sentiments were generally well known. The stage was set, therefore, for a major conflict over policy within the Cabinet, and the eventual pursuit of a policy with which the majority of the Cabinet had no sympathy.

On assuming office, Rosebery had quickly decided that Uganda should be retained.[16] On August 24, he instructed Sir Percy Anderson, head of the African section of the Foreign Office, to draw up a memorandum on the Uganda question. The initial draft--five pages in length--was then severely amended and revised by the Foreign Secretary. The final draft, printed and circulated to the Cabinet on September 13, was eight pages long--all the additions being designed to strengthen the contention that Uganda should not be evacuated.[17] The Cabinet reaction was immediate and definite. Gladstone "thought it [the minute] was a pleading from a Missionary Society or from the Company, or should have thought so but for the date from the F.O."[18] Harcourt referred to the memorandum as being "in the highest jingo tune. . . ."[19] In an attempt to gain support for his views, Rosebery, six days later, circulated a "moderate" memorandum in defence of retantion of the territory. His arguments were based on the importance of Uganda to the security of the Nile, the slave trade and certainty of massacre and disaster resulting from evacuation.[20]

It must be noted that Harcourt's letter to Gladstone, written on the 20th, was composed under the delusion that Rosebery was not in favour of retention.[21] But the Chancellor soon began to write his colleagues individually to gain support for evacuation. As well, Harcourt circulated a commentary by cabinet box. The deliberate exchange of letters and memoranda soon became a collection of unanswered arguments: on the 23rd, Gladstone mentioned, " . . . I enclose three

letters which I have written to Rosebery today besides two telegrams--and I am not yet at luncheon time."[22] Rosebery attempted to stop the dispute by arguing " . . . that it is one of those obligations which come as part of the succession to new governments whether they like it or not."[23] Gladstone, countering this, was the first to acknowledge the pall of Khartoum which hung over the question of Uganda when, in referring to Harcourt's commentary, he said:

> You wd I think be less startled at it & more at the case itself, had you gone through like Harcourt & some of us, the terrible & instructive experience of the Gordon Mission, in which we adopted a ruinous decision under the most seductive appearances. . . .[24]

He later added to Harcourt, that "there is no Uganda question, properly speaking, for decision. It has been settled by the Company and the late government. . . ."[25] And went on to assert that the government had already accepted the evacuation. He reiterated this point to Rosebery the following day.[26] This began a dispute over the intentions of the previous ministry with respect to Uganda. It had little effect except to induce Rosebery to believe that his views on the continuation of the Salisbury foreign policy were accepted by the Prime Minister and the Cabinet.

By September 23, Harcourt had received enough evidences of support from his colleagues--notably Morley, Lefevre and Asquith, that he could write to his son that "I have saved the situation as regards the Uganda annexation."[27] On the other hand, Rosebery reported to the Queen on October 3, that on foreign policy "Mr. Mundella, Mr. Fowler and

possibly Mr. Bryce are with him."[28] Gladstone had told Rosebery to consult his colleagues in town; Rosebery had tartly replied that:

> . . . I am the only Minister in London. The transient phantom of Asquith flitted through the metropolis for 15 minutes yesterday. Bryce, . . . is at Gastein. . . . Four Cabinet Ministers are on the Continent--I have not seen their addresses: . . . With the others I have, on the principle you announce, felt it only loyal to rigidly abstain from communication. Kimberley has sent me a short, useful paper on my memorandum. Harcourt writes volumes. Elsewhere a vast silence. . . .[29]

Rosebery therefore demanded a Cabinet meeting, as had Harcourt, Asquith and Ripon, when it became clear that he was persevering in his views.

Gladstone reluctantly agreed to a Cabinet meeting, making it appear that it was solely due to Rosebery that one needed to be held.

> Rosebery, however he may have been misguided by the Jingoes is absolutely loyal and never dreams of passing by the Cabinet.
>
> It is I rather than he who has not been forward to call one, that I might exhaust every chance of inducing him to recede from his untenable and most dangerous position. . . . But he has passed on to fast and far that I have (reluctantly) suggested to him a Cabinet for Friday 30th.[30]

The next day, he plaintively remarked to Rosebery that:

> . . . It is with pain, though with no hesitation, that I meet your wish in summoning this Cabinet. I could not until last abandon my hope that you might forbear to press the suggestion. . . . not that I have the smallest fear that this incidental miscarriage of ours will occur again. . . .[31]

These remarks, and those earlier, demonstrate once again Gladstone's feeling that Rosebery was a junior colleague, with the emphasis on the adjective. There is an underlying current of astonishment on the part

of the Prime Minister that Rosebery had not yet deferred to his views; indeed, he was almost unwilling to grant it possible that Rosebery could hold separate opinions.

As a reaction to the Prime Minister's attitude, Rosebery wrote a defence of his position:

> . . . I do not doubt that the First Minister shares in a special degree that of all departments. But in the popular mind a special responsibility does rest on the departmental Minister. And in strictness he shares a special responsibility with the Prime Minister.
>
> But when the First and the departmental ministers differ, as I fear we do, the departmental cannot disengage himself of responsibility. When they agree the relative spheres do not signify.[32]

This letter barely concealed Rosebery's growing intransigence and soon Sir Algernon West[33] was darting from minister to minister in an attempt to prevent any of them from taking an extreme stance. On the whole, the evacuationists were disposed to compromise, prematurely perhaps, feeling the magnanimity of victory. Harcourt's letters to Rosebery of this period were quite conciliatory as were those of Gladstone. Rosebery viewed his opposition to the other ministers as much more serious.[34] West, who agreed with him on the Uganda policy, took a similar view.[35]

On Gladstone's arrival in London on the 28th, Rosebery had a 'stormy' interview, and the following day West warned Gladstone that "from what I had gathered from Rosebery, if nothing was done, the Government would be broken up. He said he did not believe it. Then I said, what I meant was, that Rosebery would resign, and at this early period of his Administration it would be most damaging."[36] He went on

to suggest a compromise and both Harcourt and Gladstone devoted themselves to finding one.

When the Cabinet was held it was reminiscent of a mime theatre; quiet and obscure.

> Cabinet in Mr G's sitting room. Much walking about of Mr G between Harcourt & me--did not sit down till 12.30. Bewildered colleagues in knot all round. Mr G came up to me I said that in view of a telegram of Portal's[37] he saw his way to a delay of 3 months or so in evacuation. This a compromise. . . . I mute--all nearly so. No discussion--a short address only from Mr G. Herschell, Harcourt & I appointed to draw up a proces verbal. Only a round table with six places for writing. Mr G & I at the table--a general group in front & around.
>
> . . . This morning I did not think I shd eat luncheon as Foreign Minister. Harcourt & Herschell at FO at 3. Harcourt at my request dictated document to me. I sent it to Mr G promising observations next day.[38]

It was decided that, for the sake of more information, the government would subsidise the Imperial British East Africa Company in Uganda until March 31, 1893. The Cabinet confirmed this agreement on September 30 and subsequently scattered back to their retreats.[39] Rosebery sent instructions to Sir Gerald Portal to effect the decision[40] and confirmed Macdonald's commission.[41]

Both Harcourt[42] and West[43] claimed credit for idea and initiation of the arrangement and both felt that the crisis had passed and that a compromise had indeed been achieved. Rosebery felt otherwise, as his letter to the Queen of September 29 demonstrated:

> He [Rosebery] is disposed to accept, though reluctantly, the extension of time given to the company to evacuate . . . [because it] must in any case evacuate. . . . [and] the delay gives time to receive information; to elicit the real feeling of the country, which is, he is certain, against evacuation; . . . From every point of view therefore he thinks that this delay is favourable to his policy; it is not what he would wish, but it is more than this morning seemed attainable.[44]

He went on to state his intention to make " . . . the spirit in which he accepts the postponement . . ." known in the Cabinet on the following day, " . . . or, what may be more convenient, in writing to Mr. Gladstone and Sir William Harcourt."[45]

In Rosebery's mind no real compromise existed; only a respite from conflict. It would appear that he did not express his views to the Cabinet but resorted to letters to Harcourt and Gladstone. The letter to Gladstone asked:

> Is it worthwhile temporarily to bridge over a difference of policy so deep and so conscientious as that between Harcourt and myself, as revealed in our minutes?
>
> . . . But I cannot sail under false colours, and I should be wanting in manliness and candour if I allowed any false impression as to the spirit in which I accept it and as to the future complications that I foresee . . .[46]

It would not appear that this was passed on. Thus the majority of the Cabinet was left with the illusion that the compromise had been accomplished.

The Foreign Secretary's colleagues were still disposed to conciliation--Harcourt commented to Gladstone on the death of the Duke of Sutherland, " . . . There is one thing at least to the good--

you have a Garter for Rosebery. You may remember what I said to you in London on that subject. It is more important than you may suppose."[47] Gladstone did offer the Garter on October 4, and Rosebery replied that he had no wish for the honour but could not feel up to conducting another long correspondence on a personal matter--if Mr. Gladstone insisted,he would consent.[48] His next notice of the matter was to read in the press that the honour had been awarded to him.[49] This was another illustration of the lack of understanding between Gladstone and Rosebery, and of the former's brusque attitude towards one whom he considered to be a junior colleague, although it must be admitted that Rosebery's coyness in these matters was probably irritating.

Both Gladstone and Harcourt, however, continued throughout the month to search for a formula which would satisfy Rosebery; in December--communication with Uganda took three months--Harcourt proposed that the territory be reconveyed to the Sultanate of Zanzibar, which was a British Protectorate. Gladstone appears to have concurred in this. Essentially, then, they had almost acceded to Rosebery's policy. West commented of it, " . . . how this plan differs from what the Cabinet was so dead against at the beginning of the month, I cannot see."[50]

The Cabinet did not meet in October until the 28th, which fact facilitated the new tack on which Rosebery now embarked. He had been quite noncommital when he had received a delegation in September from the Church Missionary Society urging retention;[52] but

by October a change had taken place. His words to a delegation from the Anti-Slavery Society pressing for a railway to Uganda, although beginning "I am only one member of a government . . ." concluded with, "My belief is that having put our hands to the plough in that great enterprise, we shall not be able, even if we were willing, to look back."[53] At the same time, he dined "more than once" with Lugard who had returned to answer the charges against him which had been aired in the press.[54] Given Rosebery's social attitudes and Lugard's plebeian origins,[55] this indicates that Rosebery was actively interested, if not actively involved in subverting the policy of the Cabinet.[56] Lugard himself later wrote that "Lord Rosebery was glad to utilize me in giving effect to his opposition to the views of his colleagues and I had constant interviews with him."[57]

Throughout October, interest in Uganda, an interest which was sympathetic to retention, increased markedly. Two long letters from Lugard appeared in the Times on October 8 and 17, and between the beginning of November and December 20 he was involved in a speaking campaign in which he spoke at 30 public meetings or dinners.[58] The sympathy for retention also inspired 174 resolutions or petitions which were sent to the Foreign Office. It was noted, however, in the House of Commons, that "not a single Liberal or Radical Society in the country had passed a resolution in favour [of retention]."[59] Also in October, on the 28th, Salisbury added fuel to the smouldering Cabinet dispute over his government's intentions with respect to Uganda by making a public statement that it had always contemplated holding Uganda.[60] Balfour

emphatically stated in private that the Conservatives had intended to build the railway, had they stayed in office.[61]

The Uganda question, "only scotched, not killed. . . ."[62] was thus brought into the open again once the ministry started to hold cabinet meetings. Morley had declared on November 1 that, "he was willing to resign rather than occupy or remain in Uganda."[63] It would seem that Harcourt and Gladstone felt that they had the ideal proposal for the settlement--the attachment of Uganda to Zanzibar which had originally been put forward by Salisbury. "To my surprise and satisfaction," Harcourt noted, "Rosebery embraces this idea very cordially, as you will see from the enclosed letter."[64] The acceptance, indeed proposal, of this indirect assumption of responsibility by Harcourt and Gladstone indicates that they had reached a state where they were no longer concerned with Uganda per se, but only with keeping Rosebery in the Cabinet without losing face themselves. They believed, improbable as it may seem, that the attachment of Uganda to the dominions of a foreign potentate would absolve them and Britain of responsibility for the area, despite the fact that the Sultan's territories were being administered by an Imperial Commissioner. Firm in this belief, they apparently put forward this proposal in the Cabinet on November 3.[65]

Rosebery, however, had been attempting to avoid the issue entirely.[66] This was due in part to his Fabian tactics designed to increase British commitment and to reap the reward of the swing of public opinion which he felt was bound to come, also in part due to

the fact that he felt that the proposal was impracticable[67] as Zanzibar could only hold Uganda if subsidized by the Treasury.[68] A subsidy would have destroyed the illusion of saving face which made the idea attractive to Harcourt and Gladstone. Once the idea was proposed, Rosebery again pointed out Zanzibar's inability to resume responsibility for Uganda. He went on to take retention as an accepted policy and proposed therefore that an Imperial Commissioner be despatched in due course to take over from the Company and to set up a token administration.[69] The other ministers were predictably appalled by this suggestion but, diverted by the lack of reliable information on Uganda, considered the proposal that a commissioner should be sent to inquire and to report.[70] On November 7, Uganda was again considered at a Cabinet meeting. Lord Herschell, the Lord Chancellor in a memorandum circulated on the 5th, had given an opinion that the government was responsible to foreign powers for the acts of the officials of chartered companies.[71] This considerably altered the sanguine view of the situation held by Harcourt and Gladstone, and the Cabinet resolved both to send a commissioner to Uganda, and to ask the Imperial British East Africa Company to prolong its occupation of Uganda once again.[72] In reply to this request, the Company demanded a subsidy of £50,000 per year and a minimum occupation of three years. Rosebery rejected this out of hand.[73] Shortly afterward, on November 23, the Cabinet settled on Sir Gerald Portal as Commissioner--reasoning that, as he already held a similar commission for Zanzibar, they could

not be held to have initiated a new enquiry.[74] His appointment was announced publicly at the end of November.

The choice of Portal to act as commissioner to "report his opinion whether any and what measures ought to be adopted with respect to it [Uganda] after its evacuation by the East African Company",[75] was a curious one.[76] The importance of this step may be understood by the fact that, on hearing the announcement that a commissioner was to be appointed on November 24, Lugard called off his campaign for retention.[77] Esher wrote of the appointment" "Rosebery's colleagues commit themselves thereby to his views."[78] Portal had been a protégé of Salisbury and it was widely felt that he was in favour of the retention of Uganda.[79] This feeling had been amply reinforced by the unauthorized publication of one of his personal letters in the Times on October 10, which finished with: "Will the government sit quiet and . . . then be hooted into an immense expedition? I am speaking plainly to them on the subject."[80] Incredibly enough, it was Harcourt who suggested Portal for the investigation as he believed the Commissioner well disposed to his proposal to put Uganda under the control of the Sultan of Zanzibar.[81] Unfortunately, that portion of Harcourt's journal which recorded his father's understanding of Portal's mission is missing,[82] and thus, in the absence of other relevant sources, a thorough explanation of his action is impossible. Certainly the appointment demonstrated the determination of the Liberal leaders to keep Rosebery in the Cabinet in the face of any disagreement and at the cost even of major concessions.

Rosebery immediately demonstrated that these concessions were inadequate: the draft instructions to Portal, drawn up by the Foreign Office, contained references to "administering" Uganda. Gladstone himself removed these from the draft.[83] Undaunted, Rosebery simply resorted to sending private instructions to Portal on December 1 and 9. In the first letter he declared that the clause in the instructions which discussed the possibility of retention being found to be insuperably difficult, was "mainly one of form . . . " Rosebery had previously commented that "as a rather one-horse company has been able to administer I suppose the Empire will be equal to it. . . ."[84] In his second letter, Rosebery wrote, "But I may say this, as my confident though not my official opinion, that public sentiment here will expect and support the maintenance of the British sphere of influence."[85] As Stansky points out, Portal's commission had not made retention a foregone conclusion, but Rosebery's secret instructions had.[86]

As a result of these decisive Cabinet battles on Uganda, the territory was eventually taken into the Empire. In a few short months, Rosebery had successfully reversed Cabinet policy. West remarked in his diary: "and W. Harcourt and Mr. Gladstone, . . . both liked the idea.[87] If it had been made in October, they would both have gone out of their senses with rage. What a healer Time is! and Rosebery will get his way."[88] The Cabinet had shown themselves willing to go to almost any length to retain Rosebery as one of its members.

On the other hand, Rosebery had taken advantage of this and, using tactics which can only be described as dishonest, had made the Foreign Office a private satrapy.

Footnotes

[1]Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, p. 178-9.

[2]Harcourt to Gladstone, 14 Aug., 1892, ibid., pp. 182-3.

[3]Ibid., p. 183.

[4]The question of Uganda is a confusing one. The adherents of the 'new imperialism' took its importance for granted. It was felt that, in some undefined way, control of the upper waters of the Nile was essential to the control and government of Egypt. This, despite the estimation made by Gordon that the natural approach to the Sudan (and hence Uganda) was from the East. It also formed a necessary link in the Cape-to-Cairo corridor beloved for its cartographic elegance, despite its impracticability. Britain was drawn into Africa by her interests in Egypt but this movement was aided by the attitude expressed by Lord Ripon. "It would look so nice on the map . . . if we could make a swap with Germany [of Uganda] for the Damara Lands." H. C. Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries of the Rt. Hon. Sir Algernon West, G.C.B., London, Murray, 1922, pp. 59.
It is doubtful whether the sentiments of the rush for Africa, compounded of national pride, the economic forces of expansion, the fear of being left out of the spoils and a healthy ignorance of Africa, will ever be explained to the post-1918 generations with a reasonable degree of intellectual satisfaction. (See R. Robinson & J. Gallagher, Africa and the Victorians, London, Macmillan, 1961, pp. 1-26, 462-72, for a treatment of this.)

[5]Hereafter referred to as the Company.

[6]M. Perham, Lugard, 2 vols., vol. 1, London, Collins, 1960, p. 388, see also Robinson & Gallagher, Africa, p. 309.

[7]By 1892 the servants of the Company were spending at the rate of £80,000 per year while income was only £30,000. The total capitalization of £240,000, combined with the £1,000,000 of the South Africa Company and the £3,000,000 of the Niger Company, both of which had great advantages in situation over the I.B.E.A. Co., but developed much more slowly. (See M. Perham, Lugard, p. 167, and Robinson & Gallagher, Africa, p. 309.

[8]Lugard, Frederick John Dealtoy, baron Lugard, soldier, administrator, RMC Sandhurst 1878, commissioned 9th Foot same year, seconded to Military Transport Service 1886, on sick leave 1887 , led force for African Lake Company to defend Karongwa, 1890 led expedition for I.B.E.A. Co. into Uganda.

[9]M. Perham, Lugard, pp. 338-9. See also Robinson & Gallagher, Africa, p. 309.

[10]Ibid., p. 328.

[11]Lugard had taken fifty Sudanese soldiers with him into the interior. Once in Uganda he had expelled a marauding tribe and had enlisted a force of approximately 100 Sudanese,who had been cut off from Egypt ten years previously by the Mahdi, to garrison the territory for the Company.

[12]M. Perham, Lugard, p. 401.

[13]Ibid., p. 326. This was due to what was essentially a personality conflict which occurred when Lugard travelled with a 'trek' run by Macdonald.

[14]Documents Diplomatiques Francais, 1st series VIII; No. 89, in R. R. James, Rosebery, London, Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1923, p. 219.

[15]Hansard, 3 March, 1892,

[16]R. R. James, Rosebery, London, Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1923, p. 261.

[17]M. Perham, Lugard, p. 404; see also R. R. James, Rosebery, p. 261.

[18]Gladstone to Rosebery, 17 Sept., 1892, P. Stansky, Ambitions and Strategies, Oxford, Clarendon, 1964, p. 7.

[19] Harcourt to Gladstone, 20 Sept., 1892, A. G. Gardiner, The Life of Sir William Harcourt, 2 vols., vol. ii, p. 191.

[20]Excerpt Rosebery's memorandum, 19 Sept., 1892, P. Stansky, Ambitions, p. 7.

[21]Harcourt to Gladstone, 20 Sept., 1892, A. G. Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, p. 192.

[22]Gladstone to Harcourt, 23 Sept., 1892, ibid., p. 195.

[23]Rosebery to Gladstone, 21 Sept., 1892, P. Stansky, Ambitions, p. 7.

[24]Gladstone to Rosebery, 21 Sept., 1892, ibid., p. 8. [This became an excellent example of the process of drawing different lessons from the same example. To Gladstone, Gordon was an example of the folly of foreign adventure. Harcourt remembered " . . . that Gordon was sent by Granville and Hartington without the knowledge of the cabinet." (Excerpt, Harcourt to Gladstone, 23 Sept., 1892, P. Stansky,

24 (continued)
Ambitions, p. 9) and felt that danger would be averted by the calling of a cabinet. Rosebery felt that it demonstrated how a cabinet which was clear of all responsibility 'legally and literally' could still be held responsible by the nation (excerpt Rosebery to Harcourt, 22 Sept., 1892, P. Stansky, Ambitions, p. 8) and that it also showed the weakness of a compromise policy of a sharply divided cabinet. (excerpt Rosebery to Gladstone, 30 Sept., 1892, P. Stansky, Ambitions, p. 12).

[25]Excerpt Gladstone to Harcourt, 23 Sept., 1892, A. G. Gardiner, Harcourt, Vol. 2, p. 195.

[26]Excerpt Gladstone to Rosebery, 24 Sept., 1892, ibid., p. 195.

[27]Ibid., p. 193.

[28]Rosebery to Queen Victoria, 3 Oct., 1892, G. E. Buckle, ed., The Letters of Queen Victoria, Second Series, vol. 2, London, Murray, 1931, p. 163.

[29]Excerpt Rosebery to Gladstone, 22 Sept., 1892, R. R. James, Rosebery, p. 263.

[30]Excerpt Gladstone to Harcourt, 24 Sept., 1892, P. Stansky, Ambitions, p. 10, also A. G. Gardiner, Harcourt, p. 196.

[31]Excerpt Gladstone to Rosebery, 25 Sept., 1892, R. R. James, Rosebery, pp. 264-5, and P. Stansky, Ambitions, pp. 9-10.

[32]Excerpt Rosebery to Gladstone, 25 Sept., 1892, R. R. James, Rosebery, p. 265.

[33]Sir Algernon Edward West (1832-1921) served in Admiralty and India Office 1852-60, private secretary to W. E. Gladstone 1868-72, 1892-5, Commissioner of inland revenue 1872-92, Chairman of board of inland revenue 1881-92. K.C.B., 1886, P.C., 1894.

[34]Rosebery wrote to Herschell that he looked to the forthcoming cabinet with the "gloomiest forebodings". R. R. James, Rosebery, p. 266. West, on September 28, reported "Saw Francis Villiers, who told me how serious it is with Lord Rosebery". H. G. Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries of the Rt. Hon. Sir Algernon West, p. 60.

[35]Ibid.

[36]H. G. Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, p. 62. It would appear that West, agreeing with Rosebery on Uganda, was disposed to take his private utterances, and those of friends, on his intentions quite seriously. With Rosebery's penchant for the dramatic, it is difficult to judge how justified this was or how much force was added by West in his discussion with cabinet members.

[37]Portal, Sir Gerald Herbert (1858-94) diplomat; entered diplomatic service 1879, in Egypt 1882-7; mission to Abyssinia 1887. Consul-general to Zanzibar 1891-4.

[38]Excerpt Rosebery's diary, R. R. James, Rosebery, p. 267.

[39]H. G. Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, p. 63.

[40]M. Perham, Lugard, p. 410.

[41]Ibid., pp. 335 & 410.

[42]A. G. Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, p. 197; P. Stansky, Ambitions, p. 11.

[43]H. G. Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, p. 62.

[44]G. E. Buckle, ed., Letters of Queen Victoria, Third Series, vol. 2, p. 159.

[45]Ibid., p. 160.

[46]Excerpt Rosebery to Gladstone, 30 Sept., 1892, P. Stansky, Ambitions, p. 12.

[47]A. G. Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, p. 198.

[48]R. R. James, Rosebery, p. 270.

[49]G. E. Buckle, ed., Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. 2, p. 171; see also M. V. Brett, ed., Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher, 3 vols., vol. 1, London, Nicholson & Watson, 1934, p. 164.

[50]H. G. Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, p. 66.

[51]Ibid.,pp. 63-8.

[52]He wrote Gladstone that "I was so loyal to you all that I left them, I fear, under the impression that I was a strong evacuationist!" (Excerpt Rosebery to Gladstone, 23 Sept., 1892, M. Perham, Lugard, p. 412.)

[53]R. R. James, Rosebery, London, Weidenfield & Nicholson, 1963, p. 272, (20 October, 1892).

[54]Ibid., p. 271.

[55]Rosebery had always been noted for his cool assurance or patrician hauteur. In the judgement of a contemporary in 1883, it was "Not an offensive hauteur, but that calm pride by which a man seems to ascend in a balloon out of earshot every time he is addressed by one not socially his equal." R. R. James, Rosebery, p. 25.

[56]In R. Robinson & J. Gallagher, Africa and the Victorians, London, Macmillan, 1961, p. 317, the authors refer to the campaign for retention as " . . . Sedulously manufactured with the scarcely veiled encouragement of Rosebery."

[57]M. Perham, Lugard, p. 240.

[58]Ibid., pp. 21-3.

[59]Hansard, 4th Series, VIII, p. 571; 6 February, 1893.

[60]M. Perham, Lugard, p. 417.

[61]H. G. Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, p. 66.

[62]Ibid., p. 66.

[63]Ibid., p. 70.

[64]Harcourt to Gladstone, 20 Oct., 1892, A. G. Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, p. 198.

[65]It would appear from ibid., p. 198, that the Cabinet discussed this suggestion a fortnight after October 28. The exact date that t is was brought forward in a Cabinet meeting, whether November 3 or 4, is not clear. However, it is unlikely that it would have survived the objections given on the following page, so I have presumed the earlier date as it is likely that Harcourt or Gladstone would have brought it forward on the first opportunity.

[66]On 2 November, 1892, he had written Gladstone: "I see no special cause for haste in the Uganda matter." M. Perham, Lugard, p. 420.

[67]He had informed Gladstone of this on 28 October, 1892. Ibid., p. 319.

[68]H. G. Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, p. 85.

[69]R. Robinson & J. Gallagher, Africa, p. 319.

[70]P. Stansky, Ambitions, p. 12; M. Perham, Lugard, p. 427.

[71]M. Perham, Lugard, p. 427.

[72]Gladstone to Queen Victoria, 7 Nov., 1892; G. E. Buckle, Queen Victoria, vol. II, p. 178.

[73]M. Perham, Lugard, p. 428.

[74]R. R. James, Rosebery, p. 274; M. Perham, Lugard, pp. 430-1.

[75]G. E. Buckle, Queen Victoria, p. 178.

[76]After recording the appointment in his diary, West put down three exclamation marks. (H. G. Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, p. 85).

[77]M. Perham, Lugard, p. 431.

[78]M. V. Brett, ed., Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher, 3 vols., vol. 1, London, Nicholson & Watson, 1934, p. 166.

[79]R. R. Robinson & J. Gallagher, Africa, p. 319.

[80]The Times, 10 October, 1892.

[81]L. Harcourt's journal, P. Stansky, Ambitions, p. 13.

[82]R. R. James, Rosebery, p. 274; P. Stansky, Ambitions, p. 13.

[83]M. Perham, Lugard, p. 429; R. Robinson & J. Gallagher, Africa, p. 319.

[84]Ibid., p. 431.

[85]Ibid.

[86]P. Stansky, Ambitions, p. 13.

[87]A proposal to buy out the I.B.E.A. Co.

[88]21 November, 1892, H. G. Hutchinson, Private Diaries, pp. 81-2.

CHAPTER III

EGYPT: THE PATTERNS CONFIRMED

CHAPTER III

The Egyptian crisis of January, 1893, brought into the Cabinet proceedings all the elements, in varying degrees, of the Uganda crisis: Rosebery faced a hostile Cabinet, used the threat of his resignation as a weapon in argument, indulged in some behind-the-scenes manoeuvres, and ultimately carried his policy through the Cabinet. The Cabinet's methods of dealing with the crisis confirmed the procedures established during the previous African crisis.

The Khedive, the 15 year-old Abbas II, dismissed his Prime Minister and planned to replace him with an individual hostile to the British interests. Lord Cromer,[1] initially and intuitively feeling that this move was inspired by the French and Russian consuls, wished to take rapid and drastic action. He telegraphed the Cabinet suggesting that the British occupy the essential Ministries and the telegraph offices.[2] The Cabinet's reaction was predictable; they refused to sanction such actions as they would be a breach of international law and would involve a direct conflict with France--Britain's partner in the nominal "Dual Control". As Rosebery wrote drily, "Lord Cromer has been asked to make some more practical proposal."[3] On January 18, Cromer reported that a compromise had been reached--a third man, acceptable to himself as British Agent, was to be appointed Prime Minister. However, Cromer still viewed military occupation of the Egyptian Ministries as a necessary measure. It would, he felt, impress

the youthful Khedive and his supporters with Britain's determination to remain in Egypt.[4]

Rosebery felt that these measures were extreme,[5] but he also felt that some action would be necessary to make both the Egyptians and 'the Powers' aware of Britain's position in Egypt. He recommended an unobtrusive strengthening of the British army of occupation in Egypt.[6] This proposal was echoed by Cromer who, supported by the military authorities, requested that an additional battalion be sent to Egypt.[7] Rosebery's colleagues in the Cabinet, with the single exception of Bryce,[8] could not see the situation to be so serious. Kimberley, Herschell and Spencer had been in opposition to the views expressed by Rosebery in the Cabinet meeting; the remainder of the Cabinet, by Rosebery's own testimony, were mute.[9] It is evident from Queen Victoria's comment[10] that they generally believed the crisis to be over, and, consequently, Cromer to be an alarmist. West remarked that: "Cromer had not increased his reputation either with Mr. Gladstone or with Lord Rosebery."[11] Gladstone's reaction to the request for more troops was to remark to Harcourt that they might as well ask him to put a torch to Westminster Abbey as to send more troops to Egypt.[12] To his private secretary, Edward Hamilton, he remarked that "I can see nothing for it but for Rosebery to resign."[13] It is apparent from Gladstone's papers that Morley had represented Rosebery's views to him as being similar to those of the Prime Minister. This helps to explain Gladstone's violent reaction on learning the truth.[14]

He pointed out to the Queen that Cromer had not indicated that the peace of Egypt, its frontier, or its garrison were in danger, and that, in view of the French reaction to the situation, that action was not yet warranted.[15] Cromer continued to send extravagant telegrams, despite a warning by Sir Thomas Sanderson of the Foreign Office to "avoid in your official telegrams expressions which can be laid hold of."[16]

On January 21, 1893, Rosebery let it be known that he would resign if Cromer did not get an addition to the garrison and a stronger hand with the Khedive.[17] Rosebery himself wrote to Cromer that if the Consul had not received the powers which he desired by January 23, "the Foreign Office will have passed into other hands."[18] West immediately began to move to prevent this from happening by inducing Morley, through mention of Rosebery's threatened resignation, to change his stand against reinforcement and to influence Herschell and Asquith to do the same.[19] Harcourt, whose opinion on the complexity of the Egyptian situation has been mentioned, was benevolently neutral; indeed, Rosebery remarked at the time that nothing could have been more useful than Harcourt.[20] This left Gladstone, alone, violently opposed on principle to reinforcement. The result of the Cabinet meeting held on January 23 was that Gladstone capitulated and Rosebery obtained the policy which he desired. Conveniently, there was a battalion of troops returning from India and they were disembarked at the Suez. The Cabinet's action was a further admission of dependence upon Rosebery, and fear that his resignation would bring down the government. Rather

than face this, those members of the Cabinet with strong commitments to limiting British involvement in Africa were willing to accede to Rosebery's desire to strengthen the British presence in that continent. Later in the month, Rosebery exploited his victory by asking Ponsonby to advise the Queen to press Gladstone to take a firm line on Egypt in Parliament.[21] His request had its desired effect on both Gladstone and the Queen. In a manner reminiscent of his instructions to Portal, Rosebery was attempting by irregular means to limit the choices open to the Cabinet.

In addition to the policy of the evacuation of Egypt, the desire on the part of Gladstone, John Morley and Harcourt for an improved understanding with France was a casualty of the Cabinet battles over African policy. French protests had played a part in the Uganda crisis. Indeed, the standard interpretation of the history of European development of Africa is one based on the idea of colonial rivalries between the European nations, in particular between Britain and France. It had been the French demands for an inquiry into Lugard's conduct--inspired by outcries in the French press--which had reinforced the attitudes of those Cabinet members who were in favour of evacuation of Uganda.[22] It is also probable that they had reinforced Rosebery's natural antipathy to the French,[23] and to the French ambassador, Waddington.[24] This latter antipathy was buttressed in November of 1892 when Waddington attempted to establish a personal link with the francophile Prime Minister to gain acceptance of a proposal which Rosebery had already rejected. Already aroused, Rosebery

was, shortly after this incident, infuriated when Waddington requested an interview with Kimberley. He sent a strong protest to the French government through the British ambassador, Lord Dufferin.[25] Ribot, the French Prime Minister, had rebuked Waddington in response to this; however, it later became known that the ambassador had been acting on instructions from Ribot in this incident.[26] Rosebery had felt that this action of the ambassador must have been the result of orders by the French government,[27] and on November 17, the German ambassador reported that the Foreign Secretary had "added in strict confidence that France might now wait, before she got her way on any question whatsoever."[28]

This antipathy on the part of Rosebery was a major factor in the failure of an attempt by Gladstone to initiate Anglo-French talks on Egypt with a view to evacuation. In the Cabinet, Harcourt and Morley supported this policy and in the Commons a group led by Dilke agitated for an agreement. Waddington soon reported, however, that this support meant nothing: Rosebery controlled the policy and his policy was one of maintaining possession.[29]

Not only did Rosebery dominate foreign policy to the point where he overrode the other major figures in the Cabinet, but he also maintained a policy of secrecy by passing to the Cabinet only a minimum of information. In September, Esher had noted of Rosebery in his journal that, "He is absolute at the F.O. He informs his colleagues of very little, and does as he pleases. If it offends them he retires."[30]

In November, Ripon[31] had been moved to complain to Kimberley that "I have been much exercised lately by the ignorance in which the Cabinet, as a whole, is kept with respect to Foreign Affairs & to the general political situation in Europe."[32] Munro Ferguson,[33] later a permanent official in the Foreign Office, remarked of this period: "We did not send too much information from the FO to the other side of the street . . . and over Uganda Ld. R. remarked that Mr. G.'s hair would stand on end if he knew what was going on there."[34] It would appear that Rosebery had decided very early in his tenure of the Foreign Office to carry out his own foreign policy regardless of attempts by the remainder of the Cabinet to formulate policy, and, preferably, by preventing the Cabinet from considering foreign policy at all. One may be permitted at this point to speculate on the reality of the problem of the shortage of reliable information on Uganda during the latter part of 1892, and its probable origin. It was certainly in the interests of Rosebery's policy for the Uganda situation to appear confused.

Rosebery's relations with his colleagues were also influenced by his intolerance of interference in his own department. He complained that Gladstone "never said 'all right' to anything--always making some amendment in every draft."[35] Harcourt had touched this open nerve of the Foreign Secretary in November when, probably out of a desire to be helpful, he had drafted a letter to be sent to the Imperial British East Africa Company.[36] Rosebery was understandably annoyed by this

initiative in the execution of policy. He was further infuriated when Gladstone made additions to this letter, saying, "Well, if it is all settled against me by the triumvirate, W. Harcourt, John Morley, and Mr. Gladstone let me go at once."[37] This incident occurred during the period in which the French ambassador was attempting to bypass him in dealing with the ministry. Rosebery's possessive feelings towards his position, added to his attempts to deceive his colleagues, readily explain the paucity of foreign policy information passed to the Cabinet.

Asquith ingenuously described the first six months of the Gladstone ministry as being a period in which the members became "familiar with their offices and with one another and . . . [prepared] for their first parliamentary session."[38] The manner in which this cabinet became familiar with one another was an illustration of Gladstone's dictum that "men, not measures, were the difficulties of Cabinets".[39] The treatment of the Cabinet reactions to the Uganda and Egyptian crises had given an indication of the hostilities which were developing between Rosebery and Gladstone. On at least two occasions, Gladstone had exclaimed that the situation was a question of himself or Rosebery leaving.[40] In November, 1892, West felt that the relations between the Prime Minister and his Foreign Secretary would be considerably improved if they dealt with each other by personal conversation rather than by letters and memoranda. Gladstone agreed when West advanced this theory to him, but pointed out that there had already

been objections against the formation of a "ring" in the Cabinet. He was, however, willing for Rosebery to write to him directly. West concluded that if he could induce Rosebery to come to see Gladstone "it would be well."[41] It had been reported to West that Rosebery preferred to deal with Gladstone by correspondence because of the latter's growing deafness.[42] When West made the request that Rosebery see Gladstone in the interests of better understanding, Rosebery promised to do so but only after the Uganda difficulties had been settled, as Gladstone was, at that time, "always violent and unreasonable and snubbed him at the Cabinets."[43] West was able to make use of this promise on November 25 when he told Rosebery that he must see Gladstone now that the Uganda business was over. Rosebery did so and West was optimistic[44] about the effect of this on relations between the two ministers. The optimism proved to be misplaced as, barely two weeks later, Rosebery and Gladstone had a misunderstanding on the subject of the leadership of the House of Lords. On this occasion, Rosebery firmly and successfully laid the subject of his leadership of the Lords to rest.[45] Whatever benefit had been gained by personal conversations was soon lost completely, and by late January, 1893, West was again lamenting the relations between Rosebery and Gladstone and suggesting the same solution as he had previously. Gladstone felt that Rosebery had chosen correspondence as their medium of communication and implied that it was therefore up to him to change it. West's overtures to Rosebery on the subject were rebuffed.[46] By the end of January, 1893, Rosebery and Gladstone, largely as a result of misunderstandings and their conflicts

on the Uganda and Egyptian issues, avoided personal intercourse outside the Cabinet meetings and limited themselves to correspondence for the exchange of views on Cabinet matters. Within the Cabinet meetings, Rosebery had equally limited communications. West reported in February, 1893, that Rosebery did not see why he should attend any Cabinets as Gladstone always told him not to speak.[47]

These procedures generally suited Rosebery's desires to keep foreign affairs as his personal preserve and to stay uninvolved in other government business. In this he was successful to the extent that in April, 1893, he reported to the Queen that: "With one exception, and that momentary, he has not seen any of his colleagues of late. . . ."[48] Of Rosebery's relations with the major figures of the Cabinet, those with Gladstone have been considered and those with Harcourt may be assumed to be the same as those of any other minister with Harcourt;[49] only with John Morley did Rosebery maintain any personal relationship outside of the Cabinet meetings. For most of the period in which Gladstone led the Cabinet, they remained good personal friends. Rosebery visited Morley in Ireland in early December, 1892, and in February, 1893, Morley wrote to Rosebery: "You may annex the Great Sahara, if you will, so long as you don't leave me in the wilderness. . . ."[50]

Morley was not as successful in his relations with the other ministers. His sensitivity and 'thin-skin' were constantly in evidence while he was in office and were sources of regret to his colleagues.[51]

Both he and they tended to make allowances for his temperament but his relations with Harcourt at this time were particularly bad. They had deteriorated since the Brooks' Street Conferences so that by November, 1892, Morley proclaimed to West that he refused to attend a Cabinet meeting at which Harcourt was present.[52] The following June, Morley wondered aloud if there were a precedent for sending a round-robin to the Prime Minister, asking him to dismiss a colleague.[53] A month later, West discussed with Asquith the "terrible difficulties connected with Harcourt and John Morley, who quarrel on the Front Bench and refuse to speak to each other."[54]

No description of Harcourt will ever be adequate. One commentator has said that "He played so many roles that it was thought there was no such thing as the real Harcourt."[55] Suffice it to say that he was of an old Whig family, a large man with a bluff manner and the hearty appetites to match. By most accounts, he was a very warm-hearted man.[56] He was, however, cursed with a great temper which he frequently vented.[57] While in a temper he was extremely sarcastic to all around him. Once the fit of rage had passed it would appear that he forgot the incident. His colleagues could not, however, do so, a fact which gave rise to the apocryphal tale in which three men agreed to make up a dinner of six at a club by each asking the most unpopular person of his acquaintance--only four places were set, for all had invited Harcourt.

Harcourt's biography shows ample evidence of his tendency to irritate his colleagues by his sarcasm.[59] Although he regarded himself as being on personal good terms with all of his colleagues, he could not refrain from the sallies such as that to Spencer: "For new ministers are always delighted to eran a reputation in their departments by profuse expenditure."[60] Or to Campbell-Bannerman that "There seems, . . . to be no system or organisation in the War Office which gives any security against the most serious pecuniary complications."[61] There were no restrictions as to the size of the problems which could excite the harsh tongue of the Chancellor of the Exchequer: from £120 for drains in Buckingham Palace[62] to the portrayal of the Chancellor as the old steward in Hogarth's "Rake's Progress", holding up his hands at the extravagance of Acland's request for an additional £250,000 for the Department of Education.[63] His attacks inspired responses of the same order from his colleagues. Of these bitter exchanges, none were more acrimonious than those with John Morley. At one point, Harcourt wrote to Morley: "I suppose that you had both forgotten . . . that such an office as that of Chancellor of the Exchequer exists and that it has some responsibilities," and Morley responded that: "What you do is ostentatiously to hold aloof from the business, and then when others do the best they can, you descend upon them with storm and menace", and went on to compare Harcourt with Brougham.[64]

The relations between three of the four major figures in the Cabinet were therefore marked either by personal animosity or by

opposition in policy. Rosebery was alienated from almost all of the other Cabinet members by his secretive pursuit of a separate foreign policy. Harcourt was alienated from all of his colleagues by his manner. Morley was opposed to Rosebery's policy and was repelled by Harcourt's manner. Above all, the Prime Minister was almost stone deaf. The Cabinet, as Rosebery aptly remarked, was being conducted "on prize-fight principles with the leaders sparring incessantly in the middle of a ring of puzzled Ministers."[65] Gladstone's comment to West was that, "Rosebery, Harcourt, and J. Morley were very queer people to deal with."[66]

That the ministers were queer people to deal with was, to a large measure, due to Gladstone himself. He held a dominating position in the party and the feeling of Campbell-Bannerman that, "The Government is being formed for the special purpose of enabling Mr. G. to carry out his ideas: it is in an unusual degree <u>his</u> Government,"[67] was shared by the greater part of the Cabinet, of the party, and, indeed, of the country. This dominant position lays the responsibility for the disharmony in the Cabinet all the more heavily on Gladstone. It also emphasises Gladstone's continued messianic attitude towards the government. His aim in political life had long been a union of political and religious principles:[68] he felt more and more that he was the center and only power in the Cabinet. He had been in public life for sixty years and had seen so many men pass that "all men were now beginning to wear the appearance of remote and ineffectual shadows."[69]

This feeling led him to ignore others more and more. He tended to retreat from uncongenial surroundings in the assumption that his paramountcy would be recognized automatically and that harmony would result from this recognition.

One of the greatest factors which aggravated Gladstone's attitudes was, of course, age. He was over eighty and even for a man of his prodigious energies, the effort required by his office told heavily. In December, 1892, West reported that Gladstone had not slept well recently and that his hearing was defective, and that his eyesight was worse: "it was an old house crumbling."[70] Rosebery was distressed by Gladstone's appearance in February; it was "anxious and worn".[71] In May, Harcourt reported to his son that Gladstone could "not read MSS at all and hardly a book. . . . He [Gladstone] made a most inefficient speech in the H. of C. this afternoon, almost incoherent, and very weak in voice and manner."[72] The Queen's misgivings about Gladstone's age were rapidly being justified.[73]

Gladstone's abilities in dealing with his colleagues had never been of a high order. In a contemporary article by West which dealt with the Prime Minister's Day and appeared in the Westminster Gazette, it was remarked that Gladstone had:

> little of the arts of the diplomatist. He does not wheedle; he overwhelms. Strength of character, force of argument, transparent honesty of purpose, and, above all, intensity of enthusiastic conviction, are the weapons by which Mr. Gladstone convinces in counsel. . . . When the speeches in the House were delivered, they were magnificent efforts; 'but not so fine,' said Mr. Gladstone's colleague, 'as those which he delivered to me--in private.'[74]

In his old age, Gladstone relied more and more on moral conviction and evangelical fervor. He felt that it was vital constantly to feed and fan the flame of "righteous indignation".[75] Gladstone had always been lax in his performance of social duties;[76] by the 1890's he railed that it was "monstrous" at his time of life, to be expected to entertain colleagues and supporters.[77] His intercourse with his colleagues was therefore reduced to formal meetings and to correspondence, with no opportunities to resolve misunderstandings in an informal atmosphere. Gladstone also retreated even more often and more deeply into the solicitous and comfortable haven offered by his family. As early as December, 1892, Esher had relayed the rumour that Mary Drew[78] was suppressing Gladstone's colleagues letters to him.[79] At the same time, both Rosebery and West were complaining that the members of Gladstone's family were too eager to interfere.[80] The effect of this personal retreat and avoidance of contact on Gladstone's relations with Rosebery have been discussed above; their misunderstandings and Gladstone's incomprehension of the viewpoints of others may be taken as representative of his individual relations with each of his colleagues. In his relations with J. Morley and Harcourt, these ill effects were apparently ameliorated somewhat by the previous association which the two ministers had had with Gladstone--an association which was somewhat closer than Rosebery's had been or ever could have been.

In Gladstone's relations with the Cabinet as a body, the same situation became evident. He began to avoid Cabinet meetings as he

avoided confrontations with individuals. Gladstone had made great efforts to avoid a Cabinet meeting on Uganda in September, and had avoided calling any others until the end of October.[81] The November Cabinet meetings were barely under way when, on the 11th, Gladstone announced that there were to be no more until December.[82] Marjoribanks, the Chief Whip, remonstrated with the Prime Minister and obtained the promise of more Cabinet meetings before the end of the month.[83] By this time, the lack of communications within the Cabinet had reached the stage illustrated by a letter from the Colonial Secretary, Lord Ripon, to West: "The Daily News announces this morning that there is to be a Cabinet next week. Is this true? I hope it may be. . . ."[84] On November 23, Harcourt asked that more Cabinet meetings be held in December, but was embarrassed to find that those ministers who had advanced this opinion outside the Cabinet would not do so while inside its meeting.[85] The scarcity of Cabinet meetings continued into December, when J. Morley reported that "He Gladstone is obstinately averse to Cabinets this week."[86] This scarcity of meetings was to continue well into the new year.[87] During the first six months of its existence the Cabinet never realized a corporate existence; it was merely an aggregate of ministers.[88]

Denied leadership by Gladstone's withdrawal from his responsibilities and by the animosities between the three other dominant ministers, the Cabinet was not able to gain unity through pursuit of policy. The majority of the Cabinet was, at best, lukewarm over the

policy of Home Rule.[89] Two of the dominant figures of the Cabinet, Harcourt and Rosebery, were not on the committee which was forming the Irish legislation. Rosebery was disinterested but the exclusion of Harcourt from the committee appears to have been due to his temperament.[90] His exclusion was the cause of most of his disputes with J. Morley, as the committee found itself consulting permanent officials of the Treasury without reference to the Chancellor in attempting to deal definitively with questions of finance. This would have caused strife with even the most sanguine of Chancellors. Those Cabinet members not on the committee were kept in ignorance of its proposals. By December, complaints about secrecy on Ireland were frequent.[91] This policy was maintained until the bill was introduced. On this occasion Asquith wrote caustically to Rosebery, "I understand that on Monday a Bill (to "amend the provision" for the Government of Ireland), which neither you nor I have seen, is to be introduced in the House of Commons, I send you word of this, as you may possibly like to be present and hear what Her Majesty's Government have to propose."[92]

It is no wonder that the Cabinet had reached a state of demoralization in which A. Godley[93] could remark to West that, "The Cabinet parted without an explosion: that was all that could be hoped, . . ."[94] Even West, 'the Mercury' of the Cabinet and one of those most active in keeping the ministry in operation, threw up his hands and said: "but what does it matter when we are only living from hand to mouth?"[95] Inasmuch as any patterns of procedure had been established

by the Cabinet, they were the patterns of division, of the avoidance of the consideration of major questions, of a reluctance to approach questions with a spirit of compromise, and of esoteric and secret considerations of policy by small groups and individuals. Deprived of leadership and of purpose, it seems that only inertia and a transcendant faith in the GOM kept the Government in existence.

Footnotes

[1]Baring, Evelyn, first Earl Cromer, 1841-1917. Woolwich, 1855-8, commissioned 1858; 1858-67 aide to Sir Henry Stokes; private secretary to Lord Northbrook 1867-72; first British commissioner to oversee debts of Khedive Ismail 1877-9; financial member of Viceroy's Council India 1880-3; became British agent and consul-general in Egypt 1883.

[2]Rosebery to Queen Victoria cypher telegram, 17 Jan., 1893, G. E. Buckle, ed., Letters of Queen Victoria, 3rd series, vol. 2.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Cromer to Rosebery, 18 Jan., 1893, Letters of Queen Victoria, pp. 205-7.

[5]Rosebery to Queen Victoria, ibid., pp. 207-8.

[6]James, Rosebery, p. 278.

[7]Cromer to Rosebery, abstract of telegraph, 19 Jan., 1893, Letters of Queen Victoria, p. 208.

[8]George Bryce, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

[9]James, Rosebery, p. 279.

[10]Queen Victoria to Rosebery, 21 Jan., 1893: " . . . 'How can a number of gentlemen sitting in a room together in London declare they don't consider the emergency to have arisen & that the strengthening of the garrison shall take place when it has done so!!" R. R. James, Rosebery, pp. 279-80.

[11]M. G. Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, p. 122.

[12]L. Harcourt was the source of this both in his journal 2o Jan., 1893; see Stansky, Ambitions, p. 15, and West, see ibid., p. 123.

[13]James, Rosebery, p. 279 and n.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Gladstone to Queen Victoria, 21 Jan., 1893, Buckle, Letters of Queen Victoria, 3rd series, vol. 2, p. 210.

[16]Lord Zetland, Cromer, London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1932, p. 198.

[17]H. G. Hutchinson, Private Diaries, p. 124.

[18]R. R. James, Rosebery, p. 280.

[19]Hutchinson, op. cit.

[20]Hutchinson, op. cit., p. 123.

[21]Rosebery to Ponsonby, 29 Jan., 1893, Letters of Queen Victoria, 3rd series, vol. 2, p. 216.

[22]In a memorandum prepared for the Cabinet on 24 September, 1892, Harcourt wrote: "Captain Lugard has probably with his Maxim gun slain more Catholic Christians than are likely to be killed in his absence." P. Stansky, Ambitions.

[23]Hatzefeldt, the German ambassador to Britain, observed on 12 October, 1892, that "The mistrust between the two Foreign Offices (those of Britain and France) is, if anything, greater than even in Salisbury's time." R. R. James, Rosebery, p. 272.

[24]Rosebery to Gladstone, 19 Oct., 1892: "I cannot divest myself of the idea when he [Waddington] enters the room that he is a churchwarden come round for a subscription, . . . The resemblance so far holds good that he brings nothing, but generally tries to take something away; . . ." R. R. James, Rosebery, p. 272.

[25]R. R. James, Rosebery, pp. 272-3. See also H. G. Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, p. 78.

[26]14 July, 1893, H. G. Hutchinson, Diaries, p. 176.

[27]Ibid., p. 72.

[28]R. R. James, Rosebery, p. 273.

[29]Waddington to Develle, 1. Feb., 1893, Documents Diplomatiques Francaise, 1st series, vol. X, No. 156.

[30]Maurice Brett, ed., Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher, vol. 1, 3 vols., London, Nicholson and Watson, 1934, p. 162.

[31] Secretary of State for the Colonies.

[32]P. Stansky, Ambitions, p. 14. See also Hutchinson, Diaries, for 26 January, 1893, where Ripon again complained to West of the ignorance of foreign affairs in which the Cabinet was kept.

[33] A permanent Foreign Office official.

[34] R. R. James, Rosebery, p. 272.

[35] H. G. Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, p. 126.

[36] Ibid., p. 77.

[37] Ibid., p. 78.

[38] Earl of Oxford and Asquith, Fifty Years of British Parliament, 2 vols., Vol. i, Boston, Little Brown and Company, 1926, p. 229.

[39] Hutchinson, op. cit., p. 126.

[40] In November, R. R. James, Rosebery, p. 273, and again during the Egyptian crisis, see p. 279.

[41] H. G. Hutchinson, Private Diaries, p. 72.

[42] Ibid., p. 75.

[43] Ibid., p. 80.

[44] Ibid., p. 84.

[45] See Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, pp. 88 and 96, also Crewe, Lord Rosebery, vol. ii, p. 422.

[46] Hutchinson, Private Diaries, p. 126.

[47] Ibid., p. 142.

[48] G. E. Bucke, ed., Letters of Queen Victoria, Vol. 2, p. 248.

[49] See below.

[50] R. R. James, Rosebery, p. 277.

[51] See especially West's diary for 17-18 May, 1893, for a typical episode. Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, p. 160.

[52] Hutchinson, op. cit., p. 70.

[53] Ibid., p. 165.

[54] Ibid., p. 173.

[55]P. Stansky, Ambitions, p. xv.

[56]Hutchinson, op. cit., p. 174, and Crewe, Lord Rosebery, vol. ii, p. 439.

[57]Of Harcourt's temper, one of his private secretaries, Sir L. N. Guillemard, was to comment, "It was an ungoverned temper. I don't know whether he had ever tried to govern it, but if he had, it beat him." A. G. Gardiner, Harcourt, Vol. ii, p. 207.

[58]Crewe, Lord Rosebery, vol. ii, p. 440.

[59]As his biographer understated: "It must be admitted that Harcourt did not always make it easy for his colleagues to entertain amiable feelings towards him." Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, p. 200.

[60]Harcourt to Spencer, 4 Jan., 1893, A. G. Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. ii, p. 227.

[61]J. A. Spender, The Life of the Right Hon. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, G.C.B., 2 vols., vol. i, London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1923, p. 136.

[62]Harcourt to E. Hamilton, 16 Oct., 1892, Gardiner, op. cit., vol. ii, p. 203.

[63]Harcourt to Acland, 9 Jan., 1893, ibid., p. 228.

[64]A. G. Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. ii, pp. 221-2. See also P. Stansky, Ambitions, pp. 45-6, which has the added comment by Harcourt that "you must forgive me if I try to keep up the constitutional fiction that a Ch. of Exch. has something to say to finance."

[65]James, Rosebery, p. 269.

[66]Hutchinson, Private Diaries, p. 213.

[67]Campbell-Bannerman to Harcourt, 14 Aug., 1892, Spender, Campbell-Bannerman, vol. 1, p. 124.

[68]P. Magnus, Gladstone, London, Murray, 1954, p. 35. Gladstone to Manning, 5 April, 1835, "Politics would be an utter blank to me were I to make the discovery that we were mistaken in maintaining their association with religion."

[69]Ibid., p. 418.

[70]Hutchinson, Private Diaries, p. 91.

[71]Ibid., p. 138.

[72]W. V. Harcourt to L. Harcourt, 30 May, 1893, Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, p. 240.

[73]Queen's journal, 30 May, 1892, Queen Victoria's Letters, vol. 2, p. 120, also Queen Victoria to Sir Henry Ponsonby, 23 July, 1892, ibid., p. 132.

[74]Hutchinson, Private Diaries, p. 134-5.

[75]Magnus, Gladstone, p. 381.

[76]Ibid., p. 48.

[77]Ibid., p. 349.

[78]Gladstone's daughter and confidante.

[79]Esher to C. D. Williamson, 23 Dec., 1892, Esher Journals, vol. 1, p. 168.

[80]Magnus, Gladstone, p. 406.

[81]See above.

[82]Hutchinson, Private Diaries, pp. 77-8.

[83]Ibid., pp. 77-80.

[84]Ripon to West, 12 Nov., 1892, Hutchinson, Private Diaries, p. 79. The letter is dated from the Colonial Office so this does not seem to be a case of the Minister being out of touch because he was absent from London.

[85]23 Nov., 1892, Hutchinson, Private Diaries, pp. 82-3.

[86]J. Morley to West, 10 Dec., 1892, Hutchinson, Private Diaries, p. 90.

[87]Rosebery commented, again aptly, " . . . each minister manages his own affairs: there is no interchange of views." Stansky, Ambitions, p. 15. This was almost the ideal cabinet as envisaged by George III.

[88]J. Morley, committed to Home Rule, estimated that if Gladstone left the Cabinet he himself could remain only if Spencer did so, implying that there was no other strong support in the Cabinet for the Irish policy, Hutchinson, Private Diaries, p. 177.

[89]Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, pp. 218-9.

[90]Hutchinson, Private Diaries, pp. 88 & 90.

[91]Asquith to Rosebery, 10 Feb., 1893, R. R. James, Rosebery, p. 283.

[92]Private secretary to Gladstone.

[93]A. Godley to West, 26 Dec., 1892, Hutchinson, Private Diaries, p. 105.

[94]20 Jan., 1893, ibid., p. 123.

CHAPTER IV

GLADSTONE AND THE NAVY

CHAPTER IV

On February 13, 1893, supported by the cheers of his followers, Gladstone rose from his seat in the Commons to introduce his second Home Rule Bill. Behind him, although of this he was not fully aware, was a divided and demoralized cabinet; before him was the uncertain temper of a chamber in which his party had a bare majority of forty;[1] beyond that was an upper chamber overwhelmingly opposed to Home Rule. Throughout the spring and summer Gladstone piloted his bill to its third reading on the night of September first. A week later the bill was defeated by 419 votes to 41 in the Lords in a division which saw eighty-two percent of the members voting. There was little reaction in the country--the subject had exhausted the public interest. Gladstone's devotion was not changed, however, and on September twenty-seventh he announced that Home Rule would be brought forward the following year.[2]

As well as confirming Gladstone in his obsession, the summer saw the confirmation of the patterns of procedure which had been established previously within the Cabinet. As before the Cabinet was not meeting regularly, at the end of April it had not met for five weeks.[3] This was in spite of the vigorous protests in March of Asquith and John Morley. The latter had gone so far as to say that Gladstone "could not go on as the Head of the Government if he systematically put aside the consideration of all important matters."[4] In September Gladstone was to observe quite casually that "the sense

of the Cabinet might be ascertained without the meeting of the Cabinet at all."[5] Shortly afterward he was to say of a scheduled Cabinet meeting, "Well I must try and get out of that." Gladstone's failure to consult his colleagues had been demonstrated earlier in a striking incident in April, in which he proposed to the House of Commons a plan for Irish income tax without having referred it to the Secretary of State for Ireland or the Chancellor of the Exchequer, between whom he sat.[6] The lack of cohesion within the Cabinet may be measured by its lack of a policy once Home Rule was defeated. No one had really expected the measure to pass the Lords. Despite this, little of the Newcastle programme was ready to be submitted to Parliament, and that little suffered mutilation at the hands of the peers.

Rosebery confirmed his patterns of behaviour during the summer. He gave a witty and erudite speech in support of the Home Rule bill in the House of Lords. It was hardly a good political speech, and was, understandably, a disappointment to Gladstone.[7] Rosebery had fulfilled his political duties much as he would have fulfilled a mildly unpleasant social obligation--with good form, but little content.

Within his own Cabinet office Rosebery continued to treat Uganda as a personal preserve to be concealed from his colleagues as much as possible. Portal's initial reports, received in April and May, commented unfavourably on the country and on the administration of the I.B.E.A. Company. Gladstone found these reports astonishing.[8]

Rosebery's reaction was to place all possible obstacles in the way of Portal's comments reaching the Cabinet members.[9] The final report had reached London by August, and by the end of that month Anderson had read it. The Foreign Secretary, however, refused to consider the report as definite and avowed to the Cabinet that he had refused to look at it.[10] Earlier in the month he had sent instructions to Portal, again without consulting or informing his Cabinet colleagues, to protect the interests of Britain on the Upper Nile by negotiating such treaties with indigenous rulers as were necessary.[11] Rosebery continued to claim that he had not seen Portal's report until it was circulated to the Cabinet on December twentieth. On Portal's return in late November the Foreign Secretary reported that he had sent the Commissioner to the country to mature his report. Lugard's comments on this case are more revealing, "Portal did himself no good at all in Uganda—had to write an entirely new report to order on his return . . . ."[12] It may be concluded that Rosebery suppressed the first draft of the report and strongly influenced the content of the final draft, which recommended a British sphere of influence in Uganda.[13] By this procedure, and by his secret instructions of August to Portal, the Foreign Secretary emphasized that in a conflict between his personal policies and Cabinet loyalty, he would sacrifice the latter to the former.

In the autumn the Cabinet enjoyed a respite from major personal strife and individual ministers prepared estimates for the following year. However in Parliament things were less happy for the

Lords slowly stifled the Local Government Bill and the Employers' Liability Bill. Indeed the former was the only piece of the Newcastle programme to be passed in the session and even it was enacted only after being severely amended. As a result of the failure to implement the Newcastle programme the Fabians formally renounced their support of the Liberal Party.[14] In November the ministry achieved a triumph when Rosebery acted, successfully, as mediator in the great coal strike. Rosebery recorded in his diary that the day agreement was reached, November seventeenth, "would have been a good day to die on."[15]

The life of the ministry hinged on the question of Gladstone's succession. The manner of his retirement and the identity of his successor had been a matter of speculation since he had taken office. In December of 1892, John Morley had stated to West that the public felt that Gladstone was so old that he must make way for younger men.[16] He had earlier dreaded the time when Gladstone would be gone, stating that with Rosebery as Prime Minister and Harcourt the leader of the Commons there would be a Home Rule government with neither leader very enthusiastic about the policy.[17] Shortly after Morley's statement West began to suggest Rosebery as Gladstone's successor to various members of the party.[18] Asquith's reaction to this was to state that Harcourt would not serve under Rosebery.[19] He later commented that he felt that the Queen would call for Rosebery but that the latter would recommend Spencer as Premier.[20] At this time he also brought out what was to be, perhaps, the major factor in the choice of the successor--the idea that Harcourt's colleagues would

serve neither under the present Chancellor, nor with him.[21] That this was a valid statement is borne out by those statements given earlier by John Morley on Harcourt, as well as by declarations such as that by Herschell that "Harcourt is impossible."[22] In late October, 1893, Rosebery and John Morley had both declared their refusal to serve with Harcourt.[23]

It soon became obvious that the two serious contenders for Gladstone's position were Rosebery and Harcourt. On the face of it Harcourt was the obvious choice. He was a strong House of Commons man with many years of service, in and out of office, to his credit. It appeared that his claims were unassailable, were it not for his temper. While the Cabinet was weak and indisposed to discuss matters of concern, its members had managed to arrive at the feeling that service under Harcourt would be an intolerable situation. At the same time as the ministers discussed the succession they managed to do so as if it were an event to take place far in the future. They agreed that the present situation was unsatisfactory and that, if nothing else, Gladstone's age and infirmities would soon demand his resignation, but they shied away from the immediate decision which these factors demanded.

The decision was forced on the Cabinet by Gladstone's defence of two of his old principles; economy and anti-militarism. His evangelical fervor for both were aroused by a proposal by Spencer, the First Lord of the Admiralty, for a sizeable increase in naval expenditure. This fervor did not find an echo in the Cabinet and

therefore that body was thrown into a crisis over the succession which it dealt with in a manner completely typical of its style of dealing with any problem: There was a period of loud alarums, followed by a period of relative calm in which some ministers denied that a problem existed--or stated that if it did it was now solved, and ended with a 'compromise' which accomplished little, except to save appearances, and satisfied no one.

The naval scare of 1893 was based on the colonial rivalry in Africa between Britain and France. Each successive Egyptian crisis left the British more conscious of their lack of support in the Mediterranean. Attention had been attracted to the Navy earlier in the year by the collision, attended by large loss of life, of the battleships Victoria and Royal Sovereign while on manoeuvers in June. Shortly afterwards it was announced in the French press that the Russians intended to send a squadron to visit Toulon at the request of the French government. The subsequent news that Russia intended to re-establish her Mediterranean squadron resulted in a brief debate on naval preparedness in the House of Commons. The press controversy which followed soon died down,[24] but although public concern was quickly allayed, official concern in the Admiralty and the Foreign Office was not. Rosebery wrote Spencer at least four letters in late July and early August on the subject of the strength of the Mediterranean squadron.[25] Over and above this he proposed a visit by the British squadron to Toronto, and even insisted on the idea when the threat of cholera seemed about to cause its cancellation.[26]

This general attention paid to naval affairs in the summer provided the background for a second period of public concern, much more acute than the first, in November and December. It is generally agreed[27] that an article which appeared on October 31st in the Times, by its Toulon correspondent, on the French naval facilities there, was the inspiration for the widespread controversy on naval preparedness in the press and in Parliament at the end of the year.[28] On November 23rd Marjoribanks, the Chief Whip, had warned Gladstone that the opinion of the House of Commons on the Navy was alarming.[29] On December 12th Lord George Hamilton[30] gave notice of a motion on an increase of the Navy: this was treated by the ministry as a motion of confidence when it was debated on the 19th. Queen Victoria was moved to write a strong letter to Gladstone in favour of naval increases and directed that it be read to the Cabinet.[31] This was done on the 14th, during a meeting which considered the motion made by Lord George Hamilton.[32]

The naval members of the Admiralty Board seized this opportunity to press for naval expansion to meet the threat which they felt was posed by the Franco-Russian friendship. On November 21st they drew up two five-year programs for naval construction. One was referred to as the 'minimum programme' and was calculated to give Britain bare numerical parity with France and Russia; the other was a 'desired programme', which would give a preponderance over the two allies. Spencer finally accepted the minimum programme on December 15th,[33] under the threat of the resignation of the Admiralty Board.[34]

Spencer, at this point, was between two fires: the Board, which wanted more ships, and the 'economists' of the Cabinet, notably Gladstone and Harcourt.[35] At the Cabinet meeting on December 14th, which considered the imminent naval debate in Parliament, it became evident that the majority of the Cabinet was prepared to accept increased expenditure on the Navy. West pointed this out to Gladstone on the 18th and obtained his promise to waive his objections to an increase.[36] Harcourt eventually accepted the need for a large supplement to naval expenditure, but was still disposed to quibble over the amount. The Chancellor felt that the government was at the mercy of the Admiralty Board and that, as the proposed expenditures amounted to only £500,000 over those of the previous year, the increase was not worth the destruction of the administration.[37] It began to look as if another crisis had been weathered when Gladstone began to have second thoughts as to his vague promise not to oppose increased expenditure.

Rosebery wrote Gladstone, on December 19th, to urge that the Prime Minister make a statement indicating increased naval estimates. He based his appeal on the effect on the peace of Europe of the strength of the fleet.[38] Gladstone himself was more concerned about the effects of an arms race on the same peace and labelled Rosebery a 'jingo'.[39] The Prime Minister's statement in Parliament therefore emphasized the lack of any naval emergency.[40] Gladstone then began to have qualms about adopting a program of naval increases so shortly after he had announced to the House of Commons that "there

existed no condition of naval danger or I think emergency."[41] At the same time Rosebery, obviously believing the issue to have been settled, told Count Deym, the Austrian Ambassador, that he would have resigned had the Cabinet refused to increase naval expenditure. "This increase will be such that there can no longer be any doubt in any quarter that we are determined to maintain our supremacy at sea . . ."[42] Rosebery saw the new Cabinet crisis in terms of the crises on Uganda and Egypt and was, unconsciously, over-dramatizing his part in this new Cabinet conflict.

Gladstone's growing doubts alarmed West, as they did Acland and Asquith, to whom he communicated the Prime Minister's changing attitudes. On January 3rd they decided to summon John Morley to London, in the obvious hope that that devoted follower could reason with the party leader.[43] The results of Morley's interview with the Prime Minister on the following day were 'not promising'.[44] Spencer, in the meantime, had whittled £1,000,000 from the estimates.[45] Although the First Lord had not yet gained the acquiescence of the Sea Lords for this action on January 6th, Morley felt that the difference between the Cabinet and its leader had been reduced to £750,000.[46] However Gladstone's growing concern was based on principle rather than on its price, a fact which Morley was to admit three days later.[47] Gladstone wrote a final appeal to Spencer on January 7th, calling on him to resist militarism.[48] This was a last effort to avoid a position which Gladstone felt would be untenable when the Cabinet met on January 9th.

Until this point the controversy had been over the naval estimates, but now the subject of the leadership of the government began to take precedence. On December 22nd Gladstone had told West that it was time for him to step down as Prime Minister. West felt that the time had not quite arrived.[49] In an exchange with the Prime Minister on January 4th he elaborated on this, saying that Ireland must be taken into account and that Gladstone must continue in the leadership until the dissolution of Parliament and then 'recommend Home Rule to the country'.[50] Later in the day West stated to Asquith and Rosebery that "the time was not now, nor the subject a proper one for his retirement, . . ." Both ministers agreed with him.[51] Two days later Harcourt saw Gladstone and told him that if he (Gladstone) resigned he would ruin the Liberal Party "and go down to posterity as the man who had received the Liberal Party at its greatest strength and left it at its lowest ebb; . . . and that it would be the basest treachery to desert them his colleagues now."[52] Gladstone was adamant in the face of this diatribe. His growing intransigence was not, however, evident to all; Rosebery still felt that the crisis would pass, as had those of Egypt and Uganda.[53] At the same time he stated that there was a "determination on the part of the Cabinet to say Mr. Gladstone must go <u>now</u> or not at all."[53]

In the Cabinet meeting of January 9th,[54] Gladstone played his trump card. He gave a fifty-minute speech against militarism and its manifestations in Spencer's shipbuilding programme. Included

in the speech was a personal reference to his failing eyesight. Cryptic passages in his notes for the speech indicate the points which he made: "warrant ample for going. Scanty for staying."[55] The Prime Minister said he was, however, willing to compromise and accept half of Spencer's programme.[56] Gladstone thus balanced his offer of compromise with the implied threat of resignation. He was followed by Spencer who spoke briefly and stated that the Sea Lords would resign if his programme were rejected.[57] Harcourt, speaking after the First Lord, declared that, although he was opposed to the programme, he could see no way of avoiding the increase in the estimates. He went on to say that he saw a method of paying for the increase. The Chancellor finished by speculating on the results of Gladstone's resignation--the Queen might summon Salisbury, who could dissolve Parliament, defeat the impoverished and unprepared Liberal Party at the polls, and implement the shipbuilding programme. Thus Gladstone's "retirement would not <u>prevent</u> the large Navy estimates."[58] At this point Gladstone, who had turned his back on the Chancellor, brought the main point into the open as he turned and said, "Of course I can go at once if you wish it. (Sensation)"[59] There was a pause and then Rosebery, supported by Asquith, asked for a decision.[59] It was then agreed that the estimates should be "provisionally framed on the lines of Spencer's plan".[60] Harcourt then repeated the Foreign Secretary's request for a decision as to the breakup of the Cabinet (more accurately, the resignation of the Prime Minister) and drew on himself a scathing outburst from Gladstone,

who "deprecated discussion, and said that it was for them to settle whether or no there was to be a Cabinet".[61] The Prime Minister's last words were to advise that he would leave for Biarritz on Saturday (in four days time).

The Cabinet then split up to discuss the situation. With the apparent exception of Shaw-Lefevre, the Cabinet members were, in John Morley's words, "This-Weekers and not Next-Monthers i.e. for a definitive Cabinet on Thursday or Friday followed by the Prime Minister's immediate retirement."[62] Harcourt felt that this would mean the breakup of the government and told Rosebery so in an interview that afternoon. Rosebery drew analogies with Pitt's last ministry[63] and declared that rather than suffer a similar humiliation he would serve in a ministry headed by Sir Ughtred Kay-Shuttleworth.[64] After dimer that evening John Morley found, to his dismay, that the Prime Minister had deputed him to tell Mrs. Gladstone of the situation. "What a curious scene! Me breaking to her that the pride and glory of her life was at last to face eclipse."[65] Before the Prime Minister left for Biarritz both Harcourt[66] and Rosebery saw him and tried to change his mind. The latter remarked to West "I might as well have addressed my arguments to your hat."[67] Harcourt then delegated Lord Acton to reason with Gladstone, but he was no more successful than the ministers had been. The historian promised to continue his efforts in Biarritz, as Gladstone had invited him to visit him there.[68]

Gladstone became, if anything, more adamant. He proclaimed to West that the naval proposals were, "mad? MAD-mad. No statesman that ever lived, perhaps excepting Palmerston, would have given way."[69]

West asked if the Prime Minister would have another Cabinet meeting. Gladstone replied, "No, if he had, that would force a decision!" In response to a query by Marjoribanks, Gladstone refused to delegate to Kimberley the authority to summon a Cabinet meeting in his absence.[69] It was becoming obvious that Gladstone hoped that his colleagues would discover that they could not go on without him and would therefore accept his views. To this end he wished to prevent the possibility of their combining against him.

In the view of some of the Cabinet the crisis was over at this point. Rosebery felt that Gladstone had "entered upon business as usual."[70] On January 11th Asquith agreed with the Foreign Secretary that the crisis was apparently over.[71] John Morley was convinced that Gladstone's "attitude was all acting and his anguish was for nothing."[72] On the 13th of January, Gladstone left for Biarritz, adding to the Cabinet confusion with a parting remark to Marjoribanks that there was no point in his coming as he would not be talked around.[73] Acton attempted to do this for a few days in Biarritz, but without success.[74] With Gladstone's departure the Cabinet lost direct contact with him and, to a degree, with each other. The Prime Minister corresponded with John Morley, Marjoribanks and West, and the latter made two visits to Biarritz. The general effect however was the one which Gladstone wished to accomplish, a fragmented and disorganized Cabinet.

Footnotes

[1]Earlier in the century such a majority had been more than adequate--now it was considered weak.

[2]It has been remarked that Gladstone was willing, if necessary, to lead the Liberal Party to martyrdom in the cause of Ireland. Magnus, Gladstone, p. 294.

[3]James, Rosebery, p. 283.

[4]16 Mar., 1893, Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, pp. 148-9.

[5]H. Shand to A. West, 16 Sept., 1893, ibid., p. 197.

[6]6 Apr., 1893, ibid., p. 151.

[7]Rosebery described himself "as a witness, but not as an enthusiastic witness, in favour of Home Rule." Hansard, 4th series, XVII, col. 393-400.

[8]Gladstone to Rosebery, 3 Apr., 1893, Perham, Lugard, vol. 1, p. 449.

[9]James, Rosebery, p. 285.

[10]Perham, Lugard, vol. 1, p. 449.

[11]Rosebery to Portal, 10 Aug., 1893, Robinson and Gallagher, Africa, p. 326. See also Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, p. 315.

[12]F.G. Lugard to E.J. Lugard, 27 Mar., 1894, Perham, Lugard, vol. 1, p. 451.

[13]This is the view taken by both James, Rosebery, p. 286, and Perham, Lugard, vol. 1, p. 451.

[14]This was announced by the article "To your Tents, O Israel" by G.B. Shaw, in the November Fortnightly Review.

[15]Crewe, Rosebery, vol. 2, p. 433.

[16]Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, p. 96.

[17]Ibid., p. 93.

[18]26 Dec., 1892, ibid., p. 100.

[19]1 Jan., 1893, ibid., p. 110.

[20]8 Jul., 1893, Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, pp. 173-4.

[21]Ibid.

[22]20 Aug., 1893, ibid., p. 192.

[23]Ibid., p. 214.

[24]A.J. Marder, The Anatomy of British Sea Power, Hamden, Conn., Archon, 1964, p. 175.

[25]Rosebery to Spencer, July 29, 30, Aug. 4, 10, 1893, ibid., p. 177n.

[26]Ibid, p. 178. Designed as a counter to the Toulon visit this was most aptly summarised by James (Rosebery, p. 289n.), "the incompetence of the Italian Navy was so notorious that no purpose was served by this rather jejune attempt to impress the Great Powers."

[27]Ibid., p. 180.

[28]The article concluded that the British were in the Mediterranean on sufferance and that, "It would be wiser either to throw up the comedy or to keep in the Mediterranean a fleet amply strong enough for any task which the future may place upon it." Times, 31 Oct., 1893, p. 11.

[29]Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, p. 221.

[30] First Lord of the Admiralty in Salisbury's administration.

[31]Queen Victoria to Gladstone, 7 Dec., 1893, Letters . . ., p. 328.

[32]Gladstone to Queen Victoria, 14 Dec., 1893, ibid., p. 330.

[33]Marder, Anatomy, pp. 191-2.

[34]Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, p. 227.

[35]Spencer must have been quite accustomed to detailed comments on the Navy from Harcourt. The Chancellor seems to have delighted in producing memoranda on naval matters. He had done so in 1892, see Harcourt to Spencer, 29 Nov., 1892, Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, p. 201, and had continued to do so in 1893, see especially Harcourt to Spencer, 28 Sept., 1893, ibid., p. 246. Marder comments that "Figures so involved as those relating to warships will prove anything according to the predilections of the manipulator." Marder, Anatomy, p. 181. Many succumbed to the fascinations of the pastime of manipulation and the columns of Hansard for December 19th and of the Times for November and December are full of the fruits of their efforts.

[36]Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, p. 229.

[37]Stansky, Ambitions, pp. 24-5 and n.

[38]James, Rosebery, p. 291.

[39]Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, p. 231, 22 Dec., 1893.

[40]Partly as a result of this, Rosebery, hurt by Gladstone's disregard of his advice, refused to address the National Liberal Federation at their annual meeting in February as he disagreed with Gladstone on "Navy, Uganda, Egypt, Ireland etc." Ibid, p. 230, 21 Dec., 1893.

[41]Gladstone to Morley, 28 Dec., 1893, Stansky, Ambitions, p. 24.

[42]Deym to Kalnoky, 29 Dec., 1893, on interview with Rosebery, 28 Dec. H. Temperley and L.M. Penson, Foundations of British Foreign Policy, Cambridge, 1938, p. 478.

[43]Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, p. 232.

[44]Morley to Spencer, 4 Jan., 1894, Stansky, Ambitions, p. 26.

[45]Marder, Anatomy, p. 201.

[46]Stansky, Ambitions, p. 26. Gladstone was prepared to agree to an increase of £2,250,000 in the naval estimates. The Sea Lords had asked for £4,000,000, which Spencer had reduced to £3,000,000.

[47]Morley to Spencer, 9 Jan., 1894, ibid.

[48]Ibid., p. 27.

[49]Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, p. 231.

[50]Ibid., p. 233.

[51]Ibid., p. 234.

[52]L.V. Harcourt journal, 6 Jan., 1894, Stansky, Ambitions, p. 27, see also Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, p. 235.

[53]Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, p. 235, 8 Jan., 1894.

[54]This account of the Cabinet meeting is based on: Rosebery's notes written at the time, which are reproduced in James, Rosebery, pp. 295-6, and on an account of this period written by Rosebery which was published in History Today in December, 1951 and January, 1952. The date that this account was written is not known but the fact that it is written on Foreign Office paper implies that it was only shortly after the events which it describes. As well, excerpts from L.V. Harcourt's journal in Stansky, Ambitions, pp. 27-8 were used as was the version in Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, pp. 236-7.

[55]Excerpt from Gladstone papers, James, Rosebery, p. 294.

[56]Rosebery, "Mr. Gladstone's Last Cabinet," History Today (part 1 Dec. 1951, pp. 31-41, part Jan. 1951, pp. 17-22) Dec., 1951, p. 32.

[57]The 'minimum' programme acceptable to the Sea Lords. Rosebery's notes, James, Rosebery, p. 295.

[58]Ibid.

[59]Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, p. 236.

[60]Rosebery's notes, James, Rosebery, p. 295. Gladstone reported to the Queen that there was no doubt in his mind that the Cabinet would "eventually propose to Your Majesty an augmentation of the estimates for the Navy", Queen Victoria's Letters, vol. 2, Gladstone to Queen Victoria, 9 Jan., 1894.

[61]Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, p. 237.

[62]Morley, Recollections, vol. 2, p. 4.

[63]Pitt's last ministry simply ceased to exist on his death in 1806. Although the Cabinet contained four future Prime Ministers: Canning, Portland, Perceval and Liverpool, its members unanimously, in the face of entreaties by the King, agreed that there was no possibility of carrying on without their leader.

[64]Rosebery, "Last Cabinet", p. 33. "The first name of a subordinate minister that came into my head."

[65]Morley, Recollections, vol. 2, p. 5.

[66]Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, p. 254.

[67]Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, p. 237, 10 Jan., 1894.

[68]Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, p. 254, Stansky, Ambitions, p. 29.

[69]Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, p. 238, 11 Jan., 1894.

[70]Rosebery, "Last Cabinet", Dec., 1951, p. 34.

[71]James, Rosebery, p. 298.

[72]Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, p. 238.

[73]James, Rosebery, p. 299.

[74]Stansky, Ambitions, pp. 29-32.

CHAPTER V

GLADSTONE RETIRES

CHAPTER V

In early January, the active manoeuvering for the position of leader of the Liberal Party began. Oddly, neither of the two principal contenders became directly involved at this point. Rosebery was engrossed by the business of his department, and did not believe that Gladstone would resign at this time.[1] Harcourt felt that Gladstone's resignation would mean the fall of the ministry and was working to prevent either eventuality. If he could not prevent the Prime Minister's resignation he felt that "it (the government) might as well go to pieces under Lord Rosebery as under himself."[2] After Gladstone's departure to Biarritz the Cabinet divided itself into four distinct groups. One formed around Rosebery and its members, who "were in constant communication",[3] included Asquith, John Morley, Acland and Spencer. Another group was composed of those who "remained passively awaiting the stroke of fate": this included Trevelyan, Lefevre, Fowler and possibly Bryce.[4] Harcourt stood alone, and Ripon, Herschell, and Kimberley formed the last group as men who largely kept their own counsel. The major intriguer was the Chancellor's son, Lewis Harcourt, known to all as 'Loulou'.[5] His attitude, as expressed to Reginald Brett, was that he had "worked ten years at wire-pulling, and now he must reap the fruit."[6] He was hampered in the achievement of his aim by his father's belief that Gladstone was indispensable to a Liberal government, but wrote in his journal, "I have a double dose of ambition for him."[7]

The most important member of the Cabinet, apart from the two contenders for the leadership, was John Morley.[8] He had a close relationship with the dominant group of bright young men in the Commons.[9] Loulou believed that Harcourt enjoyed Morley's support. This was as a result of an agreement made several years before, in which the latter had agreed to support Harcourt as Gladstone's successor. The agreement had been concluded at Malwood, Harcourt's country house, and was referred to therefore as the 'Malwood compact'. Loulou was quickly disabused of his illusions of Morley's support. On January 8th, Morley indicated in a brief conversation that his allegiance had changed. The following day he made this quite clear, saying "My dear Loulou, it is a great pity that the Malwood compact has been broken up . . ."[10] On the 12th, Morley gave his reasons for regarding the compact as broken. These were the 'Brook Street Conferences' and the disagreements with Harcourt in the Cabinet, in particular the ones over the financial clauses of the Home Rule bill.[11] Morley felt that he could not work under Harcourt or "Possibly not even with him".[12] On discovering Morley's attitude Loulou switched to his father's strategy of attempting to prevent Gladstone's resignation, but with the aim of deferring the question of succession. With this in mind he saw both Rosebery and Spencer in attempts to persuade them to agree to a reduction in the naval estimates. This manoeuver succeeded only in obtaining renewed assurances of support for Spencer from Rosebery and from Morley.[13]

The general wish of the Cabinet was for Gladstone to accept Spencer's programme, to stay on as leader, and thus to avoid creating

problems. This was disappointed when West returned from Biarritz on January 23rd. He relayed Gladstone's unequivocal dictum, "You might as well try to blow up the rock of Gibraltar."[14] West also relayed Gladstone's intention of remaining in the Commons if he resigned from the Cabinet. During West's stay in London the Cabinet came to believe that the Prime Minister would indeed resign, but it was opposed to his remaining in Parliament if he did so.[15]

Between West's first visit and Gladstone's return Rosebery remained quiescent, partly because of his exclusive concern with the Foreign Office and partly because nearly all of the Cabinet members were his supporters. They were all violently opposed to Harcourt as a leader-- or so their attitudes were reported to Rosebery.[16] Later the Foreign Secretary and several other members of the Liberal Party had misgivings as to the sincerity of these pronouncements of reluctance to serve under Harcourt.[17] Loulou was endeavouring at this point to persuade the Cabinet members, particularly Morley, that his father was indispensable and would be Prime Minister or nothing. Unfortunately for this tactic, the Chancellor confided to his son on January 26th that he would serve under Rosebery for the sake of the party.[18]

Gladstone continued to conceal his intentions. A rumour that he intended to resign, reported in the Pall Mall Gazette of January 30th, was met by an equivocal denial from Biarritz.[19] On February 6th West again came to London from Biarritz, this time with the mission of canvassing Cabinet opinion on a proposal by Gladstone

that Parliament be dissolved and an election fought on the issue of the House of Lords' obstruction of Liberal legislation.[20] The Prime Minister was thus holding out the promise of one last 'Gladstonian' election campaign if his colleagues would drop the policy of naval increases. The members of the Cabinet rejected this proposal out of hand. As Stansky has remarked, "Rarely had the Cabinet been so unanimous."[21] The Cabinet members did not feel that 'the Lords' was an issue that would appeal to the country and they did not feel that the party was ready for an election.[22] Harcourt stated that the proposal was 'simply insane'.[23] Kimberley, speaking for the Cabinet, telegraphed "Your suggestion is impossible."[24] Gladstone had made his penultimate move--now he had to choose between resignation and the acceptance of Spencer's naval programme. He returned to London on February 10th without having indicated to his colleagues which path he had chosen.

On February 11th Loulou made an attempt to sway John Morley. Loulou felt that the Queen would call on Rosebery to form a government on Gladstone's resignation and that with Morley's support Harcourt could prevent Rosebery from forming a Cabinet and thus force the Queen to call on him to form a government.[25] In Rosebery's words Loulou offered Morley "all the Kingdoms of the World",[26] or to be exact, the Exchequer or the Foreign Office,[27] for his support of Harcourt. Two days after this Morley indicated to Rosebery for the first time that he might be willing to serve with Harcourt.[28] Loulou was less successful in moving his father, who did not favour his 'all

or nothing' approach. During a conversation on February 12th the two Harcourts drew up a statement of the terms under which the elder would be willing to continue in the government. These were, to say the least, audacious. Harcourt was to be

> free to act and speak on all questions as they arise with perfect independence and without the necessity of any previous consultation with P.M. . . . further that in all questions of Foreign Dispatches and policy he should be consulted before action is taken, as is the case with the Prime Minister, and no important appointments to posts inside or outside the Government shall be made without previous consultation with him; also that the power of recommendation to Honours shall rest equally with him as with the Prime Minister. 29

These conditions, omitting the one dealing with patronage, were first communicated to John Morley by Harcourt on February 20th. Loulou went to see Morley the following day to rectify his father's omission and to dispell the Chancellor's implied acceptance of Rosebery's succession. Morley hurried to inform Asquith, Rosebery, and Spencer of Harcourt's conditions.[30] Rosebery, predictably, reacted strongly to the conditions which would make him a 'dummy Prime Minister'.[31] February 22nd saw a strange development in which Harcourt told E. Hamilton, an intimate friend of Rosebery, that "Nothing would induce me ever to serve under him (Rosebery)."[32] This message was obviously meant for Rosebery and was passed to him. The Foreign Secretary regarded it as wiping out Harcourt's previous declaration on the terms under which he would serve in the government.[33]

Gladstone, in the meantime, had kept the Cabinet in suspense. The Cabinet meeting of February 12th served little purpose beyond

setting the date for a Cabinet dinner on February 17th. All the Cabinet members assumed that Gladstone had chosen this occasion to announce both his retirement and, more important to the future of the ministry, what reasons he would announce to explain it--health, or the disagreement over the naval estimates. Gladstone, however, felt that the Cabinet knew his intentions.[34] Thus when, at the end of the dinner, Rosebery mentioned to Gladstone that if any secret matters were to be discussed they had best 'look to the doors'. Gladstone replied, "Certainly . . . if anyone has any-topic to raise it should be done now."[35] This story became 'deservedly popular'.[36] The Cabinet was left completely in ignorance of its fate and departed from Gladstone's house a 'crestfallen flock'.[36] Kimberley felt that the Cabinet had been made fools of.[37] Harcourt's reaction, as reported to John Morley, was that he felt as he had when "a high sheriff told me he had three times tried to hang a man and failed, and I had to go down to the H. of C. and say that the man deserved to be hanged, but I had reprieved him.'[38]

The suspense was somewhat relieved in a Cabinet meeting of February 23rd, when Gladstone vaguely stated that the time had come "to end his co-operation with the members of the Cabinet."[39] The Prime Minister then embarked on a series of exchanges with the Queen through West and Ponsonby. These exchanges would have delighted a modern novelist by their marked lack of understanding and of effective communication.[40] Finally Gladstone unofficially informed the Queen at an audience on February 28th that he intended to resign

for reasons of health. The previous day the 'secret' of Gladstone's resignation was, as the Queen remarked, "placarded all over London!"[41] This occurred despite a denial issued by Gladstone, over West's signature, on February 25th.[42]

Gladstone's last Cabinet meeting was held on March 1st. West had previously suggested to Harcourt that a few words of farewell would be appropriate on this occasion. The Chancellor had agreed and had arranged that Kimberley and himself, as the senior members of the Cabinet, should perform this minor ceremony.[43] On the occasion Kimberley broke down after a few words. Harcourt then gave what Asquith later called 'a maladroit performance'[44] by reading a prepared valedictory based on "a long-drawn metaphor from the solar system".[45] Gladstone thereafter referred to the incident as "that blubbering Cabinet",[46] although he recorded in his diary that it was "a really moving scene".[47] Gladstone's last audience was on March 3rd, when he formally tendered his resignation to the Queen.[48] To Gladstone's surprise she did not ask his advice as to a successor. The Queen did not wish to do so formally and Gladstone would not give a definite answer to Ponsonby when she informally attempted to get his opinion.[48] The retiring Prime Minister had intended to recommend Spencer.[49] To Gladstone Spencer had the advantages of being a compromise candidate and a man closely connected to the policy of Home Rule.[50]

Gladstone's announcement in the Cabinet meeting of the 23rd had not convinced Rosebery of the Prime Minister's intention to resign.

On the 26th, the Foreign Secretary stated to West that he believed that Gladstone was still attempting to stay in office.[51] This may have been due to the anticlimax which ensued when the Queen sent an urgent summons to Rosebery at Newmarket on February 24th. After great efforts on his part Rosebery arrived, properly dressed, at Windsor. There he found, to his evident disgust, that the Queen "had nothing whatever to say to me."[52] He had, of course, thought that Gladstone had tendered his resignation and that the Queen wished to consult him.[52] Rosebery later stated that he "never felt sure of his resignation until he announced it to the Queen."[53] The Foreign Secretary had, however, composed a valedictory letter to Gladstone on February 24th.[54] His colleagues were disposed to take the announcement as conclusive and, although there were some desultory moves in favour of Kimberley or Spencer as compromise candidates, most of the ministers expected the Queen to call on Rosebery to form a government. Gladstone was sure that she would do so after his audience of the 28th.[55] The Foreign Secretary himself came to this view and on the 27th, composed a minute on the 'general and personal aspects of the situation' for his own satisfaction. In it he pointed to the disabilities inherent in being a liberal Peer-Premier, his lack of desire for office, Harcourt's hostility to himself, and the fact that any enthusiasm for himself as premier was based on an antipathy to Harcourt. Rosebery summarised the alternatives as "either the irksome yoke of Harcourt, or a ministry headed by a reluctant peer in face of a strenuous opposition in the House of

Commons." He concluded that Harcourt should take the leadership and that he himself would be unable to continue in the Foreign Office under Harcourt.[56]

After the 'blubbering cabinet' Acland, Asquith, and Morley had lunch with Rosebery and pressed him to commit himself. Rosebery read a prepared memorandum in response.

> My position seems to be this: I share all the views held against a Peer being head of a Liberal Ministry.
>
> My wish is to remain at the Foreign Office. I know nothing of the other post, and should be in every way unsuited for it.
>
> But if it be absolutely necessary for party purposes that I should exchange the one place for the other, it is clear—to make the arrangement barely possible:
>
> 1. that it must be in obedience to clear and decisive call.
> 2. that there must be mutual harmony and confidence between me and the leader of the House of Commons.
> 3. that as I cannot remain in the Foreign Office I must be unfettered in my selection of the Foreign Minister.
>
> Summed up it comes to this—that there must be cordiality and confidence between the Prime Minister on the one hand, and the Party, the leader of the Commons and the Foreign Minister on the other.
>
> Without these conditions it is clear that an experiment, sufficiently difficult in itself, must break down, and another combination must be sought. 57

John Morley objected to the third point and after lunch he suggested to Rosebery that a House of Commons man would be more suitable for the post. Rosebery could not remember if he had mentioned Kimberley as his choice for the post but felt that "it was known", in any case.[58] He found that Morley had become quite intractable on the subject, but was equally determined to stick to his own point.[59] On the afternoon of March 1st a deputation of six radical MPs, led by Labouchere, protested to Marjoribanks against a peer as Prime Minister.[60] This protest produced little result.

The Harcourts spent the first two days of March in an attempt to rectify their political errors of the previous month. Before the Cabinet meeting of the 1st they had modified the terms under which Harcourt would serve to eliminate the provisions that the Queen and the Commons be aware of them.[61] On March 2nd Loulou saw Hamilton and tried to dispel the impression given in the incident of February 22nd. He told Hamilton that Harcourt "had never said, or intended to say, or thought, that he 'would not serve under Rosebery'."[62] Morley called on Harcourt in the afternoon and agreed fully with Harcourt's list of terms under which he would serve, which were now in the form of a rather formal memorandum.[63] Morley informed Rosebery of the conditions late that afternoon and added that he agreed fully with them.[64]

Rosebery now knew that the Queen would call on him to form a government. The Prince of Wales had informed him of this in a note, and later in person, on March 1st. Rosebery had written a letter to Ponsonby, deprecating his potential success in the position of Prime Minister and concluding by saying that it was his duty to inform the Queen of the objections which he saw to his assumption of that post.[65] On March 2nd Rosebery received a letter from the Queen's physician urging him not to refuse the task of forming a government for the sake of the Queen's health.[66] Immediately after Gladstone's formal resignation the Queen wrote Rosebery asking him to accept the premiership "for the good of the country."[67] He immediately replied that he would endeavour to form a government. Rosebery then wrote to the members of the Cabinet,

> I desire to inform my colleagues that the Queen has asked me to form a Government.
>
> I have undertaken, under great pressure and under a strong conviction of my various disabilities, to attempt the task.
>
> Under these arduous circumstances, I would ask my colleagues for their cordial co-operation. 68

Thus Rosebery performed what he described as "the most daring act of my life, unless I except what I did just 32 years ago, which was steering the Defiance at Eton without ever having been on the river."[69]

The reconstruction of the ministry was to have a major obstacle in its path in Rosebery's determination that Kimberley should be his successor in the Foreign Office, and in the opposition of Morley and Harcourt to both the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister being in the House of Lords. The past differences of the two ministers prevented all but a rather desultory attempt on March 2nd to bargain with Rosebery on this point before he received the Queen's commission.[70] While at the Harcourts' the following afternoon, Morley vented his anger at the idea of a peer in the Foreign Office, saying that if it came to that, he did not think he could join the government. He departed to see Rosebery and to present an ultimatum.[71] Rosebery had gone to see Harcourt and was not at home. At this interview with Rosebery, Harcourt recorded that he did not read out his list of conditions as he felt that Rosebery was aware of them and he "did not desire to have the appearance of formally imposing conditions."[72] The discussion between the two hinged on the Foreign Office. Harcourt argued strongly against the office being occupied by a peer, but Rosebery declared that he could not yield on this point, that Kimberley was the best man.[73]

Harcourt then reserved his opinion on the point and the interview ended.[74] At this point however Harcourt believed that Rosebery had accepted all his conditions except that over the Foreign Office dispatches and the appointment of the Foreign Secretary.[75] This certainly was not Rosebery's understanding, and must have been based on Harcourt feeling that acceptance of the other points was implicit in the dispute over the one.

Kimberley held an official dinner that evening. Before dinner Morley had approached Acland to say that neither he nor Harcourt would stand for Kimberley being Foreign Secretary.[76] But although Morley and Harcourt sat together during dinner they did not arrange concerted action against Kimberley's appointment,[77] although Rosebery thought otherwise.[76] Early the following morning Harcourt sent a note to Morley to suggest a common strategy to ensure "a sufficient communication between the F.O. and the H. of C."[77] Morley at first delayed making a decision and then wrote, at 11:40, that he preferred to act independently.[78] Harcourt had earlier written Rosebery requesting an interview on the subject of communication between the Foreign Office and the House of Commons.[79] Rosebery replied that he was willing to meet Harcourt, "But one thing must be clear. I cannot have any conditions imposed on me which have not been accepted by previous Ministers. I must either be a real Prime Minister or I will not be Prime Minister at all."[80] Harcourt went to see Rosebery at one o'clock. He admitted that Kimberley was the fittest person for the Foreign Office and went on to consider,

> how, assuming Lord Kimberley to go to the Foreign Office, the Leader of the House of Commons might be secured in that privity to all that was taking place in foreign affairs, in which it was essential that he should have a voice. I said that I was of opinion that the Foreign Secretary should communicate as fully and freely with the Leader of the House of Commons as he did with the Prime Minister. To this Lord Rosebery agreed, and it was understood that I should communicate with Lord Kimberley for the purpose of giving effect to this object, so that the Leader of the House of Commons should have notice not only when foreign affairs reached a crisis but ab initio when affairs were beginning at all to 'creak'. 81

Harcourt had joined the re-formed ministry. There is no indication that Rosebery and Harcourt agreed on a formal separate contract for co-operation in the ministry. Indeed Rosebery wrote to Ponsonby, who was to pass it on to the Queen, that "I have refused to submit to any conditions not ordinarily imposed on a Prime Minister."[82] However the Harcourts believed that an agreement existed and it appears probable that the other members of the Cabinet who knew of the conditions assumed that Rosebery had accepted them.[83]

Once Harcourt had joined the Cabinet John Morley hastened to do so. He went to see Rosebery with the intention of changing his post in the Cabinet, preferably to become Secretary of State for India.[84] At Rosebery's urging he agreed to stay as Secretary for Ireland. The following day Morley created a scene in the first meeting of the reconstituted Cabinet. Fowler was appointed to the India Office and Morley 'flounced out' of the meeting, which continued without him.[85] This was apparently the expression of frustrated ambition and also the result of domestic difficulties--Morley's wife had previously

urged him to leave Ireland.[86] Morley then began to impose his own conditions on Rosebery in a series of letters. The first, which Rosebery ignored, stated that Morley would concern himself with his department, attend Cabinet meetings, and vote in the Commons, but would do nothing else.[87] The same day he wrote another note expressing the same sentiments and followed this with a note on March 6th with a demand for an acknowledgement to complete the contract.[88] Rosebery replied as follows:

> I have no choice but to accept your 'conditions'.
> I won't disguise from you that I am deeply pained by them.
> You would not have imposed them on Mr. Gladstone, or, I believe, on anybody else. . . . Had I known that this was to be your definite attitude I certainly would not have undertaken the Government, and if I could honourably now I would give it up. 89

Footnotes

[1]Rosebery, "Last Cabinet", Dec., 1951, p. 35.

[2]L.V. Harcourt journal, 4 and 10 Jan., 1894, James, Rosebery, p. 301.

[3]Rosebery, "Last Cabinet", Dec., 1951, p. 34.

[4]Ibid.

[5]To avoid confusion, the father is referred to henceforth as Harcourt, the son as 'Loulou'.

[6]Esher Journals, vol. 1, p. 178, 14 Jan., 1894.

[7]James, Rosebery, p. 301.

[8]Most observers agree to this evaluation and it is supported by the events of February and March. West saw John Morley as indispensable to a Liberal government. Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, p. 242.

[9]This was a radical group, interested in social policy, which included Acland, Asquith, Haldane and Grey, amongst others. The members of the group were more powerful, and probably more able, than the strident group of radicals which surrounded Labouchere. They looked upon Morley as their senior advisor. Stansky, Ambitions, p. 46.

[10]L.V. Harcourt journal, 11 Jan., 1894, ibid., p. 47.

[11]Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, p. 265, James, Rosebery, pp. 301-2.

[12]Morley reported this conversation to Rosebery immediately afterward. Rosebery, "Last Cabinet", Dec., 1951, p. 35. See also L.V. Harcourt journal, 12 Jan., 1894, Stansky, Ambitions, p. 47.

[13]Stansky, Ambitions, pp. 51-2, James, Rosebery, pp. 303-4.

[14]Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, p. 254. At this point, according to one of Gladstone's personal memoranda written after his resignation, he felt that his stand showed signs of 'providential ordination'. James, Rosebery, p. 305.

[15]Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, p. 258.

[16]Rosebery, "Last Cabinet", Dec., 1951, p. 35.

[17]See particularly J.A. Spender, Life, Journalism and Politics, 2 vols., New York, n.d., vol. 1, pp. 55-6, Rosebery, "Last Cabinet", Dec., 1951, p. 35, James, Rosebery, p. 300 and n.

[18]L.V. Harcourt journal, 26 Jan., 1894, Stansky, Ambitions, p. 56.

[19]Ibid., p. 35-6.

[20]Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, pp. 268-71.

[21]Stansky, Ambitions, p. 40.

[22]Ibid., pp. 271-4, also Rosebery, "Last Cabinet", part 1, p. 36.

[23]L.V. Harcourt journal, 8 Feb., 1894, Stansky, Ambitions, p. 39.

[24]Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, p. 271.

[25]Ibid., p. 69. This strategy depended on Morley's ability to induce the young radicals to follow him. It appears doubtful that this would have been possible at that time.

[26]Rosebery, "Last Cabinet", Dec., 1951, p. 36.

[27]Stansky, Ambitions, p. 59.

[28]Rosebery, "Last Cabinet", Dec., 1951, p. 36.

[29]L.V. Harcourt journal, 12 Feb., 1894, Stansky, Ambitions, pp. 60-1.

[30]Rosebery, "Last Cabinet", Dec., 1951, p. 38. Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, p. 281, 22 Feb., 1894, refers to this as "John Morley had told Rosebery that as a Peer he could only be a nominal head of the Government."

[31]James, Rosebery, p. 313.

[32]Rosebery, "Last Cabinet", Dec., 1951, p. 38. What Harcourt really meant by this is not certain. It may have been merely one of his famous demonstrations of temper, or it may have been a move designed to accomplish the acceptance of the terms. Or it may have been a momentary yielding on Harcourt's part to the strategy of his son, see Stansky, Ambitions, p. 68. What is certain is that Loulou later made an effort to retract his father's statement. See below.

[33]Rosebery, "Last Cabinet", Dec., 1951, p. 38.

[34]Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, p. 278, 17 Feb., 1894.

[35]Ibid., p. 37.

[36]Morley, Recollections, vol. 2, p. 9.

[37]Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, p. 279, 19 Feb., 1894.

[38]Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, p. 267.

[39]Morley, Recollections, vol. 2, p. 9, see also Rosebery, "Last Cabinet", part 1, p. 38.

[40]Queen Victoria's Letters, vol. 1, pp. 363-4, Stansky, Ambitions, pp. 75-6, f. , Ponsonby, Sidelights on Queen Victoria, New York, Sears, 1930, pp. 381-6, Hutchinson, ed., Private Diaries, pp. 283-6.

[41]Queen Victoria's Letters, vol. 1, p. 364.

[42]Hutchinson, Private Diaries, p. 283, 26 Feb., 1894.

[43]Ibid., p. 282, 23 Feb., 1894.

[44]Asquith, Fifty Years of British Parliament, 2 vols., Boston, Little, Brown, 1926, vol. 1, p. 216.

[45]Rosebery, "Last Cabinet", part 2, p. 17.

[46]Magnus, Gladstone, p. 422.

[47]Ibid.

[48]Morley, Gladstone, vol. 3, pp. 513-4. Excerpts from Gladstone's record of the event.

[49]Morley, Recollections, vol. 2, p. 11.

[50]Stansky, Ambitions, p. 79.

[51]Hutchinson, Private Diaries, p. 283.

[52]Rosebery, "Last Cabinet", part 1, p. 39.

[53]Ibid.

[54]James, Rosebery, pp. 315-6.

[55]H. Gladstone, After Thirty Years, London, Macmillan, 1928, p. 343.

[56]Rosebery, "Last Cabinet", part 1, p. 40.

[57]Ibid., part 2, p. 18.

[58]Ibid., p. 19.

[59]Ibid.

[60]Annual Register, 1894, p. 60.

[61]Stansky, Ambitions, pp. 79-80.

[62]L.V. Harcourt journal, 2 Mar., 1894, Stansky, Ambitions, pp. 80-1.

[63]Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, p. 627.

[64]Rosebery, "Last Cabinet", part 2, p. 20.

[65]Ibid., pp. 19-20.

[66]Ibid., p. 20.

[67]Queen Victoria's Letters, vol. 1, p. 370.

[68]Rosebery, "Last Cabinet", part 2, p. 20.

[69]James, Rosebery, p. 328.

[70]See ibid., pp. 321-4, and Stansky, Ambitions, pp. 80-4.

[71]L.V. Harcourt journal, 3 Mar., 1894, Stansky, Ambitions, p. 89.

[72]Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, p. 271.

[73]Ibid., pp. 271-2, Rosebery, "Last Cabinet", part 1, p. 21.

[74]Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, p. 272.

[75]So did Morley, L.V. Harcourt journal, 3 Mar., 1894, James, Rosebery, p. 326.

[76]Rosebery, "Last Cabinet", part 2, p. 21.

[77]Harcourt to Morley, 4 Mar., 1894, 8 a.m., Stansky, Ambitions, p. 92.

[78]Morley, Recollections, vol. 2, p. 17, Stansky, Ambitions, pp. 92-3.

[79]Harcourt to Rosebery, 4 Mar., 1894, 9 a.m., Rosebery,"Last Cabinet", part 2, p. 21.

[80]Rosebery to Harcourt, 4 Mar., 1894, ibid.

[81]Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, p. 272.

[82]Queen Victoria's Letters, vol. 1, pp. 375-6.

[83]James, Rosebery, p. 332.

[84]Morley, Recollections, vol. 2, p. 19.

[85]Rosebery, "Last Cabinet", part 2, p. 22.

[86]Morley, Recollections, vol. 2, p. 19.

[87]Morley to Rosebery, 5 Mar., 1894, Rosebery, "Last Cabinet", part 2, p.22.

[88]Morley to Rosebery, 6 Mar., 1894, ibid.

[89]Rosebery to Morley, 6 Mar., 1894, ibid.

CHAPTER VI

ROSEBERY IN OFFICE

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The Parliamentary session of 1894 opened on March 12th. The Parliamentary Liberal Party met at the Foreign Office at noon. In his first speech as party leader Rosebery dealt with policy, "There is no change in measures--there is only a most disastrous change in men."[1] He pledged disestablishment in Wales and said that Home Rule "will be pressed to the forefront, and, as far as in me lies, pressed to a definite and successful conclusion."[1] Harcourt followed, promising his support and promising that the Newcastle programme would be implemented. The meeting ended without any untoward incidents, but that afternoon the new leader committed a serious blunder. The Queen's speech made no mention of Home Rule. Salisbury, however, did not allow this to deter him from attacking that policy, saying that the Lords would only bow to an English majority for Home Rule.[2] Rosebery, in reply, agreed with him that "before Irish Home Rule is conceded by the Imperial Parliament England, as the predominant member of the partnership of the Three Kingdoms, will have to be convinced of its justice and equity."[3] For the leader of a ministry which held a majority in the Commons based on Irish nationalist votes to deal with Home Rule as a gift rather than as a right was astounding. That a man who regarded himself as a spokesman and leader of Scotland should state, in essence, that England must be convinced before legislation for the other kingdoms might be passed makes it incomprehensible.

Surprisingly enough the Cabinet meeting of the following morning was remarkably free of recriminations.[4] This did not make

J. Morley's task of explaining away his leader's words in the Commons that afternoon any easier.[5] After embarrassing its Irish supporters the ministry was itself embarrassed. Henry Labouchere, the radical, moved an amendment to the address which deplored the powers of the House of Lords. The vote was taken during the dinner hour and the amendment passed by two votes, a substantial number of Irish voting against the government. This was a considerable humiliation for the ministry as it meant that the entire address had to be rejected and then voted again. This was done on March 15th. It was a poor beginning.

During the life of the ministry there were four major disagreements on policy, punctuated by a crisis during an attempt to gain control of the Cabinet by Rosebery. The first disagreement over the Budget, was limited to Rosebery and Harcourt, but was to influence the subsequent disputes. Ironically the budget of 1894 was to be the one major accomplishment of Rosebery's Cabinet and the crowning achievement of Harcourt's career. The essence of the budget was the substitution of a graduated scale of taxation on all property in the death duties for the previous mixture of fixed and variable charges on various categories of property in that tax. Rosebery was concerned about the possible effects of this assault on property. He therefore wrote a memorandum to Harcourt setting forth his apprehensions. These were largely that the proposals would alienate property, "a most formidable enemy . . . perhaps the most formidable,"[6] and would fail to give the Liberal party any "compensating friends".[6] Rosebery was also concerned that "a horizontal division of parties" might result, one in which the

Liberal party would rest solely on working-class support. He finished by asking that the scale of graduation be mitigated.[6] Harcourt's immediate reaction to the memorandum was amusement at the "high Tory line taken by R . . . ."[7]

The Chancellor wrote an immediate reply in his most combative tone.[7] He was prepared to accept the alienation of property as had "another party which was founded 1,894 years ago . . . I think it is highly probable that there are 'many young men who will go away sorrowful because they have great possessions'."[8] Harcourt further stated that the only way to obtain the support of the masses was to deserve it, and that the horizontal division of parties was an inevitable consequence of household suffrage. "Your argument seems to involve that it is necessary to maintain an unequal incidence of taxation in order to avert the breaking up of large properties irrespective of the character of their possessors." Harcourt was, however, willing to mitigate the scales of graduation. Further he requested that the two memoranda be submitted to the Cabinet.[8]

The two memoranda were expressions of two different philosophies of Liberalism, the young peer expressing the most conservative of political whiggism,[9] and the old Whig moving toward a philosophy of social reform through economic change. Rosebery declined to bring the dispute before the Cabinet which, on the whole, remained ignorant of the dispute. The only exceptions were John Morley and Spencer. Both Harcourt and Rosebery showed the former their copies of the memoranda.[10] On being sent the memoranda Spencer did his best to calm

Harcourt by pointing out that Rosebery was bowing to the Chancellor's judgement by not bringing the matter to the attention of the Cabinet.[11] On the merits of the argument Harcourt was probably correct with respect to the main issue of party support. The general attitude expressed in the Chancellor's memorandum that Rosebery's paper came from "a rich man who disliked being taxed"[12] was unnecessarily insulting. Rosebery was deeply stung by this accusation of personal interest.[13] Crewe, his official biographer, considered this episode to mark the final separation of Rosebery from his Chancellor of the Exchequer.[14] Rosebery and Harcourt were only barely on speaking terms for most of the duration of the ministry.[15]

The second disagreement in the Cabinet again involved Harcourt as a protagonist. Rather than being a short dispute however this disagreement, over Foreign policy, was to flare up several times during the life of the government. At its heart was the agreement concluded between Harcourt and Rosebery that the Leader of the Commons be informed when foreign affairs began to 'creak', and the fact that Rosebery intended to pursue a 'forward' foreign policy which, it is clear, the Cabinet was not prepared to support.[16] Early in March Harcourt had seen Kimberley and had made what he felt to be suitable arrangements for communication between them.[17] The question of communication was not a problem when the final scene of the Uganda drama was played out. Harcourt privately deplored the Cabinet decision but it fell to him to announce to the House of Commons on April 12th that the government declared Uganda to be "under a British protectorate".[18] However

communication was to be the center of a continuing problem over the negotiations with the King of the Belgians about a lease of the British sphere of influence on the upper Nile.

Negotiations with King Leopold started on the same day (March 5th) that Harcourt and Kimberley had reached their agreement on the sharing of Foreign Office information. Harcourt was not informed of the negotiations until March 28th, when Kimberley wrote that "we are engaged in secret negotiations with the King of the Belgians with a view to transfer to him under a long lease our 'sphere of influence' on the Upper Nile . . . ."[19] The Foreign Secretary ended his note by writing that he was willing to supply verbally any further details.[19] Harcourt acknowledged Kimberley's letter but appears to have missed the significance of the negotiations, probably due to his concern with the budget at this time.[20] The next information he received on the subject was a copy of the treaty signed on April 12th, and sent to him on the 21st. The Chancellor exploded. In a letter to Kimberley he stated that he viewed the incident as a breach of the agreement on communication between the Foreign Office and the Commons. Harcourt also pointed out that Kimberley had professed to inform the Cabinet of current developments in foreign affairs at its last meeting and had not mentioned the treaty, which had been signed by the time of the meeting. Further he said, "The mutilation of the Portal Report (which I accidentally discovered), and this secret Agreement kept back from me and from the Cabinet till it is too late to discuss it have left on my mind the most painful impression . . . ."[21] The

Chancellor demanded that the Cabinet meeting scheduled for the 24th be held on the 23rd. On Harcourt's explanation of the situation the Cabinet sided, almost unanimously, with him. The Cabinet decided to despatch Sir Percy Anderson to Brussels to induce the King, if possible, to give up the treaty.[22] Anderson did not go, but the Cabinet was not informed of this.[23] Rosebery and Kimberley were acting directly against Cabinet policy.

To placate Harcourt, Kimberley sent him some papers relevant to the Anglo-Belgian Treaty. This had the effect of further enraging the Chancellor, who again brought the issue of foreign policy secrecy to the attention of the Cabinet in a meeting on May 4th. Again the Cabinet expressed itself in favour of a limitation of the treaty;[24] again Rosebery and Kimberley agreed to send Anderson to Brussels and again they did not.[25] At this time King Leopold of Belgium, under the pressure of French negotiations dealing with the Nile, wished to abandon the treaty but refused Rosebery's alternative. The treaty, slightly modified, was signed again May 12th and was made public on May 21st.[26] It immediately aroused protests from France and Germany. The German protest quickly brought a cancellation of one article of the treaty and French pressure brought Leopold to the point of asking for British support to sustain the agreement. The Cabinet was not prepared to support the Belgian king and Rosebery, attempting to save face, pointed out that Britain "had no power to compel the King to occupy the territories that he had leased."[27] The treaty, for all practical purposes, collapsed at this point.

The situation had been handled most ineptly by the two peers. The entire incident illustrated both Rosebery's attitude that foreign affairs were his private concern, and the impossibility of conducting relations with the powers of Europe following a policy not supported by the majority of the Cabinet members and kept secret from them. As Harcourt wrote to Kimberley, "The whole origin of the mess in which we find ourselves lies in the policy of concealment adopted from the first . . . If No. 1 (the Cabinet) had been consulted the difficulty would never have arisen."[28]

Between the signing of the treaty and its publication Harcourt discovered Rosebery's earlier instructions to Portal which directed the consul to negotiate treaties in the Nile valley while on his mission of investigation. The Chancellor questioned Kimberley to discover who had authorized the instructions, who had ordered them not to be printed, and hence who had concealed them from the Cabinet. Through Kimberley, Harcourt received a letter from Rosebery acknowledging his responsibility. Harcourt then wrote a memorandum to Kimberley, pointing out that the claim that the Foreign Secretary could "give without their (the Prime Minister and the Cabinet) knowledge instructions of the gravest consequence which are contrary to their opinion,"[29] had been disposed of by the dismissal of Palmerston in 1851.

Harcourt had exposed, to himself and to his colleagues, several instances of deliberate contravention of the policy agreed on by the Cabinet. Nothing, however, resulted from this because of the divided nature of the Cabinet, Harcourt's personality,[30] and the lack

of any alternative, in the face of Rosebery's disregard of the revelations, to resignation and the collapse of the ministry. Harcourt seriously considered resignation at this time, presumably, over the failure of Rosebery and Kimberley to live up to the agreement under which he had entered the Cabinet. It is likely that he remained in the Cabinet only for the purpose of shepherding the budget through the Commons.[31] Rosebery had hoped that Harcourt would resign once the budget was passed.[32] Loulou was also advocating this course of action.[33] The Chancellor's success in passing the budget in July, without invoking closure, won him the congratulations of both sides in the Commons. The exhilaration of this success combined with the collapse of Rosebery's Nile policy led him to remain in the Cabinet.

In domestic politics Rosebery came to agree with his predecessor that the House of Lords was the major obstacle to the Liberal party and that its reform should be the primary concern of the party. He carried on a correspondence with the Queen on this subject from March through October, starting with a memorandum which pointed out that the House of Lords existed, for all practical purposes, only when there was a Liberal majority in the Commons. This was, he wrote, a permanent danger to the constitution--but he could suggest no remedy.[34] The Queen registered her opposition to Rosebery's memorandum on April 1st: "it has never been known for a Prime Minister, . . . to attack one branch of the legislature without which, excepting the Sovereign, nothing can be done or passed in Parliament."[35] The correspondence on the subject, marked by alarm on one side and patience on the other, continued at infrequent intervals through the summer.

On June 20th a special one-day conference of the National Liberal Federation passed two resolutions, one condemning the Lords' obstruction of Liberal legislation, the other urging government action to over-ride the Lords' veto.[36] This reinforced Rosebery and on October 24th he confided to the Queen that he was shortly to lay his policy towards the Lords before the country. The policy was to move a resolution in the Commons against the obstruction of its legislation by the Lords. This would place the issue before the country. Rosebery then wrote that he thought it likely, in view of the English hostility to Home Rule, that an appeal to the country on the basis of the Lords would result in a verdict in support of the Upper House. He hoped that the resulting government would have the will to reform the Lords.[37] What basis he had for this wish is not clear. The tone of the letter is not that of a man proposing a successful campaign. Indeed Rosebery obviously felt that a Liberal campaign against the Lords would not be successful, moreover, he did not appear to care.

Rosebery may have consulted the Queen about his policy feeling that he was supported by the National Liberal Federation, but he had failed to consult his colleagues except in a haphazard way.[38] In spite of this omission he delivered his manifesto in a speech at Bradford on October 27th, saying that the next election would be fought on the issue of the House of Lords.[39] The Prime Minister's colleagues were naturally enough very indignant at Rosebery's failure to consult them. A Cabinet meeting to consider action on the Lords on November 9th broke up without

coming to any conclusion, but only after Harcourt, Morley, Asquith and Acland had all protested against the Prime Minister's independent action.[40]

Rosebery's action in neglecting to consult his colleagues marked the almost complete disintegration of the Cabinet. This body was described, by an unsympathetic observer,

> With the exception of Acland, none of the ministers are doing any work: Rosebery sees no one but Eddy Hamilton, . . . his stud-groom, and various non-political fashionables; Sir W. Harcourt amuses himself at his country place and abroad, determined to do nothing to help Rosebery; even Asquith . . . has given up attending to his department . . . 'Rot has set in,' says Haldane, 'there is no hope now but to be beaten and then to reconstruct a new party.' 41

Much of this was the consequence of Rosebery's refusal to consider himself as a head of a party seeing himself rather as a national leader, appealing to the people over the heads of the other prominent men of his own party. He had, apparently, no thought of attempting to lead the party through the Cabinet and consequently the idea of consulting its members on a new policy did not occur to him as being necessary. He was evidently willing to ask the advice of individual members but the possible nature of the Cabinet as a deliberating body was totally foreign to him.

The Cabinet had become disillusioned with Rosebery as a leader. Ripon had expressed his disappointment in the Prime Minister to West in August.[42] Morley, Asquith and Acland invited him on three occasions to dine with them in the House of Commons to meet Liberal members and were refused.[43] The last of the three said that Rosebery was "intolerable . . . shy, huffy, and giving himself the airs of a

little German king . . . . He complained that his colleagues never came to see him, but when we did go he had hurried off . . . ."[44] Haldane complained to West of Rosebery's lack of 'go and sympathy'.[45] Rosebery's failure to deal with or cope with his colleagues was reflected in the increasing infrequency of Cabinet meetings, "the profusion of weekly Cabinets . . . has ended in quarterly meetings."[46]

Part of the Cabinet's difficulties lay in the vast gulf between Rosebery and Harcourt. They rarely spoke to each other and carried out most communication through some third person, generally Asquith.[47] Both Spencer and Morley attempted, separately, to reconcile the two leaders and approached Harcourt in July and again in September. The Chancellor's response was to recall that he had been regarded as unfit to lead and that he consequently was in the position of a bystander. In his reply in September he referred to Rosebery as your leader.[48] Later he wrote that "I am not a regular supporter of the present administration."[49] The two ministers apparently made no attempt to approach Rosebery and consequently the rift between the two leaders continued to exist.

Rosebery's attempt to define a Liberal policy by his proclamation at Bradford failed to inspire any response in the nation or in the party. On November 26th a Cabinet meeting refused to adopt the Prime Minister's pursuit of the policy of reform of the Lords. At the close of the meeting Harcourt said, "I hope it is clearly understood that nothing is settled. Everyone replied, 'Oh yes, nothing is settled'."[50] The Chancellor then went on to point to the complete lack of Cabinet

policy. He said that he was not going to speak to the country, "Because I don't know what to say."[51]

Rosebery was not faced with this problem and, in a speech in Cardiff on January 19th proclaimed that, before taking up the Lords as an election issue the Liberal party would first do something 'for the people'. Something was to consist of actively adopting a number of policies from 'the Newcastle Programme': Welsh disestablishment, curtailment of the liquor trade, elimination of plural voting.[52] This policy of 'filling the cup' or 'ploughing the sands' was announced without consultation with the Cabinet. It was not to be disavowed however as it was perfectly suited to the divided nature of that body. Harcourt had already announced his advocacy of local option as a legislative programme.[53] Morley had earlier given a pledge to the Irish that Home Rule would be the principal aim of the government in 1895.[54] In a rare agreement Rosebery and Harcourt refused to allow Morley to redeem his pledge, and thus despite the fact that he resigned 'at least six times' he remained in the Cabinet.[55] The country may not have been satisfied with the multiplicity of policies announced at Cardiff but the members of the Cabinet, each espousing his own policy from those announced, were content enough with the situation. This gave an illusion of unity which was to be quickly shattered when Parliament opened.

The Liberal majority of the Commons was challenged on three occasions on the Address. It was to survive these with a reduction in strength, but on the last of three amendments there were strong

attacks made on the Prime Minister by Radicals and by Unionists. Rosebery was defended only weakly by Campbell-Bannerman and not at all by his other colleagues in the Commons. Part of the truth of the matter was that many of the Cabinet expected to be defeated on the Address.[56] Rosebery himself had thought that this would be very likely.[57] The Prime Minister as might be expected blamed his colleagues for not supporting him,[58] and called a Cabinet meeting on February 19th. At the meeting Rosebery read a four page letter announcing his intention of resigning due to "the total--or almost total--absence of ordinary support."[59] Rosebery later commented that, "It would of course not have been possible for me to resign; . . . . I called a Cabinet to play the last card left to me . . . ."[60] Harcourt was the first to answer Rosebery's declaration, saying that it was impossible for him to resign, that he (Harcourt) would decline to carry on the government and that Rosebery's move would thus mean the end of the ministry.[61] The meeting broke up in consternation.

Rosebery's colleagues were conciliatory if not contrite. Within a few hours letters of positive and active support from his colleagues began to descend on the Prime Minister. On the following day he had interviews with eleven members of his Cabinet.[62] The day following Rosebery announced that, as he had received satisfactory assurances of support for the future, he was withdrawing his resignation. For a brief period fortune seemed to smile on the government. Fowler, the Secretary for India, won a spectacular victory in debate on a motion of censure. Only a few days later Harcourt crushed a

potentially dangerous motion on bimetallism,[63] "back bench morale rose to a higher point than at any moment since the summer of 1893".[64] It was clearly the opportunity for the Prime Minister to establish his authority and unite his Cabinet.

Rosebery, at this point, broke down. He had been suffering from chronic insomnia--his normal reaction to stress--for months and an attack of influenza brought about a physical collapse on February 25th. Rosebery's influenza was quickly cured but his insomnia and general weakness continued well into April. He was thus unable to play a very active part in an episode which emphasized the ineptitude of the ministry. On April 10th the first contested election since 1839 was held for the speakership of the Commons. The incumbent speaker, Peel, had informed the government in March of his intention to resign in the immediate future for reasons of health. The choice of a new speaker was much hampered by the hostility of the Conservatives and Unionists towards a weak ministry which was on the verge of defeat. The Opposition themselves wished to select the Speaker when they assumed office which they expected to do momentarily. Harcourt felt that the post should be 'divested of party colour'.[65] Consequently he favoured a Liberal Unionist, Courtney, who, although recognised as a mentor of the Commons was quite unpopular and not trusted.[66] Within the Cabinet, Campbell-Bannerman desired the post for himself--he felt that it would be the fitting culmination of his Commons career.[67] It would appear that he was also the only person who could command support on both sides of the House. However, the Cabinet was far too weak to

be able to dispense with one of its stronger members and on March 14th it agreed that no Minister should be proposed for the post[68]—a serious disappointment to Campbell-Bannerman.[69] Harcourt approached Courtney on March 14th but the latter reported, after consulting his colleagues, that he would be unable to stand.[70] After casting about for a member to oppose the Conservative candidate Harcourt proposed to again approach Courtney. This move was opposed by Rosebery as being a needless humiliation of the ministry. "We should have a score of possible Speakers among our party."[71] However Harcourt again approached Courtney, who was obliged to refuse when, on March 25th, the Unionists pledged their support to the Conservative candidate, Ridley.[72] At this point Labouchere, who had consistently favoured a Liberal candidate,[73] intervened with the suggestion of William Gully. A Liberal back-bencher, Gully rarely attended the House but appeared to have the potential to be a good Speaker.[74] The Cabinet adopted Gully as the Liberal candidate on April 4th and he was elected six days later by a majority of eleven.[75]

The last major crisis of Rosebery's Cabinet, fittingly enough on foreign policy, also took place during the period of his illness. On March 28th, Sir Edward Grey, the under-secretary of the Foreign Office, made a speech in the Commons in which he claimed that the entire Nile valley was within the British sphere of influence.[76] Harcourt, predictably but somewhat wearily, again took up the battle against the 'forward' policy. "These declarations appear to me (as they do to John Morley) not consistent with the conclusions arrived at

by the Cabinet in more than one discussion of the subject."[77] He therefore requested a Cabinet meeting on the 30th to discuss Grey's statement.[77] At the meeting the Chancellor claimed that an extension of the British sphere of influence had been made without consulting the Cabinet. However it was Morley who was to become the most vehement on the point. He stated that if the Cabinet endorsed the policy involved in Grey's speech he would be forced to resign. He was dissuaded from doing so by Harcourt on the grounds that his resignation would further damage relations with France.[78] Following the Cabinet meeting both Kimberley and Grey made efforts to modify the declaration. Grey published a letter in the Times claiming that he had said that the Nile was within the British and French spheres of influence.[79] Kimberley, in an interview with the French ambassador, stated that Grey's declaration was only a claim and therefore open to debate.[80]

Harcourt used the incident to press anew for information from the Foreign Office. He demanded to see all answers on important questions of foreign policy before they were given in the Commons. Further, he wished to make all important statements in debate on foreign affairs.[81] Kimberley agreed to this but Rosebery later added the rider that Kimberley and himself would decide whether a question was important enough to be referred to the Chancellor.[82] Harcourt protested that this meant that Rosebery and Kimberley reserved to themselves the right to determine policy and commit the government without consulting colleagues in the House of Commons.[83] Kimberley

promised further consultation but was coming, belatedly, to the conclusion that he could not serve two masters.[84] How seriously the two peers took the spirit of this agreement was shown in the Nicaraguan incident of April, 1895. Nicaragua had expelled the British vice-consul and Britain demanded an indemnity of 15,500. Nicaragua wished arbitration on the question, a move which Harcourt supported when Kimberley informed him of the situation. Harcourt also requested a Cabinet meeting to discuss the situation. Kimberley answered that he and Rosebery were convinced that there was need for neither arbitration nor a Cabinet. Harcourt complained that Rosebery's refusal to reserve the question "for the Cabinet on the request of the Foreign Secretary and the remonstrance of the Leader of the House of Commons . . ." was "in direct breach of the understanding on which I consented to be responsible for the Government in the House of Commons."[85] The upshot was that three warships were despatched and the town of Corinto was seized. Rosebery, with the aid of Kimberley, had again demonstrated that foreign policy was his private concern. Harcourt's objections were not only over-ruled, they were disregarded completely.

The Cabinet had been loyally supported in the Commons but the lack of policy and of leadership was bound to have an effect on the Liberal members. A contemporary observer was later to say "never in subsequent years can I remember such discipline as was imposed on and cheerfully accepted by the rank and file of M.P.s at this period."[86] The discipline began to crumble and both the Scottish and the Welsh wings of the party began to indicate their disaffection. Part of the

Irish support had already defected when, in June, the Irish embarrassed the government by forcing it to withdraw a vote for £500 to erect a statue of Cromwell in the Palace of Westminster. Morley was forced to indicate the withdrawal amidst "wild cries of aboriginal joy".[87] Rosebery's comment that "This government is not strong enough to do so weak a thing"[88] was proven correct only shortly afterwards. On June 21st, the House of Commons voted 132 to 125 to reduce the salary of the Secretary of State for War by £100 to indicate its disapproval of the insufficient supply of cordite for the Army.

Brodrick, the Opposition spokesman on military affairs had told Balfour early in June that it might be possible to defeat the government on supply, specifically on a question of shortages of ammunition.[89] The opportunity, which was only "possible by the inherent weakness of the administration",[90] came when the government whips were deceived as to the strength of the House of Commons at dinnertime by the presence of many members of the Opposition on the terrace of the House. By virtue of this ruse the government was defeated in division, but only after a small comedy in which the results of the division were handed to the government whip, indicating the government's victory in the division. The Liberal Whip, Ellis, after glancing at the figures, passed the paper to the Conservative Whip, who passed it back but finally accepted it.[91]

In the Cabinet meetings the following day the choices open were dissolution, resignation, or remaining in office. Moved more by exhaustion than by any other consideration the majority of the Cabinet

were for either resignation or dissolution. Rosebery and Harcourt both advocated resignation and contrary to recommendations by the whips that the ministry carry on as the party was not prepared for an election campaign, the Cabinet resigned. Asquith later said that the Cabinet was so impressed by the fact that Rosebery and Harcourt agreed with each other that it 'deferred to their authority'.[92] It is more likely however that the deciding factor was Campbell-Bannerman's refusal to seek rehabilitation in the Commons and his colleagues' unwillingness to carry on without him.[93]

Footnotes

[1]*Times*, 13 Mar., 1894, p. 7.

[2]*Hansard*, 4th series, 12 Mar., 1894, vol. xxii, col. 22-5.

[3]*Ibid.*, col. 32.

[4]James, *Rosebery*, p. 338.

[5]Morley later commented that "it is much easier to get yourself out of a scrape of this sort than to explain away another man." Morley, *Recollections*, vol. 2, p. 22.

[6]James, *Rosebery*, p. 342.

[7]L.V. Harcourt journal, 4 Apr., 1894, Gardiner, *Harcourt*, vol. 2, p. 283.

[8]Harcourt to Rosebery, 4 Apr., 1894, *ibid.*, pp. 283-6.

[9]Rosebery's later attitude towards the budget was "Lord Rosebery is himself inclined to take a somewhat gloomy view of its effects on the class to which he himself belongs. He cannot, however, deny that there is much to be said for it in the sense of its being logically just . . ." Rosebery to Queen Victoria, 13 July, 1894, *Queen Victoria's Letters*, vol. 2, p. 415-6.

[10]Harcourt to J. Morley, 11 Apr., 1894, Gardiner, *Harcourt*, vol. 2, p. 287, James, *Rosebery*, p. 346.

[11]Spencer to Harcourt, 22 Apr., 1894, Gardiner, *Harcourt*, vol. 2, pp. 287-8.

[12]Crewe, *Rosebery*, vol. 2, p. 468.

[13]This is demonstrated by a series of violent penciled comments made by Rosebery on the Chancellor's memorandum.

[14]Crewe, *Rosebery*, vol. 2, p. 468.

[15]Hutchinson, *Private Diaries*, p. 299, Earl Oxford and Asquith, *Fifty Years of British Parliament*, 2 vol., Boston, Little Brown, 1926, vol. 1, p. 253.

[16]The Cabinet were not prepared to oppose it either, unless it was brought forcibly to their attention.

[17]L.V.Harcourt journal, 5 Mar., 1894, Stansky, Ambitions,p.98.

[18]Hansard, 4th series, XXIII,col. 223.

[19]Kimberley to Harcourt, 28 Mar., 1894, Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, p.313.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Harcourt to Kimberley, 22 Apr., 1894, Stansky, Ambitions, pp.110-1.

[22]L.V. Harcourt journal, 23 Apr., 1894, Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, pp. 314-5.

[23]A.J.P. Taylor, The Struggle for Mastery in Europe 1848-1914, Oxford, University Press, 1954, p. 87 n.

[24]L.V. Harcourt journal, 4 May, 1894 refers to a withdrawal of the treaty. Stansky, Ambitions, pp. 112-3. Rosebery, in his report to the Queen, stated that what was desired was a cancellation of the agreement on condition that another, more general one, be concluded. Rosebery to Queen Victoria, 4 May 1894, Queen Victoria's Letters, vol. 2, p. 396.

[25]Stansky, Ambitions, p. 113.

[26]For accounts and interpretation of the Anglo-Belgian agreement, see M.P. Hornik, "The Anglo-Belgian Agreement of 12 May, 1894", English Historical Review, 1942, pp. 39-55. A.J.P. Taylor, "Prelude to Fashoda: The Question of the Upper Nile 1894-5", English Historical Review, 1950, pp. 52-80.

[27]Rosebery to Queen Victoria, 13 Aug., 1894, Queen Victoria's Letters, vol. 2, pp. 419-20.

[28]Harcourt to Kimberley, 9 Aug., 1894, Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, pp. 319-20.

[29]Harcourt to Kimberley, 14 May, 1894, ibid., pp. 315-6.

[30]Asquith later commented, "his lack of any sense of proportion, his incapacity for self-restraint, and his perverse delight in inflaming and embittering every controversy, made cooperation with him always difficult and often impossible. Cabinet life under such conditions was a weariness both to the flesh and the spirit." Asquith, Fifty Years, vol. 1, p. 252.

[31]John Morley referred to this period later: "At the end of May, 1894, when Harcourt seemed to be more serious than usual in his threats of retirement." Morley, Recollections, vol. 2, p. 45.

[32]Esher Journals, vol. 1, p. 181. Rosebery had evidently hinted this to the Queen much earlier; see Queen Victoria to Rosebery, 10 May, 1894, Queen Victoria's Letters, vol. 2, p. 398.

[33]Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, p. 308.

[34]Rosebery to Queen Victoria, Mar-Apr.? 1894, Queen Victoria's Letters, pp. 385-8.

[35]Queen Victoria to Rosebery, 1 Apr., 1894, ibid., p. 389.

[36]Stansky, Ambitions, p. 137.

[37]Rosebery to Queen Victoria, 24 Oct., 1894, Queen Victoria's Letters, vol. 2, p. 429.

[38]John Morley had returned from a visit to Dalmeny in September, saying that Rosebery "is full of the H. of L. and what line ought to be taken." Morley to Harcourt, 21 Sept., 1894, Stansky, Ambitions, p. 137. He went on to point out that no action could be taken against the Lords without the support of the English constituencies, which the Liberals did not have. Harcourt agreed with Morley that "under the present circumstances. . . it is simply ridiculous to talk of tackling the House of Lords." Harcourt to Morley, 27 Sept., 1894, Gardiner, Harcourt, p. 307.

[39]Times, 29 Oct., 1894, p. 9.

[40]James, Rosebery, p. 361.

[41]B. Webb, Our Partnership, London, Longmans, 1948, p. 121.

[42]Hutchinson, Private Diaries, p. 297, 19 Aug., 1894.

[43]James, Rosebery, p. 357.

[44]B. Webb, Partnership, pp. 276-7.

[45]Hutchinson, Private Diaries, p. 303.

[46]Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, p. 342, Spender, Campbell-Bannerman, vol. 1, pp. 180-1.

[47]J.A. Spender and C. Asquith, Life of Lord Oxford and Asquith, 2 vol., London, Hutchinsons, 1932, vol. 1, p. 91.

[48]Harcourt to Spencer, 21 Sept., 1894, Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, p. 308.

[49]Harcourt to Morley, 27 Sept., 1894, Stansky, Ambitions, p. 144. For the fullest account of this attempt at reconciliation see ibid., pp. 141-4, also James, Rosebery, pp. 358-9 and Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, pp. 307-9.

[50]L.V. Harcourt journal, 26 Nov., 1894, Stansky, Ambitions, p. 140.

[51]Ibid.

[52]Times, 21 Jan., 1895, p. 9.

[53]Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, p. 307.

[54]Stansky, Ambitions, p. 147-8.

[55]James, Rosebery, p. 365.

[56]Stansky, Ambitions, p. 147.

[57]Queen Victoria's journal, 2 Feb., 1895, Queen Victoria's Letters, vol. 2, p. 473.

[58]In particular Morley, Asquith and Acland. He complained that these "have deserted him, that their ideas on the House of Lords are different to his, that they are constantly hostile to him in the Cabinet." Rosebery felt that these ministers were responsible for making him Prime Minister and that consequently they were obliged to support him. L.V. Harcourt journal, 24 Nov., 1894, Stansky, Ambitions, p. 140.

[59]Rosebery Memorandum, excerpts, James, Rosebery, p. 366.

[60]Crewe, Rosebery, vol. 2, p. 520.

[61]L.V. Harcourt journal, 19 Feb.,1895, Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, pp. 350-1.

[62]Rosebery to Queen Victoria, 21 Feb., 1895, Queen Victoria's Letters, vol. 2, p. 479.

[63]Annual Register, 1895, p. 47.

[64]James, Rosebery, p. 369.

[65]Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, p. 354.

[66]Stansky, Ambitions, p. 155.

[67]Spender, Campbell-Bannerman, vol. 1, p. 173.

[68]James, Rosebery, p. 371.

[69]Spender, Campbell-Bannerman, vol. 1, pp. 177-8.

[70]Stansky, Ambitions, p. 157.

[71]James, Rosebery, p. 371.

[72]James, Rosebery, p. 372, Stansky, Ambitions, p. 158.

[73]Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, p. 354.

[74]Appearances in this case proved to be deceiving.

[75]Stansky, Ambitions, p. 158.

[76]Grey's account of the incident states that he had transferred the firmness which he had been instructed to show on the Niger to the Nile. Grey, Twenty-Five Years, 2 vol., Toronto, Ryerson, 1925, vol. 1, p. 19. Only Grey's biographer Trevelyan has accepted this ingenuous explanation. James feels that Grey was, consciously or unconsciously, expressing views which Rosebery had expressed to him on numerous occasions. James, Rosebery, p. 375.

[77]Harcourt to Kimberley, 29 Mar., 1895, Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, p, 355.

[78]Stansky, Ambitions, p. 123.

[79]Rosebery claimed, in Rosebery to Queen Victoria, 31 Mar., 1895, Queen Victoria's Letters, p. 492, that the Cabinet with one exception (Morley) supported Grey's declaration. In view of Harcourt's attitude and the opposition within the Cabinet to the 'forward' policy, as well as Kimberley and Grey's later actions, this would appear to be untrue.

[80]Stansky, Ambitions, p. 124.

[81]Harcourt to Kimberley, 1 Apr., 1895, Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, p. 336.

[82]Stansky, Ambitions, p. 124.

[83]Harcourt to Kimberley, 5 Apr., 1895, Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, p. 337.

[84]James, Rosebery, p. 125.

[85]Harcourt to Kimberley, 18 Apr., 1895, Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, p. 331.

[86]J.A. Spender, Life, Journalism and Politics, 2 vol., London, Cassels, 1927, vol. 1, p. 53.

[87]Morley, Recollections, vol. 2, p. 48.

[88]James, Rosebery, p. 381.

[89]Earl of Midleton, Records and Reactions 1856-1939, New York, Dutton, pp. 87-8.

[90]Earl of Midleton, Records and Reactions, p. 88.

[91]On the terrace, Harcourt remarked "Thank heaven, . . . there is one night on which we need not fear a crisis." Gardiner, Harcourt, vol. 2, p. 363.

[92]Asquith, Fifty Years, p. 262.

[93]Stansky, Ambitions, p. 171.

CONCLUSION

Much of Rosebery's limits as Prime Minister were defined by the nature of his Cabinet. In conformity with the Whig tradition, Gladstone's Cabinets had been made up of men united in admiration for the leader, but united in little else. In Gladstone's case this situation was very much due to his use of the heroic cause to rally his followers. Within the Cabinet Gladstone used righteous indignation and the force of argument to resolve conflicts and to lead. Failing all else he had hitherto been able to impose unity in a conflict by use of his own prestige as Prime Minister and as a national leader.

In 1892 Gladstone's hold on the electorate was waning, and so was his prestige. The incongruous nature of the Cabinet, now thrown into relief, was particularly demonstrated by the case of Rosebery, who, included in it despite his own wishes to the contrary, and his commitment to the foreign policy of the Opposition, found himself as Foreign Secretary. Rosebery had had no real experience as a member of a group supposedly united in its objectives. His only previous experience in a Cabinet had been brief--it comprised no more than the chaotic dying days of Gladstone's second Cabinet and the brief period of his third Cabinet. His duties as Chairman of the London County Council were those of the chairman and spokesman of a public meeting. In his dealings with the leader of his party over twelve years, Rosebery had demonstrated a certain petulance, a refusal to co-operate unless he was

allowed to get his own way. Above all Rosebery did not regard himself as committed to the Liberal party or to the Cabinet. It had been royal pressure which had brought him into the latter.

The Liberal Cabinet of 1892 never really gained any cohesion. Gladstone, preoccupied with Home Rule, wished to avoid conflicts and therefore called few Cabinet meetings--he was to call even fewer as time went on. As a result each member of the Cabinet tended to become more and more preoccupied with his own department, problems, and ideas. The members communicated with each other more by writing which necessarily involved rigidity than by discussion, and forfeited the flexibility of the latter method. The Cabinet thus had only a limited opportunity to act as a deliberative body. It was consulted on various aspects of the Home Rule Bill but the majority of decisions on that policy were made by a small committee. When the Lords rejected the bill the Cabinet found itself to be without an aim--except that of staying in office under Gladstone.

Rosebery soon became one of the most isolated members of the Cabinet. During the Uganda crisis he demonstrated his determination to carry out his own foreign policy despite the opposition of his colleagues. Under the cover of compromise he first attempted to remove the subject as much as possible from Cabinet consideration and later took measures to actively subvert the decisions of the Cabinet. His final and successful tactic used to stop attempts to change his policy in Uganda and in Egypt was the threat of resignation. Throughout his tenure of office as Foreign Secretary Rosebery was in personal communication with the Queen. He took no part in the formation of

domestic policy. Given his concept of foreign policy as something which should be continuous and preferably conducted by a Foreign Secretary who was beyond the reach of party politics, it is understandable that Rosebery should have acquired a sense of separation from the Cabinet.

The weakness of the Cabinet was demonstrated in its acquiescence to Rosebery's succession. Desiring a hero, but unwilling to accept a domineering commoner, it accepted a peer who was unenthusiastic about Home Rule, isolated from the rest of the Cabinet, disposed to work alone and to work against his colleagues, and accustomed to having his own way or no way at all. Rosebery was moved, with little effort on his own part, to the leadership of a Cabinet and a party which were weak and divided.

As Prime Minister Rosebery followed the patterns of behaviour which experience had shown him were successful. He conducted foreign policy as much as possible in secrecy, avoided consulting or even coming into contact with his colleagues, and made his own decisions on policy. When Harcourt brought foreign policy to the attention of the Cabinet Rosebery simply disregarded its opinions and decisions.

Rosebery realised that the Liberal party was disunited; his solution was the call to unite against the Lords. He had not consulted his colleagues on this policy which they, as it turned out, were unwilling to support. Partly because of lack of support from his colleagues, but more because they were correct in their estimation of the little support which the policy could command, Rosebery's call to

rally and unite the party failed of its purpose. The policy had been based purely on the Gladstonian example; the national leader speaking to the nation and gaining support for his policy. However Rosebery had little contact with his Cabinet and consequently even less with his party or with the nation. The crusade against the Lords could not command the kind of support which had been given to the crusade against the Bulgarian massacres and immoral politics.

Having failed to gain support for his policy by appeals to its intrinsic worth or to the enthusiasm of the nation, Rosebery resorted to a tactic which had proven successful in the past: he threatened resignation unless his colleagues gave him their support. Having obtained assurances of support Rosebery continued in much the same way as before. He made no particular attempt to use his Cabinet as a deliberative or as a consultative body. Apparently he convinced himself that the Cabinet was carrying out the policy of 'ploughing the sands' to arouse sentiment against the House of Lords: the reality was more that each minister was pursuing his own policy and his own interest with little regard for the Cabinet as a whole.

Rosebery's modern biographer has complained that historians have not fully appreciated the effects of his breakdown of February and March of 1895. It is doubtful however if this is what prevented Rosebery from attempting to unite his Cabinet and through it the party; it is more likely that the breakdown was a result of his inability to do so. The skills required to achieve this were outside Rosebery's experience. That experience was limited to an absolute approach to

policies, based on a leader with a transcendent cause combined with a refusal to compromise. The only alternative to the pursuit of the right policy was subterfuge or the resignation either of the adherents or of the opponents of the policy. Rosebery would unite his party, but could not. He limited his attempts to do so to those ways which he had seen to be successful. Whether or not Rosebery could have brought a degree of unity to a divided Cabinet and party cannot be known, however it is certain that to do so he would have had to compromise some of his own ideas and policies. This he would not do--it was beyond his experience.

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