

HENRY 'CHIPS' CHANNON

THE DIARIES
1943–57

'Utterly addictive'
ROBERT HARRIS

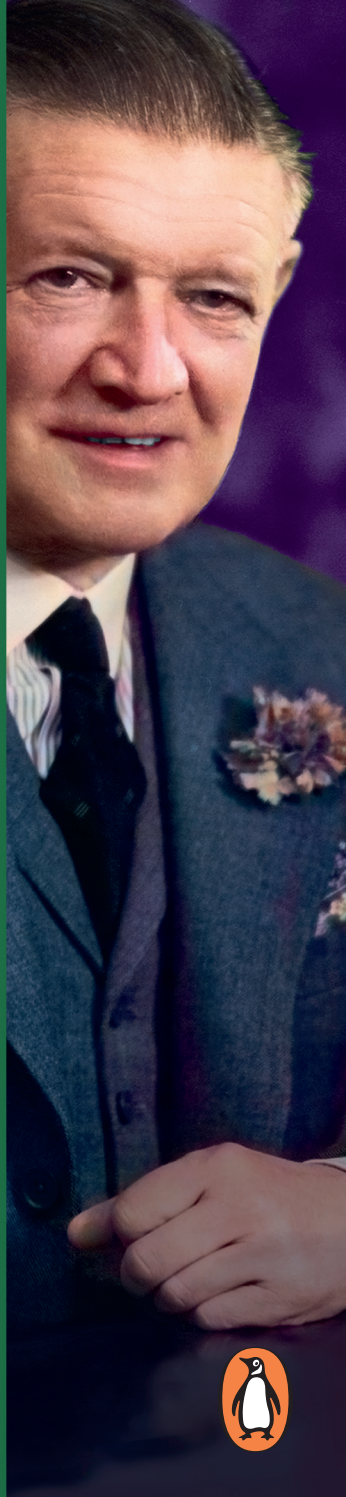
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the diary is his masterpiece'
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Fascinating. Gripping!'
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EDITED BY
SIMON HEFFER



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Henry 'Chips' Channon
The Diaries: 1943–57

'Nothing compares with the unexpurgated Channon diaries. They are rich, exuberant, copious and shatteringly honest. For those interested in the parliamentary politics of 20th-century England, in the conniving and jostling among European traders of influence, in the swansong of aristocratic glamour in Mayfair and Belgravia, in the capering duplicity necessitated by a criminalised sexuality, the diaries are matchless.' *The Spectator*

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'[The diaries] have disappointed no one in search of gossip, breathtaking snobbery and prejudice, as well as being a window on the political scene . . . Channon was a political lightweight, but his diaries will be a historians' resource for centuries.' *Country Life*

'Scrupulous . . . relieved by flashes of malicious wit.' *Literary Review*

'A veritable treasure trove . . . Generations to come will view Heffer's work as an incredible source for studying the interwar, war and postwar years. Yet, the diaries are also a human story . . . Chips knew everyone, went everywhere and had an opinion on everything.' *The Critic*

‘The MP and socialite “Chips” Channon was an unlikeable character – bitchy, snobby, prejudiced and caustic. But those vices make him an entertaining diarist.’ Biography and Memoir Book of the Year 2022, *The Times*

‘The diaries give a riveting account of politics and society in Britain from the 1920s through to the 1950s . . . Heffer is an exemplary editor.’ Jane Ridley, *The Spectator*

‘Channon is honest, frank, intelligent, and wrong about practically everything, but always intensely readable.’ Books of the Year, *The Spectator*

‘Chips is raised from the dead.’ Best Biographies of 2022, *Daily Telegraph*

‘You are wooed into a world of upper-class intrigue and indiscretions, played out in Westminster, Belgravia and snooty country mansions.’ Books of the Year, *Daily Mail*

‘Three formidable volumes have appeared, admirably edited by Simon Heffer displaying considerable scholarship . . . Channon, for all his misjudgements, ingratiating behaviour and bigotry, is revealing about public and private life, society and sexuality, and honest about himself to a degree that makes these Diaries a weird kind of masterpiece.’
London Review of Books

ABOUT THE EDITOR

SIMON HEFFER has written a number of highly acclaimed works of biography and history, most recently the series *High Minds*, *The Age of Decadence*, *Staring at God* and *Sing As We Go*, covering British history from 1838 to 1939. He read English at Cambridge University and then took a PhD in history there. In a long career in Fleet Street he was deputy editor of *The Spectator* and of *The Daily Telegraph*. Since 2017 he has been a Professorial Research Fellow in the Humanities Research Department of the University of Buckingham and is a columnist for the *Daily* and *Sunday Telegraph*.

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Henry 'Chips' Channon

The Diaries:
1943–57

Edited by
Simon Heffer



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In memoriam



Paul Channon, 1935–2007



Henry Channon, 1970–2021

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Foreword

As I read the last line of this final volume of my grandfather's diaries, I felt proud that we had fulfilled my father's ambition of publishing them unexpurgated. I also felt sad, because I did not want the extraordinary journey to end.

I have experienced similarly conflicting emotions about the diaries themselves. Chips was no saint and there are things I have learnt about him that I rather wish I hadn't.

At the same time, I have loved reading the historical content of these diaries and about Chips's adoration for my father, about his generosity and kindness to his friends, and about the huge amount of fun he had; and I am constantly reminded of the words his close friend Lady Diana Cooper wrote of him after his death: 'He made the old and tired, young and strong, shine beneath his thousand lighted candles. Without stint he gave of his riches and of his compassion.'

It is important to acknowledge, as I have done in the previous volumes, that these diaries reflect the attitudes of the time in which they were written, and contain language and opinions that are now, quite rightly, considered to be outdated and offensive. Chips also makes critical or disparaging comments and disclosures about the parents and relatives of family and friends. I want to make it clear that such material has been retained solely to ensure the integrity of the diaries, and that its inclusion does not mean that I in any way condone it, or wish to cause embarrassment or offence.

I would like again to acknowledge and thank Robin Howard, who was the person who encouraged my brother, Henry, and me to publish the diaries and who then went on to give us invaluable help and advice. I would also like to thank Georgina Capel, our literary agent; Nigel Wilcockson, publishing director at our publishers, Penguin Random House; and Hugo Vickers – all provided help and advice throughout.

However, the person to whom I owe the deepest debt of gratitude is the editor of the diaries, Simon Heffer, who has been outstanding in every way. It has been a great privilege and pleasure working with him.

I would like, in addition, to acknowledge the important work done by Helen Howard in preparing copies of the manuscripts and helping to check their transcription, and I would like to offer my thanks to the transcribers who worked on this volume: Peig Van Amerongen, Consuela Barker, Fergus Burnand, Alex Colville, Domenica Dunne, Rory Fraser, Sibylla Phipps and Luke Regan.

All three volumes have had the benefit of the assistance and professionalism of Rod Lord, who undertook the scanning and preparation for printing of the various family photographs included; of Stephanie Heathcote and Amy Musgrave, who designed the jackets; and of Isabelle Ralphs, our publicist. I offer my thanks to all of them.

It is a great tragedy and a huge sadness that my brother, Henry, did not live to see this last volume published. He died in October 2021 and I would like to dedicate this volume to him and to my father Paul. As Lady Diana Cooper said of Chips, 'These poor lines record my tears, and the sorrow of many whose lives from now on will be lonelier.'

Georgia Fanshawe

Editor's Introduction

This third and final volume of the diaries of Sir Henry 'Chips' Channon picks up the narrative in late July 1943, just after the fall of Mussolini, and continues until early 1957, when Channon's health began to deteriorate and he appears to have stopped keeping a record of a life that had become less social and, increasingly, more a question of day-to-day survival in its last eighteen months.

Until then, as readers familiar with the first two volumes will have come to expect, the diarist gives detailed accounts of his life in all its aspects, as well as providing commentary on the lives of the people with whom he comes into contact – a mixture of people from high society, politics and the arts. Channon remained a Member of Parliament until his death, though 'out of the racket' as he puts it – that is, no longer with a position at the lower end of government as a parliamentary private secretary. However, he was still assiduous in his visits to his constituency at Southend-on-Sea in Essex and in his attendance in the Commons, if as always a rare and reluctant speaker. He recounts the end of the war and the arrival of a Labour government; he had by then become perhaps a less sectarian figure than previously, when he seemed to choose political friends only from his own Chamberlainite faction of the Conservative Party, in that he began to befriend some Labour MPs – inevitably, the more colourful and entertaining ones. One of the people he seems to find it hard to be positive about is Churchill, a sentiment that, ironically, he shared with a majority of the British electorate in 1945.

His life changes in three significant ways during the early years of this volume. First, he meets and falls in love with Terence Rattigan, who at the time was on his way to cementing his position as Britain's leading playwright. They have a tempestuous relationship, not least, as Channon tells the story, because of Rattigan's drinking and his interest in other men. Through him Channon meets a whole new circle of friends in the theatrical world, and some of the leading figures in that world from the late 1940s are portrayed through his pen: a number of them became film stars as well.

Second, there is tension between Channon and the other man in his life, Peter Coats, whose burgeoning relationship with the diarist had begun in 1939. While Coats is in India as chief of staff to the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, Channon's relationship with Rattigan is taking off. There is a gap in the diaries in 1946 when Coats has returned and Channon has to make a decision about where his private life is going. It was manifestly a time of immense tension, which usually in Channon's life seems to have meant he could not bear to keep a diary – although there is also the possibility, given this was a painful time in Coats's life too, that he may on his own initiative have destroyed the diaries for those months. Coats then unwittingly – or perhaps wittingly – plays the role of the philanderer's wife; Channon goes on to commit a form of adultery before eventually putting Rattigan

at a distance. However, he is soon pursuing other men, even in the early 1950s when his colleague Sir David Maxwell-Fyfe, the Home Secretary, was ordering the Metropolitan Police to seek out and arrest men engaging in homosexual activities. One of those caught was John Gielgud, one of the many new theatrical friends that Channon makes in the course of this volume through his relationship with Rattigan.

Third, his marriage to Lady Honor Guinness finally ends in 1945, the two of them having been estranged since 1940. One of the reasons this inevitable event was delayed was Channon's concern (and he makes no secret of this) about his future financial arrangements. Luckily for him, Lord Iveagh, his father-in-law and head of the Guinness dynasty, was generous and sympathetic, partly out of affection for Channon and partly because he wished to secure the future of his grandson. Paul would inherit the properties on his father's death; meanwhile, Channon had a couple of fine roofs over his head for the rest of his life, and could continue to live in the style to which he had become accustomed.

A somewhat happier development in Channon's life is the return, in 1944, of Lord Iveagh's grandson – Channon's then eight-year-old son Paul, who had been a child evacuee in America. Perhaps because his marriage is over (and his ex-wife showing only a dutiful interest in their son) and his private life is unstable, he devotes himself to his son, who embarks on the conventional life of a prep school boy before, in 1949, going to Eton. Channon takes enormous pride in Paul's achievements and the closest interest in his life, even to the extent of trying to choose for him the most suitable possible regiment when he has to do his National Service in 1954, before he goes up to Oxford.

The reader gets hints of Channon's physical decline as he writes about various ailments, notably occasionally his heart trouble. He was a heavy smoker and drinker, though not an alcoholic, and his weight see-sawed as he put himself on crash diets if he felt he had put on too much weight. He was also subject to rapid weight loss if going through periods of depression or (more rarely) extended elation. In the end he punished himself too much, and the drink and cigarettes – and his increasing attachment to Bensedrine, taken when he felt low – killed him in his 62nd year. He would die on 7 October 1958 after a severe stroke and cardiac problems. In his family photograph albums at Kelvedon there are several snaps of him in the last summer of his life, looking suddenly aged and slightly frail, and the end was not sudden. He had by that stage certainly lived life to the full, even if he died relatively young.

II

My editorial methods have been what they were in the first volume. I worked from ring-bound volumes of photocopied or typed diaries, and from an electronic transcription of the diaries made by a team of inputters appointed by the Channon estate. I also constantly consulted the first edition of the (highly

redacted and expurgated) diaries, edited by Robert Rhodes James and published in 1967. As I have mentioned in previous volumes, Rhodes James never saw the original manuscript, but worked on a draft of the diaries compiled by Coats after Channon's death. Coats removed any detail that was potentially libellous, of which there were a great many as numerous people mentioned in the diaries were still alive – notably, in this volume, Terence Rattigan, who did not die until 1977, a decade after the Rhodes James edition was published. He also removed references to himself and to his relationship with Channon, as that relationship was potentially incriminating: homosexuality was not legalised between consenting adult men over the age of 21 until the exact time the first edition was published.

As with previous volumes, it is important to remind readers that this is a historical document, and must be treated as such. Homosexuality, divorce and promiscuity, all of which feature in the diaries, offended and outraged many of Channon's generation. Casual racism, to which few paid close attention at the time, is expressed with less restraint. Channon sometimes uses deeply offensive terms about, for example, black, Asian and Jewish people that are rightly condemned today and would indeed have been distasteful to many when he wrote them; some of his remarks about Jews, deeply unpleasant in any context, are all the more so given the horrors that by 1945 Channon knew had been perpetrated against them. The editor, publisher and trustees do not associate themselves in any way with these remarks, but felt strongly that, as with the preceding volumes, it would be entirely wrong to distort a historical document. One or two people of whom Channon is disobliging were still alive and very elderly at the time of going to press, and the wish to avoid giving serious offence and to prevent any danger of libel have caused a handful of changes to be made. Otherwise I have striven, as before, to include every remark of historical interest, and any remark that shows an interesting facet of Channon's character or that of the people about whom he writes. Much of what has been omitted consists of long lists of those who attended his frequent luncheon and dinner parties, or repetitions that would have proved tedious.

The Rhodes James edition ended in 1952: if there were diaries for the ensuing years (and Coats, having lived with Channon, must have known there were) then we must assume that Coats and Rhodes James believed that they had been destroyed or had gone missing. In fact, in the early 1990s the manuscript diaries from 1952 to 1957 were returned to Paul Channon after being found at a car boot sale. There is no doubt about their authenticity, and they are printed in this volume for the first time. There is also little evidence of how they reached the unlikely destination of somebody's car boot. One can only presume that one of the family's retainers, sensing a commercial possibility, helped him- or herself to them in the immediate aftermath of Channon's death. That they were returned to the family effectively completes the picture. Although as detailed in earlier volumes will be aware, there are other gaps in the narrative, most of these are explicable by Channon's turbulent state of mind or other preoccupations at the time. There

must be a possibility that he kept a diary at Oxford from 1919 to 1921 or 1922 and later felt it so damaging that he either destroyed it or hid it. If it one day turns up it will tell us much about the formation of his character, and of his transformation from an American to a Briton.

I have sought, as before, to supply footnotes for everyone I can trace. Those footnoted in earlier volumes are given shorter references and marked by an asterisk (*). I was, as with the previous two volumes, given extensive assistance in securing accuracy in these notes by my friend Mr Hugo Vickers, to whom once more I express the most sincere gratitude. Any surviving mistakes are, of course, my responsibility and mine alone. I also owe a debt to my wife, Diana, whose support throughout the process of editing these diaries was constant, complete and indispensable; to Mrs Sue Brealey, who once more read the proofs with a high level of expertise; to Nigel Wilcockson, my publisher, whose faith in the project was vital to its successful inception and completion; to Georgina Capel, my indefatigable agent; to Mary Chamberlain, a superb and conscientious copy-editor; to the proofreader, Jonathan Wadman; to Tom and Emily Ward, without whose intervention during this edition's prehistory my role would never have come about; and above all to the three trustees, Chips's grandchildren Georgia Fanshawe and Henry Channon, and Robin Howard, whose support for and faith in me throughout the process was both unfailing and gratifying. It has been an enviable privilege to edit this astonishing and unique historical document.

It is, however, the cause of the greatest regret to me that Henry died tragically young in October 2021, and did not live to see the completion of an enterprise of which he was one of the progenitors. I am profoundly grateful to Katie, his widow, for her enormous contribution to the project and her many kindnesses to me. Nothing could have been more appropriate than to dedicate this third and final volume to Henry's memory. An unbearable loss to his family and friends, he was especially so to me.

Dramatis Personae

Names are given first in the form most commonly adopted in the diaries.

Family

- Lady Honor Channon (1909–76). Honor Dorothy Mary Guinness, eldest daughter of the 2nd Earl Iveagh, and Channon's wife from 1933. The couple divorced in 1945.
- Paul Channon (1935–2007). Henry Paul Guinness Channon, Channon's son. Educated at Eton and, like his father, Christ Church, Oxford. While still a second-year undergraduate he succeeded his father as Conservative MP for Southend West, a seat he held from 1959 (when he was Baby of the House) until raised to the peerage as Baron Kelvedon (life peer) in 1997. Like his father, he acted as parliamentary private secretary to R. A. Butler and served in junior ministerial jobs in Edward Heath's administration. Under Mrs Thatcher he served as Minister of State for the Civil Service, the Arts and then for Trade and Industry before joining the Cabinet as Secretary of State for Trade in 1986. He became Transport Secretary in 1987 and served until 1989. He married, in 1963, Ingrid Olivia Georgia Wyndham, who had been married to his cousin Jonathan Guinness, 3rd Baron Moynce.
- Lord Iveagh (1874–1967). Rupert Edward Cecil Lee Guinness, 2nd Earl Iveagh, Channon's father-in-law. He succeeded his own father as Chairman of the Guinness brewery, holding the post for thirty-five years and overseeing a period of great expansion and success in the business. He was also a distinguished agriculturalist who greatly improved his estate at Elveden in Suffolk; part of his extensive philanthropy (in both Britain and Ireland) was to fund agricultural research. He was awarded the Garter in 1955 and made a fellow of the Royal Society in 1964.
- Lady Iveagh (1881–1966). Lady Gwendolen Florence May Onslow, wife of the 2nd Earl of Iveagh, and Channon's mother-in-law. Daughter of the 4th Earl of Onslow, she succeeded him as MP for Southend from 1927 until 1935.
- Arthur Elveden (1912–45). Arthur Onslow Edward Guinness, by courtesy Viscount Elveden from 1927. Channon's brother-in-law, he was killed in action in Belgium in February 1945.
- Elizabeth Elveden (1914–90). Elizabeth Cecilia Hare, by courtesy Lady Elizabeth Hare after 1924, was the youngest daughter of the 4th Earl of Listowel. She married Lord Elveden in July 1936.
- Patsy Guinness (1918–2001). Lady Patricia Florence Susan Guinness, second daughter of the 2nd Earl Iveagh, and Channon's sister-in-law. She married Channon's close friend Alan Lennox-Boyd in 1938.
- Alan Lennox-Boyd (1904–83). Conservative MP for Mid-Bedfordshire from 1931 to 1960, he served as Minister of Transport from 1952 to 1954 and Colonial Secretary from 1954 to 1959. He then became managing director of Arthur Guinness and Sons, a post he held until 1967. He was raised to the peerage as 1st Viscount Boyd of Merton in 1960. Married to Channon's sister-in-law, Patricia Florence Susan Guinness (1918–2001), he was one of Channon's most intimate friends.

Brigid Guinness (1920–95). Lady Brigid Katherine Rachel Guinness, third and youngest daughter of the 2nd Earl Iveagh, and Channon's sister-in-law. She married, in 1945, 'Fritzi', Prince Friedrich of Prussia.

'Fritzi', Prince Friedrich Georg Wilhelm Christoph of Prussia (1911–66). The fourth son of the Crown Prince of Germany, a grandson of Kaiser Wilhelm II, and one of Channon's closest friends. Interned for much of the Second World War, he married Brigid Guinness in 1945.

Walter Moyne (1880–1944). Walter Edward Guinness, younger son of the 1st Earl of Iveagh. He had a distinguished military and political career, serving as Conservative MP for Bury St Edmunds from 1907 until 1931. In 1932 he was created 1st Baron Moyne. From 1942 to 1944 he was Minister Resident in the Middle East. He was assassinated by members of Lehl, a Jewish militant group. He married, in 1903, Lady Evelyn Hilda Stuart Erskine (1883–1939). His son Bryan Walter Guinness (1905–92) succeeded him as 2nd Baron Moyne.

Close friends, associates and political colleagues

Alba, Duke of (1878–1953). Jacobo Fitz-James Stuart y Falcó, 17th Duke of Alba. From 1936 he was General Franco's representative in London, becoming Ambassador in 1939 when the British Government formally recognised the Franco regime.

Amery, (Harold) Julian (1919–96). Son of Leo Amery and Conservative MP for Preston North from 1950 to 1966 and for Brighton Pavilion from 1969 to 1992, when he was raised to the peerage as Lord Amery of Lustleigh (life peer). During the Second World War he served in the Middle East, as a liaison officer with the Albanian resistance, and in China. His father-in-law, Harold Macmillan, appointed him Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1958, Secretary of State for Air in 1960 and Minister of Aviation in 1962, a post he held until 1964. He also served as a Minister of State in the Heath administration from 1970 to 1974.

Amery, John (1912–45). Older son of Leo Amery, he was expelled from Harrow after a year for refusing to conform with the rules, went bankrupt in his early 20s through bad investments in the film business and, aged 21, married a prostitute. He became a fascist sympathiser in the 1930s and joined the *cagouleurs* in France, finding himself there after the Nazi occupation in 1940. He was allowed to travel to Germany in 1942 where he suggested forming a British anti-communist legion. He tried to recruit members from among British prisoners of war but only two volunteered. He broadcast propaganda from Berlin before being captured in north Italy in April 1945, where he had been supporting Mussolini. An attempt was made to construct a defence for him but he pleaded guilty to eight charges of treason, and was hanged in Wandsworth Prison in December 1945.

Amery, Leopold (Leo) Charles Maurice Stennett (1873–1955). A staunch imperialist, he sat as a Birmingham Conservative MP from 1911 to 1945, was First Lord of the Admiralty under Bonar Law and Baldwin, Colonial and Dominions Secretary in Baldwin's 1924–9 administration, and Secretary of State for India from 1940 to 1945. He married Florence Greenwood in 1897 and had a daughter, Mrs. M. A. Greenwood of Canada in 1910, and they had two sons: Julian and John.

- Attlee, Clement Richard (1883–1967). Led the Labour Party from 1935 to 1955, was Lord Privy Seal in Churchill's coalition administration from 1940 to 1942 and Deputy Prime Minister from 1942 to 1945 and Prime Minister from 1945 to 1951.
- Baillie, Olive (1899–1974). Olive Cecilia Paget, daughter of the 1st Baron Queenborough. She married in 1931, as her third husband, Sir Adrian William Maxwell Baillie (1898–1947), 6th Bt, and they lived at Leeds Castle in Kent, which she owned. They divorced in 1944. She was a leading society hostess.
- Balfour, Harold Harington (1897–1988). A regular officer in the RAF, and before that a fighter ace in the Royal Flying Corps, in which he reached the rank of major and won the Military Cross and bar. He was Conservative MP for the Isle of Thanet from 1929 to 1945, and Under-Secretary of State for Air from 1938 to 1944. He was raised to the peerage as 1st Baron Balfour of Inchrye in 1945.
- Beaton, Cecil Walter Hardy (1904–80). Photographer, designer, painter and diarist, he was helped out of his family's timber business to become a fashionable photographer by Osbert Sitwell. He worked extensively for *Vogue* and photographed many of the 'bright young things'. He made a reputation as a war photographer during the Second World War and, thanks to the patronage of Queen Elizabeth, as a renowned royal photographer. He was knighted in 1972. His diaries have been published.
- Beaumont, Hugh 'Binkie' (1908–73). One of the most successful manager-producers in the West End during the middle decades of the twentieth century, who worked closely with figures such as Noël Coward and John Gielgud. He was a founder member of the board of the National Theatre.
- Brittain-Jones, Joyce (1902–74). Born Joyce Henrietta Wallach, she married John Brittain-Jones, an officer in the Black Watch, in 1924. She met the then-exiled King George II of Greece in 1930 and, following his separation from Queen Elisabeth in 1935, and Mrs Brittain-Jones's divorcing her husband for adultery, the two effectively cohabited, with her living at the royal family's summer palace. After the war, most of which they spent in London, she reputedly rejected his proposal of marriage, thinking it would damage his chances of continuing to reign in Greece. He died in 1947.
- Buccleuch, 'Mollie' (1900–1993). Vreda Esther Mary Lascelles, daughter of Major William Frank Lascelles and Lady Sybil de Vere Beauclerk, married in 1921 Walter John Montagu Douglas Scott (*vide infra*), Earl of Dalkeith by courtesy, and from 1935 8th Duke of Buccleuch.
- Buccleuch, Walter (1894–1973). Walter John Montagu Douglas Scott, by courtesy Earl of Dalkeith from 1914 to 1935, when he succeeded his father as 8th Duke of Buccleuch and 10th Duke of Queensberry. He married, in 1921, Vreda Esther Mary 'Mollie' Lascelles (*vide infra*), daughter of Major William Frank Lascelles and granddaughter of the 10th Duke of St Albans. Before the war he had been pro-German and, some suspected, pro-Nazi.
- Butler, Richard Austen 'Rab' (1902–82). One of the most influential politicians of the mid-twentieth century, though his support for appeasement and unbridled quick wit helped ensure he never became leader of the Conservative Party, despite being in the frame in 1955 to succeed Anthony Eden and in 1963 to succeed Harold Macmillan. From 1929 to 1965 he was MP for Saffron Walden, before being elevated to a life peerage as Baron Butler of Saffron Walden. An under-secretary

at the Foreign Office at the time of Munich, he was a great reforming Minister of Education from 1941 to 1945; he ran the Conservative Research Department during the party's spell in Opposition, recruiting talents such as J. Enoch Powell, Reginald Maudling and Iain Macleod, who went on to be Cabinet ministers; and between 1951 and 1964 was successively Chancellor of the Exchequer, Leader of the House of Commons, Home Secretary, First Secretary of State and Deputy Prime Minister, and Foreign Secretary. He retired to be Master of Trinity College, Cambridge. He married, in 1926, Sydney Elizabeth Courtauld (1902–54), daughter of Samuel Courtauld (1876–1947), industrialist, art collector and philanthropist, and founder in 1932 of the Courtauld Institute of Art. He married, secondly, Mollie Courtauld (*née* Montgomerie) (1908–2009), widow of his first wife's cousin, in 1959. He played a significant part in Channon's political career.

Cholmondeley, 'Ti' (1885–1969). Born Ina Marjorie Gwendolin Pelly, she married Christopher William Lowther in 1910; and, having divorced him, married secondly George Hugo Cholmondeley (1887–1958), Lord George by courtesy, in 1921.

Churchill, Randolph (1911–68). Randolph Frederick Edward Spencer-Churchill, son of Sir Winston Churchill, spent his life in his father's shadow, and with few of his qualities and little of his talent. He mostly earned his living by writing and spent five years – 1940 to 1945 – as a Member of Parliament, before being defeated in the Labour landslide. Lazy and arrogant, he dropped out of Oxford, began to drink heavily and ran up substantial debts, setting a pattern for the rest of his life. Channon, in common with most who knew him, loathed him.

Churchill, Winston Leonard Spencer (1874–1965). Elected as a Conservative MP for Oldham in 1900, he crossed the floor in 1904 to become a Liberal, before rejoining the Conservatives as MP for Epping from 1924 to 1945 and for Woodford from 1945 to 1964. He held numerous Cabinet posts from 1908 to 1929, and was a vigorous opponent of appeasement during the 1930s (hence, in part, Channon's hostility to him). After Neville Chamberlain's resignation in 1940, Churchill became Prime Minister, serving in this role until 1945 and from 1951 to 1955. He married in 1908 Clementine Ogilvy Hozier (1885–1977). He received the Garter in 1953.

Coats, Peter (1910–90). A garden writer, photographer and designer, he met Channon in 1939 and became an intimate friend. During the Second World War, he served as aide-de-camp to General Wavell. Known to Channon as 'Bunny'.

Colefax, Sibyl (1874–1950). Born Sibyl Halsey, she was a noted interior designer. She married in 1901 Sir Arthur Colefax (1866–1936), a noted barrister and from January to December 1910 Conservative MP for South West Manchester.

Cooper, (Alfred) Duff (1890–1954). Joined the Diplomatic Service in 1913 and served in the Grenadier Guards for the last eighteen months of the Great War, being awarded the DSO. He married Diana Manners in 1919 but was a career womaniser. He became Conservative MP for Oldham in 1924 but lost in 1929, returning to Parliament having won the Westminster St George's by-election in 1931, holding the seat until 1945. He quickly attained junior office and in 1935 became Secretary of State for War. In 1937 he became First Lord of the Admiralty but resigned in 1938 over the Munich agreement. Churchill held several other roles between 1940 and 1944, when he became Ambassador to Paris, a post he held until 1948. He was knighted in 1948 and raised to the peerage as 1st Viscount Norwich in 1952.

- Cooper, Lady Diana (1892–1986). Diana Olivia Winifred Maud Manners, by courtesy Lady Diana Manners, the youngest daughter of the 8th Duke of Rutland, though probably the daughter of Harry Cust, one of the Souls, editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* and Conservative MP. Celebrated as one of the most beautiful women in England, she was a member of the Coterie, her generation's equivalent of the Souls, where she met Duff Cooper, whom she married much against the wishes of her family. She appeared in some silent films and was asked to play the Madonna in Karl Vollmöller's wordless stage spectacle *The Miracle*, directed by Max Reinhardt, to huge acclaim: she toured the production for twelve years. The money she made allowed Cooper to enter politics and her many absences facilitated his womanising, which she tolerated. When he was ennobled as Viscount Norwich she continued to be known as Lady Diana Cooper, on the grounds that 'Norwich' sounded to her like 'porridge'.
- Cooper, John Julius (1929–2018). Son of Duff and Lady Diana Cooper, he succeeded his father as 2nd Viscount Norwich in 1954. After a career as a diplomat he became a writer and television personality.
- Corrigan, Laura (1879–1948). Born Laura Mae Whitlock, the daughter of a handyman from Wisconsin, she married in 1916 as her second husband James William Corrigan (1880–1928), a steel magnate from Cleveland, Ohio. She was a noted philanthropist as well as a society hostess. She was renowned for her malapropisms, such as when in discussing India she said 'Ah, to see the Aga Khan by moonlight.'
- Cunard, 'Emerald' (1872–1948). Born Maud Alice Burke in San Francisco, she married in 1895 Sir Bache Cunard, 3rd Bt (1851–1925), grandson of the shipping line's founder. They lived largely apart from 1911, Cunard basing himself in Leicestershire where he enjoyed field sports. In London with their daughter Nancy Clara (1896–1965), Lady Cunard – who after her husband's death became known as 'Emerald' – established one of the leading salons of the era, which thrived until the Second World War. After separating from her husband she became the mistress of Sir Thomas Beecham, the conductor, and funded many of his musical projects, and was devastated when he married another woman.
- Duff, Juliet Gladys Mary (1881–1965). Born Juliet Lowther, by courtesy Lady Juliet, she married Sir Robert George Vivian Duff, 2nd Bt, in 1903 and was the mother of Sir Michael Duff. After her first husband was killed in action in 1914 she married, in 1919, Major Keith Trevor, whom she divorced in 1926. She then reverted to the surname of Lowther, though Channon calls her by her original married name, Duff.
- Dunglass, Alec (1903–95). Alexander Frederick Douglas-Home, by courtesy Lord Dunglass from 1918 to 1951, when he succeeded his father as 14th Earl of Home. He renounced his hereditary peerage in 1963 to become leader of the Conservative Party and Prime Minister, serving until 1964. He was Conservative MP for Lanark from 1931 to 1945 and from 1950 to 1951, and for Kinross and Western Perthshire from 1963 to 1974. He was Commonwealth Secretary from 1955 to 1960 and Foreign Secretary from 1960 to 1963 and from 1970 to 1974. He became Chamberlain's PPS in 1936 and served until 1960. He was created Baron Home of the Hirsel (life peerage) in 1974.

Eden, (Robert) Anthony (1897–1977). Son of Sir William Eden, Bt, of County Durham. He won the Military Cross in the Great War and became in 1918 the youngest brigade major in the Army. He was MP for Warwick and Leamington from 1923 to 1957 and became Lord Privy Seal in 1933. Later in 1935 he became Foreign Secretary, until resigning over appeasement in 1938 (hence, in part, Channon's hostility to him). Churchill appointed him Secretary of State for War in 1940 and, later that year, Foreign Secretary. He returned to that post in 1951 and was Prime Minister from 1955 to 1957. He became a Knight of the Garter in 1954 and was raised to the peerage as 1st Earl of Avon in 1961.

Fellowes, 'Daisy' (1890–1962). Born Marguerite Séverine Philippine Decazes de Glücksburg, daughter of the 3rd duc Decazes de Glücksburg, she married, first, Jean Amédée Marie Anatole de Broglie (1886–1918), and then in 1919 the Hon. Reginald Allwyn Fellowes (1884–1953), after which she was known as Daisy Fellowes. A *grande horizontale* (she tried to seduce Winston Churchill, whose cousin her second husband was, and had an affair with Duff Cooper), her lover Leishmann (described elsewhere as Lischmann) was, she told others, a 'horrible man' who had fathered her third daughter, Jacqueline (1918–65). She was an heiress to the Singer sewing-machine fortune, Paris editor of American *Harper's Bazaar* and a novelist.

Gielgud, (Arthur) John (1904–2000). One of the leading actors of the English stage, radio and film of the twentieth century. He was knighted in the Coronation Honours of 1953, shortly before being arrested for importuning.

Halifax, Lord (1881–1959). Edward Frederick Lindley Wood, son of the 2nd Viscount Halifax. He was a fellow of All Souls from 1903 to 1910, then MP for Ripon from 1910 to 1925, becoming a Cabinet minister as President of the Board of Education in 1922 and, from 1924, Minister of Agriculture. He was raised to the peerage as Baron Irwin in 1925 on accepting the Viceroyalty of India, which he held from 1926 until 1931, and succeeded his father as 3rd Viscount Halifax in 1934. He became a Knight of the Garter in 1931. He served again at Education from 1932 to 1935, then as Secretary of State for War from 1935 and as Foreign Secretary in 1938, when he became closely identified with appeasement. He almost became Prime Minister in 1940; but instead went as Ambassador to the United States from 1941 to 1946. He married, in 1908, Lady Dorothy Evelyn Augusta Onslow (1885–1976), daughter of the 4th Earl of Onslow, and later Channon's aunt by marriage. Halifax was advanced to an earldom in 1944. For many years Alexandra 'Baba' Curzon was his mistress.

Hore-Belisha, (Isaac) Leslie (1893–1957). Son of Jacob Isaac Belisha, he came from a Sephardic Jewish family that had settled in Manchester in the eighteenth century. Elected Liberal MP for Devonport in 1923, he aligned himself with Sir John Simon at the time of the formation of the National Government in 1931, and in 1932 became Financial Secretary to the Treasury. Appointed Minister of Transport in 1934, he invented the Belisha beacon to highlight the existence of zebra crossings, and took trunk roads under the control of central government to help develop an improved national road network. He was Secretary of State for War from 1937 to 1940, when he was sacked because of the blatant anti-Semitism of senior officers. One of Channon's closest friends.

- Hull, Helen Huntington (1893–1976). A prominent socialite and political hostess in New York, a patron of the arts, prominent Republican and discreet lesbian, she had married William Vincent Astor in 1914 but they were divorced in 1941. Paul Channon was evacuated to her care in the summer of 1940, after the fall of France.
- Kent, Duchess of (1906–68). Princess Marina of Greece and Denmark, daughter of Prince Nicholas of Greece. She married, in 1934, Prince George, created Duke of Kent in 1934, youngest surviving son of King George V and Queen Mary. A close friend of Channon, he died in 1942 on active service with the RAF. Her sister Olga was Princess Paul.
- Killearn, Jacqueline (1910–2015). Born Jacqueline Aldine Leslie Castellani, she was the only child of an Italian doctor, Sir Aldo Castellani, and became the second wife of the career diplomat Miles Wedderburn Lampson (1880–1964), who was raised to the peerage in 1941 as 1st Baron Killearn.
- Llewellyn, John Jestyn ('Jay') (1893–1957). MP for Uxbridge from 1929 to 1945; he held several posts in the wartime coalition government and was raised to the peerage as 1st Baron Llewellyn in 1945. A good friend of Channon's and a discreet homosexual.
- Londonderry, Lady (1878–1959). Edith Helen 'Circe' Chaplin, daughter of the 1st Viscount Chaplin, married Viscount Castlereagh (later 7th Marquess of Londonderry) in 1899. There was much talk in society about her friendship with James Ramsay MacDonald, the widowed leader of the Labour Party; and she was a passionate gardener.
- Londonderry, Lord (1878–1949). Charles Stewart Henry Vane-Tempest-Stewart, 7th Marquess of Londonderry. He was appointed a Knight of the Garter in 1919 and served as Secretary of State for Air from 1931 to 1935. He went out of favour because of his close links with, and apparent regard for, the Nazis in Germany.
- Lunt, Alfred David (1892–1977). American actor and director who, with his wife Lynn Fontanne, whom he married in 1922, had a close association with both Noël Coward and Terence Rattigan.
- Margesson, (Henry) David Reginald (1890–1965). Conservative MP from 1922 to 1942. From 1931 to 1940 he was government Chief Whip, renowned for his occasionally menacing and bullying approach, and from 1940 to 1942 was Secretary of State for War. He was raised to the peerage as 1st Viscount Margesson in 1942, having been sacked from the Cabinet and replaced by his Permanent Secretary.
- Morrison, Herbert Stanley (1888–1965). A local Labour politician in London before being elected to Parliament in 1923 for Hackney South, he lost his seat in 1924 but returned in 1929, serving as Minister of Transport. He lost his seat in 1931 and resumed a career in London politics, becoming leader of the London County Council in 1934. His legacy was substantial: he created London Transport, established the Green Belt and oversaw the building of numerous housing estates in the inner London suburbs. Returned to Parliament in 1935, he sat for Hackney South until 1945 and then for Lewisham East from 1945 to 1950 and Lewisham South from 1950 to 1959. He was briefly Minister of Supply in Churchill's wartime coalition, then Home Secretary from 1944 to 1945. He was deputy leader of the Labour Party from 1945 to 1956, and served as Leader of the House of Commons and Lord President of the Council from 1945 to 1951, then briefly Foreign Secretary.

He was raised to the peerage as Baron Morrison of Lambeth (life peer) in 1959. For all his success, he was widely disliked by both opponents and colleagues.

Obolensky, 'Serge' (1890–1978). Prince Sergei Platonovich Obolensky Neledinsky-Meletsky was educated at Oxford and became part of the Russian diaspora after the Revolution. He emigrated to America and became a successful businessman.

Olga of Greece and Denmark, Princess (1903–97). Daughter of Prince Nicholas of Greece and Denmark and Grand Duchess Elena Vladimirovna of Russia, granddaughter of King George I of Greece and great-granddaughter of Tsar Alexander I of Russia. She married Channon's close friend Prince Paul of Yugoslavia (1893–1976) and was sister-in-law of another close member of the Channon circle, the Duke of Kent.

Olivier, Laurence Kerr (1907–1989). One of the most renowned actors of the twentieth century, who enjoyed enormous success on stage, on screen and in television roles. Films he made during and immediately after the Second World War included *That Hamilton Woman* (1941), *Henry V* (1944), *Hamlet* (1948) and *Richard III* (1955). During much of that period he was also co-directing the Old Vic, and he would go on to champion the creation of the National Theatre. He divorced his first wife, Jill Esmond, to marry the actress Vivien Leigh, but divorced her in turn in 1960.

Paul of Yugoslavia, Prince (1893–1976). Prince Regent of Yugoslavia (the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes) from 1934 to 1941 during the minority of Peter II, he and Channon met at Oxford and become close friends. He was the nephew of King Peter I and married Princess Olga of Greece and Denmark (1903–97), sister-in-law of another of Channon's close friends, the Duke of Kent. After treating with the Germans in 1941 Paul was forced from Yugoslavia and forbidden ever to return; the post-war Communist regime stripped him of his property and proclaimed him an enemy of the state. Until 1945 the British authorities held him in Kenya under house arrest. Serbia rehabilitated him posthumously in 2011, after which he was reburied with Princess Olga and their son Nicholas.

Pavlovsky, Maimie (1910–82). Lady Mary 'Maimie' Lygon was the third daughter of the 7th Earl Beauchamp. In 1930 she was on the verge of becoming engaged to Prince George when her father was disgraced in a homosexual scandal. At this time she became friends with Evelyn Waugh and is thought to be the model for Lady Julia Flyte in *Brideshead Revisited*. She married, in 1939, Prince Vsevolod Ivanovich of Russia, and became Her Serene Highness Princess Mary Romanovsky-Pavlovsky. Both became alcoholics and the marriage was dissolved in 1956.

Peter of Yugoslavia, King (1923–70). Succeeded his father as King of Yugoslavia in 1934 and was proclaimed King Peter II in 1941, aged 17, after Prince Paul was removed as Regent in a *coup d'état*. He was deposed in November 1945, went into exile in Chicago and drank himself to death. He married, in 1944, Princess Alexandra of Greece and Denmark (1921–93).

Rattigan, Terence Mervyn (1911–77). One of the most celebrated British playwrights of the mid-twentieth century, with a string of successes including *The Winslow Boy*, *The Browning Version*, *The Deep Blue Sea* and *Separate Tables*. Many of his plays were filmed, and he wrote a number of successful screenplays, one of which, based on *Flare Path*, was *The Way to the Stars* (1945). He was an unhappy, bibulous homosexual and much of his writing reflects his internal turmoils. Channon

became close to him in 1944, and their friendship rapidly turned into a love affair. He was knighted in 1971.

Sitwell, Sacheverell Reresby (1897–1988). Brother of Osbert and Edith Sitwell, he married Georgia Doble (1905–80) and succeeded his brother as 6th Bt in 1969. Like his brother and sister, he had a successful literary career.

Sutherland, Eileen (1891–1943). Lady Eileen Gwladys Butler, daughter of the 7th Earl of Lanesborough and wife of the 5th Duke of Sutherland.

Sutherland, 'Geordie' (1888–1963). George Granville Sutherland-Leveson-Gower, 5th Duke of Sutherland.

Wavell, Archibald Percival (1883–1950). A career soldier, who, at the beginning of the Second World War, was General Officer Commanding in Palestine, before briefly being given Southern Command in Britain and, in February 1940, becoming Commander-in-Chief Middle East. In 1941 he became C-in-C in India; and was promoted to field marshal in 1943 and served as Viceroy from 1943 to 1947. He was raised to the peerage as 1st Viscount Wavell in 1943 and advanced to an earldom in 1947. Peter Coats served as his aide-de-camp and later as his chief of staff when Viceroy, and he became good friends with Channon.

Westminster, Loelia (1902–93). Loelia Mary Ponsonby, daughter of Sir Frederick Ponsonby (later 1st Baron Sysonby), married in 1930 as his third wife the 2nd Duke of Westminster. They divorced in 1947.

Willingdon, Lady (1875–1960). Marie Adelaide Brassey, who married the 1st Marquess of Willingdon, in 1892. He served as Viceroy of India from 1931 to 1936.

1943

TUESDAY 27TH JULY

I walked with P[eter Coats] to the House of Commons, where it was a historic day as Winston was to make a pronouncement on Italy¹ The House was packed and the excitement intense. I thought the PM's speech the most statesmanlike of his utterances; he avoided cheap jibes or [illegible] at the fallen Duce's² expense, and he deplored too much jubilation. It was restrained and subtle and prepared the Commons for more things to come. More ignorant members were bewildered but consensus of opinion was that Churchill had been masterly . . . I saw P off, and I went to lunch with the Parliamentary Empire Association at the Savoy, a small lunch arranged for Wavell.³ His face lit up when he saw me, and I fetched him his cocktail and cheered him and introduced MPs to him etc. He is apt to be a lonely and isolated figure in public Mr Amery in a completely inaudible speech introduced the Viceroy-designate who rose, and rather shyly made a charming, simple speech in reply. Then we adjourned to the House of Commons, where Wavell gave a long and excellent address to a very crowded mixed all-Party meeting, and he made a most favourable impression. I organised a deafening claque . . . he was actually a bit dull to me, as I had so often heard all of it before: it was a re-hash but to newcomers it was enthralling. He looked somehow so lovable, lovely and almost pathetic.

I had arranged a little dinner party for Jay Llewellyn in his honour. Came: Rab Butler; Harold Balfour; Geoffrey Lloyd;⁴ Alan [Lennox-Boyd]; Mabane;⁵ and P, who glistened and glittered like some golden god in this pedestrian political assembly. Dinner was gay, but towards the end lapsed a bit; perhaps everybody was a bit inebriated: meanwhile Diana and John Julius [Cooper] walked in. They, too, are staying the night and so the house is very full.

1 King Victor Emmanuel had sacked Mussolini two days earlier, and had him arrested. Six weeks later the Germans would free him and take him to lead a puppet administration from Gargano, on the shores of Lake Garda.

2 Benito Mussolini (1883–1945), Prime Minister of Italy 1922–43.*

3 Archibald Percival Wavell (1883–1950), 1st Viscount Wavell, Viceroy of India 1943–7 (qv).

4 Geoffrey Lloyd (1902–84) was MP for seats in Birmingham from 1931 to 1945 and from 1950 to 1974. He held junior office throughout the period from 1935 to 1945 and two ministerial posts during the 1950s.*

5 William Mabane (1895–1969) was Liberal MP for Huddersfield from 1931 to 1945. He held several junior offices in the Chamberlain and Churchill governments.*

WEDNESDAY 28TH JULY

All up very early. I breakfasted with P before eight as he wanted to see about the FM's¹ robes and Lady Wavell's clothes. I followed to Westminster. Bobby Cunningham-Reid,² who is the Cad No. 1, made another of his latest vile attacks on Paul and Princess Olga . . . I gave Lady Willingdon lunch at one o'clock; she, P and I lunched in the Commons, whilst the Wavells lunched in the Lords. Afterwards we joined them . . . Wavell himself was with his supporters, who were Lord Lee of Fareham³ and Lord Trenchard,⁴ both being Viscounts. I introduced Lady Willingdon to Lady Wavell – 'B'⁵ to Queenie! – and they sized each other up. Then we passed into the robing room and already Wavell was donning his ermine and velvet. Lady Oxford⁶ rushed up to me in her dominating manner, 'Will you introduce me to Wavell. He is the Empire's hero!' and so I led her up to the Field Marshal, who was trying to get into his robes. He paused, smiled and chatted with her for a moment, she was enchanted. She looks like a scarecrow, or a mad raven, yet there is fire still in that antique skeleton. She has ever been my friend and my ally . . . I then escorted Lady Wavell to the entrance of the Lords. The peers were still at prayers. Presently we were joined by the family, the sisters who 'home in' on every possible occasion, the daughters etc. Places had been reserved for the family and I stood at the bar. Soon the procession entered and Wavell was immensely dignified if somewhat diffident. He bowed correctly, answered audibly, and removed his hat the endless times required. He has taken the name of Viscount Wavell of Cyrenaica and Winchester; there are other suggestions but the Garter King of Arms has been pompous and unhelpful. The whole affair lasted only a brief twenty minutes.

1 'Field Marshal's'.

2 Alec Stratford Cunningham-Reid DFC (1895–1977) had been a fighter pilot in the First World War. He was a Conservative MP from 1922 to 1923, 1924 to 1929, and 1932 to 1945.*

3 Arthur Hamilton Lee (1868–1947) was a professional soldier before becoming Conservative MP for Fareham, which he represented from 1900 to 1918 when he was raised to the peerage as 1st Baron Lee of Fareham. He was Minister of Agriculture from 1919 to 1921 and First Lord of the Admiralty from 1921 to 1922, when he was advanced to a viscountcy. He is best remembered now for giving Chequers, in Buckinghamshire, to the nation as a country house for the Prime Minister.

4 Hugh Montague Trenchard (1873–1956) developed the Royal Air Force out of the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Air Service. He was knighted in 1918 and was the first Chief of the Air Staff. In 1930 he was raised to the peerage as 1st Baron Trenchard was advanced to a viscountcy in 1936.*

5 Lady Willingdon's sobriquet was 'Bee'.

6 Emma Alice Margaret 'Margot' Tennant (1864–1945),* wife of H. H. Asquith;* with his elevation to an earldom in 1925 she became Countess of Oxford and Asquith.

THURSDAY 29TH JULY

I lunched at the H of C with Jock Macnamara,¹ the member for Chelmsford; and I have agreed to take over the duties of his constituency as he is going abroad Macnamara was at the time [he was sent abroad] about the youngest Colonel – and certainly the youngest looking Colonel in the Army. He seems a boy; yet he is a born soldier and is now being sent abroad. In a sense I become my own MP since Kelvedon lies in his division. I can now write myself angry letters. Rab introduced his famous Education Bill² or rather presented it in its preliminary stages. He did it well, but unostentatiously. He is unassuming by nature. Later I went out shopping, ran into Felicity Wavell, gave her masses of presents and then we walked to the India Office and picked up a surprised Peter. Jay Llewellyn, who was passing, sent us home in his car. We had tea at No. 5 and then went to the Dorchester to have drinks with the Wavells.

FRIDAY 30TH JULY

I drove Laura Corrigan to Pyrford as she is Godmother to Mark,³ the youngest Lennox-Boyd, who was christened today in the Pyrford Church. We lunched with the family, all too sweet, but few preparations were made. They have literally no social sense, and dear Patsy is the worst offender of them all. A muddled luncheon party The ceremony passed off well – Christopher shrieked and diverted attention from his baby brother. To pacify him, Patsy gave him a bracelet to play with and he dropped it between the pews and the stone-walls. It could not be found. After champagne we drove back to London.

Channon and Coats spend the weekend alone at Kelvedon.

MONDAY 2ND AUGUST

P is the perfect companion, knowledge[able], witty and kind, his presence is a perpetual pleasure and drug. We are quite happy alone together and made plans for the future here His taste in gardening is impeccable. I think that he is glad of a holiday from the old Field Marshal; but I miss his gruff gentleness; some people allege that he is 'gaga' but he has a grandeur of character and genius that transcends most people. It is his detachment and long sudden silences that distance people.

1 John Robert Jermain Macnamara (1905–44) was elected as Conservative MP for Chelmsford in 1935. He was part of the Anglo-German Fellowship and for a time had as his personal assistant Guy Burgess, later exposed as a Soviet spy. A colonel in the infantry, he was killed in action in Italy.

2 It became the 1944 Education Act, creating a system of grammar, technical and secondary modern schools for those aged 11 and over.

3 Mark Alexander Lennox-Boyd (b.1943), Conservative MP for Morecambe from 1979 to 1997.*

WEDNESDAY 4TH AUGUST

I am feeling v livid and Poor Peter is far from well; he is delicate and has, I fear, weak lungs; nor has he ever really recovered from his pneumonia. Moreover the F[ield] M[arshal] is a strain: no individual is more so. P needs a holiday and a rest and I trust that Torquay where we go tomorrow will be a success.

THURSDAY 5TH AUGUST

IMPERIAL HOTEL, TORQUAY

P and I left before eleven in my – his ex – little grey car, as luckily between us we have sufficient petrol.¹ A grey day, overcast but the joy of the journey!! We stopped in several places, chatted and chattered all the way. Passing Ottery St Mary, the cradle of the Channons, we went there: the church is charming, and there are actually Channon tomb-stones in the little churchyard. At Exeter, we stopped in the rain . . . and visited the cathedral.

We arrived here for cocktails and dinner; this large caravanserai overlooking Torbay is comfortable, exceedingly so pre-war-time, but so full of Jews.

We have an immense sitting room and it was fun unpacking our books and arranging it. And a good-sized bedroom and bath and a roof where we can sunbathe. I managed to have a double bed put in as both P and I hate sleeping separately.

Nobody here that we know.

FRIDAY 6TH AUGUST – WEDNESDAY 11TH AUGUST

Nothing to report. Just bliss – we sleep together, bathe together, share sun-lit breakfasts, dress slowly together – or sunbathe on the roof, our balcony. Often it is overcast and then we wander into the town and make silly purchases, or go for drinks in the car; and sometimes he takes me to a cinema – hardly any letters, and little contact with the outside world. P refuses to go to Buckfast, as he is very anti-Catholic, and also, alas, anti-sun.

At last a communication came from my American attorneys; my mad mother's² will has been found. She leaves me all the Channon property (which was mine anyway, or most of it since my father left it to me heavily mortgaged and I allowed her to buy the property). So I came into it for the second time only freed of debt.

Her last will was made in 1937 when I was still, I suppose, colossally rich. I do not get her residue consisting of Wisconsin property. In theory this is monstrous; in practice I shall have only a small loss, as she leaves debts, mortgages and considerable administration expenses and back taxation. All this must be paid from residue so I really lose little, if anything and shall not contest it. Probably I am saved a vast amount of trouble and expense. Still I am slightly piqued particularly as she knew of my

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1 It was strictly rationed.

2 Vesta Channon had died in Chicago on 18 June 1943, a month before her 73rd birthday. Manifestly her death had done nothing to mitigate her son's feelings towards her.

altered circumstances and had often written that she was changing her will. I believe she could never get around to doing it; she was the Queen of the procrastinators. However. I am now spared the cares of loving or respecting her memory.

THURSDAY 12TH AUGUST

There was a severe raid on Plymouth last night and we heard the planes going over and I heard the distant guns, but Torquay and Torbay were untouched. We got up rather earlier this morning and I drove via Paignton into Plymouth, saw much damage and desolation; indeed half the town seems to have been destroyed. We lost the way but I eventually found the ferry and arrived at Newton Ferrers for luncheon with the Abdys.¹ They are living in two or three rooms as the house was almost all destroyed by fire a few years ago. Diana² was v sweet, gay, coquettish and charming in her slacks; Bertie, who had cooked the lunch, seemed less mad but as maddening as ever. They have only one servant, a nursemaid who brought in the child, Valentine,³ a pretty boy – people say he is abnormal but I saw no sign of it. Lady Colefax was there *en villégiature*⁴ and all were enchanted to see us. Peter was delightful . . . the remnants of the attractive house have a Pannini⁵ atmosphere: ruins, loveliness, a few treasures remain, *marquetrie* pieces and Bertie's huge library, always a breath-taking room, remains the same. The gardens are romantic. We drove Lady Colefax over to Port Eliot and had tea with the St Germans;⁶ they have recently succeeded a mad brother but have long made the Victorian house a centre of Cornish life. For tea we had Devonshire cream, honey and scones. A delightful interlude. We bought many second-hand books at Paignton on our way back.

SUNDAY 15TH AUGUST

We drove to Powderham to lunch with Venetia Devon.⁷ She is a dark, buxom brunette of my age who only marries Earls! One of them, Lord Cottenham,⁸ died a

1 Robert Henry Edward Abdy (1896–1976), 5th Bt, and his second wife, Helen Diana (1907–67).*

2 Helen Diana Bridgeman (1907–67), daughter of the 5th Earl of Bradford and from 1915 by courtesy Lady Diana Bridgeman, married in 1930 Sir Robert Abdy, 5th Bt.

3 Valentine Robert Duff Abdy (1937–2012) succeeded his father (qv) as 6th Bt in 1976. He would have a distinguished career with the Smithsonian Institute in Washington and with UNESCO.

4 On her holidays.

5 Giovanni Paolo Pannini (1691–1765) was an Italian architect and landscape painter.

6 Montague Charles Eliot (1870–1960) succeeded his brother as 8th Earl of St Germans in 1942. He was a Gentleman Usher to King Edward VII from 1901 to 1906 and to King George V from 1910 to 1936. He was also Groom of the Robes from 1920 to 1936. He married, in 1910, Helen Agnes Post (1885–1962) of New York.

7 Sybil Venetia Taylor (1907–2001) married in 1939 as her second husband Charles Christopher Courtenay, who in 1935 succeeded his father as 17th Earl of Devon.

8 Mark Everard Pepys (1903–43), 6th Earl of Cottenham, whom she had divorced in 1939.

few weeks ago. She is a cousin of Alan Lennox-Boyd's, and is handsome in a provincial way and has much sexual allure; but she is untidy, un-chic and knows nobody. Her elder daughters, plain girls, the Ladies Pepys¹ and the Courtenay girl are not unusual but the boy, Lord Courtenay,² a smiling faced baby of perhaps 15 months is a magnificent-looking child, who looks like an apple by Hoppner.³ The household . . . worship and kowtow to the reigning infant. Lord Devon is about 26 and is serving in the Middle East. There is an aged tortoise in the garden, a character . . . the house has atmosphere and tradition but is a bit down-at-heel, almost tawdry. Lord Halifax, who was delicate, was brought up there, and I believe that he inherited many of the Courtenay treasures such as plate and pictures etc. as his mother was the only surviving child of the Earl of Devon, and bagged what she could.

Delightful day and P fascinating. Can such heaven endure?

MONDAY 16TH AUGUST

Slept alone as I had a cold; woke recovered. A gloriously warm day; I drove to Dartmouth and on to Slapton Sands – a long white deserted beach. A few stray bathers and barbed wire and a Neapolitan sea. As we lay naked sunbathing, some Americans, I could hear them by their voices, presumably Commandos, made a mock landing from boats in the distance. We could just see them and hearing their voices knew they were not Germans.

The happiest day of all. Occasionally I have spasms of jealousy about Major General Gordon Grimsdale,⁴ our military attaché at Chungking, who is obsessed by Peter and writes to him weekly by every bag. I hear it is *amitié amoureuse*⁵ on Grimsdale's part; P assures me that he is amusing and helpful to his Indian career; but he is not clearly interested in him, nor attracted by him. I think so.

WEDNESDAY 18TH AUGUST

We . . . resumed our travels. Glorious drive through beautiful country . . . long English lanes. We stopped often, once at Athelney⁶ (I think) to admire a pink church with amusing painted panelling: it sits back from the road. Then on to Glastonbury where we wandered happily midst the well-kept ruins; and then to Wells. We visited the Palace, the Gardens, and toured the cathedral and heard and

1 Lady Rose Edith Idina Pepys (1927–2021) and Lady Paulina Mary Louise Pepys (1930–2017).

2 Hugh Rupert Courtenay (1942–2015), Lord Courtenay by courtesy until he succeeded his father as 18th Earl of Devon in 1998.

3 John Hoppner (1758–1810) was an English portrait painter whose work Channon much admired, and whose speciality was painting children.

4 Gordon Edward Grimsdale (1893–1950), head of the British mission in Chungking from 1942 to 1945.*

5 A romantic friendship.

6 In mid-Somerset, famous as the location of the fort in which Alfred the Great hid in 878 before defeating the Great Heathen Army.

watched the great clock strike. I sat in a stall and watched a beam of light as it caught P's fair hair and made him look like a Fra Angelico.¹ Then on again and at Chippenham we had tea: there is to be an election there next week. David Eccles,² that brilliant and showy opportunist will get it in the place of Teenie Cazalet.³

We drove through Bath and saw little bomb damage; either it has been speedily repaired, or accounts of it exaggerated.

Wonderful day: England at its best.

FRIDAY 20TH AUGUST

P and I drove up to London via Newbury and Henley . . . and on our arrival we found that the Duchess of Kent had already called on us twice today on hearing that we were returning. She came back for tea. The Wavells are in London; and Lady Wavell is at the London Clinic having had an operation, slight I think – an intestinal feminine one I think.

The Field Marshal rang up hinting to come to dine but P refused to have him! Mrs Coats⁴ came. It is lovely to be back but I am sad this happy, joyous expedition is over.

SUNDAY 22ND AUGUST

A lovely South of France day but we had been away so much that we decided to go to Kelvedon only for the day – a most *réussi*⁵ expedition. We took P's sweet mother with us, and we picnicked by the pool and slept and bathed and left after tea. P called on Lady Wavell and remained gossiping with her for two hours. He and I dined in with Maimie and Vsevolod to join us.

Once again P refused to have Wavell. The FM is rather on his nerves. I was sorry. Lady Wavell had been to Badminton where she spent what for her must have been two rapturous days alone with Queen Mary⁶ and the Beauforts.⁷

1 Guido di Pietro (1395–1455), an Italian renaissance painter; he went into holy orders and became known as Fra Giovanni Angelico, and famous for the frescoes he painted in his own friary, San Marco in Florence.

2 David McAdam Eccles (1904–99) was Conservative MP for Chippenham from 1943 to 1962, when he was raised to the peerage as 1st Baron Eccles. He helped organise the 1953 Coronation as Minister of Works, for which he was knighted. He was advanced to a viscounty in 1964.*

3 Victor Alexander 'Teenie' Cazalet MC (1896–1943) had sat on the Supreme War Council at Versailles after the Great War. He was Conservative MP for Chippenham from 1924 to 1943.

4 Coats's mother.

5 'Successful': it was one of Channon's favourite words.

6 Queen Mary was living with her niece, the Duchess of Beaufort (*vide infra*), at Badminton for the duration.

7 Henry Hugh Arthur FitzRoy Somerset (1900–84), 10th Duke of Beaufort,* had married in 1923 Lady Victoria Constance Mary Cambridge (*née* Princess Mary of Teck) (1897–1987), daughter of the Marquess of Cambridge.

TUESDAY 24TH AUGUST

It seems unusual to be spending August in London: it is only to be with Peter, to whom I seem to be concentrating my life, Harold Nicolson¹ says that 'life is just a conspiracy to make life agreeable for Peter.' So he [Coats] gave a luncheon party here at Belgrave Square for several male friends whilst I lunched with the Field Marshal at the Dorchester . . . Felicity and I walked around to No. 5 afterwards (P had sent me a note during luncheon: can desolation go further? It was handed to me by a waiter) . . . P and I had a small cocktail gathering . . . The FM was jolly and talkative as he always is after a little gin, which lulls his natural shyness.

During the cocktail party I had a message to say that Eileen Sutherland died this morning at Dunrobin. I grieve but am not surprised as she has long had the hand of death on her. She had lost all desire to live; nothing interested her and nothing was left to her. Geordie S had behaved abominably to her recently and is secretly trying to marry a second-rate little woman . . .² Eileen was at one time a glamorous creature, imposing, handsome, being such a duchess she had great position, beauty, gentleness, usually, friends and a sunny kindly nature. She was not intelligent but she was loyal, tactful, gracious and always a very great lady. Her life ended with the violent deaths of the only two friends she loved: Jack Kimberley,³ who was long her lover; and Audrey Parr Colville⁴ who was her life-long friend and other self; Audrey gave her energy, amusement, colour and happiness. Jack gave her love and passion almost until he died. Audrey was killed in a motor car accident; Jack was killed in an air raid. Life for the Duchess of Sutherland after that was a drab affair . . . I shall always remember her glittering with splendid jewels receiving [the] King . . . She reminded me always of a stag, royal, imposing, dignified . . . I have lost a good friend and tremendous ally.

We raided Berlin heavily last night; indeed the bombing of Germany has assumed gigantic proportions: every night crusades of death and destruction take off from our shores.

- 1 Harold George Nicolson (1886–1968), son of the 1st Baron Carnock, worked in the Foreign Office from 1909 to 1929, before becoming a full-time writer and journalist. He sat as National Labour MP for Leicester West from 1935 to 1945 and was an early anti-appeaser. After Channon he is probably the most renowned diarist of the era; and like him was bisexual.*
- 2 Clare Josephine O'Brian (1903–98) had married as her second husband Lt Col. Vincent Ashworth Blundell Dunkerley, DSO, but they were divorced in March 1944. She married the 5th Duke of Sutherland that July.
- 3 John Wodehouse (1883–1941) was by courtesy Lord Wodehouse from 1902 to 1932, when he succeeded his father as 3rd Earl of Kimberley.*
- 4 Audrey Pabst (1892–1940)* married as her first husband Raymond Parr, a British diplomat, and as her second, in 1938, Norman Colville. She volunteered for the Red Cross at the outbreak of the Second World War and was killed in a car crash in Cornwall.

I had a cable from Paul of Y[ugoslavia] asking me in code to see and make friends with Purić the Yugoslav Prime Minister – the long ago ex-beau of Mary Baker.² What a curious twist of fate is his happy appointment.

WEDNESDAY 25TH AUGUST

The Duke of Kent was killed a year ago today, and I sent the Duchess a telegram this morning of sympathy on her tragic anniversary. Eileen, who had received his mangled body at Dunrobin and attended to the arrangements, died 364 days afterwards. His death contributed to her own; she told me that she would never recover from the shock of seeing him – he was a very old and very great friend – brought in to Dunrobin where he had often stayed. For twenty-four hours or more his body lay in her dressing room.

Dined in and alone with P who was petulant and then sweet.

I had another scene with Alan. *Scène-de-jalousie*.³

I thought today of that ill-fated dinner party which Honor and I gave on Thursday, Nov. 19th 1936.⁴ Destiny, and an ill one, has dogged most of our guests and ourselves.

H[onor] – degraded and *declassée* and miserable

Self: deserted and not quite so lucky as you

Edward VIII – delusional, abdicated

Mrs Simpson: vilified and ostracised and disappointed

Duchess of Kent: widowed and broken-hearted

Duke of Kent: killed in an aeroplane accident

Paul and Princess Olga: detentioned [*sic*], vilified and disgraced

Eileen Sutherland: dead

Lady Cunard: deserted by her love⁵ and unhappy

Diana and Duff Cooper:

Alice and Raimund von Hofmannsthal:⁶ divorced, and both re-married;

she unhappily

Geordie Sutherland:

Tassilo Fürstenberg:⁷ married

1 Božidar Purić (1891–1977) was Prime Minister of the Yugoslav government-in-exile from August 1943 until July 1944. He had been a diplomat and chargé d'affaires at the Serbian Embassy in Washington from 1928 to 1934.

2 A childhood sweetheart of Channon from Chicago, originally.*

3 Fit of jealousy.

4 When King Edward VIII and Mrs Simpson came to dinner. See Vol. I, entry for 19th November 1936.

5 Sir Thomas Beecham,* the celebrated conductor, who had had an affair with Lady Cunard for many years before deciding to marry a much younger woman.

6 Raimund (1906–74) and Ava Alice Muriel (1902–56, *née* Astor) von Hofmannsthal had married in 1933. He was her second husband.*

7 Prince Tassilo zu Fürstenberg (1903–87),* married in 1938 Clara Jeanne Agnelli (1920–2016).*

Brownlows:¹

Victor Cazalet: killed in aeroplane crash.

Prince of Monaco:²

Of the twenty three are dead. Were we History's puppets, playing a gallery scene with the tiaras and orders and jewels and power and wealth?

SATURDAY 28TH AUGUST

Spent the morning shopping and gossiping with Peter; and then came to Kelvedon via Southend

King Boris³ has died mysteriously; who killed him? He was an intelligent indeed cunning schemer. With Jewish appearance, sallow face, and unpleasant manners, he was unattractive. The Coburg and Orléans blood was an unfortunate mixture. In September 1938 just before Munich he arrived to stay at Brdo with the Regent.⁴ Honor and I were the only other guests and he was not an endearing companion. His Nazi sympathies were made v clear and Paul loathed him and often warned the Foreign Office of his machinations; so did I; but neither of us were ever believed. He looked like something out of a Jewish Counting House; seemed like what a Rothschild ought to be, and never is . . .⁵

The death roll of this extraordinary year grows.

SUNDAY 29TH AUGUST

Rang P and then spent the day quietly. Alan and Patsy and Simon [Lennox-Boyd] came down for the day and we picnicked and sunbathed. Happy day; regained Alan's affections and rested myself. P is a draining companion. He wouldn't be so, were he here indefinitely; but not unnaturally he wants to cram everything into a few weeks.

MONDAY 30TH AUGUST

Drove up to London Rapturous reunion with P after a thirty-six-hour separation.

There is much loneliness, love and unhappiness about; but the saddest story is the Sutherland saga. It is heart-breaking to think of that wonderfully sweet woman wasting away and wearily wishing for death in two rooms at Claridge's. The exact

1 Peregrine Francis Adelbert Cust (1899–1978), 6th Baron Brownlow,* and his wife Katherine Harriet (1906–52, *née* Kinloch).* They were married in 1927.

2 Pierre de Polignac (1895–1964).*

3 Boris Klemens Robert (Marie) Ruslodwig Stanislaus Never (1894–1943), Tsar Boris III of Bulgaria from 1918 until his death.*

4 See Vol. I, entry for 26th September 1938.

5 For a discussion of Channon's lapses into anti-Semitism, see the Editor's Introduction, p. xii.

cause of her sudden end is not known; she had acute asthma which occasioned fits of pneumonia, coughing like paroxysm; she had had jaundice and her heart was thought to be weak – but really it was broken. Geordie *dans les mains d'une aventurière*.¹ There are rumours, too, of cancer. Her doctor is the famous killer; since in his case nobody ever recovers. The whole English medical profession should be liquidated. I have had a despairing telegram and sad note from Geordie S who is probably genuinely shocked and momentarily remorseful . . .

I rushed home to P who was reading in bed when I arrived. It is so lovely to have somebody to go home to.

The Duchess of Kent came to tea and brought me a long letter from Princess Paul written at J'burg. He [Prince Paul] is in better spirits and health and will live. He seems to fear that we will hand him to the Russians after the war! What nonsense!

TUESDAY 31ST AUGUST

I escorted Laura C[orrigan] to Eileen Sutherland's crowded and moving memorial service: it was impressive and beautifully done, having been organised by that idle fellow, Robin Castlereagh² – Alan came with us.

The Field Marshal sent me some grouse, which we ate this evening. A noisy party dined at Belgrave Square: Laura; Emerald; Lady Willingdon and an American journalist she brought; the Archduke Robert;³ Alan; P and I. Pleasant evening. I telephoned to Wavell and thanked him for his brace of grouse and we chatted. I then invited him and Lady Wavell to luncheon tomorrow and they accepted. I have achieved a nucleus of a party but must now organise one.

WEDNESDAY 1ST SEPTEMBER

My oriental luncheon party was a huge success. The star was Maurice Collis,⁴ the writer whose books on Burma and China are the fashion.

Alan complained all day of my neglect of him. He has the warmest heart in all the world and the most lavish impulses, too, but he is overwhelmingly selfish.

THURSDAY 2ND SEPTEMBER

Walked, as I do now every morning, to the India Office with P and my white dog . . . and on my return about ten o'clock I found the house full. Diana [Cooper]

1 In the hands of an adventuress.

2 Robin Vane-Tempest-Stewart (1902–55), Unionist MP for County Down, and by courtesy Viscount Castlereagh until 1949 when he succeeded his father as 8th Marquess of Londonderry.

3 Archduke Robert of Austria-Este (1857–95) was the second son of Karl I, the last Emperor of Austria-Hungary. He was living in exile in London.

4 Maurice Stewart Collis (1889–1973) was an administrator and magistrate in Burma who after returning home in 1934 wrote a number of histories, biographies and novels.

was still in bed – she is staying here – Alan, half-dressed was sitting on her bed as was Duff. Rab Butler was sitting privately elsewhere downstairs; Geoffrey Lloyd was waiting for me in the morning room. A ministerial levée indeed: I tried to cope with them all and my letters as well . . . I led Rab, rather embarrassed, up to Diana's bedroom and we watched her dress. The most beautiful woman in the world is devoid of vanity and she changes in five minutes and comes to stay with only a sewing-bag!

Maimie and Vsevolod lunched with P and me. Vsevolod has a new job as Managing Director of Hawker, Bannisters, the wine merchants and wants to impress the firm with the viceregal order, which I arranged through Peter, who has ordered a vast amount of wine. In spite of the supposed shortage there must be immense quantities still in the country.

P and I dined with Laura Corrigan at Claridge's, a gay dinner of the *jeunesse dorée* in honour of Henry Weymouth,¹ who has returned to this country – and to his highly unfaithful wife – after being abroad for over three years. He is bronzed, well and thin and has a slight moustache. He kissed me; indeed everybody kissed everybody else. The last time I saw him was when he motored from Nazareth to the King David Hotel in Jerusalem to lunch with P and me in January 1941.²

He looks like a *beau geste*³ here. Tonight were collected the Thursbys,⁴ Sheila Milbanke,⁵ Adele Cavendish,⁶ Nell Stavordale⁷ and the popular Americans, i.e. Ben Kittredge⁸ and Bob Coe.⁹ Uproarious behaviour, laughter, champagne . . . Adele Cavendish, who has become a malicious sour puss (fundamentally unhappy, I think, because of her disappointment over her husband, the once-so-charming Charlie – now ill and a confirmed drunkard bed-ridden for two years at Lismore)¹⁰ behaved badly. Her conversation is too Rabelaisian. P was revolted.

1 Henry Frederick Thynne (1905–92),* by courtesy Viscount Weymouth until he succeeded his father as 6th Marquess of Bath in 1946. In 1927 he married Daphne Winifred Louise Vivian (1904–97),* daughter of the 4th Baron Vivian.

2 See Vol. II, entry for 3rd February 1941.

3 A noble and generous act.

4 William Piers 'Peter' Thursby (1904–77), son of the Revd Harvey Thursby, of Burghfield, Berkshire, and his wife Helen Azalea 'Poppy' (1901–80, *née* Baring).* They were married in 1928.

5 Margaret Sheila Mackellar Chisholm (1895–1969),* from New South Wales, married as her second husband Sir John 'Buffles' Milbanke (1902–47).*

6 Adele Astaire (*née* Austerlitz) (1896–1981), sister of the dancer and actor Fred Astaire, married in 1932 Charles Arthur Francis Cavendish (1905–44) (qv).

7 Helen Elizabeth Ward (1907–70), married in 1931 Lord Stavordale,* whose family owned Holland House in Kensington.

8 Benjamin Rufus Kittredge (1900–81) was an officer in the US Navy during the war, and acted as an American attaché to the governments-in-exile in London.

9 Robert Douglas Coe (1902–85) was an American diplomat who served at the embassy in London from 1941 to 1948. He was US Ambassador to Denmark from 1953 to 1957.

10 The Cavendish seat in Ireland.

FRIDAY 3RD SEPTEMBER

We heard on the eight o'clock wireless that our armies have landed in S Italy. I fear trouble and a stiff fight, although I am privately told that the Italian govt under Badoglio¹ is, or has, negotiated a peace with us. It is only a matter of days before it will be announced.

The Wavells left reluctantly yesterday for Northwick Park to stay with George Churchill² in his uncomfortable house. He and they asked me to accompany them, but I cannot face it yet. I shall go tomorrow: I didn't want to give up two days of P's company, the rarest pleasure in the whole world. I lunched with him at Buck's, and we dined together.

SATURDAY 4TH SEPTEMBER

After spending the morning with P, we separated sadly . . . I caught an afternoon train to Moreton-in-Marsh. Although crowded I was able to get a seat; but I had no sleep, as I had hoped, as I found myself next to Mrs Neville Chamberlain³ and had to chat with this inconsequent woman all the way! She was *en route* to Birmingham. Thus I arrived tired – I am now never alone for an instant and my temperament is such that I require hours alone to recuperate. A car met me, and whisked me to this odd household where a few bores had been collected to meet the very bored Wavells! I was told we were leaving almost at once to drive to Stratford-on-Avon to see a performance of *King Lear* at the Shakespearean theatre, where I have never been. After tea we left in the FM's car; I sat on the box with Smith, the driver. Long dull drive, dark before we arrived. By one of those curious coincidences I had read as much of *King Lear* as Mrs Chamberlain would allow me to do in the train! And I quoted Keats on 'Before rereading *King Lear*!' Perhaps the FM doesn't think me quite the illiterate under-read fool I sometimes fear he does. A splendid performance, and very enjoyable. I was next to Lady Wavell and we joked and gossiped. During the *entr'acte* I piloted the FM about the foyer and bar of the hideous Germanic theatre. He was so rejoiced and cheered by some American soldiers, which so embarrassed him, that we returned to the stalls . . . The car was surrounded by autograph-hunters and we were roundly cheered as we left. A cold snack awaited us at Northwick but nothing to drink, and the FM was in one of his shy moods and seldom spoke. George Churchill thinks only of his pictures and never of his comforts. How can a house completely obsess a man? He is v different stuff than [*sic*] his cousin Winston. He inherited Northwick by a chain of unusual circumstances; what will he do with it? I wish he would leave me the pictures, or some of them; Wavell, I rather gather entertains the same hopes!!

1 Pietro Badoglio (1871–1956) Prime Minister of Italy 1943–4.*

2 Edward George Spencer-Churchill (1876–1964).*

3 Anne de Vere Cole (1883–1967) married Neville Chamberlain* in 1911. She was instrumental in encouraging him to go into politics.

SUNDAY 5TH SEPTEMBER

A series of old crocks and bores, antediluvians came to luncheon, tea and dinner. People the Viceroy and Vicereine might have liked had they remained just simple Colonel and Mrs Wavell back from abroad; but they have travelled far since then. And Lady Wavell particularly was bored, she made me faces and looked at me occasionally . . . after luncheon I found myself in the great gallery alone with Lady Wavell. It was 2.15; we began to gossip. Suddenly it was nearly five o'clock and tea things were being brought in. She is a sensitive 'sweetie' with much sense of humour although little social sense. She adores Peter and his *gemütlich* ally.¹ She *loathes* – and she admits it . . . her gossipy old sisters-in-law and I gave them a few good 'digs'. We made friends.

Lady Wavell remained in her bedroom until one o'clock ostensibly writing notes; I had brought down their post to them, masses of it. P says that she is the laziest woman on earth. Both she and the Viceroy-to-be (it is difficult to describe, to picture this simple man as Emperor of India) are perturbed by the uninhibited behaviour of their daughter Felicity, who in her simple way is highly flirtatious. She came back – but from where? – to London last night.

MONDAY 6TH SEPTEMBER

The Viceroy-designate, the Vicereine (whom P and I call 'Qumble' an adaptation in a 'humble' language of 'Queenie' as the FM calls his wife – and simply 'Q' *tout court*² when he is in an affectionate mood) drove up to London, sitting three abreast. Talk all the way; gay chat; she bullies him completely.

Gaily I fetched P and drove him to a Greek restaurant where we lunched; perhaps I over-ate for I felt cross and liverish. I am sure that all one's disappointments and uninspired moments are due to clogged livers. After, I dropped P at the I[ndia] O[ffice]. I realised how unjust I was; neither had had any excuse; he admitted to having over-eaten and drunk too much champagne all the weekend. Yet I felt discouraged, *désœuvré*³ and disillusioned and undecided whether – for the first time – our feverish friendship could continue! Was I being bullied? Remorseful, I went to sleep about five, and didn't go down to meet P when he came in . . . and I soon recovered. P and I arranged to dine alone *en pyjama*, but Alan added himself. And we dined blissfully *à trois* and drank some of the Wavell champagne, which came in the lavish 'cellar' he gave me!

Rapturous evening. Alan, tactfully, but obviously v piqued, left us at ten.
Life is divine thanks to P.

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- 1 That is, Channon. *Gemütlich* means pleasant, cheerful, reassuringly agreeable.
- 2 For short.
- 3 Pointless, at a loose end.

WEDNESDAY 8TH SEPTEMBER

A dazzling and dramatic day began inauspiciously . . . I lunched with Laura Corrigan at the Wings Club at 11 Grosvenor Place. This Club, her creation but my idea, is a success, and was crowded. Rested a little in the afternoon (conjugal life makes me sleepy about 3 p.m.). Then I had my *derrière* cleaned out and immediately felt rejuvenated; this treatment which lasts for an hour, always has a buoyant effect. I had hardly got home when Bill Astor¹ dropped in and bored me again for an hour and by being here prevented my turning on the wireless and thus I missed the announcement!! However soon after six Winnie Portarlington,² looking alive but ageing and frail, called and told me the great news that Italy had capitulated. It was 6.20 p.m. I was incredulous at first, for although we have heard rumours for a fortnight for once I was not in the real know and was only aware that negotiations were proceeding! Dazed I mixed a cocktail and then P arrived, rapturous, amber and gay, he had been told by Bob Cary³ MP at the India Office and had had the pleasure of rushing in to see Wavell and telling him. The FM had seemed surprised, so surprised that he insisted on returning at once to the Dorchester to tell Lady Wavell. P accompanied him and then rushed to tell me. There were kisses and cocktails . . . now this sad story of Italy's intervention in the war is finished. We are largely to blame, particularly Eden and Co., for the unfortunate malevolence which seems to have guided our early policy with a country which should have always been an ally . . . P and I had a gay bath together and then separated, he to dine with his mother at 8 Pont Street, and I dined with the 'Coalboxes'⁴ . . . There was much jubilation at the news, we even drank Italian vermouth, and everybody began to air his long pent-up Italian reminiscences. I was in my element and I saw at once how little hatred there was for Italy even in this so-called *Salon rouge*.⁵ The star of the evening was Desmond Morton,⁶ the Prime Minister's private adviser. I made a set at him, determined to help the Crown Prince of Italy and to save him his throne, if possible. Chance first threw me with Barrington-Ward⁷ who said he was in favour of a Regency for 'Beppo's' eldest boy.⁸ I simply advocated the Crown Prince's claims and repeated how he had always told me how anti-Nazi he was!

1 William Waldorf Astor (1907–66) succeeded his father as 3rd Viscount Astor in 1952. He was Conservative MP for Fulham East from 1935 to 1945 and for Wycombe from 1951 to 1952.*

2 Winnifreda Yuill (1886–1975) married, in 1907, Lionel Arthur Henry Seymour Dawson-Damer (1883–1959), 6th Earl of Portarlington.

3 Robert Archibald Cary (1898–1979) was Conservative MP for Eccles from 1935 to 1945 and for Manchester Withington from 1951 to 1974.*

4 He refers to the salon of Lady Colefax,* the renowned interior decorator.

5 Salon of leftists.

6 Desmond Morton (1891–1971) was Churchill's personal assistant in Downing Street from 1940 to 1945.*

7 Robert McGowan Barrington-Ward (1891–1948), editor of *The Times* from 1941 until his death.*

8 'Beppo' was the Crown Prince of Italy and Prince of Piedmont,* who would briefly become King Umberto II after his father's abdication in 1946. His son was Prince Vittorio Emanuele of Savoy, Prince of Naples* (born 1937, and at time of writing still Pretender to the throne of Italy).

BW was impressed and said so. Desmond Morton then told us much of the negotiations which have been proceeding for a fortnight; how an Italian emissary first flew to Lisbon; how later they were conducted in Sicily, and how Badoglio had from the first agreed to everything. Eisenhower¹ broadcast the brief and excellent statement from the Algiers station at 5.30. Badoglio had promised to speak to the Italian people immediately afterwards but suddenly panicked, since he was surrounded by Germans in Rome. However at 6.45, only an hour and a quarter later, he did so. We listened in at nine o'clock and heard Eisenhower's message – then conversation became general. After dinner I sat on a sofa with Morton, who is a most prepossessing but unsound Irishman. I told him all I knew of the Italian royal family and of their activities and leanings. He was interested and promised to repeat what I told him. He seemed well disposed towards the House of Savoy and later when conversation became general I led it and turned away criticism. We may save the throne for my old crony . . . Then Morton got on to King Peter and the Yugoslav family; he thinks Peter halfwitted and his obese mother an evil lying woman. I told him more and, I think, convinced him of her malevolence. He was fascinated by my reminiscences of royal Yugoslav life and by accounts of King Boris, whom Harold Nicolson has recently tried to whitewash, and I damned the Foreign Office and he agreed. I am not sure, but I think that we made friends. He is a fascinating fellow. In any case I may have altered history tonight.

Osbert Peake² drove me home in the dark blackout and I was grateful as P was awaiting me. I found him looking handsome with his khaki tunic unbuttoned; he was drinking Guinness and playing dance tunes on the wireless. We went to bed.

THURSDAY 9TH SEPTEMBER

The newspapers are riveting but really tell me little I hadn't heard from Morton last night; that most of the Italian fleet is safe in our hands; that a big battle between our forces and the Germans in Italy is imminent and that the Armistice was signed last Friday.

Alan arrived from Great Yarmouth and together we went to Park Royal to attend the annual meeting of shareholders and directors. The colossal profits are cleverly concealed in the rather dry report. Lunched here with my co-directors and in-laws who are both charming. Lady I[veagh] had not heard even an indirect word of Honor for many months, so she said. A and I drove back after a gay luncheon; and here I found P petulant and sleepy after a heavy lunch with Lady Wavell, which had fatigued him. I left him for half an hour and on my return he was in high spirits. I drove him out to dinner . . . and I came back and dined alone on a tray: shrimps, baked beans and Guinness – ever so delicious.

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1 Dwight David Eisenhower (1890–1969)* was at this time Supreme Commander of the North African Theatre of Operations.

2 The Conservative MP for Leeds North.*

FRIDAY 10TH SEPTEMBER

Walked with P to the India Office; he has been so charming, gentle and affectionate these days that my heart quite melts at the thought of his impending departure. On the way back I walked with Arthur Longmore,¹ then Kingsley Wood² and lastly Geoffrey Lloyd. St James's Park is like a ministerial garden party. At noon I picked up P again and we shopped and walked to Buck's Club where we lunched . . . P and I then bought books, ended up at Cartier's where found Maimie and Vsevolod also shopping. Then I came home . . . I am angry with the Cranborne clan and cut them dead, Father and Son.³ I have always been an anti-Cecilian. A putrid race of paltry minds . . .

I rested, then worked, dictated and signed twenty letters, and was chatting peacefully with P when the telephone rang. It was Serge Obolensky, speaking from an unknown destination; at least he couldn't say where. He is only flashing through England and I shan't see him. It was like a ghost of the past and I was quite overcome.

I am wearing a new tweed and look most distinguished.

The Italian news seems to be increasingly favourable although I fear that Rome has been bombed by the Germans today. There may be a big battle soon.

Buck's was full; Freddie Birkenhead⁴ looking bloated; Basil Dufferin,⁵ slim and somewhat recovered; Francis Queensberry⁶ boyish and gay. *Voilà*. Laura Corrigan – always charming when alone and not 'showing off'; and Alan dined with me here.

1 Arthur Murray Longmore (1885–1970), a distinguished airman until his retirement in 1942. He was knighted in 1935.*

2 (Howard) Kingsley Wood (1881–1943), Conservative MP for Woolwich West from 1918 to 1943. He held a succession of ministerial posts from 1931 to 1943, culminating in his appointment as Chancellor of the Exchequer.*

3 Robert Arthur James Gascoyne-Cecil (1893–1972),* by courtesy Viscount Cranborne from 1903 to 1947, when he succeeded his father as 5th Marquess of Salisbury. Presumably the son Channon refers to is Robert Edward Peter Gascoyne-Cecil (1916–2003),* who in turn succeeded his father as 6th Marquess of Salisbury. Cranborne had one other son living, Richard Hugh Vere Gascoyne-Cecil (1924–44), Lord Richard by courtesy, who was killed in action serving with the RAF.

4 Frederick Winston Furneaux Smith (1907–75), by courtesy Viscount Furneaux from 1922 to 1930, when he succeeded his father* as 2nd Earl Birkenhead. He married in 1935 Sheila Berry (1913–92), daughter of the 1st Viscount Camrose.*

5 Basil Sheridan Hamilton-Temple-Blackwood (1909–45), by courtesy Earl of Ava, until he succeeded his father as 4th Marquess of Dufferin and Ava in 1930. Perpetuating the family curse of premature death (his father died in a plane crash; one uncle perished in the Second Boer War and another in the First World War), he was killed when a Japanese shell landed on him in Burma in March 1945.

6 Francis Archibald Kelhead Douglas (1896–1954), by courtesy Viscount Drumlanrig from 1900 until 1920, when he succeeded his father as 11th Marquess of Queensberry. He married in 1926, as his second wife, Catherine Sabine Mann.

SATURDAY 11TH SEPTEMBER

BAILIFFSCOURT, NEAR CLIMPING, SUSSEX

P and I made an early start by car for Bognor, leaving at 10.30. The Wavells are going to Hever to stay with John Astor¹ and dreading their visit. We had a lovely drive in gorgeous weather, and after passing Petworth came on the funeral cortège or rather cars of mourners attending poor 'G' Wallace's² memorial service at Lavington.

Bognor was beautiful and bliss; but the Coopers' little West House, once so charming, is untidy and down at heel; there are geese, hens and rabbits in coops disfiguring the lawns; for Diana, rapturously lovely, is not an advanced agriculturist. We found John Julius, who declaimed to us in Russian (he is to answer questions before the Brains Trust on Monday); Lady Hardwicke,³ who is an old friend of Peter's; Conrad Russell⁴ and his aged sister, Miss Flora.⁵ Pleasant *al fresco* meal followed by a sleep and sunbathe. It was sad to see the barbed wire and the huge concrete pillboxes protecting the coast against invasions . . . about six o'clock, P and I left for Bailiffscourt and being tired, I was stupid and missed the way. We were wrongly directed to Arundel and passed under the shadow of that great bogus but nevertheless impressive castle, where I have often stayed. At length we arrived at Bailiffscourt, this extraordinary house: it is indeed a rich man's folly! A Norman feudal monastic building created by the Moynes, it has a certain attraction: peace, gorgeous sea air and new trees, planted in many thousands. P says it is Hollywood and horrible. But it is comfortable. We were given a communicating suite, as we now often are! And the Amerys, *père et fils*⁶ came to welcome us . . . Delicious dinner and then we played 'Chinese checkers'. And bed at midnight.

Two Germans escaped from Germany by plane and attempted to land here at Ford Aerodrome; unfortunately their signals were misunderstood and they were fired on. Their plane crashed and both were injured.

The Amerys are a kindly, cosy, gentle family. Angels all. Julian is shrewd and remarkably alert and intelligent; but over them all hangs the pall, the unhappiness of the eldest son⁷ and his outrageous behaviour. He is still in Berlin broadcasting, so they say, for the enemy.

1 John Jacob Astor V (1886–1971), proprietor of *The Times*.*

2 Gerard Euan Wallace (1915–43) was the second son of Euan Wallace* and the first of three to be killed in action (a fourth died on active service in 1946). He was a wing commander in the RAF Volunteer Reserve and had been killed on 20th August in an accident in Egypt.

3 Sarah Katherine Lindley (1910–65), married in 1934 Philip Grantham Yorke (1906–74), who in 1936 succeeded an uncle as 9th Earl of Hardwicke.

4 Conrad Russell (1878–1947)* was the son of Lord Arthur Russell and nephew of the 9th Duke of Bedford.

5 Flora Magdalen Isabel Russell (1869–1967) was the elder daughter of Lord Arthur Russell and niece of the 9th Duke of Bedford.

6 Father and son – Leo and Julian.

7 John Amery (qv), a Nazi collaborator who would be hanged for treason after the war.

SUNDAY 12TH SEPTEMBER

A long lovely sun-lit day of peace and exercise, nakedness and air. P and I both slept ten solid hours last night; the hum of the sea soothed us, and we left the too-slender door dividing our rooms open . . . We sunbathed and Alastair Anderson,¹ who is Sir John Anderson's² son, came to lunch. He is a squadron-leader, a doctor and it was he who questioned the German escapists. One, the elder and obviously more important, has died of his injuries: the other is comparatively all right. They brought documents etc., having done a sort-of-commando raid on their own aerodrome office! Anderson, who is sad-eyed and bronzed and nervous, said little. The arrival of these pseudo-heroes is being kept secret. I lay in the sun; P who hates it, concentrated his charms on Mrs Amery and the others (he is inclined to do that, and is always successful.) Later Leo Amery and Julian and I went for a five-miler around the estate taking what is called 'Lady Moyne's walk'. Walter Moyne must have spent tens of thousands on his trees imported from Burgundy and Dale. They are now growing, many more than man-height. On this walk Leo A, whose tremendously well-stocked mind is not always revealed to full advantage, because of his deafness, let drop an inconsequent remark *à propos* of Madras.³ I could not understand it: did he mean that I had been considered and turned down? Or that he was 'sounding' me? Pleasant evening; and tomorrow the Amerys give up their happy tenure of this place, where they have been so contented for over a year, as their host, mine uncle Moyne, returns next week from the Middle East.

Mussolini has been captured and liberated by the Germans and will now probably head a Fascist Italian govt. Another complication and I fear we crowded too soon.

Amery and I are in agreement over Italy; it was an absurd War, a Cranborne-cum-Eden quarrel, unnecessary, futile, expensive and indeed almost disastrous . . . He had wanted support for the Hoare-Laval plan⁴ (so did I, and vehemently.) It would have saved thousands of lives. But Amery added, it serves no purpose now to say all this in public; time will prove Eden and Co. wrong.

A lovely rest-cure here. I gave Julian my best sealing-wax red braces.

1 David Alastair Pearson Anderson (1911–90) was a doctor who served in the RAF during the war, and after it became a consultant cardiologist. He succeeded his father (qv) as 2nd Viscount Waverley in 1958.

2 John Anderson (1882–1958) was National Independent MP for the Combined Scottish Universities from 1938 to 1950 and served in the Cabinet from 1938 to 1945, latterly as Chancellor of the Exchequer. He was raised to the peerage as 1st Viscount Waverley in 1952 and became a member of the Order of Merit in 1956.*

3 Channon was entertaining hopes of becoming Governor of Madras. They would be disappointed.

4 The Hoare-Laval Pact of 1935 was concluded between the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare,* and his French counterpart Pierre Laval* to partition Abyssinia to placate the Italians. It was hugely unpopular. See Vol. I, entries for 17th and 19th December 1935.

MONDAY 13TH SEPTEMBER

Our hosts departed before we were up: P and I breakfasted in dressing-gowns and left about 10.30 by car for Herstmonceux, on a *vis secret* and private visit to Paul Latham.¹ We drove through the bombed district of Brighton, and were asked for our identification passes, which luckily we had! A lovely English day and we talked of old days . . . Finally we arrived at the village of Herstmonceux, where we were directed to the tiny cottage, or hut, where Paul is living. He looked thin, aged but brown and was not over-effusive in his greetings, although he had telegraphed that he would be pleased to see us. His one room is stocked with fine books, and there were pieces of good silver about. The place, his bolt-hole, is called, 'the Kennels'. He is an egocentric, this poor, sad, disillusioned gaol-bird! He took us for a long walk, we sat in his pretty pond-side folly, admired the view of the distant castle, now occupied by the Hearts of Oak Society, and wandered about the surprisingly well-kept-up gardens. He adores the place and it is tragic that he can never live there again: he has given up the world, or rather it has abandoned him: his wife has behaved atrociously – why when she didn't even love him, and played so brazenly for such high stakes as a colossally rich baronet with looks and England's most romantic seat, why didn't she stick to him? His life is ruined; yet I couldn't help noticing, for all my pity, how selfish and self-centred he is; for he never once asked P, whom he once so loved so passionately, what he had been doing these four years! Not a word of Wavell, nor a question about Egypt and India. He took our pilgrimage, which was arranged at considerable inconvenience, as a matter of course. Only towards the end did he melt a little and I saw the loneliness in his tired eyes which filled with tears as he showed us photographs of his son whom he worships and never sees . . .

We drove up, saddened by our expedition, and here at No. 5 [Belgrave Square] found Diana and John Julius Cooper who have come to stay; Alan, breezy and big, also staying; and Sadie and Simon Rodney,² with them their *vis* good-looking (like all Rodneys) nephew John³ who is in the Commandos. Merriment and cocktails and frenzy and I left them to dine with the De La Warrs⁴ in Soho . . .

Natasha Bagration⁵ rang up to say 'goodbye', this gentle, angular, bony, highly-bred Princess goes to Cairo tomorrow as secretary to Purić, the Yugoslav PM. (He

- 1 Herbert Paul Latham (1905–55),* 2nd Bt, a former MP, had been cashiered from the Army for homosexual offences. The scandal and its consequences are described in detail in Vol. II. See entries for 4th–6th and 24th September 1941.
- 2 (Charles Christian) Simon Rodney (1895–1980), third of the four sons of the 7th Baron Rodney, married in 1922 Gladys Cecil 'Sadie' Hamar Greenwood (1896–1966).
- 3 John Francis Rodney (1920–92) fought with the Commandos in Burma in the latter part of the war; he was demobilised in the rank of lieutenant. He succeeded his father as the 9th Baron Rodney in 1973.
- 4 Herbrand Edward Dundonald Brassey Sackville, known as 'Buck' or 'Buckie' (1900–76),* by courtesy Lord Buckhurst since 1917, when he succeeded his father as 9th Earl De La Warr, and his wife Diana Helena (1896–1966, née Leigh).* They were married in 1920.
- 5 Princess Natalia 'Natasha' Bagration (1914–84).* Through her mother's Russian family she was a cousin of the Duchess of Kent.

is an old acquaintance of mine dating from 1921 – I think – when he wanted to marry Mary Baker.) The whole Yugoslav govt, headed by that fool of a young King, goes to Egypt, too.

TUESDAY 14TH SEPTEMBER

The news from Italy is scarcely encouraging Mussolini's escape may be a *canard*.¹

P and I gave a little dinner party which developed into a glamorous gala: Lady Londonderry; Lady Willingdon, who 'bossed' everybody; Lady Hardwicke – Sally, who is lonely and prematurely grey; Janie Lindsay,² a dreamy doe-like divinity; George Gage,³ looking almost as Chinese as George Yeh,⁴ a garrulous and sociable 'Chink'⁵ who also dined; P and I. Yeh is Chiang Kai Shek's⁶ personal representative here and will probably represent China at the Peace Conference. He speaks fluent English, smiles, is 41, but might be any age. After dinner Venetia Montagu⁷ looked in, looking distinguished, with her blue hair and growing baldness! And then came the Field Marshal who had been dining with the CIGS.⁸ (I also invited Rab, who looked in before dinner but he had a date with Sam Hoare and didn't reappear.) Janie Lindsay leaves for Delhi on Monday to join her sister, Viv Hopetoun⁹ and to see her husband, Peter, whom she worships. He is a sallow, sour, dull fellow, half a *charmeur*, half a crook. The three Coopers, Mamma, Papa and John Julius followed. At midnight it was the boy's 14th birthday and we all gave him money and congratulated him. He talked Russian to Wavell, who is at his best with children: they share a certain simplicity and children are never frightened of him. The party then broke up and people left on foot in the blackout, Circe Londonderry having arrived with a torch I had given her. She tells me that Geordie Sutherland is more than mad – they are *brouillés*¹⁰ – yet she wants me to help

1 Red herring.

2 (Ursula) Jane Kenyon-Slaney (1920–2012) married (David Ludovic) Peter Lindsay (1900–71) in 1940. Lindsay was a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Irish Guards. They divorced in 1946 and she had two more husbands.

3 Henry Rainald 'George' Gage (1895–1982)* had succeeded his father as 6th Viscount Gage. Channon and he had been very close, especially in Channon's immediate post-Oxford years.

4 George King-chao Yeh (1904–81) was a Chinese diplomat and politician, educated both in America and at Cambridge University. He was Taiwanese Ambassador to the United States from 1958 to 1961.

5 This rude and dismissive term for a Chinese person was common currency even in polite circles until recently, and dates back to the nineteenth century.

6 Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975)* led the Republic of China from 1928 to 1949. He married, in 1927, Soong Mei-ling (1898–2003).

7 Beatrice Venetia Stanley (1887–1948),* daughter of the 4th Baron Sheffield and 4th Baron Stanley of Alderley. She married in 1915 the Liberal MP Edwin Montagu (1879–1924).

8 Chief of the Imperial General Staff, General Sir Alan Brooke.

9 Vivien Kenyon-Slaney (1918–63) married in 1939 Charles William Frederick Hope (1912–87), by courtesy Earl of Hopetoun, who in 1952 succeeded his father as the 3rd Marquess of Linlithgow.

10 On bad terms with each other.

marry him off to the Duchess of Northumberland,¹ whom he once did want to marry about five years ago. It would save him; but would he do it?

The Italian news is deteriorating and I fear that we have had a severe set-back and many lives are lost. It is too cruel and disappointing.

WEDNESDAY 15TH SEPTEMBER

Walked with P to the India Office; and on my return was handed a cable from Helen Hull in which she breaks to me that my far-away Paul must have his tonsils out next Tuesday, the 21st, and she asks for my permission. I sent it; I am not anxious but worried; poor mite – I yearn for him.

Lunched with the Birleys;² she is dark, dashing and attractive, chic and perhaps amorous? They live in a large house-cum-studio in Acacia Road. On my arrival I was shown into the studio and found Argus-eyed Oswald painting Sir John Anderson: it may be a successful portrait but the one of Wavell certainly is not. I thought it weak and foolish, although somewhat like him. There was also an indifferent one of Neville Chamberlain,³ far inferior to Gunn's⁴ famous picture! A large canvas of the Speaker (FitzRoy)⁵ is adequate and I remembered how when dining with the Speaker at his house just before the war he had shown me the collection of portraits of former speakers hanging in the dining room and he had asked, 'I wonder who will paint me after I am dead?' Ava Anderson⁶ joined the party for a cosy lunch. She and Sir John are very open in their love-making and to see this old couple carrying on like the Weymouths at their worst is funny and a touch revolting. I drove Mrs Birley to a memorial service and then came home and rested for a bit.

I was warned by Herlihy⁷ that there is a cabal against Dickie Mountbatten⁸ at the Admiralty, and would I hint to him? How can I?

1 Lady Helen Magdalan Gordon-Lennox (1886–1965), daughter of the 7th Duke of Richmond and Lennox and 2nd Duke of Gordon, married in 1911 Alan Ian Percy (1880–1930),* by courtesy Earl Percy until 1918, when he succeeded his father as the 8th Duke of Northumberland.

2 Oswald Hornby Joseph Birley (1880–1952), a leading portrait painter much patronised by the royal family, and his wife Rhoda Vava Mary Lecky (1900–81, *née* Pike). They married in 1921. He was knighted in 1949.

3 Arthur Neville Chamberlain (1869–1940) was Conservative MP for seats in Birmingham from 1918 to 1940. He was Prime Minister from 1937 until 1940, leading Britain into the Second World War.*

4 Herbert James Gunn (1893–1964), a portrait and landscape painter.*

5 Edward Algernon FitzRoy (1869–1943),* Speaker of the House of Commons from 1928 until his death. He married in 1891 Muriel Douglas-Pennant (1869–1962).

6 Alix Yveline Ava Courtenay Bodley (1896–1974)* married in 1941 as her second husband Sir John Anderson (1882–1958).*

7 John Gerard Herlihy (1903–74) was lobby correspondent of the *Daily Graphic*. He later worked for Reuters and the *Daily Sketch*.

8 Louis Francis Albert Victor Nicholas Mountbatten (1900–79), son of Prince Louis Alexander of Battenberg, and from 1917 Lord Louis Mountbatten by courtesy. His family nickname was 'Dickie'. He was raised to the peerage as 1st Viscount Mountbatten of Burma in 1946, and advanced to an earldom the following year on his resignation as Viceroy of India. He also became an admiral of the fleet, First Sea Lord and Chief of the Defence Staff. He was assassinated by the IRA.*

Then I went to the Polish Embassy to a reception – all the ambassadors and half the government congregated in the large, hideous drawing room done up in the Japanese style. Last time I went there – 47 Portland Place – was, curiously enough, for the now famous dinner party to celebrate the signing of the Polish Agreement . . . everybody was in gala dress, ablaze with orders. It was finally completed, the agreement which led and heralded the war, that night and signed the next morning. March 1939 – Today I talked to half a hundred people and then came home, where I am now awaiting Peter: we are dining alone.

P and I had a cosy, heavenly dinner *à deux* with half a bot[tle] of champagne. Partridge's.¹ An air raid began and we soon heard gunfire. It is still continuing now (10.25 p.m.). The Italian news is no better.

P funny about his luncheon party today chez the Willingdons, Winnie Portalington in her exuberance had kissed him leaving rouge marks on his cheeks much to Lady Wavell's surprise. Lady W – a great 'sweetie' is, nevertheless, as Diana [Cooper] says, '*une grande provinciale!*'²

THURSDAY 16TH SEPTEMBER

. . . . We went to have tea with Ava Anderson at her enchanting little house in Lord North Street. She is an excellent *maitresse-de-maison*³ and the atmosphere is always distinguished. We found Mrs Wellington Koo⁴ the new Chinese Ambassador – she is a most intelligent, and I think, vicious woman in the sexual sense (as befits the ex-wife of Bram Stoker, author of *Dracula*); Osbert Sitwell – Sir Osbert now;⁵ Desmond MacCarthy;⁶ Shane Leslie⁷ in the uniform of a Home Guard. He seemed softened and saddened by his mother's death.⁸ Rather a Proustian tea party. P shone – we drove Bettine Abingdon⁹ away with us and came home where we entertained forty people for cocktails. The Young. A party really for Felicity Wavell, and her younger sister, the prettier and highly pregnant

1 Not to be confused with the extant grocer's in Chelsea and Kensington, which dates from 1972, this was a long-departed West End shop and café.

2 A great provincial lady.

3 Mistress of the house.

4 Oei Hui-lan (1889–1992) was one of China's most fashionable socialites. She married Vi Kyuin Wellington Koo (1888–1985) in 1921; he was Chinese Ambassador to the United Kingdom from 1940 to 1946. Her previous husband was not the author of *Dracula*, but one Beauchamp Stoker, a British consular agent, whom she married in 1909 and divorced in 1920.

5 He had inherited the baronetcy on the death of his father Sir George.*

6 Charles Otto Desmond MacCarthy (1877–1952) was a journalist and a member of the Bloomsbury group. He was knighted in 1951.*

7 John Randolph 'Shane' Leslie (1885–1971) succeeded his father Sir John Leslie as 3rd Bt in 1944. He was first cousin of Winston Churchill, and a writer and diplomat.

8 Leonie Blanche Jerome (1859–1943), maternal aunt of Winston Churchill, had married much against the wishes of both their families John Leslie (1857–1944), who succeeded his father as 2nd Baronet in 1916.

9 Elizabeth Valetta 'Bettine' Montagu-Stuart-Wortley (1896–1978),* married in 1928 Montagu Henry Edmund Cecil Towneley-Bertie (1887–1963), 8th Earl of Abingdon.*

Joan Astley,¹ The Archduke came as did Maimie and Vsevolod, Bill Astor (who stayed until I turned him out at 8.45); Joan Bright;² many many more. Peter's pals mainly. Felicity Wavell stayed to dine and P's old governess, an Australian, Miss Colley, dined. P worships her and she is alleged to have had much influence over him. I rather disliked her as she seemed so humourless, but she is intelligent and adores him and told tales of his boyhood which captivated me. General Wavell made his great speech today at the Pilgrims' luncheon³ and it was a triumph. Tonight we listened to him – extracts – on the wireless and I crept up to the study and telephoned to tell him how excellent he had been. He was pleased for he is both lonely and affectionate, and has the detachment of the very great . . . A glorious moon-lit night, P walked his ladies home. I am awaiting his return.

FRIDAY 17TH SEPTEMBER

Ava Anderson rang up; said that old Margot Oxford had lunched with her and complained that she 'lived now only on macaroni and memorial services'! I picked up P and we drove to James Gunn's studio, ate sandwiches and then I slept for two hours whilst P posed. Gunn would be more successful were he not this most unmitigated – but not cheerless – bore. He talks *ad nauseam* until his sitters dread going to his studio. And his thinking is too loose.

Lady Colefax, charming, gentle and sad; Ti Cholmondeley ever depressed; and Nancy Rodd⁴ dined with us to meet the wicked, the sinister Colonel Gerald de Gaury⁵ who is home on leave. He is dashing in a second-rate way, is this King of Kuwait but he is silent, almost shy and ill at ease *dans le monde*.⁶ Nancy Rodd and Cecil Beaton (with whom de Gaury went away) were the successes of the evening which turned out unexpectedly well. 'Colebox' confessed to being over 60.⁷ Ti is a professional *malheureuse*.⁸ *Fuyez les malheureux!*⁹ – I am surrounded

1 Joan Patricia Quirk Wavell (1923–99), Lady Joan by courtesy from 1947, married in 1943 Simon Nevill Astley (1919–46). She married twice subsequently, all her husbands predeceasing her.

2 Penelope Joan McKerrow Bright (1910–2008).*

3 Given at the Savoy, the speech was to explain British aims in India, with a view to extending self-government.

4 Nancy Freeman-Mitford (1904–73) was the eldest of the celebrated daughters of the 2nd Baron Redesdale. As Nancy Mitford she was a well-known novelist, celebrated for *The Pursuit of Love* (1945) and *Love in a Cold Climate* (1949), and for her part in *Noblesse Oblige* (1956), her supposedly satirical analysis of the way different social classes behaved and spoke, which to her consternation was taken seriously. She married, in 1933, Peter Murray Rennell Rodd (1904–68), but they soon separated and she had an affair with Gaston Palewski (qv).

5 Gerald Simpson Hillairet Rutland Vere de Gaury (1897–1984) fought with distinction in the Great War at Gallipoli and on the Somme, and won the Military Cross in 1917. For many years he was Britain's political agent in Kuwait, and a leading authority on the Arab world.

6 In society.

7 She was 69.

8 Unfortunate, loser or wretch.

9 Away with losers!

by them. Only last night she was robbed of her few remaining pearls and trinkets, which had been given to her by the Queen of Spain.

Diana Cooper left me today and returned to Bognor. Gerald Berners¹ called to see us; he will be 60 years old tomorrow. What a foolish, futile, frivolous life he has led for a man of his many parts.

SATURDAY 18TH SEPTEMBER

We shopped leisurely and lunched in [at home]. . . . Then, after going again to Gunn's studio for nearly three hours, we left for Kelvedon. But the sketch of the Merry Major is finished and we have it with us. It may need touching up; it is excellent, a most attractive picture, and although it doesn't flatter the Merry Major it nevertheless is him.

Kelvedon, lovely but already there is an autumnal nip in the air; and what horrors and unhappiness will the autumn bring?

Mussolini has broadcast a violent attack on the Italian monarchy which will have the opposite effect and may help to save the dynasty.

P and I met the King of Kuwait,² more silent than ever, in the street. He is almost a legendary figure, a sort of Lawrence,³ and lives in oriental seclusion and splendour somewhere where 'Naps' Alington⁴ used to retire for weeks. They were allied for a long time.

SUNDAY 19TH SEPTEMBER

A lovely day. The Sec. of State for India, Mrs Amery, Sadie [Rodney] and Julian Amery, escorted by a detective and chauffeur drove down to spend the day with us. We arranged an al fresco meal by the pavilion and afterwards sunbathed. He [Amery] slept for two hours. It was however a *soulagement*,⁵ as P put it, when they left. P and I went black-berrying and in general had a rapturous day together; but he is a touch *piano*;⁶ saddened, I think, by the so very imminent departure which fills me with a wild gloom.

MONDAY 20TH SEPTEMBER

We slept long and well . . . but once we were awakened and I thought I heard a burglar – probably it was a cat.

1 Gerald Hugh Tyrwhitt-Wilson (1883–1950) succeeded his uncle as 14th Baron Berners in 1918. He was a composer, painter and writer.

2 De Gaury (*vide supra*).

3 T. E. Lawrence 'of Arabia' (qv).

4 Napier George Henry Sturt (1896–1940), who in 1919 succeeded his father as 3rd Baron Alington of Crichel.

5 Relaxation.

6 Quiet.

We drove up to London where we found mountains of mail . . . My mother-in-law writes from Elveden that she has heard that Honor has sold her farm and is moving to the New Forest. I am delighted; it is *further* away, and also a change denotes boredom. She can never stick to anything for long. This time she is only renting a farm; is it the beginning of the end with Woodman?¹ A break would complicate my life seriously. Tomorrow my little son will be operated on for tonsils at Kingston, New York. I pray for him constantly.

There is an autumnal tinge in the air and it forebodes months of only loneliness and sorrow.

TUESDAY 21ST SEPTEMBER

A too-full day. I walked with P to the India Office and then came to the H of C in the hope of obtaining a ticket for the Great Debate. Fecklessly I dawdled and missed my chance as the queue was already long . . . I was soon told the news of Kingsley Wood's sudden death this morning. He collapsed . . . at the age of 62. He was a small shrewd solicitor, Amery size, but with a twinkle in his eye; he was ambitious and sensible and always a secret Chamberlain sympathiser. I got on with him; and the nation owe him a debt of gratitude for the admirable manner in which he conducted the complicated finances of the country . . . Kingsley was liked but not loved and there was no real grief today. Indeed all the upper ministers, whilst expressing perfunctory regret, were really pleased at the prospect of promotion. They looked like kittens awaiting a bowl of cream and the lobbies buzzed with expectancy and speculation: who will be chancellor? Will it entail a major reshuffle? I sat with Thelma Cazalet² and David Eccles, the new member for Chippenham, who at the end of questions took his seat. He is a 'tough-baby' but attractive and gay and an opportunist. He was escorted to the table by James Stuart³ and Thelma Cazalet. The House was packed and Winston C had an enthusiastic reception on his arrival, but curiously enough no ovation he has ever had equals those occasionally given to Mr Chamberlain. There was the usual procedure wrangle and some hostility to the PM was revealed. Herbert Williams⁴ for instance was telling everybody that the oil and fuel used to bring back the Churchill party from Quebec⁵ was equal to the basic petrol ration for the whole of the country!! Winston rose at about 12.25 and spoke for an hour: he was methodical, but for him surprisingly humourless; he told us nothing we didn't know but showed that, unlike Eden, he is sensible about Italy. Anti-Russian feeling is

1 The horse-coper who had taken Lady Honor as his mistress. See Vol. II, entry for 9th September 1938.

2 Conservative MP for Islington East.*

3 Conservative MP for Meray and Nairn. He was Conservative Chief Whip at this time.*

4 Conservative MP for Croydon South (qv).

5 The First Quebec Conference, between Roosevelt and Churchill, had taken place the previous month to discuss the intended invasions of Italy and France.

growing, and people are more aware of their perpetual perfidy . . . I looked about the crowded chamber as Churchill spoke. There was a clutch of ambassadors; Mrs Churchill¹ sat with Pam² in the Speaker's Gallery. (The new Speaker by the way showed unexpected strength in his handling of the House and was cheered.) At about 1.30 the PM sat down after an eloquent peroration against Prussianism. Alan and I rushed to the RAC, where we had a snack lunch together during the suspension of the House – it rose for an hour, but even before the rubicund and very red-looking Premier had finished various members – too many, I thought, to be polite – had left the Chamber. (This *food qui peut*³ always irritates the PM.) Rab, to my amazement, slept soundly throughout the speech, but as he sat on the dais he was unobserved by the Front Bench.

Alan and I returned to hear the second part of Winston's speech; it was uninteresting; and eventually I crept out and hid in the far library which was full of somnolent sleepy MPs. I, too was soon snoring . . .

Everybody is dying. Valentine Kenmare⁴ is the last. He died yesterday or this morning. He was an immense, kindly, jovial witty creature, Falstaffian, funny, frivolous and always grossly over-dressed; he had a kindly heart, and was not quite the fraud he pretended to be. He has survived his father and wicked wife by a short time. His present consort, Enid Kenmare,⁵ has now buried three husbands! She will be delighted as they had already practically separated. He had a Jewish wit and was a supreme raconteur. Valentine made a precedent in the days when it was still thought extraordinary and bad taste to be either.

I dined with Laura Corrigan . . . Excellent dinner and I was between Circe L and Mary Marlborough,⁶ whom I like now more and more . . . she sweetly offered to look after Paul, and to have him constantly at Blenheim. She begged me to bring him back and put him at a private school near Woodstock. She is a sound, sensible woman and I am becoming increasingly attached to her . . . I rushed back as P was in and awaiting me.

Paul's tonsil operation has been postponed owing to the doctor's illness; so there will be a brief respite.

1 Clementine Ogilvy Hozier (1885–1977),* daughter of Henry Montague Hozier, married in 1908 Winston Churchill.

2 Pamela Beryl Digby (1920–97)* was the daughter of the 11th Baron Digby. She married, in 1939, Randolph Churchill (qv).

3 A coinage by Channon, punning on *sauve qui peut*, every man for himself; every man for his lunch.

4 Valentine Edward Charles Browne (1891–1943), by courtesy Viscount Castlerosse from 1905 to 1941, when he succeeded his father as 6th Earl of Kenmare.*

5 Enid Lindeman (1892–1973), heir to an Australian wine fortune, married Lord Kenmare (qv) in 1943 as her fourth husband.

6 Alexandra Mary Hilda Cadogan (1900–61), daughter of Henry Arthur Cadogan, by courtesy Viscount Chelsea, married in 1920 John Albert Edward William Spencer-Churchill, Marquess of Blandford, who succeeded his father as 10th Duke of Marlborough in 1934.

WEDNESDAY 22ND SEPTEMBER

Lady Wavell rang up asking me to lunch but I was already engaged to go to Lady Wilson¹ (the semi-mad wife of 'Jumbo', Sir Maitland Wilson,² the General) at the Ritz. A curious party; but I was next to Freya Stark³ and so happy enough. She is a great ally of Peter's and mine . . . Later we met again and went to a cocktail party at John Murray's, the famous publishers at 50 Albemarle Street. The rooms are untouched; are as they were in the days when Byron and [Sir Walter] Scott (indeed they met there) used to consort with their publisher! There are a few Byronese relics including a theatrical boxing-screen which Byron made for Murray. A fascinating place but ghastly party . . . P and I were bored and hurried away as we were entertaining Susie Winn;⁴ Felicity Wavell; Joan and Simon Astley . . . and Bill Tufnell.⁵ We gave them drinks and sandwiches and then took them to a wonderful coloured film, *Heaven Can Wait*,⁶ and then we all returned to No. 5 at 10 p.m. for a supper. The house, shimmering in candlelight looked superb and all were impressed. Arthur Leveson⁷ joined us for a bit . . . a *réussi* evening. He leaves next week with Dickie Mountbatten for Delhi. Indeed it was an Indian evening and I felt sad, as did Joan Astley (who is the most charming of the Wavell girls). She is pregnant; says if it is a boy she will call it 'Ralph'. Simon, her young tawny husband, is a 'sweetie' – but what a long-winded bore and he is only about 24.

THURSDAY 23RD SEPTEMBER

Woke ill and exhausted after too much indulgence – Wavell on the telephone before nine.

More deaths now the Reaper has bagged. Elinor Glyn⁸ is dead; she was an extraordinary woman, feline, theatrical, a *poseuse* and a vulgarian but a personality. She was in love with me in 1918 though I always, perhaps unkindly, called her 'Grandmamma'! I once saw her every day for months in Paris during those hectic times: her long red hair was famous as were her tiny green eyes that used all too often to light up amorously. But she was a brave old girl, tough, amorous, upright and had an unexpectedly religious streak. She tried hard to

1 Hester Wykeham (1890–1979) married Henry Maitland Wilson (qv) in 1914.

2 Henry Maitland 'Jumbo' Wilson (1881–1964) joined the Army in 1900 and rose to become Supreme Allied Commander, Mediterranean in 1944. He was knighted in 1940 and raised to the peerage as 1st Baron Wilson in 1946.*

3 Freya Madeline Stark (1893–1993), traveller and travel writer.*

4 Susan Sheila Mary Winn (1923–2001) was the younger daughter of Lady Baillie's first marriage. She married in 1946 Geoffrey Denis Erskine Russell (1921–2011).

5 John Jolliffe Tufnell (1900–90), landowner.

6 A 1943 Hollywood film directed by Ernst Lubitsch and starring Gene Tierney and Don Ameche, about a man who has to prove he belongs in Hell.

7 Arthur Edmund Leveson (1908–81), naval officer.*

8 Elinor Glyn (1864–1943) was a romantic novelist and later Hollywood scriptwriter who developed the idea of the 'It Girl'.*

marry Lord Curzon¹ and was long his mistress; and indeed, redecorated Montacute in appalling execrable taste – tiger skins and mauve carpets. But it was Lord Alastair Innes-Ker² who was (as she often told me) the love of her life. He is the hero of that period-piece, the once fashionable and daring ode *Three Weeks*,³ which made her name . . .

I am neglecting my parliamentary duties and privileges; I am worn out. When the Indian Summer is over I shall take my life in hand . . .

There is a stray rumour that Sam Hoare will be made Chancellor of the Exchequer. It would be a heaven-sent comeback for him and would involve no reshuffle on Winston's part; but will he dare, and would Anthony Eden ever agree?

Rab is tired, unpopular and looks old; and is he less friendly? I wonder? Wavell is the man of the hour; today he made yet another important speech at Winchester where he was presented with the freedom of the city. He owes an incalculable amount of his success to Peter – and even to me.

FRIDAY 24TH SEPTEMBER

Wavell has a full day; he is sworn into the Privy Council; and then he and Lady Wavell (who has bought a new pink hat) lunch with the K[ing] and Q[ueen]⁴ . . . the little Queen does quite amusing imitations of Opera stars and people! Dangerous! Nothing makes enemies so quickly as mimicry – or having a cook. I fetched P and we walked along Constitution Hill hoping to see Lady Wavell as she flashed by to lunch at the Palace, but we missed her.

P and I entertained Ava Anderson to lunch alone and she was gay and engaging. I told her that either John Anderson or Sam Hoare would be Chancellor of the Exchequer. She thought not. The pro-Hoares have intrigued for two days but I heard this morning from Rab (who insists that Hoare is really the Talleyrand⁵ of the age) that Winston hasn't the courage to offer him the Exchequer: he is too afraid of the Edenite clique and Anthony would never agree to having so serious a rival in the Cabinet . . . Later in the day we were

1 George Nathaniel Curzon (1859–1925) was one of the great proconsuls and statesmen of his age. He was Conservative MP for Southport from 1886 to 1898, when he was raised to the peerage as 1st Baron Curzon of Kedleston (in the Irish peerage, so he could sit again in the House of Commons) on his appointment as Viceroy of India; he was advanced to an earldom as Earl Curzon of Kedleston in 1911; and finally to a marquessate as Marquess Curzon of Kedleston in 1921.*

2 Alastair Robert Innes-Ker (1880–1936), Lord Alastair by courtesy, was the son of the 7th Duke of Roxburghe. He won the DSO in the Second Boer War, fought in the Royal Flying Corps in the Great War, and from 1930 to 1936 was equerry to King George V.

3 A romantic novel, published in 1907, and in its time considered scandalous because of the sexual relationship it depicted between a younger man and an older woman.

4 King George VI and Queen Elizabeth.*

5 Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord (1754–1838) was a French clergyman and Napoleon's chief diplomat who achieved fame at the Congress of Vienna in 1814. He also served as France's Ambassador to London from 1830 to 1834 and became 1st Prince of Benevento.

proved right as it was confirmed that Anderson had been offered the coveted post. This is a major Churchillian blunder, since John Anderson is needed for the Home Front and will be wasted at the Exchequer . . . Ava was fetched from Belgrave Square by the Chancellor-to-be and taken to Kingsley Wood's memorial service. (I didn't go as I am somewhat shy of attending services of people with whom I have never been really intimate.) Later I drove P to be photographed by Cecil Beaton, had my hair arranged, rejoined them. P and I dined in and alone having refused Emerald's pressing invitations to go to her. Delicious dinner and evening *à deux*.

SATURDAY 25TH SEPTEMBER *THE RECTORY MANOR, WINDLESHAM*

We arrived here to stay with Reggie and Daisy Fellowes in time for tea. A prettily-arranged house belonging to Loel Guinness,¹ it is full of charm and is comfortable. Daisy has the knack of arranging interiors. She is not really the wicked woman she is painted but only a naughty, spoilt and delightful child. Her sweetness to her husband, poor Reggie, is remarkable. He has recently had to have a leg off and is too old to learn to walk; his charming cultivated face shows traces of immense physical suffering . . . a funny old thing . . . Later we played croquet, which is becoming fashionable again. P played with exquisite expertise: everything he does is always perfect. The Brazilian Ambassador and Mme Aragão² dined, and the Argentine Ambassador, Miguel Cárcano,³ is staying here. Pleasant evening; delicious food and champagne and conversation all in French. P's French is none too good; I suspect that his German is better. It is very cold and I dread sleeping alone.

SUNDAY 26TH SEPTEMBER

Very cold. P and I went for an immense walk . . .

The newest appointments have now all been announced. Jim Thomas,⁴ who is almost halfwitted, goes to the Admiralty as Financial Secretary in the room of George Hall⁵ who goes to the Foreign Office. It is a triumph indeed for the

- 1 Thomas Loel Evelyn Bulkeley Guinness (1906–88) was a distant relative of Lady Honor Channon. He was Conservative MP for Bath from 1931 to 1945.*
- 2 José Joaquim de Lima e Silva Moniz de Aragão (1887–1974) was the Brazilian Ambassador to the United Kingdom from 1940 to 1952. His wife was Isabel Rodrigues Alves (1891–1980).
- 3 Miguel Ángel Cárcano (1889–1978), Argentinian Ambassador to the United Kingdom from 1942 to 1945.*
- 4 James Purdon Lewes Thomas (1903–60), Conservative MP for Hereford.* He and Channon were very close friends for a time, with quite possibly a closer relationship even than that.
- 5 George Henry Hall (1881–1965) was Labour MP for Aberdare from 1922 to 1946, when he was raised to the peerage as 1st Viscount Hall. He held junior office in the wartime coalition, and in the Attlee administration served as Colonial Secretary from 1945 to 1946 and as First Lord of the Admiralty from 1946 to 1951.

Edenites, but is monstrous as Alan L-B was so obviously the proper choice. An ex-minister three times¹ and has now served three years at sea. Ministerial experience plus practical naval knowledge passed over for Jim, whose only qualifications are his deep loyalty to Anthony Eden and his disloyalty to anyone else. Dick Law,² the dullest man in political life, becomes a Minister of State. It is all too terrible and smacks of too much favouritism.

MONDAY 27TH SEPTEMBER

P and I up early and went for a freezing walk, then we drove to London . . . Later I went to the Dorchester to the Mountbattens' mammoth cocktail reception. I was rather early and found a bevy of royalties – they always arrive too soon. Uncle Charlie, the King of Norway,³ stood like a maypole in the middle of the room. That was at six; he was still there at eight when P and I left . . . Bernhard of the Netherlands,⁴ Olaf of Norway⁵ and Bertie [*sic*] of Sweden⁶ were talking together and I joined this group of 'monarchs' – soon all London arrived; it was like a peacetime party. Three hundred people at least. I chatted with everybody, chiefly Lady Wavell, who looked well and was delightful – she whispered to me that Lady Astor was mad and had hissed at her. So she seemed; for she rushed up to me and was foolish and infuriating. I fear that she is going off her head!! All the gov't; many ambassadors, etc. came but Winston, who was expected, had not turned up when P and I left.

We walked home . . . I had a headache and went up early.

Although outraged I congratulated Jim Thomas heartily on his job. Alan rang up from Gt Yarmouth; he is disappointed and indignant. Freya Stark also asked me to lunch.

TUESDAY 28TH SEPTEMBER

I did not attend Valentine Kenmare's memorial requiem Mass this morning; I cannot become like Lady Oxford and pass my life at memorial services. I hear it

- 1 Lennox-Boyd had been parliamentary secretary at the ministries of Labour, Home Security and Food between 1938 and 1940.
- 2 Richard Kidston Law (1901–80)* was the youngest son of Andrew Bonar Law (1858–1923), Prime Minister 1922–3. He sat as Conservative MP for Hull South West from 1931 to 1945. In 1954 he was raised to the peerage as 1st Baron Coleraine.
- 3 Prince Carl of Denmark (1872–1957) was elected King by the Norwegian Storting, or Parliament, in 1906 when voting to end the union with Sweden. He took the regnal name King Haakon VII.
- 4 Prince Bernhard of Lippe-Biesterfeld (1911–2004),* from birth Graf von Biesterfeld, married Princess (later Queen) Juliana of the Netherlands* in 1937.
- 5 Prince Alexander Edward Christian Frederik of Glücksberg (1903–91).* He was King of Norway, with the regnal name Olav V, from 1957 until his death.
- 6 Prince Bertil of Sweden, Duke of Halland (1912–97).*

was crowded with Catholics and others; he was a popular fantastic Falstaff-ian figure. The dashing 'showy' widow¹ has now buried four husbands and already *on dit*² she is looking out for a fifth, and will find one.³

There is indignant consternation in London over the recent govt changes; it is felt (and has been told to him) that Winston let a great opportunity slip; for he had recently begun to woo the Conservative Party with some success: yet at the first occasion he snubs it: he takes back his old mistress Beaverbrook,⁴ makes him Lord Privy Seal and so affronts a large and powerful section of his supporters; and moreover the minor promotions are all of a glamorous character, all Edenite appointees. One expected favouritism, which is legitimate in politics, but the PM is ill-advised to ignore the party as a whole. It is a scandal that Alan L-Boyd was not sent to the Admiralty instead of the papier maché Jim Thomas. But then Winston is in a holiday mood – ebullient for victory, one can do nothing with him. It is becoming impossible.

WEDNESDAY 29TH SEPTEMBER

At six o'clock I arrived at the Dorchester where a mammoth memorial concert had been organised by Lady Colefax as a tribute to Victor Cazalet. Over 700 people attended and the ballroom was full; nevertheless I thought the affair an embarrassing festival lacking in taste, since with so many people present the atmosphere was that of a cocktail party. Nobody was in black and people went about chattering and making engagements . . . Thelma Cazalet made a short speech. I soon stole away as I was already v late for the Wavells' cocktail party upstairs. It lacked chic certainly and the only 'grands' were my friends. Lady Wavell looked charming and was so – the Field Marshal looked boyish and seemed gay. He accused me of neglecting him; and twitted me with avoiding him! I had not wished to push myself. I stayed an hour and then walked home in the blackout with P, Felicity Wavell and Freya Stark. P and I left the ladies and went up to our baths and had a rapturous half-hour together pleading everlasting love, companionship – loyalty; the dear boy suddenly broke down and cried. So did I. We are to be so soon separated for so long.

King Victor Emmanuel has written a personal and confidential letter to our King urging us to prosecute the invasion of Italy with more speed and force – he appeals for our aid against the Germans. He is more pro-ally than the allies and will (may) thus save his throne.

1 The former Viscountess Furness (qv).

2 The word is.

3 She did not; but she did, in 1954, supply a fatal dose of heroin to Donald Bloomingdale of the New York department store family; after which her own long history of drug addiction became public. Somerset Maugham called her 'Lady Killmore'.

4 William Maxwell Aitken (1879–1964), 1st Baron Beaverbrook.*

THURSDAY 30TH SEPTEMBER

The days flash by with a ghastly rapidity . . . the Duchess of Kent rang up early and we gossiped. Arthur Leveson told me much last night: The Mountbatten party leaves now on Saturday. I asked A L (known as 'The Pie') to warn Dickie of an Admiralty cabal against him: he had already heard of it . . . he was v sweet; he is a charming creature. He says that Dudley Pound¹ is gone, or going, finished and 'gaga'; he hopes that Percy Noble² will be appointed but apparently Winston [is] not too well disposed towards him.

I dressed for dinner with care and elegance. Lady Willingdon fetched me and we drove to Claridge's to dine with Laura Corrigan, who had collected a distinguished party; the Belgian Ambassador,³ [and] the Spanish Ambassador who was loud in his praises of Sam Hoare's work in Spain. [The Duke of] Alba added that his own mission in life was to promote good relations between England and his country, and if he succeeded he would not have lived in vain; Wellington Koo and his seductive, vicious, wicked and intelligent little wife who I thought eyed me with desire – instead I got completely off with her. She was dressed in Chinese clothes and was slim and *élégante* – we forged an axis but our flirtatious conversation ended on a banal note when she confided she could not get enough food for her Pekingese – the Dudleys;⁴ Laura looking lovely; Eric, genial; Loelia Westminster and Emerald (I divided them at dinner) and Harold [Balfour]. Just the twelve. Good food and champagne. I was gay and sparkled. Everybody affectionate and I forged a new axis with Mme Koo . . . Came home and found P in; he was, or pretended to be annoyed by my mental infidelity and *succès* with Her Excellency of Chungking. Glamorous gala.

FRIDAY 1ST OCTOBER

P woke still cross but we soon were reconciled and spent the day together shopping etc. He lunched with General Kirby⁵ who offered him a job as Gauleiter in Germany. I lunched alone and later picked up P. We spent an intimate and cosy afternoon

1 The First Sea Lord.*

2 Percy Lockhart Harnam Noble (1880–1955) joined the Navy in 1894 and served in both world wars. He was 4th Sea Lord from 1935 to 1938, when he was posted as Commander-in-Chief of the China Station. From early 1941 he was Commander-in-Chief, Western Approaches, and from 1942 until he retired in 1945 was head of the British Naval Delegation to Washington. He was knighted in 1936 and retired in the rank of admiral.

3 Baron Émile-Ernest de Cartier de Marchienne (1871–1946).*

4 William Humble Eric Ward (1894–1969), 3rd Earl of Dudley,* and his wife Frances Laura (1915–90, *née* Charteris).*

5 Stanley Woodburn Kirby (1895–1968) was commissioned in the Royal Engineers just before the outbreak of the Great War, in which he fought with distinction and won the Military Cross and bar. He held a number of senior staff appointments between the wars and in June 1943 became Director of Civil Affairs in the War Office, having served as Deputy Chief of the General Staff in India for the previous year, where he met Coats. His discussion with Coats presumably rested on assumptions about the Allied rule of an occupied post-war Germany.

before I left for Coppins, driving down Alice Harding and Alic [*sic*] Poklewski' . . . Coppins is as luxurious, as *bien tenue* as ever and the Duchess, in purple for half-mourning, looks more lovely than I have ever seen her. She was gay, confiding, affectionate, divine. We gossiped, then went to change and dined at nine o'clock. She wore a dazzling confection of mauve and purple, a Molyneux number, and many many pearls. She is beginning to recover. Later we played backgammon. Once or twice she referred to the dead Duke; wished, indeed, that he were alive to have seen the fall of Alec etc. She is extremely anti-Yugoslav, loathes Queen Mignon² and the boy King but has been pleasant . . . to old Aspasia³ and her daughter, Alexandra . . . She had also a secret meeting with Purić, the new Yugoslav PM, just before he left for Cairo. Indeed she came up especially from Sandringham to do so; he abused the dynasty and promised privately to help Prince Paul and his family in all means in his power. He thinks that the boy King is a noodle and a weakling and the mother wicked. The meeting took place in Natasha Bagration's tiny flat in Chelsea Cloisters just before the Yugoslav govt left for Egypt. He asked, what of Alexander?⁴ He seemed extremely pro-us, and pro-our party. It was an important meeting. The royal wedding is to take place in November.⁵

Delicious cosy evening; I am really happiest with royalties. I gather that the two elder Kent children are somewhat out-of-hand and spoil – so she hinted. The baby is her all and she worships him and has moved his nursery into the Duke's bedroom.

SATURDAY 2ND OCTOBER

Woke early and rang up P, who was in bed at Belgrave Square; he begged me to hurry up to London, which I immediately did . . . we were both rattled by the death of the Duke of Wellington,⁶ who has been killed. He was a 'poop'; plain, half-gaga and wholly unattractive, although he is P's cousin (the eccentric Duchess of Wellington⁷ was *née* Coats). But what is important and staggering is that Gerry Wellesley⁸ is now Duke of Wellington at the age of 58. His lifetime dream has come true. He has a horrible character, cold, pompous, frigid; and he is very 'common', for all his

1 Alfons Alexander 'Alik' Poklewski-Koziell (1891–1962).*

2 Marie, former Queen Consort of Yugoslavia. 'Mignon²' is Channon's rendering of her family nickname.

3 Aspasia Manos (1896–1972), Princess Aspasia of Greece and Denmark.* She was only 47.

4 Prince and Princess Paul's son (qv).

5 Between King Peter and Princess Alexandra of Greece. It did not take place until March 1944.

6 Henry Valerian George Wellesley (1912–43), by courtesy Earl of Mornington from birth until 1934 and Marquess of Douro until 1941, when he succeeded his father as 6th Duke of Wellington, died near Salerno of wounds sustained while fighting as a captain in 2 Commando.

7 Wife of the 5th Duke.*

8 Gerald Wellesley (1885–1972).* by courtesy Lord Gerald Wellesley from 1900 to 1943, was the third son of Lord Arthur Wellesley; later 4th Duke of Wellington, and himself became 7th Duke in 1943, succeeding his nephew. He was homosexual and, as a staff officer in the Second World War, was known as 'the Iron Duchess'.

considerable erudition and grand manner. Worse, he is never sure of himself: now he will be impossible. I had a long and passionate friendship with him which broke up over the doing-up of Kelvedon. Honor could not stand him. We are now enemies and for life. P likes him and that will be a complication. Valerian,¹ his son, is a handsome boy. How pleased Lady Scarbrough² would be by this turn of events; and how unexpected – a series of deaths and accidents.

I rushed to London, and arriving at No. 5 before 10.30 found P awaiting me. We shopped; I took him to the India Office and later fetched him there and we lunched together at Buck's Club; and we arranged a large cocktail party – a farewell *fiesta!* – for next Thursday at Belgrave Square. We are asking a hundred people in.

I drove here to Leeds, bringing down Mrs Corrigan. Here are Adrian³ and Olive Baillie; four American sergeants who are convalescing; Admiral Sir [blank] Ramsay,⁴ who recently made the arrangements for the Sicilian landings; Geoffrey Lloyd; Lady Moore,⁵ and Olive's daughters, the hard, uninteresting Pauline Ward,⁶ *qui en finira mal*,⁷ and divine dazzling little Susie [Winn].

I had a long gossip with Geoffrey Lloyd: he is indignant with Winston; thinks he has gone too far and that this last reshuffle is an insult to the House of Commons and to the Conservative Party. The whole house party is anti-Churchill.

Joan Moore played the piano quite magnificently after dinner. She is a great artist.

SUNDAY 3RD OCTOBER

Slept late and rested and came down only at one o'clock . . . Old Lord Hardinge⁸ came to lunch: he is now 85. However he was interesting and told us how had known five generations of Hohenzollerns well, having frequently talked to the old Emperor William I (he was there attached to our Embassy at Berlin) and constantly played tennis at Potsdam and elsewhere with the Empress Frederick's daughters;

1 Arthur Valerian Wellesley (1915–2014), by courtesy Marquess of Douro from 1943 to 1972, when he succeeded his father as 8th Duke of Wellington.*

2 She was the mother, by her first marriage, of the new Duke's estranged wife; she had died in 1931.

3 Sir Adrian William Maxwell Baillie (1898–1947), 6th Bt.*

4 Bertram Home Ramsay (1883–1945) joined the Royal Navy in 1898. He commanded a destroyer in the Great War, and retired in 1938: but Churchill urged him out of retirement the following year, and he planned the Dunkirk evacuation in 1940 and commanded the naval forces in the 1944 invasion of Normandy. He was knighted in 1940 and killed in a plane crash near Paris on the way to a staff conference in January 1945.

5 Joan Eleanor Birkbeck (1902–89), a concert pianist, married in 1935 as her third husband Viscount Moore.* She was later better known as the Countess of Drogheda, after her husband inherited his peerage.

6 Pauline Katharine Winn (b.1920)* married in 1940, Edward Ward (1907–87); he was the first of her three husbands.

7 Who will come to a bad end.

8 Charles Hardinge (1858–1944), 1st Baron Hardinge of Penshurst.*

the Emperor and Empress Frederick were his intimate friends. The late Kaiser he knew, whilst the fat Crown Prince stayed with him for nearly three months whilst he was Viceroy.¹ The 5th generation he met in the personable shape of my dear little friend, Fritzzi,² who used to stay at Leeds . . .

Long walks, sleep and bridge and too much food filled the quiet day and I am feeling well again.

Will that fat and foolish and pompous idiot, Gerry Wellesley, live at Apsley House? I wonder whether he will inherit it as he had long since quarrelled with all his family – he quarrels with everybody in the end!

MONDAY 4TH OCTOBER

I drove Olive Baillie and Laura Corrigan to London. P had already arrived and we lunched together in a bistro near Victoria.

Later we went to have tea with Lady Cunard who was witty, whimsical and enchanting. Her suite at the Dorchester is exquisite arranged with bibelots and French furniture . . . The Wavells went to Coppins to lunch with the Duchess of Kent today; one of my little plots and arrangements. P then called on his mother whilst I fetched his portrait from Gunn's studio. It is quite excellent, although not flattering, nevertheless is a handsome portrait. I paid Gunn fifty guineas for it.

Emerald repeated that Mrs Wellington Koo, the Chinese Ambassador, is having some difficulty in finding enough food for her Pekingese. A truly Proustian remark!

TUESDAY 5TH OCTOBER

Admiral Cunningham's³ appointment as 1st Sea Lord has been announced . . . And 'Pound Foolish'⁴ has gone . . .

- 1 Wilhelm I (1797–1888) succeeded his brother as King of Prussia in 1861 and was proclaimed Emperor of Germany at its unification in 1871. His son, Kaiser Friedrich, survived him for only ninety-nine days; his grandson, Kaiser Wilhelm II, was forced to abdicate in 1918. The Crown Prince (1882–1951) was a supporter of Hitler, wrongly thinking for a time that he would restore the Hohenzollerns to the German throne.
- 2 Prince Friedrich Georg Wilhelm Christoph of Prussia (1911–66)* was a grandson of Kaiser Wilhelm II. He would marry, in 1945 after a war spent in internment camps, Lady Brigid Guinness.
- 3 Andrew Browne Cunningham (1883–1963) joined the Royal Navy as a cadet in 1897. He commanded a destroyer during the Great War and won the DSO and two bars. After a series of commands between the wars he was appointed Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff in 1938, knighted in 1939 and became Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, just before the outbreak of war. He organised the invasion of 16,500 men from Crete in 1941 and was created 1st Baronet in 1942. He was promoted Admiral of the Fleet in 1943 and became First Sea Lord later that year. He was made a Knight of the Thistle in 1945 and raised to the peerage as 1st Baron Cunningham of Hyndhope later that year. In 1946 he was advanced to a viscountcy and made a member of the Order of Merit, on his retirement as First Sea Lord.
- 4 Sir Dudley Pound (qv); Channon is monstrously unfair to him as Pound had been struggling to do his job while mortally ill.

Walked with P to the India Office, and had to rush to the H of C as I had an attack of diarrhoea – I arrived just too late, after an embarrassing disaster which luckily nobody observed . . . P telephoned to say that the Field Marshal wanted us to lunch alone with him at the Senior Club. I rushed home to have a bath and to tidy myself and at one o'clock came a second message that Wavell had become entangled – I think with Smuts' and would I forgive him: I was relieved, indeed and I spent a quiet afternoon, catching up with life and attending to matters and having my hair arranged. (I am still dark with only a v few and almost imperceptible grey hairs over my temples.) Later I went to Lady Wavell's cocktail party at the Dorchester, going with Peter and his mother. It was mixed but gay, and I talked at length with Freya Stark and others. There were about a hundred. Lady Wavell was most affectionate and he, too, but he was bewildered. *Le monde* is still new to him, and glamorous . . . I slipped away early as I had to change and fetch Princess Alexandra of Greece at eight o'clock.

When I called for her at 37 Grosvenor Square, I found Ben Kittredge also there and we drove *à trois* to Claridge's to dine with Laura. *Un dîner de jeunesse*.² I was between Princess Alexandra and the Alba girl, the Duquesa di Montoro³ – a dreary, sad, wide-eyed girl of romance and unmasked sex. I foresee a turbulent future for her. The others were . . . two Cárcanos,⁴ and a collection of Americans and Bertie of Sweden, who is rather rude and a bore. He looks v Bernadotte;⁵ however I was nice to him. A long confidential and satisfactory talk with Alexandra whom I have known since she was a beautiful baby . . . Alexandra confided in me that her wedding will take place in November here. King Peter is flying back to marry her. She is pro-me, and rather revealing about her wicked mother-in-law-to-be, Queen Mignonne, whom she calls, 'Pikey'; says she stays all day in bed with Rosemary Cresswell⁶ etc. The Queen has been horrible about me because I am a friend of Princess Paul's; but Alexandra asked her why not? She thinks that peace will be restored between us . . . later I drove her home. A successful evening with the *jeunesse dorée*. P refused flatly to go and spent the evening with his mother whom he worships, although he confesses that she bores him . . .

1 Jan Christian Smuts, Prime Minister of South Africa.*

2 A youthful dinner.

3 María del Rosario Cayetana Fitz-James Stuart y Silva (1926–2014) succeeded her father in 1953 as Duchess of Alba, the third duchess in her own right. She married in 1947 Don Luis Martínez de Irujo y Artázcoz. She was thought to be the most titled aristocrat in the world after succeeding, holding seven dukedoms, a count-dukedom, nineteen marquessates, twenty-three countships, a viscountcy and a lordship. In her later years she became a martyr to the art of the plastic surgeon. See also entry for 2nd June 1946.

4 The Argentinian Ambassador (qv) and his wife.

5 Jean Bernadotte (1763–1844) became a Marshal of France under Napoleon, and was elected heir to the Swedish throne in 1810, succeeding as King Charles XIV John in 1818. Descendants of Bernadotte's elder brother still form the Swedish royal house.

6 Violet Rosemary Cresswell (1903–83). Technically Mrs Cresswell was Queen Marie of Yugoslavia's lady-in-waiting; the Queen had lived in England since 1937.

WEDNESDAY 6TH OCTOBER

Tonight is the evening of the big govt banquet . . . in honour of the Wavells . . . The Duchess of Kent came to tea and to please Peter I invited his mother, Felicity Wavell, as well as Alice [Harding] and Cecil Beaton and Angier Duke.¹ The Duchess came in Wren uniform and was less shy than usual and much more possessed. She shows signs of recovering . . . she was most affectionate and even funny. She handed me a letter from Prince Paul which had been brought over by Smuts. Prince Paul is in better spirits, and seems almost normal; he asked me to do some shopping for him Xmas and otherwise. He wants to give O[lga] a Fabergé jewel to commemorate their twentieth anniversary on the 22nd. Eventually our little party left, and everyone had enjoyed seeing the exquisite Duchess. (Lady Wavell also is always unexpected and has got London society all wrong, insists that the Duchess of Gloucester² is more attractive. A very South Kensington point-of-view.) The tiny tea party was a success except for the episode of Felicity Wavell dropping a full cocktail glass over the Duchess of Kent as she curtsied – she is a famous dropper, apparently . . .

P and I dined deliciously, deliriously alone . . . P delicious; he is enchanted with his Gunn portrait. Not over-gushing by nature, he is much more demonstrative when drunk or a touch tipsy. Tomorrow is our huge cocktail *festa*,³ what will it be like?

Hugh Euston⁴ flitted in and out; he is pale, shy and *chétif*,⁵ and hopelessly inoperative. As I fixed his appointment as ADC to the Wavells, I trust that he will be a success; but I fear not. I gather that the royal family, who at first encouraged his romance with 'Lilibet'⁶ now think him too inert and *énervé*⁷ and are looking elsewhere – perhaps towards Valerian Wellesley, suddenly Marquis of Douro!⁸

THURSDAY 7TH OCTOBER

A long day has dawned and ended . . . walked with P and the dog to the India Office, and returned to make arrangements. Wavell half-suggested coming to luncheon but I was against it – an added strain. I gather that last night's govt dinner

1 Angier Biddle Duke (1915–95), American diplomat.*

2 Lady Alice Christabel Montagu Douglas Scott (1901–2004), daughter of the 7th Duke of Buccleuch. She married Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester, in 1935.

3 Party.

4 Hugh Denis Charles FitzRoy (1919–2011), Earl of Euston.*

5 Puny.

6 Later Queen Elizabeth II (1926–2022).

7 On edge.

8 Arthur Valerian Wellesley (1915–2011), by courtesy Marquess of Douro from 1943 until he succeeded his father as 8th Duke of Wellington in 1972. He was a professional soldier until 1968 when he retired in the rank of brigadier. He did not marry Princess Elizabeth; he became a Knight of the Garter in 1990.

was moderately successful; there were seventy guests including about six women. The men wore dinner-jackets and burgundy was served but no champagne. Winston sat between the two Wavells and made an adequate speech; Wavell answered somewhat shyly and whilst it was a good speech, it did not, of course compare with his historic Pilgrim Oration¹ in which both P and I had a hand.

P brought E. M. Jenkins² to lunch and I collected Rab so that they should meet and discuss India. We sat between them and afterwards left them to talk confidentially. P and I, being in a sense, half-men, have supreme social sense and we amuse the pure males – and then leave them. We spent a hectic but amusing afternoon arranging No. 5 and tidying the furniture and lighting candles. The house looked a dream of rococo beauty and shimmered; it was quiet, elegant and distinguished certainly. At 5.30 punctually our first guest, Lady Halifax, arrived and she was v charming. She and P took to each other immediately and had a long talk. Her arrival was followed by that of the Duke of Alba . . . and after that I lost all count – for three hours people poured in; young and old; gay and great; tight and sober; and soon the blue dining room with the flickering candles was crowded and the candles warmed it. I know from counting afterwards that over 105 people turned up and I remember many; Freya Stark dressed like an Eskimo in a white fur coat; Ève Curie,³ chic and military, in a French uniform; Violet Trefusis⁴ gaudily got-up in an 1860 affair; Loelia Westminster in green; Mrs Amery sad-eyed wandered like a ghost; the Belgian Ambassador remaining for hours; Harold Nicolson in a corner with Lady Wavell who was in an irritated mood (more of that later); the two Wavell girls; the Polish Ambassador;⁵ the Argentine Ambassador; Harold Balfour; Audrey Bouverie⁶ wearing a curious bird hat; Daisy Fellowes, *élégante* but ageing; and ever so many more. Hore Belisha said it was the most glamorous party he had been to since the war [started]! And certainly so it seemed. Peter rushed about with his quiet elegance, the perfect host – it *was* his party really. A modern mixture of the young and the grand.

There were two rows, one between Laura Corrigan and Audrey Bouverie over Ève Curie; the other more serious, was a scene which I did not witness between Lady Wavell and Miss Joan Bright, the pushy secretary to ‘Pug’ Ismay.⁷ Lady

1 His speech the previous month to the luncheon at the Savoy of the Pilgrims of Great Britain.

2 Evan Meredith Jenkins (1896–1985) joined the Indian civil service in 1920 and had just been appointed Wavell’s viceregal secretary. In 1946 he became the last British governor of the Punjab. He was knighted in 1944.

3 Ève Denise Curie (1904–2007),* younger daughter of Pierre and Marie Curie.

4 Violet Trefusis (1894–1972, *née* Keppel), novelist and memoirist.*

5 Count Edward Bernard Raczynski (1891–1993), Polish Ambassador to the United Kingdom from 1934 to 1945.*

6 Audrey Evelyn James (1902–68)* married, in 1938, as her third husband, Peter Pleydell-Bouverie.*

7 Hastings Lionel ‘Pug’ Ismay (1887–1965), Army officer and diplomat. In 1947 he was raised to the peerage as 1st Baron Ismay.*

Wavell asked me which she was and I pointed her out. A little later Lady W – like an avenging angel – swept down upon her and said 'So you call my husband, my sweet APW, oh yes?' 'Yes, I often call people that!' Joan retorted. 'He is Lord Wavell to you!' Lady Wavell answered crushingly, her voice vibrating with fury. Nobody observed this *scène-de-jalousie*,¹ but Joan described it to Peter. She was so upset that she immediately left! Lady W remained on in possession of the field and [illegible] at me, especially when I luckily remarked that I scarcely knew Miss Bright! The blackout fell at seven o'clock and then there were taxi difficulties. Old Princess de Polignac² remained in the front hall for an hour awaiting a conveyance. People chattered and made dates; the candles guttered, the cocktails were passed and it was after eight before the room rather emptied. Unfortunately, the War Cabinet was still sitting: there had been a gloomy meeting over Portugal and this prevented the govt from coming. I had a telephone message from F[ield] Marshal Smuts that he would be unable to come etc. Nevertheless at 8.40 Wavell and Amery arrived together and we gave them the last drinks. Both were out of breath and disappointed not to have come earlier . . . at 9.30, P and I, leaving the rich atmosphere of smoke and *luxe* left the house and walked to Pratt's to dine *à deux*.

Our first big party together and it was a huge success.

FRIDAY 8TH OCTOBER

The saga of our Indian summer is ending and there are moments when I would be relieved for the strain and sadness of parting is v great – and one must not, as Marvell put it, 'for parting pleasure strain',³ yet I am wretched, miserable at the prospect of a prolonged separation, for I feel that P, who is extremely secretive, plans to be away the full five years of Wavell's viceroyalty. I don't know. It is a cushy comfortable job, although glamorous and dull after all his great exploits, travels and adventures . . .

About six Diana [Cooper] rang me up in a frenzy from the Dorchester where she had accidentally met the Wavells in a lift; the Field Marshal had insisted on her going to his apartment for a drink and she was 'funking' it. She loathes Lady Wavell who snubs and misunderstands her (Lady W is a 'sweetie' but middle class and she resents the *grand monde*). I was soon bullied into going to the Dorchester where I found Diana closeted with Emerald Cunard who had just come in from No. 10 Downing Street where she had been having tea alone with the Churchills and was full of them. She, too, hates Lady W and told them so. I fear that she has made herself extremely unpopular with her 'airs and graces' and queer assured superiority. Diana dragged me to the FM's rooms and we discovered him

1 Jealous interlude.

2 Formerly Winnaretta Singer (1865–1913), an heiress to the sewing machine empire.*

3 From 'Daphnis and Chloe, thought to have been written around 1647, by Andrew Marvell (1621–78): 'Gentler times for love are meant: / Who for parting pleasure strain / Gather roses in the rain, / Wet themselves and spoil their scent.'

munching tomato sandwiches and drinking beer. He was about to take Lady Wavell, whose 56th birthday it is, to a film. We stayed for a quarter of an hour, drank gin, and I secretly was sorry for the FM who went three times to his wife's bedroom to fetch her. She was dressing and did not emerge – she wouldn't, and I saw through his embarrassment. I fear the Victor of Libya is hen-pecked . . .

SATURDAY 9TH OCTOBER

My little boy is 8 today; for four horrible birthdays he has been apart from me.

P and I had a lazy morning, although the complications of packing have begun. We walked late to the India Office, and I left him to 'cope' for a little as I went to Hatchard's where I ran into Lady Halifax and her son Richard buying books. Richard was wheeling himself in an armchair; he looks fat, of course.¹ He is legless, but cheerful and friendly. His hardy and good humour are remarkable.

Wavell rang me up and soon called to say 'goodbye'. He stayed for half an hour and I felt *attendri*² towards him and shall certainly miss him. I almost embraced him and for a fleeting second feared that he would kiss me! I gave him two golf clubs of mine which he coveted and he took two books and left . . . I felt sick at heart and a wave of devotion to him came over me. P came in and we undressed and dined *à deux en pyjama*: he is keeping the last weekend for me and seems happy enough.

A strange night – woke early.

SUNDAY 10TH OCTOBER

We got up later, breakfasted luxuriously and drove to Paddington Green on a glimpses of the Moon³ expedition since he wanted to see where he had been stationed in that autumn of 1939 when our idyll first began. We wandered about – the statue of Mrs Siddons,⁴ where we sometimes met, has disappeared. Probably it has been put away. Returned for luncheon. Mrs Coats came, too. We were gay together and she seems courageous about the separation. She is most tactful and understanding; but I doubt whether she minds as much as I do . . . we talked of the dark autumn of 1939 when P was a subaltern, unknown and timid, in the [Royal Corps of] Signals.

1 Following his severe wound sustained in North Africa: see Vol. II, entry for 11th January 1943.

2 Tender or fond.

3 Channon was probably more influenced by the wistful Edith Wharton novel with this title (1922) than by the line from *Hamlet*, Act 1, scene 4 from which it came – 'What may this mean / That thou, dead corse, again in complete steel, / Revisits thus the glimpses of the moon, / Making night hideous, and we fools of nature / So horribly to shake our disposition / With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls?'

4 Sarah Kemble (1755–1831) was one of the leading actresses of the late eighteenth century, specialising in Shakespearian tragedy. She married William Siddons, a fellow actor, in 1773. Her statue was returned to Paddington Green after the war.

What a four years he has had! . . . He said 'goodbye' to relations in the afternoon and then came back to me. Suddenly there was little to do. 'Life after death'; and we sat affectionately together making rather desultory conversation. Then we dined and in pyjamas; and later exchanged vows; next time he comes to No. 5, it will be, he said, '*pour le toujours*.'¹ We drank champagne given me by the Viceroy-designate.

MONDAY 11TH OCTOBER

A grey, gloomy day dawned and I half-hoped that the dreaded Wavell departure would be postponed, but it was not to be. The morning was long and a mess; Simon Astley² dropped in, so did Hugh Euston . . . the Indian party in fact. P and I went for a short walk and lunched *à deux* at 12.45 – shrimps and champagne. I almost broke down and there were tears, too, in those shy haunting grey eyes. We left before two in my little car for Airways House, where the departure was to take place. The royal train was brought up; there were police and some friends, relations, hangers-on, and the govt began to arrive: it was a distinguished galaxy, but emotional. E. M. Jenkins, the Viceroy's P[rivate] S[ecretary] melted and sat with his old mother whom he may never meet again; I introduced them to the Duke of Grafton³ who was moved and sad and most friendly, and thanked me for my help re Hugh Euston's appointment. I introduced Hugh and Felicity Wavell etc. At last the Wavells arrived, she was *bien mise*,⁴ indeed *élégante* in grey, was gay and gracious and most affectionate to me. He was in tweeds and nearly broke down as he went about shaking hands and I noticed tears in his Cyclopien eye. He remarked to somebody that always before he had been seen off only by a sergeant major and now all the govt and half London society was on the platform. Mrs Coats came . . . Peter darted here and there, wearing a blue suit and a new British Warm.⁵ He wore too, my watch chain, and carried my cigarette case and wore my links and carried other gadgets which I had given him. He was sweet and smilingly efficient . . . greeting friends etc. The Andersons appeared, so did the Cripps ménage;⁶ Harvie-Watt⁷ represented the Prime Minister, Guy Millard⁸ came on behalf of Anthony Eden, whilst Lord Allendale⁹ drove up in a royal car representing the King. I introduced him to Lady Wavell, who is genuinely anxious to get away as London has been too much for her; he, on the other hand, was sad and moved . . . Felicity,

1 For ever.

2 Husband of the former Joan Wavell (qv).

3 Charles Alfred Euston FitzRoy (1892–1970)* succeeded his cousin as 10th Duke of Grafton in 1936, after the 9th Duke was killed in a motor-racing accident.

4 Well turned out.

5 The traditional double-breasted grey-brown overcoat of the officer class in both world wars.

6 Sir Stafford Cripps (1889–1950)* and his wife Isobel (1891–1979, *née* Swithinbank).*

7 George Steven Harvie-Watt (1903–89), Conservative MP for Richmond.*

8 Guy Elwin Millard (1917–2012) joined the Diplomatic Service in 1939.* He worked for Eden again when the latter became Prime Minister.

9 Wentworth Henry Canning Beaumont (1890–1956) succeeded his father as 2nd Viscount Allendale in 1923.* He was a close friend of the Queen.

I led to the train, after introducing her to the Lord Chancellor, Lord Simon, and I put her into the viceregal compartment. Suddenly she sobbed; for she is a sweet mite, and threw her arms around me, she kissed me 'goodbye!' and we parted. At 2.25 Peter began to agitate and herded the party to their places. I carried Lady Wavell's bag. P seemed calm but my heart nearly stopped. At the last second those horrible Cranbornes came, and there was a tremendous cheer as the train simply slipped out. P at a back platform seized my hand and we clasped in [*sic*] – and I wondered, shall we ever meet again: It was dreadful . . . and as we left I hated the people to whom the Wavells meant nothing – Grimston¹ and Jim Thomas and others. Oh! the agony of railway stations; I watched Eddie Devonshire² . . . laughing with the Cranbornes. I came home alone, cool and calm, but when I found a plethora of messages and kind enquiry I broke down. Bill Astor was awaiting me; but I rushed to my tailor's and finally went to the Amerys' to tea. They had sent me such a sweet message. Sadie Rodney and Mrs Amery are good and tender friends; they both kissed me, she said that I had made Wavell Viceroy and Sadie added that I had launched them. I burst into tears and left . . .

Dined at the Argentine Embassy *en famille*. Mrs Cárcano said she knew that I was unhappy. I am. Now it is nearly midnight and this horrible day is ending. They were to have rung up from Poole, if there was a second, or if they were delayed. Nothing of the sort occurred. Even now they are flying on the Atlantic. I pray that P will be safe . . . and happy. I am so sorry, too, for Joan Astley, left behind, deserted by her husband and family, is highly pregnant . . . I have taken a double dose of sleeping draught and now await sleep and *loubli*.³

TUESDAY 12TH OCTOBER

I slept ten hours all alone; woke refreshed but vacuous and void. Indeed there is a sense of relief, the pain of actual parting is over; loneliness has not yet set in and the strain of farewell is over. I am better now than I shall later be. There is an accumulation of constituency, financial, social and literary work as well as chores; and I shall be busy for some time.

I walked to the House, avoiding the way P and I always went so happily together, and arrived early enough . . . but all the morning my telephone had buzzed; people rang up for kindness or curiosity and some, I know because they were genuinely glad that P has left; for they either disliked him or resented his influence and perpetual presence. I shall never forget him, not until the end of my days. Now I must get on with life . . . Diana C rang; she has dined at No. 10 last evening with the Churchills, Max Beaverbrook and Duff. Just the five. Winston had rushed in in a bath towel saying he 'wouldn't be long', which he was. Much

1 Robert Villiers Grimston (1897–1979). Conservative MP for Westbury.*

2 Edward William Spencer Cavendish (1895–1950), by courtesy Marquess of Hartington from 1908 to 1938, when he succeeded his father as 10th Duke of Devonshire.*

3 Oblivion.

Wavell talk: the PM is uneasy about Wavell's liberal or slightly left-ish, neo-Gandhi predilections. He doesn't like Lady Wavell, and Clemmie irritated her and was scathing about her mannerisms . . . Beaverbrook, ever a good host but an embarrassed guest was silent and cross.

There was excitement at the House and I heard at once that there was something afoot. After questions Amery read out a long statement about the famine in Bengal;¹ and then Winston rose and announced to a surprised House (it never knows anything) of our recent occupation of the Azores. (The new Portuguese Ambassador, the Duke of Palmela² and father of eleven children was in the gallery – his first appearance.) Winston did it with relish and skill and the House was enchanted.

I dozed a little and later attended a meeting addressed by Lord Halifax in usual monotonous yet humorous voice. It was crowded and he pleased although he never fascinates. Charles Wood,³ looking extremely handsome, was in the room, proud of his father, I suppose, although he doesn't like him. None of his children does. Walked home, changed into more fashionable clothes and at 6.45 I was at the Wings Club, where as secretary, I received the Duchess of Kent who came to visit it officially. Laura Corrigan, Harold Balfour and I met her at the door; and she was attended by Rachel Davidson.⁴ These two pathetic gentle unhappy sweet widows have struck up a new friendship. The Duchess was superbly dressed in black satin, wore a plumed hat and many pearls and jewels and looked what she ever is, the most lovely biped alive. She inspected the whole club and was effusive in her praises of what we had done; then we adjointed to the bar and I presented some fifty airmen to her. They were of all nationalities and she was magnificent, talking easily with them all in several languages. They seemed *éblouis*⁵ by her beauty and graciousness. I put her in her car, and she drove off with Mary Herbert⁶ to give us all a few moments in which to reassemble at Claridge's where

- 1 The Bengal famine is one of the incidents with which Churchill's posthumous reputation has been frequently tarred, notably in the mission to depict him as being racially prejudiced. It occurred mainly in 1943 in Eastern India and in what is now Bangladesh, though most of the two to three million deaths attributed to it (in a population of over sixty million) occurred in 1944. It is mainly argued that neglect caused by British policies was responsible for the famine, but farming in the area had been in decline for generations and was unable to keep up with the growth of an already ill-fed population. Although wartime conditions, notably the Japanese occupation of Burma, exacerbated the problem, the authorities were undeniably slow to the point of dereliction in their response to the humanitarian crisis. Matters improved after the Army took over the distribution of aid in October 1943, but it was far from the British Empire's finest hour.
- 2 Dom Domingos Maria do Espírito Santo José Francisco de Paula de Sousa Holstein-Beck (1897–1969).*
- 3 Charles Ingram Courtenay Wood (1912–80), by courtesy Lord Irwin from 1944 to 1959, when he succeeded his father as 2nd Earl of Halifax. He was Conservative MP for the City of York from 1937 to 1945. He married, in 1936, Ruth Alice Hannah Mary Primrose (1916–89).
- 4 Formerly Lady Rachel Fitzalan-Howard.*
- 5 Dazzled.
- 6 Mary Dorothea Hope (1903–95), by courtesy Lady Mary Hope, married in 1936 Sidney Herbert, by courtesy Lord Herbert.*

we dined in gaiety and state with Laura Corrigan. The Cárcanos; Harold Balfour; Sidney¹ and Mary Herbert; Poppy and Peter Thursby – she had been robbed of her jewels on the night of our party; Sheila Milbanke; Angier Duke. It was the Duchess's first dinner party since he was killed, almost since the war started, and she seemed to enjoy it thoroughly. Later she drove back to Coppins. Harold drove me home in his grand car; we sat for a time outside, with the ministerial blinds down and he showed me the telegrams describing the Wavells' trip

This afternoon's post brought me a postcard scribbled in the train, or from Poole, from Peter, saying that all was well – hitchless were the arrangements and the Wavells praised me and sent love. I ache for him. The first of a thousand Peter-less days are over.

WEDNESDAY 13TH OCTOBER

Slept soundly; I am still worn out by excesses and emotions but already I look improved and am putting on weight again. Walked to the House and came back in time to give Rachel Davidson luncheon. We talked of old days and she confessed to me how she had worshipped Colin,² and how he had been an angel of sweetness and purity. (He was really a *faux bonhomme*,³ treacherous, sly and half-a-cad, and his sexual life was a scandal. Nobody knew him longer and better than I. Long may she cherish her illusions; and, at least, all of her heiresses having failed him, he made Rachel happy, 'supremely so' as Mary Herbert remarked to me last evening). Rachel asked me about Honor and I told her the story. She was sympathetic and sorry for me. She asked whether I had even seen her or run into her and I told her that I had not met her since January 1942. We parted in affection and tears and I went back to the House to attend a meeting. This morning I heard Winston speak on coal;⁴ he made a surprise intervention and did it extraordinarily well; he was witty, full of gusto and pacified all elements. It was statesmanlike but really only postponed the issue of nationalisation. Came home, hid from callers and the telephone in my bedroom and at six turned on the wireless and heard the official announcement of Italy's declaration of war on Germany. So the wheel has turned full circle. Then I changed and went to the Dorchester to dine with Lady Cunard.

1 Sidney Herbert (1906–69), by courtesy Lord Herbert, succeeded his father as 16th Earl of Pembroke and 13th Earl of Montgomery in 1960. He became equerry to the Duke of Kent in 1935 and, after the Duke's death in 1942, private secretary to the Duchess. He married, in 1936, Mary Dorothea Hope (1903–95), by courtesy Lady Mary Hope, daughter of the 1st Marquess of Linlithgow.

2 See Vol 1, entry for 30th January 1924.

3 A fake.

4 There was industrial unrest in the coal industry, reopening fault lines that had been prominent throughout the inter-war period. Churchill appealed for an attitude of national unity at least until the war was over.

Dinner was a huge success; John Anderson, our new Chancellor and Ava; and they had brought his son Alastair, a doctor of 33 . . . Archie Sinclair¹ full of charm and fun, and Violet Trefusis (as usual nearly an hour late) completed the party. Heavy evening and Emerald was entrancing and her French furniture and fine possessions lent an elegance to the evening. I felt well and was funny. Later I left with Violet and in the foyer I saw, sitting with her sister Brigid, my wife – I went up to her, she was ungracious and looked hideous, ill-kempt and greyish; however we chatted for a time and I told her of Paul's recent tonsil operation. She was as irritating as only she can be, and so ill-dressed. Luckily I looked glamorous and well and was gay and master of the situation. Brigid was embarrassed. Neither Honor nor I were. H complained of the Dorchester food; I said I had dined upstairs with the War Cabinet and the food was delicious. She then wrote out at my request her new address near Brockenhurst. At present she is living on a boat. I ought to feel miserable for her yet somehow I cannot: she is so altogether unsatisfactory. She was fat and looked so drab: I was gay and airy and that is the mood which annoys her most. After about ten minutes I left them and as I walked home alone in the blackout to my luxurious house, I could not be sorry for her and I felt pangs of what might have been – it might all have worked out differently! But there has never been such a discontented bore and I wonder how her groom-paramour 'sticks it!' She was not *attendrie* at seeing me: and yet I was never once unkind to her in my life. Probably our *rencontre*² made matters better.

FRIDAY 15TH OCTOBER

I am still trying to catch up with an accumulation of chores, political and otherwise; and I am still tired.

Went to Billy McCann's³ cocktail party; he is charming, clever and cautious. Spent an hour there chatting with Elizabeth Elveden, and then drove with Maimie, Vsevolod and George [Gage] to dine at the Pastori restaurant. Gage's party – a feat since he has never been known to pay for anything before . . . home now, at 10.30, and very sleepy I am going to bed.

The Indian travellers are in Cairo but I have not yet had a cable; possibly they were delayed for a few hours.

SATURDAY 16TH OCTOBER

KELVEDON

People are agreed that the PM's handling of the Coal Debate was masterly and his speech pleased and placated the aggrieved Conservative Party. Whenever he is in trouble he veers towards us, and leans on us; then he is triumphant and he becomes

1 Archibald Henry Macdonald Sinclair (1890–1970), 4th Bt, Liberal MP for Caithness and Sutherland, Secretary of State for Air and leader of the Liberal Party.*

2 Meeting.

3 William 'Billy' McCann (1910–?), head of the Spanish Division in the Ministry of Information.*

intolerant and snubs and scoffs at us . . . with his recent outrageous reshuffle, what an unpleasant man.

Mairi Bury¹ came to lunch with me; she is sharp yet gentle and has an acute charm but she is v 'sexy' like all her family. We talked of poor little Diana Worthington² whose body has been found in the river. She was pathetically lovely and still in love with her husband, Greville who behaved shabbily to her and ran off a year or two ago with another woman. Twice I had dreamt of her and I told her so when I happened to meet her in Curzon Street. She looked surprised and flattered; I have known her since she came out. What a tragedy; there is much loneliness in life and I must first banish my own and then help others with theirs . . . I told Beatrice Eden³ of my dream and asked her to invite me with Diana [Cooper] to lunch (her stepsister and cousin); of course she did nothing; The wretched woman would have been alive today if I had taken her up, I suppose. I had even toyed with the idea of marrying her.

Kelvedon looks lovely; I am always entranced by its beauty when I come; and the trees are growing. It will be lovely here after the war.

I rang up Alan at Yarmouth; I miss him and it is a scandal that he is not in the govt. Then I sent a long cable to Prince Paul at Johannesburg. Now I am once more alone.

SUNDAY 17TH OCTOBER

Slept deeply and woke in my lovely grey bedroom which I have not occupied these many months. Alan rang me depressingly from Yarmouth where he is bored and *dépaysé*.⁴ It is pouring with autumn rain and the first of the fogs shroud Kelvedon. All is bleak – Pierrot [Coats] is even now almost approaching his splendid and dusky destination: I trust he did not misbehave in Cairo. He can never resist flesh – yet here he did for six months. He ought to have sent me a cable from Cairo as he promised; but he loathes cables and rarely sends them. They offend his Scotch sense⁵ and it is possible that he has been delayed. They were due to leave Egypt today.

Vsevolod rang me from London. Hore-Belisha had lunched with them and accompanied them to a Greek service; he is very religious. Any religion will do.

1 Lady Mairi Elizabeth Vane-Tempest-Stewart (1921–2009),* married in 1940 Derek Keppel, Viscount Bury.*

2 Mary Diana Duncombe (1905–43), daughter of the 2nd Earl of Feversham, married in 1927 William Greville Worthington (1903–42), whom she divorced in 1942. Immediately after their divorce Worthington was shot dead by a naval sentry whose challenge he apparently had not heard. Lady Diana committed suicide by drowning, never having recovered from the pain of the divorce.

3 Beatrice Helen Beckett (1905–57), daughter of Sir William Beckett, banker, married in 1923 Anthony Eden (qv). They divorced in 1950.

4 Disorientated.

5 Channon implies Coats is penny-pinching.

Vsevolod tells me that his great-aunt Elena (the Queen of Italy)¹ has escaped into Switzerland where she has joined his mother² who will be furious. He also tells me that poor Hubert [Duggan]³ is dying, as we have long known and feared.

I have been for a walk; the untidiness of Kelvedon depresses me . . . all is tangled and neglected but growing. A lovely, long, lonely day catching up with life: how can I bear the separation . . . even now they are probably at Muscat on the threshold of India.

MONDAY 18TH OCTOBER

The morning newspapers announce that the viceregal party has arrived in India . . . I am horribly hurt that P did not cable me from Cairo – but always before when I have taken offence I have been proved wrong in time . . . perhaps he sent a letter on by the boat?

I drove up to London, my little car laden with luscious vegetables and flowers. Many letters to attend to. My darling Diana [Cooper] has arrived to stay with me for a few days – lunched alone; had my hair cut, and have given Princess Alexandra of Greece an exquisite Louis XVI snuffbox as a wedding present. Lady Willingdon and the Loxleys⁴ dined: Lavender Loxley is a sweetie but so unpowdered and *unsoignée*⁵ that I fear she will not make an admirable Ambassadors. They left early and as I write the sirens are sounding: it is just before 11 p.m. Now the guns boom. I trust that Diana will get back safely from the Dorchester?

TUESDAY 19TH OCTOBER

I have stopped taking all drugs, tonics and vitamin pills – many people live on them. In consequence my 'tum' is in better shape but I am dreadfully depressed; constantly on the verge of tears, and so lonely – so utterly lonely – only Diana's beautiful presence in the house saves me: I am ever on the verge of tears.

No news of P nor of anybody. The party, so the newspapers say, arrived in Delhi yesterday.

Diana, like radiant light, flashes in and out of this ghastly, ghostly, austere house so full of too-fresh memories – every book, nook, every *biblot* recalls the departed Bunny [Coats]. I am overwhelmingly miserable . . .

1 Formerly Princess Elena of Montenegro (qv).

2 Princess Helen of Serbia and Yugoslavia (1884–1962), daughter of King Peter I of Yugoslavia, married in 1911 Prince John Constantinovich of Russia (1886–1918), who was murdered by the Bolsheviks the day after Tsar Nicholas II and his family. She and her children managed to escape thanks to a diplomatic intervention by Sweden.

3 Hubert John Duggan (1904–43), Conservative MP for Acton from 1931 to 1943.*

4 Peter Noel Loxley (1905–45), a career diplomat,* and his wife Elizabeth Lavender (1914–95, *née* Dawnay).*

5 A coinage of Channon's own. Were there such a French word, it would be *insoinnée*.

There is much afoot politically: I hear that the PM will return to Washington directly Eden returns from Russia and that Smuts will act as Minister of Defence in his absence. All this is super-hush. And there is a job for Duff [Cooper] coming in the new reshuffle. Probably P. J. Grigg¹ is for the high jump, although he may be returned as the permanent Head of the Civil Service and become a sort of Horace Wilson.²

WEDNESDAY 20TH OCTOBER

The new Viceroy was sworn in, in a nine-minute ceremony at Delhi. Not a word has come from that gentle *pierrrot*; he rather puts things off, sometimes – a procrastinator: it is his only fault. Still I am hurt; however I sent off an interminable, sad letter to him by the bag today; and ordered him two books. I would forgive him anything and he and I both know it.

I pumped Diana this morning but she would not be drawn beyond saying that there was something up in Delhi. I walked to the H of C but nobody knew anything.

There are two fashionable rumours; one that Lady Kenmare, the widow – for the fourth time – is actually pregnant and that the peerage must remain in abeyance until the child is born. I doubt the story.³ The other is that the Weymouths have come to the parting of the ways: can it be true? I am dissuaded to believe either tale on the ground of improbability.

I have spent perhaps too much money; but far less than I had feared; however I shall economise for a few weeks, not entertain which will be both a change and a rest; nor will I buy expensive *bibelots* for myself, nor for Peter for some months, since he has everything.

THURSDAY 21ST OCTOBER

A day of acute anxiety and horror unparalleled. I was handed a cable as I still slept . . . For a moment or two I fondled it thinking, of course, it must be from Peter. But in my horror I read:

'Paul has pneumonia in no way critically ill still you ought to know will cable frequently – Helen Hull.'

I felt dazed, dumb, sick . . . and I half-know that he will die, have always known it, at least for months. But my reason tells me that he has the best of care, is strong (but it is unfortunate that this should come so soon after his tonsil operation) and that American doctors treat pneumonia lightly . . . what can I do,

1 Percy James Grigg (1890–1964), National MP for Cardiff East and Secretary of State of War.*

2 Horace John Wilson (1882–1972) was assessor, civil servant and Chamberlain's *de facto* Chief of Staff.

3 He was right to. She was 51 at the time of her bereavement; and Kenmare was succeeded by his younger brother, who became the 7th and last Earl.

except hope and pray? I got up so miserable that I scarcely heeded Peter's first letter from Cairo, dated October 18th. He told me little; it was an affectionate inadequate scrawl saying that they were just off to Delhi. Nicholas Lawford¹ also sent a line by the same bag from Cairo: he is now in Moscow with Eden.

Geoffrey Lloyd called to see me, just as I was working, as he does every morning; and I was obliged to walk with him as far as the Ministry of Petroleum where he showed me over the secret room and I saw all the child-like images on the walls, the maps which indicate the petrol and oil supply of the whole world. Then to the H of C, for a bit . . . I walked back to Belgrave Square and *en route* had an inspiration: I will go to America and see my son. But how can I get there? At home I found Cecil Beaton photographing Angier Duke in my dining room. Loelia Westminster was watching. Angier promised to help me get to the USA if necessary. I have sent two cables to Helen Hull asking for details; and then via Patsy I sent Honor a message to ring me up. Honor did so, and was reasonable. She seemed somewhat upset . . . then I wept for an hour at the tragedy of life, and dressed for dinner, and walked across to the Argentine Embassy arriving just before the Duchess of Kent. Dinner was gay: four Cárcanos, mother, father and a brace of delectable daughters; Moores; 'Jakie' Astor;² and Harold Balfour and Sheila. To my surprised delight I was sent in next to the Duchess and Sheila Milbanke, both very stalwart allies and favourite women and had almost an idealised conversation with each: both have been in love with Serge O and describe the emotion as being the deepest, perhaps only infatuation of their lives . . .! The Duchess was radiant in black, and we had a confidential chat; and I advised her to attend Princess Alexandra's wedding, if invited and prevailed upon her to do so. She wants me to cable to the Crown Prince [of Greece] in Cairo and ask him to come and stay with me for the wedding. I won't. The Greek dynasty is doomed, and although I love him, he fatigues me . . . Then we talked of Paul and Olga, our faraway favourites. I did not tell her of my Paul's illness; but I did confide in Sheila afterwards. She was angelic, and said that Honor, whom she has always quite liked, once remarked to her, 'Paul isn't my baby – he is Chips's!' We sat after dinner and champagne was served. Harold Balfour was v sweet and offered me a place in a bomber when I told him of my unhappiness about Paul . . .

The political changes are scheduled to be announced towards the middle of the month, directly after Anthony Eden returns to England from his Moscow mission.

Now I must go to bed: I have a desperate day ahead of me tomorrow, whether I go to Southend to receive constituents as arranged – or to the USA by bomber. I cannot decide which to do.

1 Valentine George Nicholas Lawford (1911–91) was private secretary successively to three Foreign Secretaries – Lord Halifax, Anthony Eden and Ernest Bevin – between 1939 and 1946.*

2 John Jacob Astor VII (1918–2000)* was the son of the 2nd Viscount* and Viscountess* Astor.

FRIDAY 22ND OCTOBER

PALACE HOTEL, SOUTHEND-ON-SEA

I scarcely slept last night, although I took two sleeping pills; and now I have concluded that it would be unwise, although dashing, to fly to the States now. It would be more sensible to bring Paul back in the spring when the weather has begun to be warm – I didn't much want him to cross the Atlantic in the winter cold and gales. If he improves, I will wait until March, then go there and fetch him.

I got up early, dull post . . . and then dressed and left for Southend. I dallied, however, about the front door hoping for a reassuring cable from Helen Hull about Paul and none came, and my several frantic anguished ones are still unanswered . . . Southend was as usual, good air, but dull and oh! so depressing and detached from my real life . . . Interviews and deputations all day; unhappy, desperate people with problems, usually of a pecuniary or domestic nature; I tried to help but I was really only half-attending as all day my thoughts were with my child . . . my love for him is v great.

Now I am alone in my usual suite, No. 38, overlooking the sea – except that I cannot see it because of the blackout; and a mild raid is in progress. Unfortunately I once shared the bedroom with P, and the memory of that blissful night stabs me. I only like places that are somehow associated with me.

SATURDAY 23RD OCTOBER

I tried to be sensible; children have recovered from pneumonia; he has the most up-to-date doctors, is in good hands . . . and so I did sleep, although I resorted to two Annanols.¹ This morning I woke refreshed at eight, leapt up and decided to wait until nine before telephoning to London for news. Actually I was having a solitary breakfast by the ghastly gas fire when at 8.30 the telephone tinkled. I fell on my knees, prayed to God, and to Blessed St Anthony² for good news of my son and it was! Helen Hull cables that Paul is improving but will be ill for a fortnight. I thank the good God.

Now the bleak rainy day is in front of me: I have meetings to address and people to see – but nothing matters now that Paul will probably live. Honor is to ring me up at noon to enquire for him.

Later:

Of course H did not telephone, although she had promised to do so and I waited in all the morning. Her lack of consideration, or even ordinary decency is staggering. She cares nothing for her child, or anyone else.

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1 Presumably a sleeping pill.

2 St Anthony of Padua (1195–1231), Portuguese by birth, was the patron saint of lost things or sick people.

One always loves a country where one has fallen in love; and perhaps, too, one is fond of a place where one has heard joyous news. Tonight for the first time I felt an affection for Southend and will now often come here.

A quiet day. It is a year since the vital battle of El Alamein began. What a year of disillusion for Germany and of triumphs for the Allies.

I addressed three thousand people in the Odeon Cinema and now shall go to bed.

SUNDAY 24TH OCTOBER

Slept well *sans* drugs. The capacity for much sleep is probably the sweet means of preserving one's youth. And that I am determined to do. Certainly I look younger than any of my contemporaries – when I am not tired of too much gin and fornication. I hate the former and adore the latter.

That old rogue, Lloyd George,¹ at the advanced age of 80 has married his secretary, the famous Miss Stevenson.² She has long been his mistress and the mother of at least one child by him. I remember prophesying in this diary some time ago that the marriage would take place.³ He is a wicked old Welshman hated by everybody.

Wonderful weather plus a somewhat reassuring cable from Nannie⁴ about Paul, and an affectionate one from Peter raised my spirits: I like Southend, and once more I love life.

I inspected and addressed sea cadets and lunched with my chairman, Captain Parker⁵ who is 77; Mrs Parker is 70; her sister who was present, an old Mrs Williams is also 77. I am only 46; but the combined ages of this queer quartet were 270! Good lunch but they were ill at ease as the middle classes always are *en intimité!*⁶ Then I drove here; Kelvedon is icy and nostalgic for P. I am reading *Richard II* which suits my mood.

Telephoned to the Iveaghs who are at Elveden and told them about Paul: Lady I was wise and strength-giving and took it calmly. I couldn't resist telling them of Honor's monstrous behaviour and cold indifference. I think that it sank in. Alan L-B is at Elveden, too, for the night, having gone over to stop with Elizabeth [Elveden] from Great Yarmouth. I ought to have contacted him earlier so that we might have been together at Bury St Edmunds and had a good gossip. I miss him.

1 David Lloyd George (1863–1945) had been Liberal MP for Caernarvon Boroughs since 1890.

He was Prime Minister from 1916 to 1922, and leader of the Liberal Party from 1926 to 1931.*

2 Frances Louise Stevenson (1888–1972)* became Lloyd George's mistress in 1913 and in 1929 gave birth to a daughter, Jennifer. The girl was almost certainly fathered by another man, but she persuaded Lloyd George that Jennifer was his.

3 See Vol. 1, entry for 11th June 1942.

4 A member of Channon's staff who had escorted Paul to America and was looking after him.

5 I was unable to trace this gentleman and his family.

6 'In private', but in this case he alludes to a particular unease with a social superior.

MONDAY 25TH OCTOBER

All day here in almost sunbathing weather after the morning's fog. The afternoon was spent planting out trees and making decisions. We put in five and made arrangements for many more. Am I a suppressed country squire?

It will be three years tomorrow since Honor came up to London from Kelvedon and broke it to me that she wanted to marry Woodman and would I divorce her? Three long years and I realise now that it is all for the best . . .

TUESDAY 26TH OCTOBER

I only heard this morning at Kelvedon that Hubert Duggan died yesterday. It is just as well; he was ill, worn-out, disillusioned, impoverished, friendless, hopeless, helpless and embittered. For ten years I was his life, and his greatest friend but his ineptitude, his drinking, his fecklessness, his too many females exhausted me and I chilled towards him. He was never the same after that. His long liaisons with Phyllis de Janzé,¹ which lasted until her death (eight fallow years) finished him. He could not write a letter, keep an engagement, go near his constituency² nor take an interest in life, politics or even his private financial mundane affairs, which were in a sad muddle. Grace Curzon³ warped him, overshadowed him and kept him young and foolish and helpless. Yet she loved him. His marriage, which I tried to stop, was a pre-ordained disaster. It lasted five months.

I drove up to London, went to the House in my tweeds. Fag. A nice letter from P posted in Cairo cheered me; but nothing has come about my son.

Dressed in a dinner jacket and lots of riches, I drove my little car to West Eaton Place to pick up Poppy Thursby, as she asked me to do: I sat with her as she finished her dressing and understood for the first time the frustration she must have had from Hubert: she ruined him really. She was depressed by his tragic death; said he had longed to live; that he had suffered torments, both physical and mental . . . When we came down there was a blanket of fog and we felt our way slowly to Claridge's to dine with Laura Corrigan . . . Ate like a hog and drank champagne like a *poisson*.⁴ Greatest difficulty in getting home as the fog had thickened and we crept back, the two *Grandeas d'Espagne*⁵ and I. Several times we were lost and often bumped into railings and pavements. *Enfin*⁶ I disposed them at the Embassy . . . I could scarcely get home. Here I am at last exhausted.

1 Phyllis Meeta Boyd (1894–1943),* married in 1922 vicomte Henri Louis Leon de Janzé.

2 Duggan (qv), Lady Curzon's son from her first marriage, had been Conservative MP for Acton since 1931. He died of tuberculosis, but had been badly affected by Phyllis de Janzé's death (see Vol. II, entry for 23rd March 1943).

3 Grace Elvina Hinds (1877–1958),* from Alabama, married in 1917 as her second husband Earl (later 1st Marquess) Curzon of Kedleston.*

4 Fish.

5 Two unnamed eminent Spaniards he had met at the dinner.

6 At last.

WEDNESDAY 27TH OCTOBER

Mercifully a cable has come to say that Paul is prospering splendidly. *Dieu merci!*¹ I slept badly and woke cross: all day I had felt ill: too much champagne and rich food undid the good effects of a few days' retreat at Southend and Kelvedon. Geoffrey Lloyd called; he loves me dearly and calls me his 'Chiplet' and we walked to Central Office and saw Tommy Dugdale,² the Chairman. I tried to wangle a CBE for a constituent. Thence to the House; it was good-humoured and there were no scenes.

Everybody says that Lord Normanby, who was repatriated from Germany today,³ is the hero of the hour. He is a great friend of Paul Latham's and is, I believe, a sort of human angel of goodness. I must meet him.

Drove in a thick fog to dine with Cecil Beaton and regretted going: he was charming and the company pleasant but the effort of dining out and testing one's car and one's limbs is too much. At dinner (we sat down at 10.00 p.m., 'Spanish style' – as everyone was late) were: Alice Harding; James Pope-Hennessy;⁴ Michael Duff,⁵ who later guided me home carrying a torch in front of the car; Bridget Paget,⁶ who bores everybody with her long lament of wanting to die; and Joan Moore. Peggy Crewe⁷ started to come; but had to turn back.

THURSDAY 28TH OCTOBER

Woke in a *piano* mood: I must live a more quiet life.

Geoffrey Lloyd looked in, but I refused to accompany him to the House. Then Edwina Mountbatten⁸ for a second: she is a dream of efficient beauty.

Maimie and Poppy Thursby and I (Hubert's great loves, the real influences in his futile life) accompanied by Vsevolod lunched together here and drove in my car to Windsor to attend the Duggan funeral. It was impressive in its solemn simplicity. Roman Catholic rites. We four were the only friends present; but grouped about the open grave and coffin were his mother, Grace Curzon, who looked as glamorous as ever; she behaved with composure and dignity; Marcella and Edward⁹ and

1 Thank God.

2 Thomas Lionel Dugdale (1897–1977) was Conservative MP for Richmond from 1929 to 1959. He was created 1st Bt in 1945 and raised to the peerage as 1st Baron Crathorne in 1959.*

3 Lord Normanby (see Vol. II, entry for 28th November 1941) had been captured at Dunkirk. Finding several blind prisoners in his prisoner-of-war camp, he constructed braille alphabets for them and, despite not knowing braille himself, taught them how to use them to read. When the blind prisoners were repatriated in 1943, so was he.

4 Richard James Arthur Pope-Hennessy (1916–74), author.*

5 Charles Michael Robert Vivian Duff (1907–80), succeeded his father as 3rd Bt in 1914.*

6 Bridget Colebrooke (1892–1975), daughter of the 1st Baron Colebrooke, married in 1922 Lord Victor Paget, from whom she was divorced in 1932.

7 Margaret Etienne Hannah Grey Pimrose (1888–1961), daughter of the 5th Earl of Rosebery, in 1899 married as his second wife the 1st Marquess of Crewe.*

8 Edwina Cynthia Annette Ashley (1901–60)* married in 1922 Lord Louis Mountbatten.*

9 Edward Denis Rice (1899–1973), married in 1927 Marcella Duggan,* daughter of Lady Curzon.*

Henry Rice¹ in an Eton jacket and top hat; Alfred Duggan,² fat and looking tipsy; Baba Metcalfe³ There were no incidents; men of the Life Guards made a guard of honour. I was quite unmoved: I suppose I had long ceased to love him, or even care. When love dies with one it always turns to dislike. Drove back and went to the H of C, where we were discussing the reconstitution of the new chamber. The PM's proposals were decidedly unpopular Later when Somerset de Chair,⁴ in an angry ill-advised moment, divided the House, I ran into the PM. He called me 'Chips' for the first time for ages; and was smilingly gracious.

Rab dropped in and remained for two hours; an unprecedented visit; he was affectionate and confiding and we 'swapped' political news and gossip. He told me much that I was able to piece together with what I had already heard: on the day of P's and my giant cocktail party Wavell had put in his famous ill-fated memo on a future policy for India and it was debated in the War Cabinet for hours! He actually advocated releasing Gandhi and other extreme left-wing measures. The Cabinet was stunned; and Churchill exploded: in fact went so far as to consider cancelling the appointment. Never has there been such a political faux pas. How could Wavell have been so ill-advised? Rab thinks that Jenkins⁵ put him up to it; sometimes one profits by an initial mistake, but others must pay. This time it will be Mr Amery who Winston now wishes to liquidate. Leo will be punished for Wavell's gaffe . . . and a man who can be so politically inexperienced may easily make another similar mistake and his vicerealty may end sooner than expected. I half-hope so; for selfish reasons.

He turned then to the impending reshuffle; Rab thinks that David Margesson may be returned to power; and that he himself may be offered the India Office. Duncan Sandys⁶ will be given a department and other promotions, not all unfavourable, will take place. He thought me v well informed and we agreed that about November 12th would be the probable time. Put in a word for Alan; he has strong claims and this time I am hopeful. Rab promised to stake a claim for him. Are our days returning? I feel that there is something happening, something still within the tomb⁷ of the future that will be favourable.

Rab confided in me that Sydney Butler is expecting a baby in February: I suspected it.

FRIDAY 29TH OCTOBER

Quiet day: walked with Geoffrey Lloyd in the Park, and he confided to me his political ambitions; wants to have a dept of his own, his own ministry, an

1 Henry John Bernard Rice (1928–2010), the elder of their two children.

2 Alfred Duggan (1903–64), a minor novelist, was Hubert's elder brother.

3 Lady Alexandra Naldera 'Baba' Curzon (1904–95),* youngest daughter of the 1st Marquess Curzon by his first marriage. In 1925 she married Major Edward Dudley 'Fruity' Metcalfe.*

4 Somerset Struben de Chair (1911–95), Conservative MP for South West Norfolk from 1935 to 1945 and for Paddington South from 1950 to 1951.

5 Wavell's private secretary (qv).

6 Edwin Duncan Sandys (1908–87), Conservative MP for Norwood.*

7 Thus in the MS; one might expect it to be 'womb'.

understandable desire. I advised him to intrigue to get the Chancellorship of the Duchy of Lancaster and continue with his fuel and petrol in that role. He agreed to do so . . . Left a fat letter (no. 2)¹ at the India Office and came home. Lady Curzon of K[edleston] rang me up and we talked of Hubert for an hour; there is a row over his will: he left everything he had, and God knows it is little enough, to his housekeeper thus disinheriting his mother. She is in a rage. Wants me to organise the requiem Mass for him on Monday: and I promised to do so.

At a hint from Peter I called to him suggesting that he invite General Gordon Grimsdale, his Chungking admirer (he is military attaché there) to stay with me when he comes to London on leave next month. It might be amusing to upset that apple-cart and have some fun as well. I feel halved without a gay companion.

It is present day: Jay Llewellyn has sent me a huge bottle of scent; and Lord Alfred Douglas² a slim signed vol. of his sonnets.

Will another month see many of our friends restored to power and promoted?

SUNDAY 31ST OCTOBER

I drove to Pyrford to spend the day with the family. Both Iveaghs were sweet, and anti-Honor. Brigid was down, depressed and in 'the dumps': I fancied that she was cold to me, as no doubt Honor has poisoned her against me: Lady Halifax, on the other hand, was charming and affectionate and I drove her home before the blackout as she was dining with the Linlithgows.³ Here I found Billy McCann, very charming. Now I am dining alone.

MONDAY 1ST NOVEMBER

A dull day: I am down and depressed: it is a reaction after the excitements of 'Indian Summer' and I miss P poignantly. Yet I was happy before he came and contented and occupied. Now I am *désœuvré*. Perhaps it is that there is no male in my life now: and that has never happened before since I can remember: there was always somebody; of late years, Alan. Now, he, too, is 'away', and although he rings up frequently from Great Yarmouth it is no longer the same thing. Yet during the past three weeks, and it is just three weeks today since P left, I have:

- A. Regained my physical health and put on a stone
- B. Recovered my mental equilibrium
- C. Had a long dose of Southend and placated my constituents
- D. 'Done' Kelvedon and tidied up there

1 For Coats.

2 Alfred Bruce 'Bosie' Douglas (1870–1919) * Lord Alfred Douglas by courtesy, was the third son of the 9th Marquess of Queensberry. He was the lover of Oscar Wilde.*

3 The Marquess and Marchioness of Linlithgow* had just returned from India, having passed on the viceroyalty to Wavell.

- E. Resumed interrupted relations with the Iveaghs
- F. Seen more friends
- G. Put my many personal affairs in order, financial and political
- H. Gone over my neglected diaries.¹

Mrs Reginald McKenna² has apparently committed suicide. Anna Karenina! She threw herself from her train. It was only a few weeks ago that both she and Mr McKenna came in for a cocktail to meet Wavell; and now McKenna is dead, and she has followed him by taking her own life.

Dined at an American Red Cross Club and later addressed about a hundred soldiers on parliamentary procedure. The audience was slightly superior to the others who in the dining room really seemed subhuman. What an unattractive race. Dull evening.

TUESDAY 2ND NOVEMBER

The sirens sounded just as I was leaving to go to the Wings Club, where Joan Moore gave a magnificent concert. She is an outstanding musician. Harold B[alfour], Helen Fitzgerald³ (so that affair has begun again) and Lady Willingdon slipped out. I sat with Emerald, who complains that Randolph Churchill who is still here on leave, breaks up and wrecks every luncheon and dinner party which he attends.

Alan, although he is unaware of it, is to be taken back into the government at the next reshuffle which will be announced on the day after Eden's return.

WEDNESDAY 3RD NOVEMBER

I was chief usher at Hubert Duggan's memorial service which was held this morning at the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Farm Street. A large attendance for wartime! His old mistresses and I, two ambassadors, the Argentine and Spanish whom I persuaded to go; and a few friends. All the relations. I was unmoved; I who am so sentimental and tender and affectionate, is my love for him – once quite strong – then so dead? Drove on to the House, was obliged to refuse a last-minute invitation to lunch with the about-to-be-*dégonné*⁴ Secretary of State for War⁵ and Edwina Mountbatten as I had an old engagement with

1 For the avoidance of doubt, there is very little sign of revision to the MS.

2 Pamela Margaret Jekyll (1889–1943). She had married, in 1908, Reginald McKenna (1863–1943), one of Asquith's closest associates and a highly effective First Lord, Home Secretary and Chancellor of the Exchequer under him from 1908 to 1916. He was Liberal MP for North Monmouthshire from 1895 to 1918, and a sworn opponent of Lloyd George, whom he regarded as a liar and charlatan.

3 Helen Gascoigne Drury (1896–1957),* married in 1923 Evelyn Charles Fitzgerald.*

4 Literally, 'unstuck', or in this context, 'about to be sacked'.

5 He refers to P. J. Grigg (qv), who would stay in post until July 1945.

Edward Rice. He brought his little 12-year-old daughter Caroline;¹ she never uttered, drank wine and looked sardonic. I gave her £1. The Ritz was full and I saw dear Mrs Keppel,² who wants to dine and stay with me – but I shan't have her and others. Quite *avant-guerre*³ atmosphere but ghastly Lady Cranborne was nearby.

I looked up my guest-to-be, Gordon Grimsdale. He is just 50; and has only got into reference works this year. There has been no answer to my cable dispatched to him in Cairo yesterday. I ought to hear on Friday, or before . . .

Hubert, I hear, left £14,000, which is much more than I thought he had. I am relieved to know that his financial affairs were not in quite so deplorable a state as I feared.

Sydney Butler, mighty pregnant, came to see me, as did Juliet Duff and gay Billy McCann. I pushed them out, and rushed to the Dorchester where I picked up Emerald and we went together to dine with Lady Colefax in a private room. Large party; about twenty-six. I was between Sally Hardwicke and Christabel Aberconway⁴ who is *detraquée*;⁵ we talked first of poor Mrs McKenna and her surprising suicide. She did an advanced Anna Karenina by leaping from a fast train. And then Lady Aberconway told me secrets of the Asquiths' sexual life; how the PM always made love to her – 'did the act' as Margot calls it – no matter how late! Eventually their doctors insisted that they have separate bedrooms and Margot agreed. It is one of the regrets of her life that she did so, she confessed to all. Long talk with Baba Metcalfe about her stepmother⁶ and her vagaries and variegated finances and then walked home.

THURSDAY 4TH NOVEMBER

To the H of C with Geoffrey Lloyd. Secret session when Winston announced the dates of prorogation. Geoffrey tells me that the government is seriously concerned about the possible prospect of aerial bombardment of London on a mammoth scale by *rockets*.⁷ The Germans are straining everything to produce a rocket which will destroy us. A pleasant outlook!

- 1 Caroline Helen Rice (1931–2016) was Channon's goddaughter. She married the 3rd Earl of Plymouth in 1950.
- 2 Alice Frederica Edmonstone (1868–1947) married in 1891 George Keppel (1865–1947).^{*} She was a noted society beauty and hostess before and after the Great War, best known for having been the mistress of King Edward VII from 1898 until his death in 1910.
- 3 Pre-war.
- 4 Christabel Mary Melville Macnaghten (1890–1974), daughter of Sir Melville Macnaghten, married in 1910 Henry Duncan McLaren (1879–1953),^{*} who succeeded his father as 2nd Baron Aberconway in 1934.
- 5 Bonkers.
- 6 Lady Curzon (qv).
- 7 His intelligence was remarkably accurate. The first V-1 was launched at London on 13th June 1944, and around 9,250 were aimed at the Home Counties thereafter. They killed over 6,000 people and injured 18,000.

The Iveaghs lunched with me and were charming and affectionate and garrulous. I then returned to the H of Commons where there was a full-dress debate on the famine in Bengal. Amery had already spoken but I heard the rest. Leslie H[ore]-B[elisha] was the most brilliant and surprising. Clear, concise and eloquent he helped the situation.

Alan rang from Yarmouth; he was out last night on his boat and had a battle with the Boche. His boat was hit. He suggests meeting at Kelvedon for nefarious purposes. I shall see . . .

Old Mrs Cavendish-Bentinck¹ is dead at last! The original of the *vieillesse diamantées*,² she was nearly 90, immensely rich, incurably social and friendly and unconsciously witty. Her *mots* pronounced in a deep basso voice were often brilliant. She was supremely *élégante* with her furs and many, many jewels. She was a twin, *née* Livingston, and aunt of Lady Granard,³ who is also a twin, and her daughter, Lady Dumfries,⁴ has produced twins. Mrs C-B was a grandiose Edwardian hostess, lived for *luxe*, royalties and splendour and *placements*;⁵ a gay, gallant and garrulous old girl.

FRIDAY 5TH NOVEMBER

Early to the House. But at 9.30 a.m. I realised that the Duchess of Kent was coming to luncheon and I had neither ordered the food nor invited the guests. A bit of telephoning produced both: the two butlers, Rab and Sydney; Ben Kittredge; and the Poklewskis came and it was a *réussi*, indeed a gay festival. I also invited Laura Corrigan, who breezed in for a moment *en route* to the Argentine Embassy, as did Lady Londonderry who is ever my staunch ally – the Duchess looked thin, angular but was divine and affectionate. I really love her deeply.

No interesting news except I gathered from Diana Cooper, Geoffrey Lloyd and Rab Butler, all of whom came to see me during the day, that the grand reshuffle has been postponed until the end of the month. Winston cannot make up his mind, and in any case enjoys the spectacle of his ministers – fearful, and hopeful – dancing like cats on hot bricks awaiting his decision.

1 Elizabeth Livingston (1855–1943),* society hostess before the Great War. She married in 1880 William George Cavendish-Bentinck (1854–1909).

2 'Diamond-encrusted old ladies'. This is a Channon coinage: he is punning on *jeunesse dorée*, gilded youth; but the noun *vieillesse* is unknown in French.

3 Jane Beatrice Mills (1883–1972), daughter of Ogden Mills, an American plutocrat and businessman, married in 1909 Bernard Arthur William Patrick Hastings Forbes (1874–1948),* by courtesy Viscount Forbes until he succeeded his father in 1889 as 8th Earl of Granard.

4 Eileen Beatrice Forbes (1912–93), Lady Eileen by courtesy, married in 1932 John Crichton-Stuart (1907–56), by courtesy Earl of Dumfries until 1947, when he succeeded his father as 4th Marquess of Bute. Lady Dumfries gave birth in 1933 to twin sons, the elder of whom became the 5th Marquess in 1956.

5 Arranging the right seating plans at dining tables.

Went to Chelsea Cloisters to have a cocktail with the Archduke Robert in the one-roomed flat that he has sublet from Natasha Bagration, who is now the toast of Cairo . . . The Austrians are cock-a-hoop over the Moscow declaration pledging the eventual liberation of Austria.

SATURDAY 6TH NOVEMBER

The wireless announces that the Vatican City was last night bombed; each side accuses the other.

A bleak and sombre day . . . looked in at the Wings Club, where I had a conversation of an alarming nature with Laura Corrigan, who confided to me that Emerald Cunard goes about London repeating highly libellous remarks that Randolph [Churchill] is spreading about the 'Coats'. He calls P 'Miss Petty Coats' and says that Wavell, who is anyway an old fool, makes a major mistake in keeping P on; makes charges against me. He has always been a dangerous person and vitriolic against me; but I have an inner conviction that he will not live long.

Now I must go to bed; but I do so with that deadened inward feeling of trepidation which always comes to me when the World is against me; or one is embroiled in 'poison'.

SUNDAY 7TH NOVEMBER

Slept ill and realise the dangers of the gossips and what far-reaching harm it can do. I rang Laura, my informant, who told me more; but she is inclined to exaggerate the importance of these things. Then my telephone tinkled all morning, and I allowed Emerald to gossip for an hour – to take her pulse. It was fairly satisfactory; so perhaps I have been unduly alarmed. Still I must be careful . . .

I had so looked forward to my reunion tonight with Alan; he was coming up especially to be with me here; but his brother George has been taken critically ill – with, I think, pneumonia – in Edinburgh. Alan and his antique mamma caught an early train this morning and even now are *en route* for Edinburgh and I am deprived of my evening's enjoyment.

There were two raids last night; and now this morning it is bitterly cold but sunny. Winter has begun. Nevertheless Maimie, Vsevolod and an attractive friend of theirs, Major Edward St John,² just back from the Middle East, and I drove to Kelvedon where we went for a walk, cut flowers, had tea and returned about 6 p.m. Emerald had invited me to tea, but I couldn't face it. I think I exaggerate the social imbroglio, still I must be tactful and self-effacing until it blows over.

1 The name stuck. By the end of his life he was 'Petticoats' to all London society, though not to his face.

2 Edward Richard Gordon St John (1911–86) fought with the Royal Artillery during the war and retired in the rank of lieutenant colonel.

A mysterious cable came from P . . . he tells me that Grimsdale is delighted and *en route*.

Two raids this evening; short ones. I now go to bed.

MONDAY 8TH NOVEMBER

I was finishing off my letters before lunch and waiting for Prince Fritz, who was to come here incognito, when I saw a military car draw up and several officers get out. A few seconds later a little squirrel of a man entered No. 5 and he put out his hand and said, 'Are you Chips?' It was the long expected General Grimsdale fresh from Delhi. I liked him at once but was disappointed – and infinitely relieved. He had flown straight from Delhi which he left on Wednesday morning at 7 a.m., seen out at the aerodrome by Peter, who, however, had been adamant with him; their fast friendship is cooling, or at least is on another basis.

Gordon (he is called that) later told me many consoling things which delighted me; but whilst *soulagé*¹ and flattered, made me sorry for him, as he is obsessed by P . . . He was four days at Delhi and scarcely saw him. We had a rather forced-landing luncheon here: he, Fritz and I, and then I spent the afternoon with Grimsdale getting to know him. Diana Cooper came to tea, and although they had served together at Singapore, she didn't remember him; luckily I whispered to her as she walked in and she pretended to know him and was charming – he was *ébloui*! Little, or rather immensely pregnant, Joan Astley also came to see me – and him – in answer to my frantic telephonic summonses. He, plus Patrick Buchan-Hepburn² . . . supped at Pratts where we joined Harolds Balfour and Nicolson . . . General and I walked home; and sat up talking and praising Peter until late. He says that P lives for me.

TUESDAY 9TH NOVEMBER

I breakfasted *en pyjama* with my new General, and then he left for the War Office. He is ineloquent, unfashionable, grey, dim but delightful and we are fast friends and firm allies *déjà*.³ Patsy L-B then rang me to break to me that Geordie, Lennox-Boyd's eldest brother, the ridiculous *farceur*⁴ fellow, died in the night at Edinburgh.⁵ He had all of Alan's foolish qualities and resembled him poignantly; but none of his brilliance or sweetness. Alan is distraught. Two brothers gone in four years . . . I went to the House, remained for a bit but it suddenly rose owing to miscalculation on the part of the whips. Took Grimsdale to lunch with Edwina Mountbatten at 15

1 Relaxed, at ease.

2 Patrick George Thomas Buchan-Hepburn (1901–74), Conservative MP for East Toxteth.*

3 Already.

4 Joker.

5 He was serving in the Highland Light Infantry when he died of pneumonia aged just 41.

Chester Street and much Delhi plus Chungking chat! He was unexpectedly successful with her. Then we shopped, he and I, and I gave him a present from Cartier's – the first he had ever had!

WEDNESDAY 10TH NOVEMBER

Lunched with Fitzgeralds . . . Cárcanos etc. at Claridge's. The govt appointments are to be made public tomorrow: Duff becomes a Minister of State in the occupied regions of Africa at £5,000 per year, thus splitting Harold Macmillan's job. But more exciting still is that the PM rang up Alan at Edinburgh this luncheon-time and offered him the parliamentary secretaryship of the Ministry of Aircraft Production under Cripps. He was charming and considerate. Alan jumped at it! What a week for him. That ghastly naval nightmare is over.

THURSDAY 11TH NOVEMBER

I got up early, fetched Ian Tavistock² and we drove to Henlow to attend the funeral of Geordie Lennox-Boyd. *En route* we gossiped: Tavistock was vituperative about his freak father,³ yet he hates his mother, the present Duchess of Bedford⁴ even more . . . Ian says that the Dowager Lady Amphill⁵ is the wickedest person alive, or at least that he knows. I suggested Randolph Churchill and he agreed that it was a close thing. Except that Lady Amphill was usually the more successful of the two. Tales about the Bedford family are always fascinating . . . the service was held in the little Henlow Church; Alan escorted his old mother, who behaved like a Roman mother with dignity. Francis, slim and handsome in uniform, was with Patsy . . . This is the second son old Mrs Lennox-Boyd has lost and she fully expects to see Francis killed quite shortly.⁶ Ian and I drove back to London and had a quick sandwich snack at the H of Commons – which was buzzing with reshuffle gossip. The appointments will be announced tomorrow. Duff is to be Ambassador to France with temporary headquarters at Algiers . . . Went to tea at the Argentine Embassy, after lingering in the House long enough to witness an

1 Maurice Harold Macmillan (1894–1986), MP for Stockton-on-Tees. At this stage Minister Resident at Algiers, he ended up as Minister of Defence, Foreign Secretary, Chancellor of the Exchequer and, from 1957 to 1963, Prime Minister.*

2 John Ian Robert Russell (1917–2002), by courtesy Lord Howland until 1940 and then Marquess of Tavistock until 1953, when he succeeded his father as 13th Duke of Bedford.*

3 The 12th Duke (qv).

4 Louisa Crommelin Roberta Jowett Whitwell (1893–1960), married the 12th Duke of Bedford (then by courtesy Marquess of Tavistock)* in 1914. She had unsuccessfully sued her husband in the 1930s for the restoration of conjugal rights after they were separated.

5 Margaret Lygon (1874–1957), Lady Margaret by courtesy, was the daughter of the 6th Earl Beauchamp. She married the 2nd Baron Amphill in 1894. She was perhaps Queen Mary's closest friend.

6 She would not be disappointed.

amazing scene, an attack on Cunningham-Reid.¹ The whole House led by [Earl] Winterton² and the Home Secretary [Morrison] jeered him; but as he is the thickest-skinned man in the world (and probably a bit demented) he didn't seem to mind. I also gathered that Eden's great speech re Russia and the Moscow experience was a flop. A full-dress occasion but dull. He returned yesterday.

I drove Alan to the Cabinet Offices where he was to see Winston . . . later Alan came in at about one o'clock. He had seen Winston in bed who had been charming but said that Cripps was opposed to his appointment, to having him as his junior minister because of his political (erstwhile) views.³ His file was produced, letters from him, Chamberlain etc. were examined and the PM, whilst laughing and gay, advised Alan to write him a letter on the spot denying any fascist leanings. Alan went into an adjoining office and dictated a mock letter (he showed me the copy) and then marched to the PM's bedroom. He was told to come in: Anthony Eden was sitting on his bed and they read the concoction and agreed that it would do. Cripps was called on the telephone and what this afternoon threatened to be a crisis, or at least a pain, passed off smoothly. Alan is cock-a-hoop and has almost forgotten his brother's death – he kept me up v late, indeed.

I pray that Alan will be happy in his new job: the great thing is to back in the govt. I hope that no scandal or indiscretion will spoil his happiness or career.

FRIDAY 12TH NOVEMBER

Gage, Tufnell and Diana dropped in to see me: Diana is enchanted and yet saddened by the prospect of being Ambasadress to Paris for she hates the French and doesn't want to be away for five or six years. I have promised to look after John Julius . . .

The PM's very hush and secret party left tonight for an unknown destination.⁴ Hardly anybody knows that Winston is away – and eastbound. Randolph, that human fiend, that deadly menace has gone with them.

SATURDAY 13TH NOVEMBER

A cold, sleepy day. I walked Gordon Grimsdale to Buck's where we had a cocktail with Duncan Sandys, and then lunched *à deux*. Slept in the afternoon . . . When I came in [after an evening at the theatre] I gathered that both Alan and Grimsdale had already come in – and neither was alone.

A brief note came from Honor this morning demanding a divorce: what am I to do? The three years have not yet expired.

1 He had made accusations under privilege as to the character of a female warden in a hostel for delinquent girls run by the Young Women's Christian Association.

2 Edward Turnour (1883–1962) succeeded his father as 6th Earl Winterton in 1907.*

3 As an appeaser.

4 He was on his way to the Tehran conference with Roosevelt and Stalin.

SUNDAY 14TH NOVEMBER

About eleven o'clock the General [Grimsdale] and I set forth in my car for Farnham Royal where we spent the day with the Kemsleys.¹ Warm house, luscious food: Coopers, little John Julius over from Eton; the Belgian Ambassador, the Brazilian Ambassador and Ambassadress, Desmond MacCarthy etc. . . . much talk of aerial bombardment, and rockets that will half-demolish London. It will be unpleasant; the Germans are 'up' to something. De Gaulle,² too, is much criticised for the high-handed manner in which he has pulled off a *coup d'état* in Lebanon.³ I played bridge, and skilfully, with Duff and the ambassadors . . . After tea Gordon Grimsdale and I drove back, arriving home just after blackout time.

Cecil Beaton told me that he went to see the Queen who told him that the Buckingham Palace balcony is unsafe; and yet they want to use it for the Victory. They are ordering in cement.

MONDAY 15TH NOVEMBER

Diana and Duff and Grimsdale all know that the PM has gone; but otherwise the secret seems well kept. Whitehall is convulsed by de Gaulle's outrageous coup in overthrowing the Lebanese govt.⁴

I walked across the Square to have a glass of sherry with the Belgian Ambassador before lunch: there were some 200 people assembled to drink the health of King Leopold on his name-day. He is being resurrected. Lunched at the Argentine Embassy: Alba, Percy Loraine,⁵ a collection of Spanish grandees and the family. Delicious food. Alba is most affectionate and rather impressed by my Ludwig book:⁶ he told a story of how his aunt, the aged Empress,⁷ wrote after the death of the Prince Imperial⁸ to her miserable mother, '*Maman, j'ai le courage . . . La douleur ne tue pas!*'⁹

1 James Gomer Berry (1883–1968),* created 1st Baron Kemsley in 1936, and his wife Marie Edith (1888–1976, *née* Merandon du Plessis).*

2 Charles André Joseph Marie de Gaulle (1890–1970), leader of the French government-in-exile in London from 1940 until 1944, and later President of France from 1958 until 1969.*

3 Free French troops had taken control in Lebanon and promised it independence from France.

4 The Allies would in turn control Lebanon until the end of the war.

5 Percy Lyham Loraine (1880–1961), 12th Bt, diplomat.*

6 *The Ludwigs of Bavaria*, published in 1933.

7 In 1853 Eugénie de Montijo (1826–1920) married Charles-Louis Napoléon Bonaparte (1808–73), President of France from 1848 to 1952 and Emperor of the French from then until 1870. Alba's grandmother was her sister.

8 Napoléon Eugène Louis Jean Joseph Bonaparte (1856–79), the Prince Imperial, moved to England with his family in their exile following France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian War. He trained as a soldier in the British Army and was determined to fight, and went out to the Zulu Wars, where he was killed in a skirmish. This had far-reaching implications; he was regarded as Napoleon IV by the Bonapartist faction, and his death meant the end of the idea of a restoration of the imperial family to the French throne.

9 Mother, I have courage . . . grief does not kill.

TUESDAY 16TH NOVEMBER

There is much political speculation, but it is unlikely that anything will transpire until after the PM returns. Linlithgow wants the War Office; and there is serious unrest amongst the Conservatives at the growing influence and power of Beaverbrook, whom they consider a political harlot. The *on dit* is that the new triumvirate of Bracken,¹ Cherwell² and Beaverbrook could rule the country when the Oligarch is abroad, and dominate and fascinate him when he is at home.

I felt ill, liverish and down, yet accompanied Alan to his new Ministry – Aircraft Production. He looks downcast and dejected.

WEDNESDAY 17TH NOVEMBER

Woke feeling slightly better. Breakfasted with Grimsdale. No letters. The French situation seems a touch eased. De Gaulle shows signs of climbing down over Lebanon. I trust so.

I cannot take an interest in anything and am continually being unsettled by remarks Grimsdale drops about P. Am I a fool? . . . A dull dreary day in the middle of a weary wasted week. I did nothing, nothing at all. Lunched and dined alone, felt downcast and dejected. Alan came in late to see me.

There is an undercurrent of malaise and malheur in spite of the victories: there are strikes, Italy going badly and now news from Lebanon. De Gaulle has been given twenty-four hours to put the position right.

Alan was 39 – entered his 40th year at midnight. We celebrated it strangely together. Is he mad: I fear – dread – some sort of bust-up from him.

FRIDAY 19TH NOVEMBER

Telephoned to the Duchess of Kent; had a cable from Prince Paul; talked twice to Diana Cooper; rang Emerald who snapped at me. She is piqued about something – what?

Still no bag letters.³

Later: a long one came: it is a touch impersonal but gay and well written. Am I spoiling Peter? Or is he not quite so deep, so capable of feeling as I supposed? He is an enigma to me and my life a torment in consequence – but I am only happy when he is there.

Cripps has been tiresome, dirty and dishonest with Alan. The man is a maniac. London seems unaware that the boss is away.

I gave a dinner party for Gordon Grimsdale; Mrs Keppel was the ‘show piece’: she looked magnificent in black sequins and jewels and her fine white hair and

1 Brendan Rendall Bracken (1901–58). Minister of Information from 1941 until 1945.*

2 Frederick Alexander Lindemann (1886–1957), created 1st Baron Cherwell in 1941, was Paymaster-General from 1942 until 1945.*

3 Letters from Delhi in the diplomatic bag, from Coats.

gracious manners are impressive. She is so affectionate and *grande dame*, that it is a pity she drinks and then becomes garrulous and inaccurate in her statements; Ève Curie, sharp and handsome; Cecil Beaton, gay and graceful and greying at the temples; Maimie and Vsevolod; Sadie Rodney; Leslie Hore-Belisha, benign and Bourbonic.¹ Fine food and adequate wine, candlelight and conversation.

Alan, heavy and half-demented, breezed in and soon fled. Much conversation and at length they left. Cecil Beaton remained behind and had a tête-à-tête with Gen Grimsdale, whom I call 'Chinese Gordon.'² Cecil and I, too, had a long confidential chat; we both deplore the Churchillian venom, largely attributable to Randolph, which still persists against Wavell. I gave Cecil a gold cigarette case – and went to bed, leaving him with the General. I took to Ève Curie; I felt that she would not be averse to an affair with me. Sex-starved, perhaps.

Prince Paul in remote Johannesburg cables to me to buy his Christmas presents. I will.

SATURDAY 20TH NOVEMBER

I twitted Grimsdale at breakfast on his social and sexual successes . . . he denied some of them. We lunched together at Buck's Club, luncheon costing nearly £3 because of oysters. I walked there in the intense cold without an overcoat, which was foolhardy. Met Osbert Sitwell and we walked together. Slept the whole afternoon. I was dining with the Devons but turned back because of the dense *potage St Germain* fog.³ Instead I am alone now and writing to P an endless letter. The Duchess of Kent has just rung up and proposed herself to luncheon on Monday.

The joy, the *luxé* of being alone in a precious, well-lit, well-heated house on a bitter winter's night is intense; the fog is impenetrable! People are lost, scurrying and shouting in the street; the guns are going and then in the distance one hears thuds that sound like bombs.

SUNDAY 21ST NOVEMBER

I over-ate yesterday at Buck's and I am liverish in consequence: everything, one's success, happiness, even sex and appearance depend on one's liver!

Later G and I drove to Kelvedon in the cold fog; and there we lunched quietly *à deux*. We drove back about 5 p.m., and I had cocktails with Circe Londonderry and Derek⁴ and Mairi Bury (who is immensely pregnant). They all live on the top floor of the Hertford Street side of Londonderry House and the apartment is

1 Reminiscent of the French royal house of Bourbon, and not, one presumes, like the whiskey.

2 The nickname of General Gordon of Khartoum following his feats in China in the 1870s.

3 Metaphorically, a 'pea-souper'.

4 Derek William Charles Keppel (1911–68), by courtesy Viscount Bury from 1942 until his death, married in 1940 Lady Mairi Vane-Tempest-Stewart (qv). They divorced in 1958.

rather squalid. Elizabeth Leveson-Gower¹ dropped in; she has greatly improved and looks radiant. She has the dark colouring and slightly oriental look of her mother; and indeed I see nothing Scotch or Gower about her . . . I was rather attracted by Elizabeth: shall I marry her?

MONDAY 22ND NOVEMBER

I always leave the arrangements for my entertainments until the last moment and never invite anybody until too late! This morning I realised that the Duchess of Kent was lunching and that only Alice Harding was coming to meet her. An hour's telephoning secured: the Argentine Ambassador, my blond Miguel Cárcano; Juliet Duff; Nicholas Lawford; Alic Poklewski who proposed himself. A gay and *gemütlich* little party, and we lunched off golden plates in the black dining room. I invited Cecil Beaton but he jauntily told me that he was spending the day at Windsor first photographing and then lunching with K and Queen.

I have heard gossip re the royal wedding. It seems that King Peter, who is weak and a noodle, is running out – fast. The ceremony has been postponed until December and it is doubtful now whether it will ever take place at all. The fat Queen – ‘Pikey’² – is working hard against it as she wants to keep Peter and hence the power in her own chubby hands. Will that frail, lovely little creature . . . be able to bring him up to scratch, alone and unaided?

The Frogs have climbed down in Lebanon and the arrested officials there have been released. War with de Gaulle is temporarily averted.

Honor writes again reiterating her request for a divorce.

Every day I am haunted by memories of Peter; by things I never said to him; by subjects we forgot to discuss; and I wish he were present to see new acquisitions and to share new jokes.

The Duchess was angelic and glamorous.

TUESDAY 23RD NOVEMBER

The last day on the dying session was largely given up to an explanation and agreements about Mosley's inopportune release.³ The excitement in the country is considerable and has been whipped up by the communists and Jewish elements. I walked to the House with Geoffrey Lloyd and saw nothing unusual. Later I was told that an angry crowd had surrounded the St Stephen's entrance and policemen had had to use batons. We heard nothing within although the public lobby was

1 Elizabeth Millicent Sutherland Leveson-Gower (1921–2019) succeeded her uncle, 5th Duke of Sutherland, in one of his subsidiary earldoms as Countess of Sutherland in her own right, in 1963.

2 Whom he normally terms Mignonette, the Queen of Yugoslavia (qv).

3 Morrison had decided that Sir Oswald Mosley³ was no longer a threat to society and allowed him to leave the house in the grounds of Holloway prison where he and his wife had been confined since May 1940. Nevertheless he spent the rest of the war under house arrest.

crowded with young factory workers indignantly protesting at his release. I rather enjoyed the ironical scene of the Labour Party so enraged by the release of one of their ministers by a Labour Home Secretary!! Their indignation seemed great. Morrison made an excellent case for his order: Mosley had been examined by five eminent physicians and they requested unanimously that his health demanded his release from Holloway. He is an able parliamentarian and he put it over with skill and persuasion.

I know Mosley intimately, or rather did: he is a cunning, mad, unscrupulous not unattractive fellow animated by an urge for power and publicity. The least one can say about him is that two women have adored him, for his first wife, Cynthia, was one of God's gentlest and loveliest of creatures . . .

We then went into secret session and the announcement made by Attlee that Winston was meeting with Roosevelt¹ and Stalin² fell flat.³ Most of us were already aware of it; and the others were too angry about Mosley. The statement was not illuminating; merely referred to the meeting Actually the PM went to the Azores in the *Renown* and on to Cairo, and is now at Tehran with Roosevelt and Stalin. A fantastic page in history.

WEDNESDAY 24TH NOVEMBER

A too-full day crowded with alternatives: it was the Opening of Parliament by the K and Q but I couldn't get there, as I had to attend a Guinness meeting. . . .

I rushed away to lunch at the Spanish Embassy I was late and rather taken aback to find Gerry Wellesley, that old cold *farceur*, now the Duke of Wellington there. We shook hands civilly but I never addressed a single remark to him The food was so excellent that I over-ate; and fell asleep in the afternoon.

Emerald and Laura Corrigan, intimate contemporaries who hate each other *au fond*,⁴ dined with Grimsdale and me. High comedy. Vitriolic conversation. The General was bewildered. We went on to the Wings Club where we joined Mollie Buccleuch and Noël Coward⁵ and others; it was crowded with gay Airmen and was animated. Noël Coward, dark and debonair, sang for an hour to an enthusiastic audience – he was endearing and I became fond of him again. General and I walked Mollie home.

Gerry Wellington is impossible; how our lives have crossed, inter-crossed and now they must run parallel but can never really meet. I hate him which is a pity.

1 Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882–1945) was the 32nd President of the United States, in office from 1933 until his death.

2 Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin (1878–1953, *né* Dzhughashvili), leader of the Soviet Union from 1924 until his death.*

3 The first meeting of the 'Big Three' Allied war leaders, at Tehran from 28th November to 1st December.

4 Deeply.

5 Noël Peirce Coward (1899–1973), writer, director and actor.*

THURSDAY 25TH NOVEMBER

To the House: it was dull. Lunched and dozed there. And attended a crowded smoky meeting addressed by Smuts. He seemed young and sprightly and looked well in khaki. He is always wise. I spoke to him for a second in the lobby and he was amiable but I was not sure that he recognised me. Came home. General GG and I went to dine at the Chinese Embassy, a ghastly party. Mostly 'Chinks': bad food; cold house; appalling conversation. Mme Wellington Koo has certainly the grandest possible manner and is impressed by herself. She made vast overtures to me until I was embarrassed; but knowing that I was safe, I responded.

FRIDAY 26TH NOVEMBER

Old Princesse de Polignac was found dead in her bed by her *inamorata*, Alville Chaplin,¹ this morning. She had dined last evening with 'Coalbox' (where I was invited) and Ronnie Storrs² had walked her home. She had been unusually animated. She was 78, would have been 79 in January; was twice married and all her life was a world-famous lesbian. A great lady with the appearance of one of Napoleon's marshals, she lavished millions of francs on music and the arts and young ladies. Her musical salon in Paris was famous; her Venetian palazzo the rendezvous of exotic and civilised Europe. Since the war started she had been a refugee in England, who still dallied in forbidden – or isn't it? – love!

Sad about old Winnie; one will miss her deep sergeant major's voice. She is to be buried at the Paignton Palace.

Alan, Grimsdale and Gerald de Gaury and I dined well at La Belle Meunière.

SATURDAY 27TH NOVEMBER

Emerald and I drove in my little car to Barnet to lunch with Grace Curzon and her dipsomaniacal son, Alfred Duggan. It was a cold, foggy, wet day and we lost the way. Lady Curzon's beauty is unfaded and her appearance is still impressive; she seems happy enough in her attractive small Georgian house, Fairholt on Hadley Green. She has two servants and seems not to hanker for the past grandeur and power, which was unsurpassed. She is a child – and an actress – at heart. We talked of Hubert.

There can be v little left of Berlin since it is being systematically bombed nightly: the capital, or perhaps morale of the German people, will soon be destroyed.

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1 Alville Chaplin (1909–94, *nee* Bridges) a noted gardener.*

2 Sir Ronald Henry Amherst Storrs (1881–1955), former Governor of Jerusalem, of Cyprus and of Northern Rhodesia.*

WEDNESDAY 1ST DECEMBER

Everybody telephoned and I was nearly frantic. Laura Corrigan has had a row with Harold Balfour who at times is not quite a gentleman. Then Diana, Lady Willingdon, Duchess of Kent and others.

Snack lunch at home; and then I had my hair arranged, deliberately avoiding the House of Commons which was discussing the recent release of 'Tom' Mosley. I take the view that too much time has been lost, and too much fuss made on this charlatan.

That evening, Channon gives a dinner party for the Regent of Iraq.

. . . All the afternoon I half-expected that people would 'chuck' my Emirical evening and when the sirens sounded at eight o'clock I was fatalistic. Meanwhile I had arranged the house and it looked magnificently luxurious. And astoundingly enough, everybody arrived punctually. Lady Brabourne¹ in black velvet was dressed for Derby House. Soon after they had all assembled the royal party came in two huge cars. Alan and I were on the doorstep in the mist; out stepped the slim uniformed figure of the Regent,² followed by a too-large suite . . . I ushered them in and introduced them all around. Circe Londonderry did not curtsy. Patsy L-B acting as hostess, looked very beautiful but she did not help. At nine o'clock, after cocktails (and I noticed that these Arabs did drink) we processed into dinner. The blue dining room was *en fête*.

This was a stupendous achievement in the fifth year of the war. The food was adequate and the drink flowed; so did the conversation. The Regent was obviously impressed. When the ladies left, I sat with him over the port. He is a mild-mannered little man, gentle, unassuming and curiously enough reminded me of another Regent, or my blond Paul. He has been overworked with seeing too many factories and aeroplanes, and thoroughly enjoyed 'an evening out': it was his last as tomorrow the party return to Baghdad. There were undercurrents: Somerset de Chair had led the assault, the march on Iraq³ – but HRH seemed particularly pleased to see him; and de Chair and de Gaury had quarrelled (indeed in *The Golden Carpet*, de Chair's book,⁴ he attacked him). It was serious in Baghdad. All went well. The Emir warmed up; lost his shyness and I had one of my great

- 1 Doreen Geraldine Browne (1896–1979), by courtesy Lady Doreen from 1903, was the daughter of the 6th Marquess of Sligo. She married, in 1919, Michael Knatchbull (1894–1939), who succeeded his father as 5th Baron Brabourne in 1933.*
- 2 'Abd al-Ilah of Hejaz (1913–58) was Regent of Iraq to King Faisal II from 1939 to 1953, and held the title of Crown Prince from 1943. He and the government were very pro-British. In the Revolution of July 1958 he was killed with other members of his family and his body was publicly mutilated and burnt by a mob.
- 3 This was something of an exaggeration. De Chair (qv) had fought in the Anglo-Iraq conflict earlier in the war, as an intelligence officer in the Cavalry.
- 4 About the Iraq expedition.

successes with him, certainly. One conversation had a *double entendre*, as we chatted of cigarette cases, jewels and Rolls-Royces . . . we then joined the ladies; or rather didn't as the exquisite Emir evidently preferred the gentlemen and never once spoke to the glittering female assembly of beauties . . .

He also asked me to visit him, and said [to come] now! Next time he came to England he would ring me up from the station. He was fascinated by my *bibelots*,¹ boxes and jewels and fingered them – ought I to have given him one? His manner is highly flirtatious and insinuating; he is a frivolous *flâneur*² and doesn't seem in the least Arab. He often dreams of the Prophet: now he said he would dream of me. I turned my full battery on of charm and succeeded. At 11.45 he made a move towards the door and the party broke up. (They are being called tomorrow at 6 a.m. to fly by BOAC)³ . . . I saw them off.

FRIDAY 3RD DECEMBER

Stalin, Roosevelt and Winston are in Persia: it is announced.

SATURDAY 4TH DECEMBER

Got up late, well and refreshed; breakfasted as usual in the Black Room with the sciurine⁴ General. Then we telephoned; half London was on the telephone to us; then we shopped. I was extravagant; bought a Fabergé cigarette case, a dream in white enamel, for myself for £25; and gave the General a gold one costing £50. He gave me bound books; we then had cocktails at the Ritz with Diana, old Conrad Russell, and Charlie Londonderry. Later lunched with the two Londonderrys. Charlie held forth against his cousin Winston who, he maintains, has no Churchillian qualities. They are a dreadful family: Winston's genius comes from the Vane-Tempests, he asserts; and his vitality from his American mother. Perhaps. The PM's grandmother was a Vane-Tempest,⁵ she was the daughter of the Vienna Lord Londonderry, and became Duchess of Marlborough. Charlie L went on to tell us how his political prospects were blighted by an unfortunate dinner party at Emerald's before the war, when he argued with Winston; said that France was unreliable and rotten and could not be depended upon as she was unprepared. Winston lost his

1 Ornaments, knick-knacks.

2 Literally, 'stroller: man about town.'

3 The British Overseas Airways Corporation. It had become the state airline in November 1939 when Imperial Airways merged with British Airways. In 1974 it merged with three other airlines to form a new British Airways.

4 Squirrel-like.

5 Frances Anne Emily Vane (1822–99), Lady Frances by courtesy, was daughter of the 3rd Marquess of Londonderry, who had been Ambassador to Austria. She married in 1843 John Spencer-Churchill, by courtesy Marquess of Blandford, who in 1857 succeeded his father as the 7th Duke of Marlborough.

temper, being a fanatical Franco-phile; he couldn't forgive Londonderry then, and certainly not later for being proved right.¹ Charlie thinks that Smuts's surprising reference to France, predicting that she would be a second-rate power after the war, is inspired, and probably by Winston himself. Certainly the remark has caused unusual astonishment and may be a rebuke and warning to de Gaulle. I don't know: but certainly Smuts is the only statesman who could have done it. I heard the speech on the 25th at Westminster and am surprised that it has been published.

Alan breezed in; gay and debonair. Patsy has given him £20,000; and Lord Iveagh has made out a covenant giving him personally £500 per annum. Am I to have nothing? Luckily I warned Bland² of all this yesterday, having had wind of it. Bland promised to push my interests, too.

Everyone has gone to *An Ideal Husband*; Gordon Grimsdale is dating Tony Pawson!³ Alan escorts Laura; Emerald is going with the Cárcanos and Coopers. I, luckily, am alone.

Alan warned me . . . that there was considerable gossip about P and me – towards the end [of Coats's stay]. Has Wavell got to hear of it?

SUNDAY 5TH DECEMBER

Cold Sunday: I picked up Lady Willingdon and drove her in my small car to Coppins to lunch with the Duchess of Kent. She was in purple relieved by amethysts and pearls and looked dazzlingly beautiful, but perhaps tired and sad. I know that *inassouvie*⁴ look in women. Ulick Alexander⁵ and others were there. Lady W curtsied to the three children! The baby cannot quite walk, and is a pretty creature crawling about, smiling and trying to chatter. Edward is good-looking but rude, perverse and suddenly shy; he adored his 'papa' as he called him. Today he ran up to me affectionately and then broke away. Little Alexandra is always attractive and good-mannered – Michael is a tiny edition of Queen Mary. Back by five; took Gordon Grimsdale to tea with Emerald at the Dorchester. She scintillated and he was impressed and fascinated.

1 Londonderry's political prospects were in fact finished by his devotion to Hitler and the Nazi Party.

2 Christopher Harry Bland (1867–1947), the Guinness family's man of affairs.

3 Algernon John 'Tony' Pawson (1916–90) was the sometime boyfriend of Arturo López Willshaw (1900–62), son of a Chilean plutocrat, who owned the flat where Pawson lived. López eventually evicted him when moving on to another beau, Alexis, baron de Redé (*né* Oskar Dieter Alex von Rosenberg, 1922–2004). It was said of Pawson that he had, when serving his country, the smallest waist in the British Army; he died while visiting a friend for Christmas.

4 Unsatisfied.

5 James Ulick Francis Canning Alexander (1889–1973) was a professional soldier who in 1928 had become the late Duke's Comptroller of the Household.*

WEDNESDAY 8TH DECEMBER

Woke below par. Gordon Grimsdale will get into my bed after we are called and talk for half an hour before getting up!!

Cecil Beaton agreed to come [to dinner] but he is still shaken by his accident. He left London last Friday (with a gold watch from me in his pocket for Peter) *en route* for Delhi; on Sunday morning only did they take off, and from Swindon, I think. Hardly were they in the sky when the plane caught fire and crashed. It was a question of seconds; and by a miracle someone opened the door and all the occupants got out alive – many were singed. It was a miracle that they were not all burnt alive. Ever since Cecil has been resting and recuperating; however tonight he seemed almost his usual self. Others were: Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands – never nicer and more gay and charming (Maimie Pavlovsky said it was because Lady Orr-Lewis,¹ who is his mistress, was not there); Vsevolod of Russia; Gordon Grimsdale, Alan – in a hysterical mood; Alice Harding; Sadie Rodney and the Greek princesses, mother and daughter, Aspasia and Alexandra, the future Queen of Yugoslavia

Dinner was excellent and a huge success. I liked Bernhard immensely, particularly when he offered to take letters and a Xmas present to my little small son. The Greek princesses are upset by a semi-recognition of General Tito² in Yugoslavia and seem to think the Karageorgevich dynasty is doomed – apparently I warned Princess Aspasia at a dinner of Ben Kittredge's that King Peter would never reign, and she has not forgotten it. Indeed she passed on the information to the boy. I think I was probably right. I don't care; but I am sorry for these ladies as their ambitions and hopes are thus dashed . . . and also one hears that the sly slim weak young King wants to wiggle out of the engagement. Alexandra begged me to get a secret letter to him (I did it once via Peter) and I persuaded Grimsdale who leaves so soon – alas – to take one.

Philip of Greece, who was dining tonight, and Douglas Fairbanks, both chucked on account of flu. There is a widespread influenza epidemic.

Alan was in a dreadful state of nerves because his brother Francis has flu, too, or at least a temperature. Alan's selfishness rivals his lavish sweetness. He was quite angry because I said that flu was not serious – and he left in a huff – at 1 a.m. in the blackout by car for Amesbury where Francis was ill. What a mad family Alan has fled into the wild Wiltshire night, convinced that his brother Francis will die because he has a temperature.

1 Doris Blanche Lee (1898–1960), married in 1929 John Duncan Orr-Lewis (1898–1980), who succeeded his father as 2nd Bt in 1921.

2 Josip Broz (1892–1980), better known by his *nom de guerre* Tito led the Yugoslav partisans in the Second World War, was Prime Minister of Yugoslavia from 1944 to 1963 and President from 1953 until his death. A committed communist, he also repeatedly defied Moscow, gaining an unusual level of popularity in the West.

THURSDAY 9TH DECEMBER

Dined with Lady Colefax at the Dorchester, an immense dinner of twenty-eight . . . I was amused and amusing. The party was in the nature of a good-life gala for the Coopers. Desmond MacCarthy proposed their health; Duff was too rude to reply. His rudeness is proverbial, and one wonders whether it will please the French?

FRIDAY 10TH DECEMBER

Got up at seven and shared a good breakfast with Gordon Grimsdale . . . I drove him in the fading blackout to Paddington Station and there at 8.25 said a sad 'goodbye' and wondered as I drove away when, if ever, I should see him again? He clasped the handsome gold cigarette case I gave him; probably he will leave it to one of his adopted sons. Then I rushed to Southend arriving at 10.30. All day I gave audiences to constituents and was tired, cold and bored.

Grimsdale telephoned from Belgrave Square; he had spent a freezing day at Swindon and was then told there was no aeroplane and nowhere for him to sleep. He returned to London and leaves again in the early morning. I am sorry not to be with him.

Heavy barrage here about 7.30 and big bombs dropped nearby.

SATURDAY 11TH DECEMBER

Slept for twelve hours last night: the bomb dropped in St Vincent's Road and killed at least three people. The Convent was partly wrecked and now this gay crowded hotel is housing a dozen surprised nuns, who are refugees! Many windows broken in High Street and elsewhere.

I wrote out a speech and delivered it to 180 members of the Conservative Association – my delivery was good, but the matter indifferent. I could not make the effort, and felt I was being a bore.

Grimsdale rang up about six o'clock; he was at Belgrave Square, having returned from Swindon for the second time, as the aeroplane was not ready to take off! Indeed he spent some six hours in the train. I hesitated about rushing to London and decided not to: there was no train and it was too cold and foggy to drive. He is alone at No. 5. He has two v private letters for King Peter and Princess Alexandra in his possession; he has promised to deliver them personally.

SUNDAY 12TH DECEMBER

Again I slept for twelve hours, and then drove to Kelvedon where I had hoped to spend the day quietly, and indeed did until 5 pm, when a message came that my poor General had returned to London – or was *en route* – for the third time. I quickly decided to join him, packed up, and drove up . . . in the dark and cold.

A horrible drive: I nearly turned back twice; but one can do anything one wants to, really. I arrived home before him: he came in only at 10 p.m., cold, angry and exhausted. The inefficiency of the Air Ministry is outrageous. I took him to dine at Pratt's where we had an excellent meal and were joined by Tom Purdey¹ who was drunk; Billy Hartington² who gets better-looking every day; and A. P. Herbert.³ Grimsdale much amused.

Mairi Bury had a daughter yesterday at Londonderry House: I was to have been a godfather had it been a boy.

MONDAY 13TH DECEMBER

Got up at 7 a.m. Perhaps Lady Willingdon is right; the day is longer and one accomplishes more. I drove Grimsdale for the second time to Paddington Station and saw him off! This is his fourth attempt to leave and he seems to think it will be successful!

Rang the Duchess of Kent to wish her a Happy Birthday: she is 37 today; and we chatted for half an hour. She has had flu but is recovering. Half the country seems to be affected with it! Prince Paul has sent her £20 with which to buy me a Xmas present – what do I want?

Busy morning; quarrelled with Harold Balfour on the telephone over Laura Corrigan whom he has treated shabbily; dictated and wrote until noon and then fetched Diana at the Dorchester and we shopped and did chores for an hour. I lunched at home and alone (she gave me an onion cheese from Bognor); then more work, and went out again with Bundi [Channon's dog] and I had a Proustian adventure. In a Bond Street jeweller's, where I bought a Fabergé enamelled case, I saw an extraordinary marionette of a woman – or was it a man? In grey flannel trousers, a wide leather belt, masculine overcoat and a man's brown felt hat, it was a frightening appearance; but her hair was golden, golden dyed and long. What is wrongly known as platinum: the mouth was a scar. Bundi began to sniff a spaniel and as I glared at this terrifying apparition I recognised Gladys Marlborough,⁴ once the world's most beautiful woman! The toast of Paris, the love of Proust;⁵ the *belle amie*⁶ of Anatole France,⁷ etc. etc., and now an over-painted mad-looking lesbian. I had heard that she was mad; and although I hadn't seen her since my

1 Thomas Donald Stuart Purdey (1897–1957) was a prominent member of the London family of gunsmiths.

2 William John Robert Cavendish (1917–44), Earl of Burlington by courtesy until 1938 and then Marquess of Hartington.*

3 Alan Patrick Herbert (1890–1971) was the independent MP for Oxford University, and also a comic writer and librettist.*

4 Gladys Marie Deacon (1881–1977)* married, in 1921, the 9th Duke of Marlborough.*

5 Valentin Louis Georges Eugène Marcel Proust (1871–1922), renowned French novelist.*

6 Girlfriend.

7 Anatole France (François-Anatole Thibault) (1844–1924), novelist and poet, won the 1921 Nobel Prize in Literature.*

wedding, it seemed no reason to cut her; and I went up to her and smiled and put out my hand, which she took shrinkingly and then heading into French (as she always did) said: '*Est-ce que je vous connais, monsieur?*'¹ 'Yes,' I said, 'I am Chips!' and I remembered how she used to telephone me every morning; how we had been allies for twenty years or more; how I gave her sugar in the last war when she was still dazzlingly beautiful; and then of the Blenheim days . . . and how we used to lunch with Proust; and of the story that d'Annunzio² fainted when he saw her, such was her beauty . . . and now, this marionette sham, this he-ghoulish female, mad, muttering and miserable. She looked at me, stared vacantly with those famous turquoise eyes that once drove men insane with desire and replied. '*Je n'ai jamais entendu ce nom-là*,'³ and she flung down a ruby clip she was examining and bolted from the shop. What an adventure . . .

Gladys Marlborough looked like a boy in a male brothel in Fez.⁴

TUESDAY 14TH DECEMBER

Up betimes and went shopping, and on to the House where Anthony Eden, smartly dressed, delivered a pretty travelogue which interested nobody particularly. He cannot hold the House; there was not wit, humour or eloquence in his tedious description of the momentous meetings in Tehran or Cairo. After thirty minutes members got up and began to trickle out. Beatrice Eden sat in the Speaker's Gallery with Clemmie Churchill and they later waved to us in the lobby, as I stood chatting with Loelia Westminster and Sadie Rodney . . . All the ambassadors turned up and many others. A *manqué*⁵ performance but one thing did come out, although Anthony to do him justice tried to conceal it: that Peter of Yugoslavia will never reign; he added a word of sympathy for the Boy King who had done so much for his country – 'What?' I longed to ask. Winston is returning by sea, and probably has the President with him?

I felt 'fluey' and came home. A letter, quite the nicest, deepest and most touching one that I have ever had came from P . . . P is unhappy in his present post; has less contact with the Viceroy, is only a glorified *maitre-d'hôtel* and wants to leave, to return to Europe and to me. I don't want him back yet; not until my own private affairs are regularised. Then *tant pis*.⁶

1 'Do I know you, sir?'

2 Gabriele d'Annunzio (1863–1938) was an Italian writer.*

3 'I've never heard that name.'

4 In the Rhodes James edition some of this entry is cut, some sentences are arranged in a different order, and a further French phrase that is not in the MS is inserted, one presumes by Coats. Mr Hugo Vickers, whose excellent biography *The Sphinx* is the definitive account of the life of Gladys, Duchess of Marlborough, interviewed her in her great old age in the 1970s, and she made it clear that she knew exactly who Channon was: 'I can be quite oblivious when I want to be,' she told Mr Vickers.

5 Inadequate, lacking.

6 Too bad.

My blond brother-in-law [Lennox-Boyd] breezed busily briefly in; he said that Eden's speech was a masterpiece of dullness. He buzzed off, and is due to come back to see me to my bed.

Joan Astley rang up; she is still undelivered and the infant is now just three weeks overdue.

Alan came back, mad and semi-intoxicated, and then dashed off to Pratt's to meet Adrian Liddell Hart' . . .

WEDNESDAY 15TH DECEMBER

My quiet antisocial cure continues and I revel in it . . . Lunched alone, attended a 1922 Committee, snubbed Harold Balfour. (I must really add a codicil to my will cutting him out: he has 'died' on me for no good reason. Friendships often last just seven years!) Walked home and worked and then went around to 17 Grosvenor Place to have a cocktail with Maureen Dufferin,² who was v sweet and affectionate and pretty: she went out of the way to be gentle and painstaking, having rung me up. Has she quarrelled with Honor, or what? . . . I drank two whiskies and then felt desperately lonely and sad and insecure by longing for P. I came away. What witchcraft he exerts over me. I live only for him and his letters and he is sad and far away; and maybe misses me?

I am aware of a dastardly deal done at Tehran: we have turned over the Balkan sphere of influence to Soviet Russia. The Balkans and Czechoslovakia are to be Sovietised. Anthony Eden tried it on over the Baltic States and failed largely due to 'Teenie' Cazalet's protests and intrigues. This time Stalin has won, and we have weakly given in. It is monstrous. Eden is the *âme damnée*³ of English politics. I should like to expose him. Is Oliver Harvey⁴ behind this? The reaction in the States, at least, will be tremendous, when it is known.

Dined and alone: *quel soulagement*.⁵

THURSDAY 16TH DECEMBER

Christmas presents began to arrive *déjà*: a gold box from the Duchess of Kent; a v pretty . . . Dresden ornament from Mrs Coats etc. Mairi Bury rang me just

1 Adrian Liddell Hart (1922–91), naval officer.*

2 Maureen Constance Guinness (1907–98), a cousin of Channon's wife Honor, married in 1930 the 4th Marquess of Dufferin and Ava.*

3 A tortured, or damned, soul.

4 Harvey (qv) was certainly loyal in the extreme to Eden, whose private secretary he had just ceased to be following a promotion. His diaries do not reveal him to have been the architect of the Tehran settlement, or even leading the move to roll over in front of Stalin's bulldozer; but they do show a concern to save Poland from Stalin's clutches.

5 How relaxing!

as I was going out and asked me to be godfather to her baby, the Hon Rose Keppel.¹ . . . It is the second child: I am delighted. I walked to the H of Commons with Geoffrey Lloyd and tried to persuade him to have an *amour*² (he is amorous in theory, but dilatory in practice) with Mme Ève Curie. He was intrigued but unenthusiastic. I went in to the H of Commons and I was quickly made aware that there was 'something up' – what, I didn't know. At the end of Questions, Attlee rose and in his usual monotonous voice announced that the PM was ill and that pneumonia had set in in his left lung. The House, taken completely by surprise, gasped, for the immediate and important eventualities which this may mean occurred to everybody. A few moments later I saw Anthony Eden and John Anderson, the two rival claimants to the succession, deep in great conversation in a lobby. I went into the lavatory and there were Attlee and old fat funny Bevin³ both blustering with importance; they were amiable to me, and we agreed that the illness is serious: a man in poor condition physically, and nearly 70, cannot have pneumonia twice within a year without meaning grave risk of death. I feel that he will die. Attlee rather hinted that the PM was in the Middle East and later I learnt from Emerald that he was in Algiers. Mrs Churchill left today by air to join him. Somehow everything isn't right with life, all was flat; and I came away and lunched with Laura Corrigan at the Wings Club. She was uninterested in what may mean the end of the Empire as we have known it; for although I privately detest the PM, I recognise that he is the keystone which keeps everything together. Then I slept a little, shopped, and at 4.30 went around to Londonderry House to see Mairi Bury, who looked extraordinarily pink and pretty, although the infant was born only on last Saturday. I sat with her for an hour and we laughed and gossiped; she is mature and remarkably intelligent. The baby was brought in in his Moses [basket] and slept peacefully: she looked, I thought, like him [Lord Bury], gentle, fat, swollen-cheeked . . . Then I called on Emerald . . . Emerald says that the PM is really v ill and that the War Cabinet is desperately worried about him . . . and I walked home. I hate this cold; it saps one's strength – I am too old for it.

FRIDAY 17TH DECEMBER

An official announcement from Downing Street last night said that there was some improvement in the PM's condition. Even if he lives, he will be ill for many weeks and his powers will be delegated to others . . . I walked to the House; it was deserted and bored; then I went Christmas shopping without much success. The prices of everything are incredible; it is inflation.

1 Rose Deirdre Margaret Keppel (b.1943), from 1979 Lady Rose by courtesy.

2 Love affair.

3 Ernest Bevin (1881–1951), Labour MP for Wendsworth Central and Minister of Labour and National Service.*

Joan Astley produced a daughter at 9 a.m. today . . . I sent her flowers – ten large white chrysanthemums which cost me £3.10.0! Flowers are Himalayanly expensive, as is everything else.

A dull day; seen nobody. Harold B and Alan rang up. Harold's row with Laura deepens . . . Cecil Beaton, after a rough trip, has arrived in Cairo. I trust that my watch is still safe? He is due in Delhi next week.

SATURDAY 18TH DECEMBER

The PM's improvement has been maintained. I hear that Randolph got embroiled in Cairo in some gaffe; another officer took the blame, shouldered the responsibility and has been rewarded with a decoration. I must trace this tale to its source.

Lady Baillie, heavily muffled in furs and with a running cold dined with me as did Geoffrey Lloyd, as delightful as always. It is a long-standing romance: they are practically a married couple. Adrian Baillie is living in a Nursing Home, doing a 'drink' cure: the root of his trouble is unhappiness and his jealousy over Geoffrey . . . I wonder whether they will divorce? Such a marriage with a demi-mad millionairess who has had three husbands would finish him off politically.

SUNDAY 19TH DECEMBER

Lazy morning with my books. My library is dukedom enough . . . gave Diana luncheon at the Ritz – called on Emerald.

Dined in alone with Jay Llewellyn whom I liked more than ever before; he was charming and sympathetic . . . tipped me to warn Alan that Cripps is gunning for him and could stop at nothing, not even at personal aspersion or scandals. I cannot interfere . . . Alan must steer his own (I hope) triumphant course.

MONDAY 20TH DECEMBER

Christmas presents pour in: the English are not lavish: my dear mother-in-law sends a seal (neither pretty nor valuable); Honor sends me a tiny chipped cheap tortoiseshell box worth a shilling; Circe Londonderry a silver mite or a box for saccharine . . . but Laura Corrigan has given me a cheque for twenty-five pounds, six bottles of expensive drink, a huge turkey – almost unprocurable – and two chickens.

It would seem that the PM is recovering. He is not at Algiers.

A week's rest and complete continence has rescued my energies; but I have aged these past months. Dined in and alone.

TUESDAY 21ST DECEMBER

Raids last night and again one has just this second sounded as I write these lines. (6.37 p.m.)

Before luncheon I met Alan at the Carlton Grill and drank with him and ticked him off; he is beginning to get on my nerves and I must be careful or I lose his love. I fear that he is more than mad, in fact completely crazy.

Gordon Grimsdale cables me, probably from Cairo, that King Peter is enchanted with the photographs the General took out of Princess Alexandra. Am I ever Cupid's messenger, and handyman? The text was in discreet code and asked me to thank her. I rang up Claridge's and talked to the poor child, who is distraught by the 'Tito' turn of affairs. She sees her throne-to-be tottering; and half-crying asked my advice: I had none, alas, to give her, but could not resist a dig at Queen Mignonette by saying that she has made so many enemies here that she is largely responsible which is, of course, true. Princess Alexandra agreed. She is sensible and a realist.

I have been going through my finances and fear that I have over-spent this year, partly because of P. It is, however, too early to tell. I shall await April 6th, before knowing.

I am becoming socially slothful and only really like dining alone and reading . . . Mrs Keppel, the modern, but already out-of-date Pompadour, sent me a touching letter saying how much I had contributed 'all these many years' to the gaiety, colour and glamour of London.

WEDNESDAY 22ND DECEMBER

After attending to Xmas chores, I drove my secretary Miss Sneath¹ to Kelvedon where we collected flowers and holly and I sent off seasonable cables to the following persons:

Peter
 My Son
 Lilia Ralli²
 Prince Paul
 Crown Prince of Greece
 Gordon Grimsdale
 Maureen Dufferin
 Helen Hull
 Mrs Vanderbilt³
 Natasha Bagration

1 Muriel Sneath (1899–1987).*

2 Julie Marie 'Lilia' Pringo (1901–78),* married in 1921 Jean Ralli.

3 Grace Graham Wilson (1870–1953), who in 1896 had married (greatly against his father's wishes) Cornelius Vanderbilt III.*

I have also dispatched half a hundred cards and letters and am giving forty-two presents. The festival will cost me around £250, perhaps more.

This morning I met Princess Alexandra and her mother, Aspasia in Cartier's. They were v friendly and sweet, but depressed by the turn of events in the Balkans. *Je ne vais plus au Bled, car les rois sont détronés . . .*¹

THURSDAY 23RD DECEMBER

The situation in the Balkans deteriorates from a royalist point of view. It is the twilight of the Kings . . . I prophesied it two years ago.

A disturbing rumour is that the Germans have placed a new sort of amazing gun on the Pas-de-Calais road and that they will bombard London and Bristol, Dover and elsewhere towards the end of January. The reports are taken v seriously by the govt. *Que faire?*² Move some of my possessions to Kelvedon?

Alan and I shopped practically most of the day; everything is expensive but not really scarce at all.

Peter cables that Cecil Beaton has arrived safely at Delhi.

FRIDAY 24TH DECEMBER

Quiet day: Alan left me for Henlow Grange where I refused to follow . . .

Two characters have died: Lady Wilson,³ Lord Ribblesdale's⁴ eldest daughter, she married Sir Mathew ('Scatters') Wilson and always stuck to him, indeed probably loved him in spite of, or because of his outrageous conduct and blatant infidelities. She was a grey, bony, clever, boring, *bas bleu* of a woman, who wrote dim sketches about France, dressed badly, and looked like a witch. He, with his boisterous spirits, and zest for cards, horses, pleasure, is a Regency character – a jovial ruffian. Grace Curzon was demented with love for him for many years and he treated her shamefully and wrecked her financially and socially. Will he marry her now?

The other is old Victor Bowring-Hanbury⁵ who was 76. He lived in this house for many, many years; and we bought it from him when he had his financial crash in 1935. He was always alleged to have murdered his wife's first

1 I shall go no more to Bled, for the Kings have lost their throne.

2 What to do?

3 Barbara Lister (1880–1943), daughter of the 4th Baron Ribblesdale, married in 1905 Mathew Henry Wilson.*

4 Thomas Lister (1854–1925), 4th Baron Ribblesdale.

5 Victor Henry Bowring (1867–1943) had married Ellen Hanbury, a rich widow, in 1904 and added his name to hers. Bowring, Hanbury managed to spend much of his wife's money and sold off her property; he was declared bankrupt four years after her death, after trying to sell parts of his art collection for which he had not yet paid. He was discharged from bankruptcy in 1938.

husband, Hanbury and afterwards he married the wealthy widow and even took the name, as well as the money of his predecessors! After she died he lived on here in the house which looked like an antique shop, surrounded by treasures. He wore velvets, and it is said, his wife's jewels and fraternised [with] Guardsmen!! A vicious old collector, certainly. He persecuted me with letters etc. Once workmen discovered a secret panel which was full of finely bound books! Honor and I, having bought the house, decided to keep them. I have them still. But we bought many of his objects . . . Sometimes I feel his strange eerie influence and wonder whether it is affecting me, for as I age, I am becoming increasingly like him. He slept for thirty years or twenty in my bedroom, where the great Lord Shaftesbury also died.¹

I am alone this evening – and on Christmas Eve, having refused several invitations.

SATURDAY 25TH DECEMBER

Woke early and felt depressed, as I miss my absent son, and my faraway Pierrot [Coats]. Dressed, wrapped up presents and delivered them – sherry and wine to Mr and Mrs Amery (who don't drink!); the same to Lady Colefax; and then called on Ti Cholmondeley whom I found in bed with bronchitis. She was surrounded by friends and parcels . . . I brought her £5, a bottle of whisky, some holly and a string of sham pearls. Then to lunch at Londonderry House, Laura Corrigan, Margaret Stewart² . . . and Lord and Lady Chaplin.³ Mairi and Derek Bury lunched in their bedroom as she is still not well – the baby is a fortnight old today and is to be called 'Rose'. Many jokes and Charlie Londonderry saying it should be known as 'Rose and Chips' . . . Too much rich food at luncheon; turkey and champagne; I felt bloated. We listened to the King's broadcast which is always a torture as he is so halting, faltering and flat. Today he was less uninspiring than usual and tears came into Circe Londonderry's eyes . . .

Later I called at the Clinic where I had tea with Joan Astley whose infant daughter Diana is eight days old. A quiet baby, she doesn't yet look like the Viceroy. Joan is an enchantment . . .

I shall spend Xmas in London, pleasant, cosy, effortless and peaceful.

1 He did not: he died at Folkestone.

2 Margaret Frances Anne Vane-Tempest-Stewart (1910–66),* from 1915 Lady Margaret by courtesy, was the second daughter of the 7th Marquess of Londonderry (qv).

3 Eric Chaplin (1877–1949) succeeded his father as the 2nd Viscount Chaplin in 1923. He married, in 1905, Gwladys Alice Gertrude Wilson (1881–1971), daughter of the 1st Baron Nunburnholme.

MONDAY 27TH DECEMBER

The eight o'clock news announced that *Scharnhorst*¹ has been sunk in the Arctic Circle where it was attempting to interfere with one of the convoys to Russia. A great victory.

A cable from Nannie says that Paul is well; thank God!

Paul Latham, who always writes better than he talks, sent me a Xmas line to which he added, 'I always think that Peter was born with a glass slipper on his foot.' My foot. The remarkably mild weather continues . . . I have rarely had so pleasant a Xmas.

Maimie and Vsevolod gave me luncheon in their poky cottage at 36 Montpelier Walk: we agreed that the Greek princes and the King are a stingy lot, and they never think of sending us food parcels from Cairo; they practically lived in our houses for months! However they cheered us with rich gifts. M and V took me to see their enchanting new home which they have bought and mean to live in after the war: it is at: [left blank] a tiny palazzo of charm. Tea with Emerald.

Harold B and Alan dined with me; they insist that I should be made a baronet. I was bored.

TUESDAY 28TH DECEMBER

I woke feeling like the *Hesperus*² and was V T[ired] all morning; but did much work. Am I going mad? Lunched and dined alone. Laura Corrigan and Nicholas Lawford came to tea.

Alan is seeming alarmed by the reports about the possible aerial bombardment of London towards the end of January and the prospect is unpleasant or serious, certainly! The govt are even considering mass evacuation. There are two schools of thought; one headed by Lord Cherwell (to which I incline), think that the whole affair is partly bluff to deflect our bombers from their targets, and that whilst there may be something, it will prove no more than an uncomfortable farce: a few *canailles*³ and confusion at the worst; the other view is that it is highly serious.

WEDNESDAY 29TH DECEMBER

Slept eleven hours and woke so tired: I am done with life? Alan is still living here, since his own house is so uncomfortable.

Headache and dejection all day augmented by a foolish letter from Honor: she drives me frantic.

1 This major German battleship was crippled on 26th December in the Battle of North Cape mainly by HMS *Duke of York*, with help from destroyers of the Royal and Royal Norwegian Navies, and finished off by torpedoes from HMS *Jamaica* and HMS *Belfast*. Only thirty-six men survived out of a crew of almost two thousand.

2 That is, a wreck.

3 Scoundrels.

Later, however, her note was cancelled out by two very affectionate letters from my mother and father-in-law who are at Elveden. Much touched by their loyalty and devotion.

George Gage, Nicholas Lawford and Alan dined with me and I cheered up. Nicholas remained on; he is the oldest 32 I have ever known; sophisticated, disillusioned and gentle, is half-inhuman and too deeply obsessed by himself. We are allies . . . Alan rushed out . . .

THURSDAY 30TH DECEMBER

The too-full year is drawing to a close silently . . .

Alan, Bill Tufnell, the languishing Lord of Langleys, and I dined at 8a Hobart Place, the little nest where the rich Lennox-Boys fug it! They have been five years married today and still live in squalor because Patsy is so hopelessly lazy. She is a liability to Alan in most ways and he is beginning to regret his marriage; but he loves his babes and likes the millions.

FRIDAY 31ST DECEMBER

The dying year's last day. The telephone buzzed beginning with the Duchess of Kent who wished to come to *déjeuner*¹ but I was obliged to refuse as I had arranged with the sinister Gerald de Gaury to go to the East End. A vicious expedition,² I suppose. Alan and I picked him up and we drove to the docks where we lunched at an Arab restaurant. Excellent food, but a smelly place and later we visited several dingy Arab lodging-houses. Bits of from Hell they were. I am against the East End: it is further afield than the East. Then we drove to the famous pub at Shadwell, the Prospect of Whitby, and admired the Whistler-like view of the Thames, and finally home.

On my return I found that the Duchess of Kent had called and left a letter for me from Paul in Johannesburg. Quite a reasonable and somewhat gossipy epistle. Alan and I dined with Mrs Corrigan at Claridge's and kept the company including Duff Cooper (who was in one of his moods of benevolent boredom and didn't seem to mind) waiting for nearly an hour. Alan has been attending the Secret Weapon Committee (the problem seems to have worsened!! Shall I move my treasures to Kelvedon?) Dinner was animated: Barbie Wallace³ brought the American writer, Herbert Agar;⁴ they are in a swoon of love: I have never seen a

1 Luncheon.

2 That is, to engage in acts of vice.

3 Barbara Lutyens (1898–1981), daughter of the architect Sir Edwin Lutyens, married Euan Wallace in 1920.

4 Herbert Sebastian Agar (1897–1980) was an American writer. In 1934 he won the Pulitzer Prize for History for his book *The People's Choice*, about the American presidency. He married Mrs Wallace (qv) in 1945.

couple so enamoured. It is always faintly ridiculous in a middle-aged couple, yet I envied them their exchanged glances of perfect sympathy. We went on to a party, a small dance given by Helen Fitzgerald A tiny crowded home ensured a gay evening; but I was tired and flat and dull and didn't enjoy it. Consequently I felt, or feared, that I was unpopular – am I?

At midnight we sang and everybody kissed everybody else. I spent the evening with Laura Corrigan and Diana C. Edwina Mountbatten looked lovely: there were a few demi-drunken American officers. A quiet uneventful evening – and now it is 1944 and I go to bed. I can hear Alan snoring in the next room.

What will this year unfold? The return of my son, I hope; my divorce, I dread? The appalling Second Front? The aerial bombardment of London? Extravagant expenditure? Or what? My senses are deadened and I don't much care. My real life is over. I am 46 and I hate it.

1944

SATURDAY 1ST JANUARY

I entered the New Year lethargic in spirit and low in health but I hope soon to recover The Day was balmy, and I wished I had gone to Kelvedon, but my energies are at an extremely low ebb [section of MS heavily blacked out] Woke out of sorts; refused to lunch with Diana Cooper, Emerald and Gage, my old friends; instead I met Alan at the RAC and we had a snack and a Turkish bath.

A quiet day of gilded seclusion but I was sad not to have seen Diana. Last evening I thought her positively plain; for the first time her eternal beauty deserted her.

If only I knew of a comfortable monastery I would hie myself to it: the world means nothing to me now, never have I entered the New Year in so dejected a state of mind. Indifference is warping my susceptibilities. . .

SUNDAY 2ND JANUARY

A balmy day indeed. Slept late and feel *déjà* better for my treatment and *pillules*¹ of vitamins. Wrote letters to the Viceroy, Lady Killearn, Prince Paul and others and left them to be dispatched by various bags. Walked back to sad Laura Corrigan's luncheon alone as it is her 54th birthday,² or so she says! Then, walked to the London Clinic and called on Joan Astley still in bed.

Then to the Dorchester (in all I must have walked seven miles) and called on Emerald, who was in tears (I had refused to lunch with her and the Coopers on their last day!) A tearful farewell with Diana: we wept, as did little John Julius, who hastily tried to hide his boyish tears. Even Duff was *attendri*, gentle and affectionate. I hated it partly for itself and more because it recalled another recent *départ* when I was in a haze of horror. Home, where Alan awaited me, the usual Lennox-'emboydery': and I ended up giving Francis, his hardening, long, languid, melancholy brother dinner at Pratt's when I was suddenly gay and talkative. We walked home in the clear moonlight and I thought of Duff and Diana in the clouds ahead *en route* for Algiers.

MONDAY 3RD JANUARY

Slept indifferently and vaguely heard the sirens. Apparently, we bombed Berlin again for the second consecutive night. I am alone – Dull and disappointing post:

1 Pills.

2 She was 65.

but my pass-books show that I am not seriously insolvent financially. That is something, though I seem to have spent about nine thousand pounds in cash last year, which is an immense sum considering current taxation.¹ I must retrench seriously for a time.

I fetched Emerald and took her to the Perroquet for luncheon. She is so lonely, *désœuvrée* and disillusioned now as she ages. She has no standards and no relations and nobody on whom to lavish her love except the selfish Coopers . . . Had drinks at Londonderry House. Mairi Bury read me her poetry which is extraordinarily mature, if a bit unoriginal, almost Shelley in touch. Dinner blissfully alone . . .

A most disappointing long irritating letter came from the man Coats: he is dispirited and run-down at Delhi: bored and weary, he has temporarily lost his wit and apologises for a dull brief visit. Had I spoilt him? The last letter was a declaration . . . I am so piqued that I resolve not to write him for a time, and so wrote immediately ten pages! But have not sent it and shall hold it up for a bit.

TUESDAY 4TH JANUARY

The Russians have advanced into what was Poland. It is Red Winter.

Marie, Lady Willingdon who is becoming something of a turn, brought her daughter-in-law to lunch – the present Lady Willingdon² (Nigg's³ third wife!) She is a dull girl but pleasant enough. Others: Lady Carlisle,⁴ Nicholas Lawford, and the Archduke Robert. We had lobsters, beef and plums in gin and a successful party. Biddy Carlisle and I were once staunch allies, and long-estranged but we are now reconciled after a Twenty Years War! Her son, Charlie Morpeth,⁵ who is my godson, comes of age on February 21st next. I must find him a nice present to make up for years and years of neglect. Otherwise an uneventful day.

Dined with 'Smaragda'⁶ Cunard at the Dorchester, her elegance, her exquisiteness cannot be exaggerated. She remains feminine and desirable at the age of 74. An odd party designed to impress Lord Portal⁷ who is a fat, funny

1 The standard rate by 1944 was 50 per cent; incomes above £20,000 a year attracted a surtax of 48 per cent, and purchase tax – levied on the manufacturing price of goods – was 100 per cent.

2 Daphne Caldwell (1908–89), married the 2nd Marquess of Willingdon (qv), as his third wife, in 1943.

3 Inigo Brassey Freeman-Thomas (1898–1979) was by courtesy Viscount Ratendone from 1931 until he succeeded his father as 2nd Marquess of Willingdon in 1941.

4 Bridget ('Biddy') Helen Hore-Ruthven (1896–1982), in her own right 11th Lady Ruthven of Freeland, married in 1918 George Josslyn L'Estrange Howard (1895–1963), 11th Earl of Carlisle; in the Second World War she commanded the Women's Auxiliary Corps (India).

5 Charles James Ruthven Howard (1923–94), by courtesy Viscount Morpeth until 1963, when he succeeded his father as 12th Earl of Carlisle.

6 The Greek for 'emerald'.

7 Wyndham Raymond Portal (1885–1949), Baron Portal, the Minister of Works,⁺ not to be confused with the senior RAF officer.

Falstaff-ian figure, a deaf duck. He shares a flat with Oliver Lyttelton,¹ and they arrived together bringing three bottles of champagne (@ £5 each?) as a present. This is how the Churchillian govt lives. Emerald was ungracious about it, as she always is about presents which embarrass her. The Andersons were there and the Moores. Conversation flagged, nobody bothered, but after the champagne had flowed both old Portal and Oliver Lyttelton became fatuously anecdotal. OL is gifted as a raconteur but strives for an effect and risks repeating 'chestnuts': he is a slippery cove, high-spirited and a touch vulgar. Nobody enjoys life or success more than he . . . I kept thinking of how Biddy Carlisle had lunched with me today. For years she loved him (and he her) passionately and wanted to divorce and marry him; he always refused, remaining legally loyal to Lady Moira,² who is a tired, giggling, *fin-de-race*³ Pekingese of a woman who worships him. John Anderson's brain is so quick and incisive, matrimony and society have lent him some polish and a touch sweetened his dryness. Ava blossoms still in the shelter of his protecting love.

Walked home about midnight in the cold moonlight. London looked astonishingly beautiful, like a Canaletto. Even hideous Park Lane took on a magical quality. Here, I found Alan philandering with the Honourable Hedley Strutt,⁴ Lord Rayleigh's younger son, who looks like a goat.

The PM is still honeymooning at Marrakesh with Max Beaverbrook.

WEDNESDAY 5TH JANUARY

Went to bed too late and slept deeply until I was awakened by a terrific noise of heavy barrage: I thought it must the much-vaunted secret weapon.

I am so sad, so lonely and so in love: what poisoned fruit have I eaten? And I am desperately sorry for poor Emerald in her loneliness and dejection. Life has passed her by; and I too, am in some danger of being left behind at 46! P's letters are so *piano* and infrequent. Today I had a *coup d'énergie*⁵ and went to Lloyd's bank and went through my important papers and *pensées*⁶ there. I brought back several vols of this diary. They are for '41, '42, '43 and parts of '40. I shall deposit them at the British Museum next week.

1 Oliver Lyttelton (1893–1972), Conservative MP for Aldershot, Minister of Production from 1942 to 1945.*

2 Moira Godolphin Osborne (1892–1976), Lady Moira by courtesy, daughter of the 10th Duke of Leeds, married Lyttelton (qv) in 1920.

3 Degenerate.

4 Hedley Vicars Strutt (1915–2012), third of the four sons of the 11th Baron Rayleigh (1875–1947). He fought in the Scots Guards during the war.

5 Burst of energy.

6 Thoughts.

THURSDAY 6TH JANUARY

Awoke confronted by a blank, empty day. Bill Tufnell called and gave me a dozen or so bottles of rare wine from the Langley's cellars, a most welcome present! He is lonely and touchingly grateful for all the parties here. I want never to give another.

Yesterday at Lesley & Roberts, my tailors, who are still the most fashionable ones in London, I ran into Colonel (as he now is) Arthur Penn.¹ I cut him dead, this male old maid who has always been so correct, so snobbish and humourless has a disastrous influence on Sovereigns [*sic*]. So long as they were only the Yorks, he was unknown outside a certain 'landed' section of London society where his ribald humour and pointless jokes were even appreciated. With their elevation, he likes to interfere with their friendships and activities; he is narrow-minded, unintellectual, a suppressed (I think) pansy; malicious and out of date. The K and Q adore him; he is a court mandarin; but he knows nobody outside his small circle whose importance daily dwindles. He shoots well and for forty years has been invited to weekend and shooting parties, where his alleged high spirits have enlivened the dull wits of his high-born friends. I have always hated him, loathed him for more than twenty years and have often said so and done him as much mischief as possible.

I went for a short walk and ran into the long, lanky, languorous Lord Tavistock in Belgrave Square. He was carrying his infant red-headed son in his arms.² The child, I must say, looks curiously distinguished, like an Infante by Velázquez. On my return to No. 5 I had a surprise. For weeks like Richard II, I have had a strange, uneasy premonition that something unpleasant was going to happen – 'Yet again methinks some unborn sorrow ripe in fortune's womb is coming towards me and my inward soul with nothing trembles.'³ Well in a way it has come in the shape of a letter from my mother-in-law saying that she and Lord Iveagh withdraw their opposition to a divorce, that I am now free, that the decision now lies with me. What shall I do? I dread it; yet feel deep down that to go through with it is the wisest course.

FRIDAY 7TH JANUARY

A glorious, glamorous post. A long letter, illegible but merry from Cecil Beaton at the Viceroy's house in Delhi and a yet longer one, an immensely gay, gossipy epistle from Peter written on the last day of the year.

1 Arthur Horace Penn (1886–1960), the courtier.*

2 Henry Robert Ian Russell (1940–2003); by courtesy Lord Howland from August 1940 until 1953 and the Marquess of Tavistock from 1953 to 2002, when he succeeded his father as the 14th Duke of Bedford.

3 The line is actually spoken by the Queen: Shakespeare, *Richard II*, Act 2, scene 2.

I rang up Joan Astley, still in her Nursing Home; she, too, had heard from Delhi: the Viceroy writes [to] his daughter that to get through the tedium of endless dinner parties he now turns to his female neighbours, when conversation flags and asks, 'If you couldn't be a woman, what animal would you be?' Startled Anglo-Indian – and Indian too – matrons are amazed.¹

Went for a walk with Geoffrey Lloyd. Talked to H[arold] H[arington] B[alfour] a few times: I have now patched up his row with Laura. I saw Mr Bland and asked him to use his good influence to obtain a better settlement for me in view of the impending divorce. He agreed . . . to mediate the delicate negotiations on my behalf with my in-laws. Lunched alone; slept deeply for an hour: and then wrote to him a short letter and posted it, urging my claims and case.

Dined with Emerald Cunard, her dining room, her drawing room is heavy with French furniture . . . but she was exquisitely dressed, candles shed eighteenth-century shadows; there was an elegance of life which so appeals to me. The party assembled was eccentric. The silent Colonel Gerald de Gaury, George Gage, Madame Subercaseaux² of the Chilean Embassy, Peter Quennell³ and lastly Lady Oxford herself. She arrived late dressed as usual, *en Marie Stuart*⁴ and at once dominated the room. She began by insulting Emerald, accused her old friend of having bunked to America, to avoid the bombing: for a moment or two the atmosphere was tense. The hatred these two old ladies bear one another pervaded the room but then it passed. Old Margot kissed me and began her reminiscences, which are always riveting. Her every remark is a *mot*. She said *entre parenthèses*⁵ that she had been unlucky, she had never met a clever woman; undoubtedly there were some, but she had failed to meet one. They were barren, could do nothing without the stimulus of male love. I interposed saying that they were the world's greatest letter writers, women and effeminate men like Horace Walpole.⁶ She agreed and cited Norah Lindsay,⁷ Lady Desborough⁸ and herself, Madame de Sévigné⁹ and Lady Mary Wortley

1 Rhodes James, perhaps misled by Coats, attributes this anecdote to Coats. It is thus in the MS.

2 Margarita Donoso Foster; she was married to Luis Subercaseaux Errázuriz (1882–1973), who ran Chile's relations with Yugoslavia from Chile's London consulate, where he had been based since 1928 apart from when Ambassador to Peru from 1934 to 1938.

3 Peter Courtney Quennell (1905–93), man of letters.*

4 Looking like Mary, Queen of Scots.

5 In brackets.

6 Horatio 'Horace' Walpole (1717–97), Whig politician, man of letters and 4th Earl of Orford. He built Strawberry Hill House in Twickenham.

7 Norah Mary Madeline Bourke (1873–1948), garden designer, married in 1895 Harry Lindsay (1866–1939).

8 Ethel 'Ettie' Fane (1867–1952),* married in 1887 William Henry Grenfell (1855–1945), 1st Baron Desborough.*

9 Marie de Rabutin-Chantal (1626–96) was born into the Burgundian aristocracy and married, in 1644, the marquis de Sévigné, a Breton nobleman. Her letters, mainly to her daughter, are regarded as one of the jewels of seventeenth-century French literature.

Montagu.¹ After an excellent dinner, my old friend ‘Kakoo’ Rutland² and her eldest son, Charles,³ who has immense charm, but a weak mouth and is conscious of his ducal importance. Kakoo was most affectionate to me – she is so old a friend and we sat on a sofa for two hours talking; occasionally she sparred with her old Aunt Asquith, who looked like a malevolent scarecrow. When at last she left, escorted home by Peter Quennell who is a wiry, friendly auburn critic, we discussed the old lady who must be at least 80. She had twice remarked that I was the kindest man she had ever met so I was duty bound to defend her. Emerald delivered a tirade against her and dismissed her as being black and wicked with only a nodding acquaintance with truth etc. Actually, I am sorry for the old witch. . . then I went down to the Rutlands’ suite and sat on Kakoo’s bed for a bit, gossiping with her and Charles. On my return, Ali Forbes⁴ had arrived; he is a most beautiful young American who is completely Europeanised. He has even Winston’s ear and returned yesterday from Algiers, where he saw Serge Obolensky who had been lunching with the Soviet Ambassador!! – and he had also seen the Coopers on their recent arrival. Harold Balfour joined us and there was a long argument as to whether the Coopers would successfully represent England in Algiers. I secretly think decidedly not. And we *relevé*⁵ Margot’s remark that the two wickedest human beings she had ever met were Lloyd George and Max Beaverbrook: of the two Lloyd George was the worse, for he was the greater man; had more ability and more power.

SATURDAY 8TH JANUARY

Lunched at the Ritz with Alan and Patsy . . . I dislike women more and more, they are such selfish time-takers. And darling apple-faced Patsy is a sullen supreme bore; I don’t know how Alan puts up with her; he is often exasperated and is quite rightly determined to make a success of his marriage.

I suspect that I am becoming impotent.

1 Mary Pierrepont (1689–1762), Lady Mary by courtesy from 1690, was daughter of the 1st Duke of Kingston-upon-Hull. She married, in 1712, Edward Wortley Montagu, who was a Whig MP from 1705 until his death, but also British Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire from 1716 to 1718. She was best known for her letters describing her voyages to and from Constantinople, and her husband’s Embassy there.

2 Kathleen ‘Kakoo’ Tennant (1894–1989),* wife of the 9th Duke of Rutland.*

3 Charles John Robert Manners (1919–99)* had succeeded his father as 10th Duke of Rutland in 1940.

4 Alastair Cameron Forbes (1918–2005), journalist.* Rather like Channon, he chose to befriend the great and the good.

5 Raised.

MONDAY 10TH JANUARY

There is a 'me' wave on. I noticed it particularly at Peggy Crewe's cocktail party where I was soon surrounded by everybody. I went with Madame Cárcano – indeed spent the day with her. Ava Anderson whispered to me to drive home with her. When I said that I was pledged to the Ambassadors she replied: 'Your sense of hierarchy is upset!'

Lady Iveagh writes that she is seeing Honor today.

TUESDAY 11TH JANUARY

Alan looked in sweetly before dinner but as he was revolting about P I flew at him and we had a short sharp row, and he rushed away into the darkness and I followed, cried out and he returned, kissed me and we are reconciled. He is an angel, but jealous ever of P.

I walked to the Argentine Embassy, picked up Mme Cárcano, and we fetched Emerald and Ti Cholmondeley and drove to Claridge's. When we arrived, a pompous gala with Laura Corrigan, the Belgian, Spanish and Greek Ambassadors . . . Home by midnight. I think I have flu, but the thermometer registers normal.

Ciano¹ has been shot. He was 41. Nobody has been so high and fallen so low. It is rather shocking to shoot one's son-in-law in cold blood. I knew him and always found him cordial, easy, fashionable and painstaking. He was pro-Fascist always but not anti-Semitic. He three times invited me to luncheon and I once went: a grand affair at the Palazzo Bachesini.

WEDNESDAY 12TH JANUARY

I am still moved by Ciano's murder. When will this retribution end?

I am going to economise for twelve months and try to pay off my extravagances of last year.

All morning I have been taking my temperature and still feel like Hell . . . I came home and rested for two hours, rushed to the doctors – Laurel [his doctor] insists that I am having my change of life; and when I came home, I found that the Duchess of Kent had already arrived here with Lord and Lady Herbert, Rachel Davidson and the inevitable leech-like Poklewskis. I had invited Hamish Erskine²

1 Gian Galeazzo Ciano (1903–44), 2nd Count of Cortellazzo and Buccari, was Mussolini's son-in-law and his Foreign Minister from 1936 to 1943. To appease the Nazis, he was shot on Mussolini's orders.

2 James Alexander Wedderburn St Clair Erskine (1909–73) was a younger son of the 5th Earl of Rosslyn. He fought in the Coldstream Guards and won the Military Cross, and had recently escaped from an Italian prisoner-of-war camp. Nancy Mitford (qv) attempted suicide after falling in love with him; he was homosexual.

and Alice Harding and we had a merry tea party. The Duchess was a dream but she behaved badly to Hamish, never speaking to him. She showed me a glorious diamond and sapphire and emerald rose which the Duke of Kent gave her when Michael was born: it was his last present. She adores it and now that she is out of mourning, she can wear it. They all went off to a play, but as I felt so ill, refused to go . . . I had flu, 100 degrees and am going to bed.

Everyone is rather shocked by the callous, cruel way in which Ciano was tried and shot by his father-in-law's orders.

THURSDAY 13TH JANUARY

Lord Iveagh writes that he has withdrawn his opposition to a divorce and now the move is up to me: what shall I do?

I still feel wretched, irritable and *farouche*.¹ Later I collected twelve volumes of diaries dating from October 1940 until now and took them to the British Museum where I was received with deference and respect by the Director, Sir John Forsdyke.² The Custodian of Manuscripts, a Mr Bull, led me through caverns measureless to man³ – like the Roman catacombs – where after unlocking many doors, we came upon my two tin boxes containing older diaries, all the ones in fact that I did not destroy.⁴ But gone are all the Proust-like letters which in my youth and folly I burnt . . . and I deposited the recently written dozen, added them to that final pile of frivolous chronicles.

Quiet afternoon; rested and I am gradually recovering and dreading my Southend *Fahrt*⁵ tomorrow.

I shall leave one divorce matter in abeyance until the end of February and then begin to take steps; but nevertheless kill time. Every day that Honor is unmarried to Woodman is a victory for Paul.

Channon spends two tedious days in Southend, where he is joined by Billy McCann.

SUNDAY 16TH JANUARY

Appalling fog and we twice turned back the car, but at length persevered and got to Kelvedon where we lunched. I was given five ducks' eggs. Drove back in 'pea-soup' and then I found three disquieting letters: one from Lord Iveagh

1 Wild, or fierce.

2 Edgar John Forsdyke (1883–1979) was Director and Principal Librarian of the British Museum from 1936 to 1950. He joined the Museum's staff in 1907. He was knighted in 1937.

3 A quotation from the opening of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem, 'Kubla Khan': 'In Xanadu did Kubla Khan / A stately pleasure dome decree: / Where Alph, the sacred river, ran / Through caverns measureless to man / Down to a sunless sea.'

4 This hints at why there are no diaries for the years 1919–22 and 1929–33.

5 The German for 'journey'. The homophony is doubtless why Channon chose the word.

refusing a further settlement; one from Honor (friendly) complaining about Paul and says she has a cold; and another from Bland who is upset by the Iveaghs' flat refusal . . . and so am I. It is unjust.

I was dining out but chucked because of the fog. One cannot see a yard. And my temp is 100 degrees – am I in for a dose of flu? I wrote to Lord Iveagh, Bland and to Honor that I shall begin divorce proceedings in the spring.

TUESDAY 18TH JANUARY

I went early to the House hearing that the PM was due back. The secret was well kept but I soon twigged that they wanted to stage a demonstration of enthusiasm: surprise would add to it. It did. He came in just before 11.30 and smiled. The House cheered and rose, a courteous, spontaneous welcome which under the dramatic circumstances was legitimate but curiously cold. Churchill is not loved in the House. He has never had any ovations to equal several of Mr Chamberlain's. This morning's performance proved that. I thought he looked disappointed, but his health and colour have returned. Later I overheard him chatting with Mr Speaker and telling him that he felt wobbly and weak in his legs. Mrs Churchill, radiantly proud, and Mary Churchill¹ were in the gallery smiling. The girl is pretty. I talked with Duncan Sandys who is always the most friendly of the family . . . the House was fairly crowded and the atmosphere good. The new Common Wealth member² for Skipton took his seat: the silence was almost hostile.

Later, I sat with Alan as we drank two brandies and ginger ales – his usual morning ration. He is ageing. Yesterday, Patsy gave him £13,000. He came to breakfast with me here, which forced me to begin a long day too early. He told me a Rabelaisian story of an adventure he shared last night – what can Guy Liddell Hart³ think of the govt?

Gossip says that Grigg will be made a peer or perhaps go to the India Office, succeeding poor Amery who is to be *dégommé*; more reliable is the tip that Max Beaverbrook goes to the War Office. That seems to be settled.⁴ The temperature of the House was being taken today. Winston considers that he can do anything, that he is omniscient. Ernest Brown⁵ and I had a conference and he is convinced that the atmosphere is heavy with intrigue, that Beaverbrook is the *âme damnée* of both the Prime Minister and the country. He must indeed be wicked to be so hated by an honest man like Ernest Brown.

1 Mary Spencer-Churchill (1922–2014),* youngest daughter of Winston and Clementine Churchill.

2 Hugh McDowall Lawson (1912–97) was a lieutenant in the Royal Engineers. In the by-election of 7th January, caused by the death of the sitting Conservative member, he was endorsed by the local Labour Party. He won by 21 votes over the Conservative candidate, who had been endorsed by all the main parties nationally. He did not contest the seat in 1945 but tried later, unsuccessfully, to become a Labour MP.

3 Lennox-Boyd's current love interest.

4 None of this happened.

5 Alfred Ernest Brown (1881–1962), MP for Leith and leader of the Liberal National Party.*